

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTERS OF ARTS-ENGLISH

SEMESTER -IV

INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

SOFT CORE 402

BLOCK-1

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Postal Address:

The Registrar,

University of North Bengal,

Raja Rammohunpur,

P.O.-N.B.U., Dist-Darjeeling,

West Bengal, Pin-734013,

India.

Phone: (O) +91 0353-2776331/2699008

Fax: (0353) 2776313, 2699001

Email: regnbu@sancharnet.in ; regnbu@nbu.ac.in

Website: www.nbu.ac.in

First Published in 2019



All rights reserved. No Part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from University of North Bengal. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this book may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

This book is meant for educational and learning purpose. The authors of the book has/have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the contents of the book do not violate any existing copyright or other intellectual property rights of any person in any manner whatsoever. In the even the Authors has/ have been unable to track any source and if any copyright has been inadvertently infringed, please notify the publisher in writing for corrective action.

FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

BLOCK-1

Unit-1 Raja Rao - Kanthapura-1	6
Unit-2 Raja Rao- Kanthapura - 2	32
Unit-3 Raja Rao - Kanthapura-3	55
Unit-4 Amitav Ghosh - The Shadow Lines - 1	87
Unit-5 Amitav Ghosh - The Shadow Lines - 2	108
Unit-6 Modern Indian English Poetry – Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Robin S Ngangom - 1	132
Unit-7 Modern Indian English Poetry – Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Robin S Ngangom - 2	157

BLOCK-2

Unit-8: Modern Indian English Poetry – Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Robin S Ngangom - 3

Unit-9: Karnad-The Fire And The Rain -1

Unit-10: Karnad-The Fire And The Rain -1

Unit-11: Manjula Padmanabhan- Lights Out - 1

Unit-12: Manjula Padmanabhan- Lights Out – 2

Unit-13: Amit Chaudhuri – “Notes On The Novel After Globalization” And “ Huge Baggy Monster : Mimetic Theories Of The Indian Novel After Rushdie” From His Book Clearing The Space -1

Unit-14: Amit Chaudhuri – “Notes On The Novel After Globalization” And “ Huge Baggy Monster : Mimetic Theories Of The Indian Novel After Rushdie” From His Book Clearing The Space -2

BLOCK-1 INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Introduction To Block

UNIT 1: Sri K. Raja Rao's life and work.

UNIT 2: Historical Background, Characterization, Significance Of The Title, Use Of Mythical Technique and Kanthapura as a Gandhi Epic of Raja Rao's Kanthapura.

UNIT 3: Elements of Poetry, Fantasy and Lyricism in Kanthapura, Kanthapura as a fictional concretization of Gandhian Thought, Indianness of Kanthapura, Art and Technique of narration in Kanthapura, Plot and Structure of Kanthapura, Role of the Coffee Estate Workers in the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura, Treatment of Freedom Movement in Kanthapura and Depiction of the Women Characters in Kanthapura

UNIT 4: Summary and Analysis, Characters and Themes of Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines".

UNIT 5: Themes, Problematics of National Identity and Omniscient Narrator as Historian of "The Shadow Lines" by Amitav Ghosh

UNIT 6: Jayanta Mahapatra's "A Missing Person", "Hunger", "Freedom", "Dawn at Puri" and "Twilight".

UNIT 7: Nissim Ezekiel's life and Nissim Ezekiel's Poems like Night of the Scorpion, The Patriot, Poet Lover and Birdwatcher, Background, Casually and Island

UNIT-1 RAJA RAO - KANTHAPURA-1

STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Raja Rao's Life
- 1.3 Raja Rao's Work
 - 1.3.1 Kanthapura
 - 1.3.2 The Serpent and the Rope
 - 1.3.3 The Cat and Shakespeare
 - 1.3.4 Comrade Kirillov
 - 1.3.5 The Chess Master and His Moves
- 1.4 Short Stories of Raja Rao
 - 1.4.1 Javni
 - 1.4.2 Akkayya
 - 1.4.3 The Little Gram Shop
 - 1.4.4 Narsiga
 - 1.4.5 The Cow of the Barricade
 - 1.4.6 Nimka
 - 1.4.7 The Policeman And The Rose
 - 1.4.8 Raja Rao's Use Of English
- 1.5 Raja Rao: The Kannada Phase
- 1.6 Prizes and Awards
- 1.7 Let us sum up
- 1.8 Keywords
- 1.9 Questions for Review
- 1.10 Suggested Reading and References
- 1.11 Answers to Check your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about Sri K. Raja Rao's life,
- and you would also learn about Sri. K. Raja Rao's work.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sri K. Raja Rao was an Indian writer of English-language novels and short stories, whose works are deeply rooted in metaphysics. *The Serpent and the Rope*, a semi-autobiographical novel recounting a search for spiritual truth in Europe and India, established him as one of the finest Indian prose stylists and won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964. For the entire body of his work, Rao was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988. Rao's wide-ranging body of work, spanning a number of genres, is seen as a varied and significant contribution to Indian English literature, as well as World literature as a whole.

1.2 RAJA RAO'S LIFE

Raja Rao comes from a very old Indian Brahmin family. He was born in 1909 in the village of Hassan, in Mysore. His father was a professor of Canarese in Hyderabad. After having matriculated from Hyderabad he went to Aligarh for higher education. There, he was lucky enough to come in contact with Prof. Dickinson. He inspired Raja Rao to study French language and literature. He took his B.A degree from Nizam College, Hyderabad. He was awarded Government scholarship by Hyderabad University and on this scholarship, he went to France to continue his study of French literature there.

First, he studied for Doctorate degree at die University of Sorbonne under the supervision of eminent scholar as professor Cazamian, a name familiar to all students of English literature though he studied French literature all his publications in book form have been in English.

Notes

He lived in France from 1928 to 1939 and returned to India on the outbreak of World War II in 1940 and again went to France in 1946 and lived there till 1956. There he married an American actress Katherine now called, Katherine Rao, and he has a son by her. It was in France thousands of miles away from India, that his novel *Kanthapura* was written and though the collection of stories entitled 'The Cow of the Barricades' was published in 1947, most of the stories contained in it were also written in France. He had settled in the USA and would teach Indian Philosophy both Buddhist and Vedantic at the University of Texas. Raja Rao is the Pride of India though he is better known and appreciated abroad than in his own country.

He lost his mother at the age of four and it left a lasting impression on him. The absence of a mother and orphan hood are the recurring themes in his works. He was influenced by his grandfather with whom he stayed in Hassan and Harihalli. Since Raja Rao's mother tongue was Kannada his first published work was in Kannada. Later on he switched over to writing in English. The short stories he wrote in the 1930's and early 40's have been collected in 'The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories'. As a college student he drew inspiration from Gandhi's 'My Experiments With Truth' which appeared in as a serial, and later he was involved in Gandhi's Quit India Movement in 1942.

Raja Rao's works are deeply rooted in Hinduism. His *The Serpent and the Rope* is a semi-autobiographical novel which tells of a quest for spiritual truth in Europe and India. Because of this novel he has been considered as one of the finest of the Indian stylists. He married Camille Mouly who taught French at Montpellier in 1931. The marriage broke down in 1939 and it is depicted in his novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. His first stories were published in French and English. He contributed four Kannada articles for *Jaya Karnataka* which is an influential journal.

"It may be noticed that Raja Rao was not just bi-lingual but multi lingual. He began writing in Kannada for the periodical *Jayakamataka* published in Dharwar. At the opposite end is his writing in French. He was appointed to the editorial board of the *Mercure De France* in Paris and he

held that post for several years, where he published the French version of his story A Client.”

He edited with Iqbal Singh, ‘Changing India’, an anthology of modern Indian thought from Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. Then he co-edited with Ahmad Ali a journal from Bombay called ' Tomorrow'. He took active part in the formation of cultural organization. 'Sri Vidya Samiti', to revive the values of ancient Indian civilization but this organization failed shortly after the inception. He was associated with Chetana, a cultural society in Bombay for the propagation of Indian thought and values. Kanthapura deals with the impact of Gandhi's teaching on nonviolent resistance against the British.

The story is seen from the perspective of a small Mysore village in South India. Rao has borrowed the style and structure from Indian vernacular tales and folk epic. The influence of Gandhism can be seen in the short story collection 'The Cow of the Barricades' 1947 also. He published Gandhi's biography. ‘Great Indian way’, A life of Mahatma Gandhi. He received the prestigious International Neustadt prize for literature. The Serpent in the title refers to illusion and the Rope to reality.

1.3 RAJA RAO'S WORK

Though Raja Rao started his writing career in Kannada he has proved himself to be a great writer in English. He has many novels to his credit and to quote a few ‘Kanthapura’, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare, Comred Kirillov, The Chess Master and His Moves. He has not only written novels but also short stories. Raja Rao proved himself to be a unique stylist because of his first novel's puranic quality.

“The project on Raja Rao was undertaken during the seventies when the major works of all the Indian writers in English born in the first quarter of this century had already been written, appreciated and tabled as Incontrovertible evidence of Tndianness’ from its modest beginning in the preceding century, the subcontinent's creative effort in English has been for quite some time deeply involved in the question of national

Notes

identity seeking expression in an alien medium. The historical background of European colonization naturally forced such concentration of nationalism, which, however useful in the politics intellectual and creative activity , producing a singular crisis in the Hindu psyche exacerbated by an almost universal notion of a permanent divide between East and West.”

He wrote in his preface to *Kanthapura* that since we are not native speakers of English we cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the world as part of us. That is why instead of writing in Standard English he wrote in simple English, which could be read and understood even by a common man. The story is told by a Brahmin widow and, the story reflects the struggle between the good and the evil. Here, Raja Rao has personified Gandhi and Gandhians as the symbol of good on the one hand and Britishers on the other as the forces of evil. *Kanthapura* is a peaceful village but yet it fought for Indian independence and incidentally it is the educated youth who revolted against the British authority, which is the result of inspiration of Gandhi. They fought for the upliftment of the Harijans. The villagers were pacifists but the arrest of the Gandhian that is Moorthy, non-violent hero, caused trouble. This police violence led to shameful deeds and silent heroism. The non-violent hero, Moorthy is jailed and Gandhians are driven out of the village. In this novel the novelist has depicted how even the pacifist natured villagers turn to violence if their peace is disturbed and at the same time the novel projects the suffering of the poor and the moral myopia of the middle classes.

The Serpent and The Rope is the second novel of Raja Rao, which was published two decades after the publication of *Kanthapura*. It is an autobiographical novel in which he has written about a student named Rama who goes to France to pursue his higher studies, and about his love affair and marriage with his beloved and his spiritual quest. The novel conveys quite and convincingly well the problems of Indian intellectual caught between the past and the present, the east and west.

Since *The Cat and Shakespeare* has a puzzling theme in the form of a novel the writer himself called it a 'metaphysical comedy'. The story deals with an extra marital affair of a revenue office clerk, his philosopher neighbour Govindan Nair and the problems and pains, red tapism that makes the acquisition of ration card a herculean task. One of the critics described it as being in Upanishadic style. Padmanabhan Iyer, the central character of the novel *Comrade Kirillov*, takes the name Kirillov after becoming a communist, marries a Czech woman and lives in the west for 20 years. We can notice the strong pull of Indian roots. Irene's cousin had told her that since Kirillov was an Indian, his Indianhood would break through every communist chain. An Indian may go where he likes, but his soul will ultimately pull him back to India and between an Indian and a westerner there can never be a union of souls. Irene realizes it at last. The novel has its clear affiliations with 'The Serpent and The Rope'. Taken together Raja Rao's writings present a rich experience of Indian life at many levels and he is certainly a major Indo-Englian novelist. All of Raja Rao's novels explore philosophical concepts.

1.3.1 KANTHAPURA

'Kanthapura' is the first novel of Raja Rao. The impact of Gandhi and freedom movement on a remote village is depicted in this novel. It is a narrative novel. The narrator of this novel is an elderly woman, widow, who narrates the story in an Indian style. Like his short stories we can find blending of truth and imagination, poetry and strangeness, history and legend in *Kanthapura*. 'Kanthapura' is remarkable in many ways; the narrator is a grandmother. She tells the story of Indian freedom movement in which she had taken part. The spontaneity and Indianness and feminine tone can be noticed in her story. She is typical Indian Grandmother. While reading the novel we come across many humorous statements also. No village in India is free from superstitions. Even *Kanthapura* is not an exception. She uses the names of many Gods and Goddesses. Here Gandhi is compared to Rama and the Britishers particularly the is compared to a soldier in Ravan's army. Satyagrah is divine and ironically Krishna himself is in Kamsa's prison!

Notes

In this novel even the trivial things gain importance because they are glorified. We can find racism in this novel. By this we come to know about caste consciousness among the Indians. The political revolution is also portrayed in this novel very well.

Raja Rao explains in his foreword why English is chosen as his medium and how his style is unconventional because of his attempt to adapt in English the idiom, the rhythm, the tone, the total distinctness of vernacular. By bringing the intricacies of the narration, Rao has introduced a new dialect. We can say that the novel *Kanthapura* is a triumph of a new dialect Rao has tried to give the English the native Kannada speech sounds. *Kanthapura* is a typical novel not only as far as characters are concerned but also as far as rhythm of speech, diction, phrasing, intonation and speech manners are concerned. This is not 'Babu' English, this is not the English of the sophisticated Indians who meet in an exclusive club in Mumbai, Kolkata or New Delhi. This is a simple natural speech of rural folk transmitted in English: it is as though one sees a familiar landscape through coloured glasses. The colouring, the strangeness is unavoidable but it doesn't alter the essential truth of the things seen or the movements observed. "The telling has not been easy," admits Raja Rao, and continues:

"One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'Alien' yet English is not really an Alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make up. We are all indistinctly bilingual many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians we have grown to look at the large world as part of us----- "

After language, the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression. Even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs.

“We in India think quickly, we talk quickly and when we move we move quickly ----- we tell one interminable tale----- ” In Kanthapura it is depicted that even remote villages were influenced by the freedom struggle.

Most part of the novel deals with the Gandhi Purana. Gandhi is a role model to Moorthy, because, Moorthy is a staunch follower of Gandhiji. The reign of redmen is resisted by the Satyagrahis and because of the Dandimarch by Gandhi and his followers the country was engaged in passive resistance of ‘Alien’ authority. The people did not follow salt laws instead they started to manufacture salt in open defiance of the Government, forest laws were broken, toddy shops were picketed. What happened in Kanthapura is a not unique exception but the way of narrating the story by the Grandmother is important and unique because, it gives the historical background of the novel .There are rhythmic chains of names that too Indian and typical Kannada names you will find the rigid caste system, superstitions firm faith of villagers in gods and goddesses the courage of the villagers because they were not afraid of going to jail and undergo punishment.

Since the story is told by an old woman we can notice the feminine touches and mannerisms. The Grandmother has told the story breathlessly like any other old woman because there are many lengthy paragraphs.

Moorthy is a Gandhiman and he is also a satyagrahi. There is a bureaucrat Badekhan, the police, who tries to oppress the riot, but people are not afraid of him because they say; What is a policeman before a Gandhiman? Tell me does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?

Like Shylock in Shakespeare’s drama ‘The Merchant of Venice, here is the Bhatta who is notorious for charging high rate of interest. He is a hypocrite because he looks like an orthodox Brahmin but his deeds are bad or cruel. He is cunning too. There is Rangegouda symbol of Village headman who is named to be a sensible person. Moorthy obeyed him always. Besides, river Himavathy there is goddess Kenchamma who

Notes

always protected the villagers who had been considered as the guardian of Kanthapura. Beyond the hill there is Arabian Sea.

Kanthapura is in every sense a typical Indian village because the streets are divided on the basis of the people who lived on those streets. There is a Brahmin street, Pariah quarter, a potter's quarter, a weaver's quarter, a Sudra quarter. There is Skeffington Coffee Estate, which is a symbol of the impact of industrialization. Most of the people of Kanthapura have nicknames like waterfall Venkamma, Nose-Scratching-Nanjamma, Comer-House Moorthy etc. Gandhiji is a legendary figure for the villagers.

For the people of Kanthapura Gandhi is virtually like a God. He cannot tolerate foreign rule. He is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his country.

Besides, Moorthy the supporters of revolution in Kanthapura Rangamma, Rangegouda and the girl Ratna, and then, ultimately the people of Kanthapura.

They throng to the streets irrespective of their caste, creed, religion etc. When the police begin to arrest the revolutionaries some people go to neighboring village Kashipura to take shelter. Some people don't hesitate to spend allotted span of time in jail. After the Gandhi Irwin pact the revolutionaries are released.

Gandhi's trip to England to attend the second Round Table conference was thought and believed by the villagers that he had gone to get them swaraj.

They say the Mahatma will go to Redmen's country and he will get us swaraj — And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile. Sita will be with him for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharata will go to meet them with the worshipped sandals of the Master on his head. As they enter Ayodhya there will be rain of flowers. Like Bharata we worship the sandals of the Brother saint.

Raja Rao has described Kartik, the Festival of Lights in a peculiar

manner:

“Kartik has come to Kanthapura----- with the glow of lights and the impressed footsteps of the wandering gods: white lights from clay trays and red lights from copper stands and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance leaves: lights that glow from Banana trunks and mango twigs, yellow lights behind white leaves, and green light behind yellow leaves, and white lights behind green leaves and night dark through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains night cuts through the Brahmin street and the Pariah street and the Potters' street and the weavers' street and flapping through the shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river - and gods walk by lighted streets - Kartik is a month of gods.”

“Like Mulk Raj Anand, Rao also boldly translates Indian words, phrases, expletives and idioms - in this case from his native Kannada - into English and uniformly brings a touch of a poet to his style.”

1.3.2 THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE

If ‘Kanthapura’ of Raja Rao is compared to the Ramayana, ‘The Serpent and The Rope’ should be compared to the Mahabharat. If the storyteller in Kanthapura is a Brahmin widow who is a minor character Rama is the storyteller in ‘The Serpent and The Rope’ who is highly educated and a central character of the novel. Even Rama is a south Indian Brahmin the eldest son of the professor of mathematics at Hyderabad: he can proudly trace his lineage back to Madhwacharya and far back indeed to sage Yagnavalkya of the Upanishad Age.

It is an autobiographical novel. In this novel Ramaswamy who is a postgraduate in history and also the narrator of the story goes to France on a government scholarship to pursue a course of research in European history. In France, he falls in love with a history teacher who was a year senior to him. Her name is Madeleine. In the novel he describes her beauty:

“Her hair was gold, and her skin for an Indian was like the unearthed

Notes

marble with which we built our winter palaces. Cool, with which lake about one, and the peacock strutting in the garden below.

The seventh hour of music would come, and all the palace would see itself lit---”

Madeleine was like the palace of Amber seen in moonlight.

He marries her and a child is born to them whom they first called Krishna and later Pierrie; but the child dies of bronchopneumonia within a year of his birth. Then, we will be introduced to her uncle Charles and aunt Zoubie and her half-sister Catherine as well as two other younger men, George and Lizo. This novel is a blend of western and eastern culture. Madeleine like Rama is also interested in philosophy and religion, and often there are philosophical discussions between the two.

When Rama was in Europe his father dies. So, he returns to Benarus with his little mother and his baby brother Sridhar and attends the last rites of his father. All roads in India lead to holy Benarus.

Benarus is eternal. There the dead do neither die nor the living live. The dead come down to play on the bank of the Ganges, and the living who move about and even offer rice -balls to the manes live in the illusion of a vast night and a bright city.

Raja Rao's description of the river Ganges can be noticed. Ganges the perennial river falling on Shiva's head from heaven and flowing across Bharat to the sea; Devi Sureshwari Bhagavathi Gange — Saviour of the three worlds of restless waves.

Clear is thy water circling upon the head of Shiva. Then goes to Allahabad to meet his father's old friend and stay there for some time. There he meets Pratapsingh who was betrothed to marry Savitri the young western educated daughter of Raja of Surajpur. He was fascinated by her.

Then Rama goes back to France to complete his work. George is a frequent visitor to his house and similarly Catherine Madeleine's sister.

George falls in love with her and marries her. Rama visits Cambridge in connection with his research work and comes in close contact with Savitri.

After his work at Cambridge is over he comes to London and stays there for sometime to study in the London Museum and other libraries, Savitri visits him in his apartment and one morning she comes with coconut and kumkum performs aarti, touches his feet and thus takes him to be her lord and master with god as their witness. Rama gives her the toe ring, which, little mother had given to him for Madeleine but which were still in his possession.

Savitri is ready to elope with him but he advises her to the contrary. Like a dutiful 'Hindu girl' she must go back to her home and marry the person destined for her. Savitri eventually marries Pratapsingh and it is hoped she was a good wife to him. After a couple of days his sister's marriage was fixed and he comes to India to supervise the arrangement. He attends Saroja's marriage and expected to return to France, but his health does not permit him. In the meanwhile, his wife Madeleine gives birth to her second child. Her life is saved but her second child too dies. This is the second shock received by Madeleine and it changes the whole course of her future life.

However they continue to live together for sometime more. Then he goes to London. He falls ill there and is hospitalized and one of his lungs has to be taken out. Savitri, who was in London visits him often. After sometime he divorces to Madeleine.

Even after the divorce Rama keeps on visiting George Catherine. He had great love for their child Vera. He visits them occasionally. However, ambiguity marks the end of the novel, for, it is not clear whether he actually returns to India or his attachment to Vera keeps him back in Paris.

'The Serpent and The Rope' is Raja Rao's most elaborate and most philosophical work. It has a strikingly individual tone a curious mixture of 'Indian tenderness and French clarity'.

1.3.3 THE CAT AND SHAKESPEARE

This is the third novel of Raja Rao and the novelist has subtitled it as “A philosophical comedy”. It is marked by much crudity and absurdity. It is the tale of two friends Govindan Nair and Rama Krishna Pai. There are numerous digressions and much that is entirely superfluous.

Govindan Nair is a poor clerk in the rationing office getting only Rs. 45 a month. Krishna Pai is also a clerk and they live in adjoining houses in Trivendrum. When Pai falls sick he is well looked after by Govindan Nair and his son Sridhan. Pai loves Shanta, a school teacher, and he has an immoral relation with her. Govindan is charged with corruption and fraudulent practices. His boss Boothlinga Iyer dies of heart failure as a cat jumps suddenly on his baldhead. When Govindan Nair is tried in the court he brings the cat to the court of law. He throws the whole blame on Boothlinga Iyer saying that what he did was under orders from his boss who was then dead. This is how Govindan Nair defends himself. “My Lord, I was saying:” One day after the whole office was empty and Boothlinga Iyer was alone he said: Govindan Nair stay there. I have a job for you. And he produced the Benarus Pot that he had hidden deeply in the sample rice sack. There was one sack always in office. So he produced the Benarus pot and said: Go to Matthalinga Nayak and in the third house right by the temple Mantap there must be a widow called

Menakshamma. Please hand over this one hundred and nine rupees to her. That is all, there is in it”. The cat creates a diversion in the court by jumping here and there and Boothlinga Iyer’s signature is revealed under another signature.

As the judge is handling the paper over a sunbeam from the ceiling falls on the paper and that is how under the light the signature of Boothlinga is revealed.

This proved Govindan Nair’s innocence. Then another comments “Normally the story should have stopped there. But is life normal? Is the cat in the court normal? Is death normal? Is Shanta's life with me normal

? And such a married spouse it was first published in French in 1965 and the English version represents the revised text.

A long short story rather than a novel the book reads like an extended character sketch. Kirillov is actually Padmanabha Iyer an Indian intellectual, his Russian appellation being after the dedicated fanatic by that name in Dostoevsky's possessed Kirillov's self description is: 'Anonymous my name, logic my religion, communism my mother land'. Set in the nineteen thirties and forties in London the novel mainly comprises the garrulous Kirillov's opinion on Communism, the British, the war, the Indian freedom struggle etc. - all viewed through expectedly bright red spectacle. He marries Irene - a Czech girl, who shares his convictions and on her death leaves for Moscow, landing in Pecking when the novel ends. The narrator for the most part, is 'R', who is later identified with Raja Rao himself. Kirillov is viewed with good-humored irony as a professed communist who is yet very much Indian at heart. Part of the narration is by experts from Irene's diary but they don't seem to add much by way of a different perspective. There are suggestions of the East West theme of the Serpent and the Rope in the picture of the Kirillov Irene relationship and the persistent irony in the earlier part recalls the comic vein in the Cat and Shakespeare. But it is clear that in Comrade Kirillov Rao has little or nothing new to say. Kirillov hardly emerges as a living figure, because the putative complexity of his character is only reported but not realized in effective fictional terms through meaningful incident or symbolic presentation.

In this novel a Brahmin is the central character. In this novel the novelist suggests that being a brahmin Kirillov gives importance to materialistic life than spiritual life. It is the foreign ideology that is Marxism which swept away his happiness and contentment. The novel has the significant title "A New Novel". But there is nothing new in it except irony.

1.3.5 THE CHESS MASTER AND HIS MOVES

It is not different from other novels. It is also a vedantic novel like other novels. As for as technique and characters are concerned it is similar to 'the Serpent and the Rope'. The criticism of 'the Serpent and the Rope' can be applied to this novel also. The novel is a linear progression of the

Notes

plot and there is a lot of repetition of the same idea. In this regard the novel is similar to T.S. Eliot's Waste Land.

The major topics of discussion among the characters are significance of life, communism, as a metaphysical entity, the meaning of being an Indian, Gandhian ideas, Nehru's India, identity of a Brahmin in the modern world male female sensibilities true marriage, the limitation of language etc.

1.4 SHORT STORIES OF RAJA RAO

Raja Rao was not only a novelist but also a short story writer. He has many short stories collections to his credit. 'The Cow of The Barricades'

is the earliest collection of short stories. The collection of short stories which are written after 1947 have been entitled 'The Policeman and The Rose and other Stories' .

To be precise Raja Rao's short stories have been categorized into two groups which belong to two periods of his career. Though Raja Rao has written many short stories his novels have overshadowed them.

1.4.1 JAVNI

Javni and Akkayya reveal the sociological concern of the writer. Javni is a great short story by Raja Rao. It is about a loyal servant who accepts situations in life as they come and serves her employers with devotion and love. Her simplicity, goodness and godliness are described in this short story.

Though it has no plot or romance or adventure the story which tells us the sad tale of a south Indian girl of lower class creates interest among the readers. It not only tells us the sad tale of the lower class girl of south India but also depicts the happy domestic life of educated Indians of middle class.

1.4.2 AKKAYYA

Akkayya is also a deeply moving story like Javni It tells us about the heroic figure i.e. Akkayya she is a symbol of Indian womanhood. It tells

us the story of a young widow who had to depend upon her brother after the death of her old aged husband. Since she was dependent on her brother she had to do all the household chores and look after children without selfishness. In her childhood Akkayya was a pretty and intelligent girl. At the age of five she used to discuss with her father religious scriptures. She was fond of children. She was lucky for she was offered orphan children whom she treated like her own until her death.

1.4.3 THE LITTLE GRAM SHOP

It is the story of a middle class woman's misery who suffers a lot. It portrays the brutality and degradation of the husband of the middle class woman. It is the story of a proprietor of gram shop. Motilal, who is a Gujarati Bania ill-treats his wife, beats her frequently and makes life cumbersome for her. She suffers silently. This is the plight of many Indian women. She can't go anywhere as her mother is dead.

Bad luck follows Motilal because his son, Chota elopes with a woman as a result brings disgrace to his father. In the end, Chota's mistress presiding over the gram shop and lives with another man. In this short story the writer has depicted the sad story of three generations from grandfather to grandson.

We find the curse on the family, Motilal's grandfather distributed his property among his ten concubines. Motilal himself died in an accident because of his greed for money; and Motilal's son Chota suffers a lot. Chota's mistress who had eloped with another man presides over the shop and Chota loses his father, mother and wife. We are not informed at the end whether Chota was dead or alive.

1.4.4 NARSIGA

It is a story about a small, illiterate, orphan who was influenced by freedom struggle. In this story the boy mythicises-Mahatma Gandhi as Rama, the divine hero of the Ramayana and the alien ruler as Ravana. He is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He wished to be at the feet of Gandhi like Hanuman who will be at the feet of Rama.

1.4.5 THE COW OF THE BARRICADE

As far as the theme is concerned it resembles Narsiga but is more powerful in expression. It deals with India's freedom struggle in poetical and mythical terms. The theme is Gandhism and Gandhi is in the background. In this story also we find a character like Moorthy who fights for non-violence and meditates to avert the bloodshed. There is a row between the people and the soldiers then the Gouri a compassionate cow intervenes and moves on the barricades between the two. Then the soldiers see tears in the eyes of Gouri and pathetic condition of Gouri and shout out, 'Victory to the mahatma. Mahatma Gandhi ki jai; and joined the crowd. But their chief red man sees this and fires at Gouri. It hits Gouri's head.

Gouri is the symbol of India. She will be reborn, so it is the story about the spiritual regeneration of India.

1.4.6 NIMKA

We find the mingling of both fact and fancy in both the stories i.e 'The Cow of The Barricades and Nimka'. Gandhi is compared to Rama and glorified and the Englishmen are compared to Ravana. Like Kanthapura we find the mythical technique in this story also. Nimka is a story which tells us about the coming of age of Raja Rao and his maturity as a writer and thinker. In it the writer reveals sociological concerns.

It is about a very sad story of a young Russian waitress in a restaurant. Though paid less, she was a princess to her student admirers from the Sorbonne. She loved an Indian but couldn't marry him but loved a Frenchman and deceived him and married a Russian widower who was twenty years older than her. He gave her a son Boris. When Hitler occupied France her husband lost all his money on horses and ran away from her. At the end she loses her mother and his son does not return to take her to Russia. At last she sells her necklace which she had saved against all odds.

1.4.7 THE POLICEMAN AND THE ROSE

The Policeman and the Rose is called a pure fiction and Rao has subtitled it as 'A True Story'; Raja Rao has used symbolism in a complex and confusing way in this story. According to him every living man is considered as a policeman and even in his previous life he was a policeman. So, there is vagueness and ambiguity, even obscurity about the policeman. Hence, the readers are baffled and perplexed till they come to know that probably the policeman symbolizes the law of karma.

To sum up Raja Rao gave birth to the novel which contains precise ideological reconstruction of India and philosophical and cultural aspect. C.D.

Narasimhaiah finds India in microcosm. Raja Rao is a classical, religious and philosophical novelist. Raja Rao is a metaphysical poet and novelist where as Narayan is only a novelist. His novel Kanthapura depicts complex culture and Indian portrayal of pre-independent village.

Indian English writers obviously work under a kind of creative tension with which writers writing in their native languages are not confronted".

Besides the tight rope walking on the linguistic front, Indian English writers have to contend with another difficult choice: writing for a foreign as well as native Indian clientele, the former requiring them to explain uniquely Indian thoughts and situations, the latter treating such explanation of the obvious as inartistic and an excrescence, placing the writer on the horns of a uniquely situational dilemma.

The Indian English-writer has to choose his own blend of tradition - both Indian and English -and individual talent, the capability to synthesize them and forge his experience into a unique artistic amalgam meeting the dual requirements -an inenviable and exacting requirement incontrovertibly.

1.4.8 RAJA RAO'S USE OF ENGLISH

Raja Rao has used English in such a way that westerners can understand

Notes

how Indians think, feel and speak. Prof. V Y Kantak has written that Raja Rao's use of English "has made us regain our faith in the Indians' creative use of English. His English seems to spring from the Indian scene, the Indian manner of gesture and speech, absorbs it, and yet suffers no distortion. Word, phrase or sentence structure, the shifts and the modulations -all grow from that root. And it is English, Chaste English, not borrowed or applied but taking the shape of new material. The fluent, simple prose has a harmony which is the fruit of complete interpretation of matter and manner.

In Kanthapura he has used peasants' speech. Whenever they get angry peasants use abusive and vulgar language. So, Rao has used it more judiciously than Mulk Raj Anand. Rao has used peasants' speech because he wanted to express peasants' sensibility. Rao has used Indian imagery, proverbs and idioms. In his similes he has used the names of familiar animals. Sometimes he has used Indian words directly in English. He has used English as if it is his mother tongue so it speaks of his mastery over English.

Indian writers in English use various methods to create Indian atmosphere. One of the methods is that they translate literally the speech of the characters in order to bring Indianness. As a result, one can feel that it is an Indian novel and an Indian character which is speaking to another Indian character. If they are used judiciously it is good. e.g. Mulk Raj Anand translates Punjabi words, proverbs and even abuses but Anand has overdone it. Similarly Raja Rao has also translated some Indian words, proverbs and abuses as well.

Every Indo -Anglian writer has tried to express Indian sensibility through a suitable medium. So, Rao has developed Indian English like American English, Canadian English or even Australian English. Instead of using other forms of 'be' i.e. is and are in present tense he has used 'be' "The sorrow of woman be indeed the barrenness of man".

"What wonderful animals be in our land"

"All brides be Benares born"

Rao has used English like his mother tongue. It shows his mastery over the language.

1.5 RAJA RAO: THE KANNADA PHASE

Raj Rao emerged as a major writer of fiction after publishing his second novel 'The Serpent and the Rope' 'The Times Literary Supplement' called him India's greatest novelist. Since Raja Rao lived in Europe an outsider may think that he was an English writer but he was born in Karnataka, so, his roots are in Karnataka. He used to write prose and verse in his student days when he was in Hyderabad. Some of his writings are in Kannada. 'The Client' a story included in his collection 'the Cow of the Barricades' is a translation of a story originally written in Kannada. Rao was a great admirer of Romain Rolland. He had thought of translating his works into his own mother tongue Kannada. His works go far beyond Karnataka and Kannada language since he has rich experience and linguistic sources. By Kanthapura we come to know-that it is his fullest expression of Kannada phase. Not only Kanthapura but also some of the stories in the collection Cow of the Barricades like Javni and Akkayya are also expressions of the same phase. Though Rao had written in Kannada his horizon had already widened. Evolving the style of his own, Rao has used resources of Indian languages like Hindi, Sanskrit and Kannada. He has used some words directly and some Kannada words in translation.

Eg : Bhattare and Ramannore etc.

He uses Kannada words and expressions directly e.g Budumekayi, Dasara Haavu, Ayyappa, Ayyayyo, Hele, Hele etc. He has translated Kannada words, abuses in translated form . The articles which were published in one of the oldest and influential journals of the day are as follows.

1. A Pilgrimage to Europe
2. Europe and Ourselves
3. Expiation of a Heretic
4. Romain Rolland, the Great sage

Notes

These articles give us biographical picture of the author. They provide us about the facts of his early life and his personality. Rao has expressed his devotion to Karnataka both in Expiation and in a Pilgrimage to Europe.

The cold wind is blowing from the Alps,
The emerald waters are sparkling in Leman,
In the cloudless sky the moon is foil of mirth.
Out there, it is all sweetness, beauty,
But, here, inside, it's all desolate. Sad
Alas, fallen again am I.
Tell me, O God, tell me where I've sinned,
Tell me, O God !
Memories...
All kinds of fears---
The mountains are dancing
Around me.
The morning cock crows at last
And the cow calls its young one to her.
But it is not the fragrance of Champaka.
Only the aroma of a rose.

In his 'Europe and Ourselves' he appreciates great writers of Karnataka and says that they deserve popularity in the west also. He says Kanaka a saint poet must have a place beside Keats. Pampa should have a conversation with Pope. The books of Shrinivasa and Kailasam are in no way inferior to the books of Romain Rolland. It shows that he was proud of Kannada writers and Kannada literature.

1.6 PRIZES AND AWARDS

Raja Rao has been liked by his readers and critics because of his new style. His works have brought him many prizes, awards. Among them are Indian government's Padma Bhushan and Sahitya Academy Awards. And also, he was awarded the prestigious Neustst International prize for Literature in 1988. Raja Rao was the first and only Asian to be so honored.

Check your Progress-1

1. When and where was Raja Rao born???

2. From which college did Raja Rao do his graduation ???

3. Which award did Raja Rao receive for literature???

2. From which year to which year did Raja Rao live in France ???

1.7 LET US SUM UP

Early life

Raja Rao was born on 8 November 1908 in Hassan, in the princely state of Mysore , into a Smartha Brahmin family of the Hoysala Karnataka caste. He was the eldest of 9 siblings, having seven sisters and a brother named Yogeshwara Ananda. His father, H.V. Krishnaswamy, taught

Notes

Kannada, the native language of Karnataka, at Nizam College in Hyderabad. His mother, Gauramma, was a homemaker who died when Raja Rao was 4 years old.

The death of his mother, when he was four, left a lasting impression on the novelist – the absence of a mother and orphanhood are recurring themes in his work. Another influence from early life was his grandfather, with whom he lived in Hassan and Harihalli or Harohalli).

Rao was educated at a Muslim school, the Madarsa-e-Aliya in Hyderabad. After matriculation in 1927, Rao studied for his degree at Nizam's College. at the Osmania University, where he became friends with Ahmad Ali. He began learning French. After graduating from the University of Madras, having majored in English and history, he won the Asiatic Scholarship of the Government of Hyderabad in 1929, for studying abroad.

Rao moved to the University of Montpellier in France. He studied French language and literature, and later at the Sorbonne in Paris, he explored the Indian influence on Irish literature. He married Camille Mouly, who taught French at Montpellier, in 1931. The marriage lasted until 1939. Later he depicted the breakdown of their marriage in *The Serpent and the Rope*. Rao published his first stories in French and English. During 1931–32 he contributed four articles written in Kannada for *Jaya Karnataka*, an influential journal.

Nationalist novelist

Returning to India in 1939, he edited with Iqbal Singh, *Changing India*, an anthology of modern Indian thought from Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. He participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. In 1943–1944 he co-edited with Ahmad Ali a journal from Bombay called *Tomorrow*. He was the prime mover in the formation of a cultural organisation, *Sri Vidya Samiti*, devoted to reviving the values of ancient Indian civilisation; this organisation failed shortly after inception. In Bombay, he was also associated with *Chetana*, a cultural society for the propagation of Indian thought and values.

Rao's involvement in the nationalist movement is reflected in his first two books. The novel *Kanthapura* was an account of the impact of Gandhi's teaching on nonviolent resistance against the British. The story is seen from the perspective of a small Mysore village in South India. Rao borrows the style and structure from Indian vernacular tales and folk-epic. Rao returned to the theme of Gandhism in the short story collection *The Cow of the Barricades*. *The Serpent and the Rope* was written after a long silence during which Rao returned to India. The work dramatised the relationships between Indian and Western culture. The serpent in the title refers to illusion and the rope to reality.[4] *Cat and Shakespeare* was a metaphysical comedy that answered philosophical questions posed in the earlier novels. He had great respect for women, once he said, "Women is the Earth, air, ether, sound, women is the microcosm of the mind".

Later years

Rao relocated to the United States and was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin from 1966 to 1986, when he retired as Emeritus Professor. Courses he taught included Marxism to Gandhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Indian philosophy: The Upanishads, Indian philosophy: The Metaphysical Basis of the Male and Female Principle, and *Razor's Edge*.

In 1965, he married Katherine Jones, an American stage actress. They had one son, Christopher Rama. In 1986, after his divorce from Katherine, Rao married his third wife, Susan Vaught, whom he met when she was a student at the University of Texas in the 1970s. In 1988 he received the prestigious International Neustadt Prize for Literature. In 1998 he published Gandhi's biography *Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi*.

Rao died of heart failure on 8 July 2006, at his home in Austin, Texas, at the age of 97.

Raja Rao Award

The 'Raja Rao Award' was created in Rao's honor, and with his permission, in the year 2000. It was established "to recognize writers and

Notes

scholars who have made an outstanding contribution to the Literature and Culture of the South Asian Diaspora."The award was administered by the Samvad India Foundation, a nonprofit charitable trust named for the Sanskrit word for dialogue, which was established by Makarand Paranjape of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi to bestow the award and to promote education and cultural contributions to India and the South Asian diaspora.No cash prize was attached to the award during its existence. The Award was bestowed seven times between 2000 and 2009, and thereafter discontinued.

The inaugural recipient of the Award was K. S. Maniam of Malaysia, who was bestowed the award in 2000. Other recipients were Yasmine Gooneratne of Sri Lanka, Edwin Thumboo of Singapore, Harsha V. Dehejia of Canada, David Dabydeen of Guyana, Varadaraja V. Raman of the United States, and Vijay Mishra of Fiji. The award was discontinued in 2009. The award was bestowed annually from 2000 to 2004, after which it was bestowed semi-annually, with one award being given for 2005-2006, and one being given for 2007-2008. Meenakshi Mukherjee, chair of the last awarding jury, died in 2009, and the award was discontinued that same year, and has not since been bestowed.

Those who served as jurors for selection of the recipient included Meenakshi Mukherjee ,Braj Kachru, Victor Ramraj, and Makarand Paranjape.

1.8 KEYWORDS

- Invocation: Address in prayer
- Avatar: Incarnation
- Dandi March: Gandhi's famous march to the sea-shore in Gujarat to the British salt law

1.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a short note on Raja Rao's life.
- Mention Raja Rao's work.

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Jonathan Webster, *Understanding Verbal Art: A Functional Linguistic Approach*, Springer, 2014, page 125.
- Mallya, Vinutha . "Country Poet". *Pune Mirror*.
- "Raja Rao Annual Award 2002". Samvad India Foundation. Retrieved 9 September 2019.
- "Raja Rao Annual Award 2003". Samvad India Foundation. Retrieved 9 September 2019.
- Brian Shaffer, editor, *The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 2011, page 1035.
- "Raja Rao Annual Award 2004". Samvad India Foundation. Retrieved 9 September 2019.
- Makarand Paranjape, *Science and Spirituality in Modern India*, Samvad India Foundation, in association with Centre for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, 2006, page xiii.

1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Raja Rao was born in 1909 in the village of Hassan, in Mysore.
- Raja Rao did his graduation from Nizam College, Hyderabad.
- Raja Rao received the prestigious International Neustadt prize for literature.
- Raja Rao lived in France from 1928 to 1939.

UNIT-2 RAJA RAO- KANTHAPURA - 2

STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 It's Historical Background
- 2.3 Characterization in Kanthapura
- 2.4 Significance of the title Kanthapura
- 2.5 Raja Rao's Use of Mythical Technique
- 2.6 Kanthapura as a Gandhi - Epic
- 2.7 Let us sum up
- 2.8 Keywords
- 2.9 Questions for Review
- 2.10 Suggested Reading and References
- 2.11 Answers to Check your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit, you would know about:

- Historical Background, Characterization, Significance Of The Title, Use Of Mythical Technique and Kanthapura as a Gandhi Epic of Raja Rao's Kanthapura.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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

2.2 IT'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

Gandhi continued to prepare the nation for the prolonged struggle which lay ahead before independence could be gained. He aimed at the total involvement of all sections of the Indian people and so launched a comprehensive programme of economic, social and religious uplift and emancipation of the Indian people. His programme of action was fourfold:

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

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

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

The British government was shaken. Gandhi was invited to England for talks. He accepted the invitation and went for the Round Table Conference dressed in his usual loin cloth and the result was the well -

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

2.3 CHARACTERIZATION IN KANTHAPURA

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

He is considerate and respectful is obvious from the affectionate way in which he is referred to by the people of Kanthapura. He is called "Corner - House Moorthy", "our Moorthy". Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic and is a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the Saint of our Village".

It seems that the impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village lad, into a young man capable of leadership and

the self - sacrifice and devotion which leadership entails. Of course, he has never come into personal contact with Gandhi. Moorthy was in college when he felt the full force of Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi - man. From the time we meet him in the beginning of the novel to the very end of the book, Moorthy is perched at the top in his ascetic strength and his capacity for action comes as a surprise in a visionary ascetic strength and in a visionary like Moorthy.

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

It is Moorthy who organizes the Gandhi - work in the village and he shows a rare devotion and insight for a village youth. He goes from door to door carrying the message of Mahatma Gandhi. It is he who explains the economy of the Khaddi and the importance of the charkha to the ignorant and superstition - ridden women of the village and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters. It is he who forms the Congress Committee in the village and is unanimously elected as its President. Even Range Gowda, the Patel, 'the Tiger' of the village, is deferential to him and calls him 'learned master'. He has full confidence in him, uses all his authority and prestige in his favour and

Notes

permits him to have his way in everything. The women too must be enthused and so Moorthy sets about organizing them. A Women Volunteer Corps is thus formed with Ratna as the head of this organization of Swayam Sevikas or Sevis. Like Gandhi, Moorthy, too, undertakes a fast, organizes picketings and Satyagrahas, courts arrest and is sent to jail. Throughout, he is shown to be an ideal Gandhite.

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

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

2. Ratna, the Progressive Widow

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

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

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

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

3. Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village

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

He is a man of forceful, commanding personality and wields considerable power and authority in the village because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the village.

Nobody dares to oppose him or disobey his orders. Nothing can be done in the village without Range Gowda. He is also kindly, sympathetic and

Notes

generous and does his best to help the poor, the needy and the suffering of the village.

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

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

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

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

He alone of the Kanthapurians ever returns to Kanthapura. It is he who brings to them news from Kanthapura. In this way he serves to round up the novel and it is in the fitness of things that it is with his appearance and with his words that the novel comes to an end. His dramatic appearance is like the fall of the curtain after the catastrophe.

4. Bhatta, the First Brahmin

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

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

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

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

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

However, even Bhatta has been humanized. He is no unredeemed monster. He too has something good in him. He has his moments of magnanimity too. Someone said, "Hadn't he sent our Fig - tree House

Notes

Ramu to the city for studies?" Bhatta said, "If you bring a name to Kanthapura - that is my only recompense. And if by Kenchamma's grace you get rich and become a Collector, you will think of this poor Bhatta and send him the money - with no interest, of course, my son, for I have given it in the name of God. If not, may the Gods keep you safe and fit."

5. Bade Khan, the Policeman

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

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

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

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

6. The White Owner of the Skeffington Coffee Estate

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is a very large coffee plantation at a stone's throw from Kanthapura. It is owned by a white man, who is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or whip in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his

estate who neglect their duty. He is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India who exploited Indians in various ways.

A large number of workers are needed on the estate and they are recruited by the white owner's Maistri or Steward under false promises. They are brought to the estate from distant parts of Mysore. Promises of attractive wages are made. Visions of happy, comfortable life with practically no work to do are held out to them. It is said that one who enters the gates of the coffee plantation never comes out of it.

The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one - room huts to live in which they are provided little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid - they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib' and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. If there is any slackness or if they rest a moment, the Maistri or the Sahib is always there to whip them. There is a worst kind of economic exploitation. The workers are exploited sexually also. If the Sahib takes a fancy to any of their women then she is sent to his house at night or he would even have her, then and there in the plantation.

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

7. The Swami

The Swami lives in the city. He remains in the background. Like Mahatma Gandhi he never appears on the scene. He is an orthodox Brahmin, narrow and conservative in his views. He is a traitor to the cause of the freedom of India. He is in the pay of the British government. He has received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the Government. So he is a willing stooge of the Britishers. In league with Bhatta, he does

Notes

his best to defeat the freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is he who excommunicates Moorthy for "the Pariah business" and thus is indirectly responsible for the death of his mother who is unable to bear the shock.

8. Advocate Sankar

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

He is noble, generous and kind - hearted. When his first wife dies, he does not marry a second time. He remembers his wife and regards it a sin to marry again.

9. Waterfall Venkamma

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

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

against everybody and thus justifies the nick - name the novelist has given to her.

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

10. Narsamma

She is the old widowed mother of Moorthy. She is orthodox and conservative unable to understand the implications of the Gandhi movement and the noble work in which her son is engaged. She has a great love for her son and has high hopes of a brilliant career for him. Her hopes and dreams are shattered when he joins the freedom movement. She is literally shocked and her feelings are intensely hurt when Moorthy is ex - communicated by the Swami for the "Pariah business".

Being the youngest of her sons, Moorthy is deeply loved by her. Instead of becoming a Sub - Collector as she hopes he would become, she is told that he has frequent intercourse with the Pariahs. This is a terrible blow to her. Excommunication is regarded by her as nothing less than a sin. She is shocked terribly and dies as a result of this shock.

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

11. Rangamma

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

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE KANTHAPURA

The title of the novel should be apt and suggestive. Just as a sign board tells us of the contents of a shop so a good title should indicate the contents of the novel. The title 'Kanthapura' is apt and suggestive because the novel is about a South Indian village named Kanthapura and if there is any hero in the novel it is the people and the community of the village named Kanthapura.

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

Having described the village, the novelist comes to the people. There is a Postmaster Suryanarayana with his two - storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass - panes to the windows; the thotti - house of pock - marked Sidda, which had a big veranda, large roof and a granary; Waterfall Venkamma, who roared day and night and Zamindar Bhatta, who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain; the young, idealistic corner - house Moorthy, who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India; and the nine - beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded to the soil from immemorial generations. It is obvious he knows them just as well but if he does not individualize them

it is obviously because he doesn't like to crowd his canvas. Thus we are told of the people, their poverty, their ignorance and their petty jealousies. The villagers are depicted in their realistic colors. Their names are made descriptive in nature - it is a typical rural way. For instance: Bent legged Chandrayya, Cardamom - field Ramachandra, Coffee - planter Ramayya, Corner - house Moorthy etc.

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

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

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

Thus Kanthapura is not a novel dealing with the life and doings of any individual hero. It is certainly not the story of Moorthy but of the masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their momentary defeat

which has in it the seeds of ultimate victory. It ends with an account of their life in Kashipura and gives us a sense of abiding fulfillment which they have attained. Hence if there is any hero in the novel, it is Kanthapura itself and its people.

2.5 RAJA RAO'S USE OF MYTHICAL TECHNIQUE

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

Past and present are freely mixed up and Gods and Goddesses and heroes and heroines of epics freely jostle with contemporary personalities. Mahatma Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi and is but a soldier in ten-headed Ravana's army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa's prison.

The use of the mythical technique is seen at its best in the strange kind of Harikathas recited by Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man. In his Harikatha, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and

personalities are constantly linked - up with Puranic Gods and epic - heroes and heroines. One of the Harikathas he recites is about the birth of Gandhi.

The use of the mythical technique makes Gandhi, the invisible God and Moorthy, the invisible avatar. The reign of the Red - men become Asuric rule and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics: Shiva is three - eyed and Swaraj too is three - eyed : self - purification, Hindu - Muslim unity and Khaddar. Gandhi is Shiva himself in human shape: he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule as the boy Krishna killed the serpent Kaliya. Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of the Gita and hand - spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like Pooja. This juxtaposition of the past and the present, of men and Gods, is kept up throughout the novel upto the very end. Mahatma Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with Puranic significance.

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

2.6 KANTHAPURA AS A GANDHI - EPIC

Kanthapura is a great village novel but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non - violent non - cooperation movement was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages during those stirring days from 1919 - 1930 when Gandhi transformed the entire nation in a single lifetime into an army of disciplined and non - violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement - the political, the religious and the social and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is

Notes

not merely a political novel but a novel concerned as much with the social, religious and economic transformation of the people as with the struggle for political freedom.

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

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

It was Mahatma Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds and thousands of little Gandhis throughout the country. To be young was very heaven in those days. The Corner - House Moorthy, our Moorthy, as the villagers called him, was young. Moorthy was in college when he felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man. There is nothing extraordinary in it though, for in those days hundreds and thousands of young men throughout the country gave up their studies and courted arrest. But about the manner in which Moorthy walked out of the college: he is said to have had, not an actual, firsthand

experience of Gandhi by personal contact but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and Moorthy pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone and came back to college and walked out of it, for good.

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

Those were tumultuous, stirring times and this atmosphere of tumult, of a national upheaval, under the impact of a single personality, has been successfully captured by the novelist. There are dharnas, picketings and satyagrahas. People, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna and so the movement continues. There is the no - tax campaign and when the people refuse to pay the land revenue, their lands are laid waste and they are compelled to flee the village. In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of

Notes

all the castes and professions and laborers of the Coffee Estate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureaucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered and a remnant reaches - after sore trials and vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy- spend an allotted span in jail but the Gandhi - Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis.

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

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

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

Check your Progress-1

1. What does Kanthapura describe about?

2. Under whose leadership was Congress from 1907 to 1917?

3. Who is Ratna and when did she become widow?

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learned about Historical Background, Characterization, Significance Of The Title, Use Of Mythical Technique and Kanthapura as a Gandhi Epic of Raja Rao's Kanthapura.

2.8 KEYWORDS

- **Calling:** Profession by which someone is known
- **Mannerisms:** Peculiarities of behavior or speech
- **Garrulous:** Over-talkative

2.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write the significance of the title Kanthapura.
- Describe Kanthapura as a Gandhi – Epic.
- Describe Raja Rao's Use of Mythical Technique in Kanthapura.
- Write a note on the Characterization of Kanthapura.

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Notes

- Gawlowicz, Susan . "RIT Lecture Addresses Science and Religion in Today's World". Rochester Institute of Technology.
- "Raja Rao Annual Award 2006". Samvad India Foundation. Retrieved 9 September 2019.
- "Raja Rao Annual Award 2008". Samvad India. Retrieved 17 February 2018.
- Ulagam, Astro . "KS Maniam: Malaysia's soil is so accommodative to us; why can't we be the same to each other?". Astro Awani.
- "Jury for the Award". Samvad India Foundation. Retrieved 9 September 2019.
- "In Memoriam: Victor J. Ramraj", Pamela McCallum, Ariel; University of Calgary, Vol. 45, Iss. 3 : 1-2. DOI:10.1353/ari.2014.0020.
- reserved, the complete review - all rights. "Comrade Kirillov - Raja Rao". www.complete-review.com.
- "Padma Awards" . Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2015. Retrieved 21 July 2015.

2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Kanthapura by Raja Rao describes the simple rustic life of a South Indian village, Kanthapura.

The Congress remained under the leadership of the Moderates from 1907 to 1917.

Ratna was a young widow and became a widow when she was hardly fifteen years of age.

UNIT-3 RAJA RAO - KANTHAPURA-3

STRUCTURE

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Elements of Poetry, Fantasy and Lyricism in Kanthapura

3.3 Kanthapura as a fictional concretization of Gandhian Thought

3.4 Indianness of Kanthapura

3.5 Art and Technique of narration in Kanthapura

3.6 Plot and Structure of Kanthapura

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

3.8 Treatment of Freedom Movement in Kanthapura

3.9 Depiction of the Women Characters in Kanthapura

3.10 Let us sum up

3.11 Keywords

3.12 Questions for Review

3.13 Suggested Reading and References

3.14 Answers to Check your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit, you would know about:

- Elements of Poetry, Fantasy and Lyricism in Kanthapura
- Kanthapura as a fictional concretization of Gandhian Thought
- Indianness of Kanthapura
- Art and Technique of narration in Kanthapura
- Plot and Structure of Kanthapura
- Role of the Coffee Estate Workers in the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura

- Treatment of Freedom Movement in Kanthapura
- Depiction of the Women Characters in Kanthapura

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Raja Rao's first novel Kanthapura is the story of a village in south India named Kanthapura. The novel is narrated in the form of a 'sthalapurana' by an old woman of the village, Achakka. Kanthapura is a traditional caste ridden Indian village which is away from all modern ways of living. Dominant castes like Brahmins are privileged to get the best region of the village whereas Sudras, Pariahs are marginalized. The village is believed to have protected by a local deity called Kenchamma. Though casteist, the village has got a long nourished traditions of festivals in which all castes interact and the villagers are united.

The main character of the novel Moorthy is a Brahmin who discovered a half buried 'linga' from the village and installed it. A temple is built there, which later became the centre point of the village life. All ceremonies and festivals are celebrated within the temple premises.

Hari-Kathas, a traditional form of storytelling, was practiced in the village. Hari-Kathas are stories of Hari. One Hari-Katha man, Jayaramachar, narrated a Hari Katha based on Gandhi and his ideals. The narrator was arrested because of the political propaganda instilled in the story.

The novel begins its course of action when Moorthy leaves for the city where he got familiar with Gandhian philosophy through pamphlets and other literatures. He followed Gandhi in letter and spirit. He wore home spun khaddar. Discarded foreign clothes and fought against untouchability. This turned the village priest, a Brahmin, against him who complained to the swami who was a supporter of foreign government and Moorthy was ex-communicated. Heartbroken to hear it, his mother Narasamma passed away.

Bade Khan was a police officer, a non hindu of Kanthapura. He was brought and supported by the coffee planters who were Englishmen.

Considered as an outsider, Bade Khan is an enemy of the people who refuses to provide shelter to him.

After the death of his mother, Moorthy started living with an educated widow Rangamma, who took part in India's struggle for freedom. Moorthy was invited by Brahmin clerks at Skeffington coffee estate to create an awareness among the coolies of the estate. When Moorthy turned up, Bade Khan hit him and the pariah coolies stood with Moorthy. Though he succeeded in following Gandhian non violence principle, the incident made him sad and unhappy.

Rachanna and family were thrown out of the estate because of their role in beating Bade Khane. Meanwhile, Moorthy continued his fight against injustice and social inequality and became a staunchest ally of Gandhi. Taking the responsibility of the violent actions happened at the estate; Moorthy went on a three day long fasting and came out victorious and morally elated. Following the footsteps of Gandhi, a unit of the congress committee was formed in Kanthapura. Gowada, Rangamma, Rachanna and seenu were elected as the office bearers of the committee and they avowed to follow Gandhi's teachings.

Fearing the greater mobility of people of Kanthapura under the leadership of Moorthy, the foreign government accused him of provoking people to inflict violence it and arrested him. Though Rangamma and Rachanna were willing to release him on bail, he refused. He was punished for three months rigorous imprisonment.

While Moorthy spent his days in prison, the women of Kanthapura took charge of the struggle for freedom. They formed Women's Volunteer Corps under the leadership of Rangamma who instilled patriotism among the women by presenting thr historical figures like Laxmi Bai of thansi, rajput princess, Sarojini Naidu etc... Moorthy was released later and he came out as strong as he was. People thronged at his house were dispersed peacefully.

Dandi March, Picketting of Boranna's toddy grove were other activities led by Moorthy after his release. Arrest of the satyagrhis, and police brutality to women became a part of the everyday life of the

people in Kanthapura. Atrocities against women added miseries of the people. In the last part of the novel, it is mentioned that people of the village were settled in Kashipur and Kanthapura was occupied by people from Bombay.

3.2 ELEMENTS OF POETRY, FANTASY AND LYRICISM IN KANTHAPURA

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

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

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

The description is vivid and graphic, a poetic and whimsical rendering of reality. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air; Jagdish

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

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

3.3 KANTHAPURA AS A FICTIONAL CONCRETIZATION OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT

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

Kanthapura is an obscure, out of the way, slumbering South Indian village. This obscure village, slumbering for centuries, suddenly comes

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy - spend an allotted span in jail but the Gandhi - Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis.

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

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

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

3.4 INDIANNESS OF KANTHAPURA

The novel is a western art - form but Raja Rao has used it to express an essentially Indian sensibility. Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. It is an Indian novel and it expresses the Indian sensibility to

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

- Our hearts beat like the wings of bats;
- Every squirrel has his day;
- The youngest is always the holy bull;
- And yet he was as honest as an elephant;
- A rasping hiss as though a thousand porcupines have suddenly bristled up;
- Does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?
- Numerous proverbs find a natural place in the peasant speech:
- the policemen are not your uncle's sons;
- saw you like a rat on your mother's lap;
- the first daughter milks the cow when the mother is ill;
- you cannot straighten a dog's tail;
- there is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura;
- only a pariah looks at the teeth of dead cows;
- Land, lust and wifely loyalty go badly together.

Sometimes the peasant's use an abusive, vulgar language and Raja Rao also does not hesitate to use such a language when the occasion demands it though his use of it is more restrained and judicious. Such language is an integral part of peasant speech and so its use is essential to express peasant sensibility. This is indeed the natural speech of the rural folk transmuted into English. With the effective use of the "dialect" and

Notes

village material the novelist has succeeded in conveying, "In a language not one's own the spi

rit that is one's own."

Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. Raja Rao has shown to other Indians writing in English how best to express in a foreign art - form a sensibility which is essentially Indian.

3.5 ART AND TECHNIQUE OF NARRATION IN KANTHAPURA

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a triumph of narrative art. It is perfectly suited to the ends he wanted to achieve. Raja Rao has been eminently successful despite the difficulties of the task. He succeeded in bringing into his compass an amazing amount of heterogeneous material and still move ahead swiftly towards the end he had in mind. The narration is straightforward and chronological; there is no backward and forward movement as in a stream of conscious novel.

The tale has not been narrated by the novelist himself but by a persona, called Achakka. Achakka is an old grandmother that most ancient of story - tellers. She had been personally involved in the events which form the substance of the novel and she narrates them years later for the benefit of a new comer. Thus the substance of the novel is made up of the stream of her memory, in which many events and characters have been blurred by the passage of time and many others have been heightened by her imagination. She is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non - cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering. All is recollected and narrated by a naïveté which is not the author's but the narrator's.

The choice of such a narrator serves several useful purposes. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma - the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy

is regarded as his avtar in Kanthapura. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.

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

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

Achakka is both the narrator and the commentator. The narrative is hardly very straightforward: there are involutions and digressions, there are meaningful backward glances. There are rhythmic chains of proper names, there are hypnotic repetitions and refrains and there are also sheer poetic iridescences. A village, a picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, all spring up before our eyes demanding recognition and acceptance.

Notes

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

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

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

A considerable part of the book is taken up with life on the coffee estate, the crudities and vulgarities of the Red-man; the humiliations of the poor and the helpless the sickness that broke them and the violation of their women's honour - all have been portrayed most vividly and convincingly to the last detail of credibility.

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

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

booth. The sense of the largeness of their numbers is conveyed through a multiplicity of images and epithets.

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

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

3.6 PLOT AND STRUCTURE OF KANTHAPURA

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

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

Notes

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

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

Political propaganda is carried on in the guise of religion. The Harikatha - man, Jayramachar, tells strange Harikathas, in which there is a curious mingling of religion and politics. Gandhi is likened to Ram and the Red - man to Ravana and the freedom struggle becomes a fight between the

two incarnations of good and evil for the sake of Bharat Mata or Sita. The use of the mythical technique is kept up upto the very end.

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

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

As soon as the call comes from the city Congress, the Kanthapurians, lead by Moorthy, march to picket the toddy plantations, with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad'. There is a cruel lathi -

Notes

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

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

3.7 ROLE OF THE COFFEE ESTATE WORKERS IN THE GANDHIAN MOVEMENT IN KANTHAPURA

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

Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that.

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

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

Once the coolies were brought to the coffee plantation, the manners of the Foreman changed and he grew harsh and threatening. They were exploited in many ways. All promises were forgotten. No wages were given. Indeed, the white owner did not even know that they had promised four - anna bit for a man and two - anna bit for a woman. They were given small huts to live in which they had to repair or thatch themselves. They were provided with a frugal diet and were made to work hard from five in the morning till late in the night. If anybody took rest or was slow, he was severely whipped by the Maistri who was ever on the watch. No

Notes

wages were paid and the old hands knew that one, who came to the Estate once, never went out of it again. He must work, suffer and die there.

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

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

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

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

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

3.8 TREATMENT OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KANTHAPURA

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

Notes

creative work which projects Gandhi's life and ideals though it is perhaps one of the few which did so directly.

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

In the novel, we have more than a glimpse of the freedom movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. We see how the name of Mahatma Gandhi acts like a charm in every part of India and how the people in the remote and far - away Kanthapura wait with baited breath and observe a fast in order to show their solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi as he sets out on his historic Dandi March. In cities as well as villages there are volunteer groups which organize the people, distribute charkas and yarn and even form an ambulance corps to take care of those who are wounded in the firing and lathi charges on Satyagrahis. Moorthy is a typical example of the thousands of young men who were fired with patriotic zeal by Mahatma Gandhi's inspiration and who, under his programme, left schools, colleges and universities, or resigned from their jobs and made a bonfire of their costly imported clothes. Rangamma and Ratna represent the women's side of the movement, while Range Gowda and Rachanna show how even the people of the lower castes picked up courage or curbed their natural instinct for retaliation and accepted the voluntary restraint of non - violence. Peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the Government with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood. There are Dharnas, Picketings and Satyagrahas. Kanthapurians, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like

Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. Shouts of 'Gandhiji ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad' resound in the air and boost the morale of the people. Large numbers are arrested and sent to jail. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna, who zealously leads the movement and the movement continues.

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

In the case of Khadi, he was a fanatic. He would never attend a wedding party if anyone did not exclusively wear Khadi. He would not even make an exception in the case of the bride, telling them that the showy sarees they wore only enriched Italian yarn - makers and German dye manufacturers. Sankar, who was no doubt a fanatic but he admitted this fact and claimed that a few fanatics were necessary in every field. His fanaticism was revealed in the matter of fasting for he observed a fast and made the members of his family also observe a fast, on most of the days connected with Mahatma Gandhi or other patriotic leaders, or days

Notes

of national importance, e.g. the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. Such people may be eccentric and extremists but their example does not fail to impress and inspire others.

British Government in India, its laws and ways are also depicted vividly in the novel. The White Man, who owns the Skeffington Coffee Estate, is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India, who exploited Indians in various ways. They employed paid agents like Bhatta and the Swami to oppose the freedom movement. They send policemen like Bade Khan to harass the patriots and cook up false cases against them. Their treatment of peaceful Satyagrahis is extremely inhuman. They do not spare even women and children. Inside the prisons, people are treated with great cruelty and forced to salute the Union Jack. Even such movements as prohibition are opposed because these would loosen the hold of the foreigners upon the poor masses. Many of their laws, for example, those relating to the ban on the making of salt, are extremely discriminatory against the poor people. Moreover, there are references to the atrocities committed by the authorities in the other parts of India, e. g, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The British policy of divide and rule is also seen in operation, for the loyal Swami is given a gift of twelve hundred acres of land so that there is no chance of his joining the patriotic movement.

One of the most important evils in Hinduism is the caste system. In the novel, Kanthapura there is much implied criticism of it. It is described through Bhatta and later through Swami. Both are conservative and orthodox Brahmins and are the agents of the British government and work together to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. Since the Swami's power rests on the superiority of the Brahmins over other castes, he takes the view that the caste system is the very foundation of Hinduism. He maintains that no Brahmin should have contact with the Pariahs and threatens to excommunicate Moorthy because he does so. Later this threat is actually carried out. People of the lower castes are not admitted inside temples but must have darshna of the God from outside. Though the pariahs do not seem to mind this much, there is a movement that the doors of the temples should be thrown open to all classes. One of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi in Karwar has already done that. He is

Advocate Ranganna who describes his meeting with the Swami. The Swami had sent a message to the advocate that he desired to see him. The Swami told him that for some time there had been too much of this Pariah business. According to him, it was polluting for a Brahmin to mingle with a Pariah. He maintained that the Pariahs could not be uplifted through the efforts of others.

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

The boycott of foreign goods was meant to cripple the efforts of the foreign manufactures to exploit and impoverish India and the insistence was on spinning because that taught the people of the dignity of labor as well as of self-reliance. In a poor country like India, simple living must be practiced. Moreover, spinning could provide a regular income to the common masses, especially to women who have no other means of earning available to them. Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks had both a moral and an economic aim. If the poor coolies, who are grossly exploited by the owners of the various plantations, learn to read and write, they would become better acquainted with their rights and would not be cheated so easily. Drink is the greatest enemy of the poor because it never allows a person to spend his income on essential items or make a saving for a rainy day. The Picketing of the

toddy grove and the toddy booth has the immediate effect of making the coolies realize how evil toddy - drinking is so that some of them even take a pledge that they would never touch the poisonous drink again in their lives.

Thus, the political movement of Swaraj is closely linked with religious reforms and social upliftment in Kanthapura.

3.9 DEPICTION OF THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN KANTHAPURA

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

The women characters have been skillfully delineated by Raja Rao. There is a great variety of them in the novel. At the foremost we have Rangamma. She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and other people in Kanthapura acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. She knows many things of general interest. She is never befooled by Bhatta. She helps Moorthy literally, although, she does not seem to share his belief that Pariahs and Brahmins are all equal. After meeting Sankar, Rangamma develops into a fine leader and speaker. She is able to fill the void created by the death of her father, who used to expound the Vedantic texts at Harikatha meetings. It is Rangamma, who plays the major part in organizing the women of Kanthapura into a Sevika Sangh. She is practical - minded for when she comes to know that some husbands are complaining that they are not receiving proper attention at home because their wives are away to participate in drill, she at once takes proper measures and explains to the Sevikas that they must not neglect their household duties.

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

Achakka, the narrator, though she is never sharply individualized, is revealed by her manner of narration and her comments on persons and events. In the novel, her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura, who responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the Goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these feelings, she shares with other women of the village.

However, Achakka is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non - cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering.

Notes

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

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

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

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

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao presents women as various forms of Shakti. A typical Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive and she is also as firm as a rock, great in suffering. Shakti rises in them and each of them is enthused at the proper time. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they got much inspiration from other examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.

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

Check your Progress-1

1. How is the novel Kanthapura narrated?

2. Name the traditional form of storytelling.

3. Who is main character of the novel "Kanthapura"?

3.10 LET US SUM UP

Kanthapura is set in 1930s and the scene of action is the village Kanthapura, a typical South Indian village. Moorthy, a young man

Notes

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

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

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

the course of time, British Government was shaken and overthrown. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is a milestone and representative of the spirit of the crores of Indians marching ceaselessly towards independence.

3.11 KEYWORDS

- **Omniscience:** Having all knowledge
- **Consummate:** Perfect of its kind
- **Meandering:** Long drawn out
- **Allegory:** Symbolical retelling

3.12 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a note on plot and structure of Kanthapura.
- Describe in brief the elements of poetry, fantasy and lyricism in Kanthapura.
- Describe in brief the depiction of the women characters in Kanthapura.
- Mention the role of the coffee estate workers in the Gandhian movement in Kanthapura.

3.13 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Alterno, Letizia . "Raja Rao: An Indian writer using mysticism to explore the spiritual unity of east and west". London: The Guardian. Retrieved 3 July 2017.
- Ahmed Ali, "Illusion and Reality": The Art and Philosophy of Raja Rao, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Leeds, July 1968, No.5.
- "Editing Raja Rao". The Hindu. Retrieved 17 June 2016.
- "Noted author Raja Rao passes away". The Indian Express. Retrieved 8 July 2006.

Notes

- "Raja Rao passes away". Chennai, India: The Hindu. 9 July 2006. Retrieved 9 July 2006.
- "Preserving a culture under attack," The Ottawa Citizen, Ottawa, Canada, 4 Oct. 2003, P. C3.
- Shalini Dube, Indian diasporic literature: text, context and interpretation, Shree Publishers & Distributors, 2009 p. 114.
- "Preserving a culture under attack," The Ottawa Citizen, Ottawa, Canada, 4 Oct. 2003, P. C3.
- Singh, Khushwant . "The Indo-Malaysian connection". Tribune of India.

3.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- The novel "Kanthapura" is narrated in the form of a 'sthalapurana' by an old woman of the village, Achakka.
- Hari-Kathas, a traditional form of storytelling.
- The main character of the novel "Kanthapura" is Moorthy.

UNIT-4 AMITAV GHOSH - THE SHADOW LINES - 1

STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Summary & Analysis
- 4.3 Characters
- 4.4 Let us sum up
- 4.5 Keywords
- 4.6 Questions for Review
- 4.7 Suggested Reading and References
- 4.8 Answers to Check your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would go through the Summary Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines".
- you would also go through the Analysis Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines".
- and further you would also go through the Characters of Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines".

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Shadow Lines is a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel by Indian writer Amitav Ghosh. It is a book that captures perspective of time and events, of lines that bring people together and hold them apart; lines that are clearly visible from one perspective and nonexistent from another; lines that exist in the memory of one, and therefore in another's imagination. A narrative built out of an intricate, constantly crisscrossing

Notes

web of memories of many people, it never pretends to tell a story. Instead, it invites the reader to invent one, out of the memories of those involved, memories that hold mirrors of differing shades to the same experience.

The novel is set against the backdrop of historical events like the Swadeshi movement, Second World War, Partition of India and Communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta.

The novel earned Ghosh the 1989 Sahitya Akademi Award for English, by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters. The novel was translated by Shalini Topiwala into Gujarati In 1998

4.2 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The *Shadow Lines* can be viewed at one level as a story of a Bengali family through which Amitav Ghosh presents, analyses and problematises many issues that are being debated in contemporary India. The story cleverly engages in its main body characters spanning three generations of this family.

The story of these characters is not told in a contextual vacuum, it instead corresponds to the growth of Calcutta as a city and India as a nation over a period of three decades or more. Significantly, private events in the author's life and other important characters take place in the shadow of events of immense political significance. The family too is not there typically as a spectacle but as a means to 'discuss' these issues that are at the heart of this work. So there is Tha'mma, the grandmother of the unnamed narrator through whom the issue of the Bengal Partition and the whole idea of Nation, Nationalism and Nationhood gets discussed.

There is Tridib, the eccentric Historian cousin through whom the idea of history being problematic gets highlighted. Then there is the third generation Ila, the narrator's second cousin through whom the author brings to fore the issues of diaspora and racism. The role of the narrator is also central to the extent that it is he who articulates the ideas held by

these characters and also integrates these subjective viewpoints and experiences to highlight that both public discourses like history and personal discourse like anecdotes are incomplete till they are integrated. The role of the narrator is also crucial to the structure of the novel, which is one of story within story told in a non-linear way. The novel has also been analysed by the critic Suvir Kaul in the essay “Separation Anxiety:

Growing Up Inter/National in *The Shadow Lines*” as embodying elements from the bildungsroman tradition of the novel. M.H.Abrams describes the term bildungsroman as a ‘novel of formation’... ‘the subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist’s mind and character, as he passes from childhood through varied experiences –and usually through a spiritual crisis – into maturity and recognition of his identity and role in the world.’

The Shadow Lines witnesses the growth of the narrator from an impressionable 8 yr.old in the Gole Park flat in Calcutta to an assured adult through the book. However, the growth of the narrator is not physical alone but seen in relation with the growth of ideas on ‘... nationalism, nation states and international relations...the narrator’s itinerary into adulthood ...is necessarily framed by these larger public questions...it becomes not merely a male bildungsroman, an authorized autobiography, with its obvious agendas and priorities, but also a dialogic, more open-ended telling of the difficult interdependencies and inequalities that compose any biography of a nation.’

The novel begins with the eight-year-old narrator talking of his experiences as a schoolboy living in the Gole-Park neighbourhood in Calcutta. He introduces the reader to the two branches of his family tree—the families of his Grandmother Tha’mma and that of the Grandmother’s sister, Mayadebi. According to the acclaimed critic Meenakshi Mukherjee this rendition in the novel amongst other details helps the reader feel the ‘concreteness of the existential and emotional milieu...the precise class location of his family, Bengali bhadralok, starting at the lower edge of the spectrum and ascending to its higher reaches in one generation, with family connections above and below its own

Notes

station...’ The grandmother is a schoolteacher and the father is a middle rung manager in a tyre company.

The family of Mayadebi is more affluent, her husband being a high-ranking official in the foreign services, with one son, Jatin being an economist with the UN and the younger one Robi being a Civil Servant. Only Tridib of her sons is not successful in the material sense, however of his ability the reader is left in no doubt as even though eccentric, he is the one who is the repository of all the esoteric knowledge. He can talk on length about issues as diverse as the sloping roofs of Columbian houses and the culture of the Incas with equal ease. He is also the one who transfers to the young narrator a profound love for knowledge.

The sisters Tha'mma and Mayadebi are thick with each other, however the former is perennially on her guard on the issue of accepting help from the latter. In this regard it is important to talk about her past experiences. As a young woman living in Dhaka she is married off to an Engineer posted in Burma. However she loses her husband very early and is left with the prospect of raising her only son single handedly. What follows is her struggle to make ends meet and her subsequent career as a schoolteacher in Bengal. She raises her only child independently and lives a spartan life where wasted time stinks. Her self worth goads her to abstain from becoming dependent on her affluent relations. In the midst of the narrative she retires from school and her life really comes a full circle.

One of the important facets of Tha'mma's worldview that we have to consider is her perception of historical events and her notions of Nationhood and Nationalism. As a young woman she finds herself in the greatly charged milieu of 19th century Bengal when the Extremist strand of Nationalism was in its full glory. As a college going young woman she upholds these young extremists as her true heroes and secretly desires to be a part of such extremist organizations as Anushilan and Jugantar. She idealises these young men who indulge in clandestine extremism with the larger goal of Independence in mind. At the same

time as a product of Western Education, her idea of Nation as an entity is borrowed in its entirety from England. She tends to associate gory wars passion, sacrifice and blood baths with the creation and grandeur of nations.

‘War is their religion. That’s what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that...that’s what you have to achieve for India.’ She particularly likes her nephew Robi who, according to her, has besides, a fine education a fine body that is essential for the enterprise of nation building. To the fact that she is a dislocated Bengali she does not pay much attention and like a typical middle class character is too involved in matters of livelihood to bother about these issues. Life is simple for her- she believes in the values of honesty and hard-work and has been a tremendously scrupulous teacher and mother. She believes so completely in the ideal of hard work that when she meets her poor migrant relatives she can think of no other reason but lack of hard work as the reason for their penury.

She gives no thought to the event of Partition that is partly responsible for the dislocation and destitution of the family. It is only when she plans to visit her sister in Dhaka and when she has to undergo the usual procedure of compiling her immigration papers that she is jolted into recognizing the reality of the Partition of her state. The author here delves into the whole idea behind physical and psychological spaces. Here the author talks of Phantom distances through the shadow lines that the state machinery creates in order to reinforce the idea of nation. Whereas in a large country like India where diversity abounds in every aspect of cultural, economic, social and linguistic existence nationhood is imposed over these imagined communities and ironically where communities exist naturally they are thrown apart with barbed wire fencing, passports and papers reinforcing a much greater psychological distance between the two. Her visit to her erstwhile home in Dhaka also turns out to be poignant in ways more than one.

Notes

Her uncle is the only one languishing in that house because he is completely out of touch with reality and refuses to believe the fact that the country has split. Here the author echoes the idea of collective madness and normalcy. Whereas the uncle who refuses to believe in the Partition of the country is labelled mad by the so called normal people, it is in a way a collective madness that has endorsed the highly abnormal act of Partition and then driven the non conformists to the edge of madness. This old man also portrays the violence that history perpetrates. Whereas this violence is a part of the life of all the people who underwent the distresses of dislocation during Partition, it can only find an expression through the grotesque means of madness. And there is escape from it also through madness.

The character of Tha'mma is crucial to the narrative in the manner in which it brings out some of these concepts and also provides a rallying point around which other ways of looking at these are built. Tha'mma embodies a conventional even though interesting belief system, which is challenged by the other characters as well as the novelist himself. For most part of the book she comes across as a frugal, no-nonsense woman for whom any wastage of time or money is abhorrence. She is a principled old woman whose views on nation and nation building are remarkably simplistic. She doesn't consider herself as a migrant belonging to the other side of the border; she has no sympathy for her refugee relatives living in a state of utter penury. Her notions of nation, nation building are straight from history books. She considers healthy young people like Robi as ideal nation builders. She is remarkably free from all traces of cynicism so evocative of victims of partition.

She does not consciously criticize the phenomenon of Partition even once, there are no lengthy harangues: her critique of the Partition, nation and nationalism lies in her anecdotes. Often it is the anecdotes and the personal experiences that make her acknowledge the cracks and contradictions in her beliefs. Tha'mma as a child in Dhaka house makes stories about the disputed upside down house. The artificial constructedness of the 'otherness' of the house is very evident and many

critics have seen it as a foretaste of a similar exercise that the state indulges in when the Partition of a nation has to be justified and difference has to be created if it does not exist. The two nations just like the two parts of a household were united at one time but the course of history divides them and for sustaining their separation the difference has to be created. The case of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent has been very different because the state has been forced to create a difference where none existed and show the two nations as inherently opposed.

It is the fear that comes of the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent, that the spaces that surround one, the streets that one inhabits, can suddenly and without warning become as hostile as a desert in a flash flood. It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world-not language, not food, not music-it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror. The house trope used in the novel is for obvious reasons of making the reader see through such an act when it comes to the country : what is ironic is that Tha'mma who should have seen through it is blissfully oblivious of the strategy. Perhaps this oblivion is tantamount to a deliberate non-admission of facts that are deeply disturbing to her. Here the two reactions of madness that we examined earlier can be compared to the non admission of events, a denial that the individual resorts to in order to avoid the madness that is bound to follow later.

The oblivion of Tha'mma therefore becomes her survival strategy. However an indicator of this deep complex does surface later. Her decision to go to Dhaka in order to bring back her old sick uncle is a very upsetting time for her. Routine activity of furnishing her personal details while finishing the documentation for her visa forms raise fundamental doubts within her about her identity. The sane formulations of her life are threatened by some dull looking External Affairs Ministry forms. For the first time the sure shot, unruffled Tha'mma goes through pangs of some fundamentally disturbing introspection. She wonders as to how the 'place

Notes

of her birth had come to be messily at odds with her nationality'. She cannot resolve the chaos that surfaces in the patterns that are so essential to her identity. The narrator at this point cleverly talks of certain language constructions in the Bengali language:

You see, in our family we don't know whether we are coming or going- It's all my grandmother's fault... But of course the fault wasn't hers at all: it lay in the language. Every language assumes a centrality fixed and settled point to go away and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not coming or going at all : a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. According to Nivedita Bagchi there is ' a peculiar construction in the Bengali language which allows the speaker to say "aaschi" instead of "jachchhi" '...which is 'especially used as an equivalent to "good-bye"'.

Thus a Bengali speaker while leaving a place is apt to say, "I am coming instead of "I am going." The grandmother's Bengali verbs that confuse the simple acts of coming and going become a part of the family's lore. Young people in the family joke about this language feature that confuses movement of two opposite kinds. But interestingly, within this feature of the Bengali language lies a critique of the migration of populations during the Partition of 1947. If, therefore Tha'mma says "aaschi" before leaving for Dhaka, it is to be read as an announcement of her arrival to her erstwhile home rather than a faux pas that confuses coming and going.

All going away therefore culminates only in a coming of a very different kind. The fault therefore obliquely points at the chaos of coming and going that there is in Tha'mma's world rather than in her language. This claim is further confirmed by the fact that the book has two sub-sections: Going Away and Coming home. Both phrases indicate the queer sense of home and homelessness that the Partition victims have experienced that allows them to dispense with a fixed point that signifies a point of departure. It is also interesting to note why a common language feature should invite ridicule from the speakers themselves. It is foregrounded to

draw the reader's attention towards the fault of Partition, neither that of the language nor that of Thakur. Specific addresses are remarkably highlighted in *The Shadow Lines*, the house at Raibajar, the narrator's house in Gole Park, 44, Lymington Road, the Price household, the Shodor bazaar in Dhaka and the feud-ridden Dhaka house.

All these are real enough to be plotted on a street atlas. These intricate addresses have a strong power of evocation and add to the verisimilitude of the narrative. Infact these specific addresses have a power that emanates from their permanence. These addresses are more than a mere assistance in discovering location, they are the units that survive civil political and private strife and yet remain unchanged. In this way if compared to nations as entities, specific locations outdo them in endurance. Nations are born, nations die, the cartographers and politicians rearrange political spaces but these locations are remarkably immune to these designs. They thus become the fixities and entities with 'semiotic signification' that provide meaning to several characters, their concerns and their identities. This further becomes an instance of a personal space outdoing a public one. Specific addresses in the novel subvert the idea of the nation in the novel.

The narrator's eccentric cousin Tridib is an unconventional character who does not fit into the genteel society of his family. He is conducting research into the ancient Sena dynasty of Bengal and is repeatedly shown engrossed in his study. Tridib does not merely happen to be a scholar of Ancient history writing a thesis on the lost Sena Empire, his is indeed a voice that bears the burden of a historical vision. Right from the beginning of the novel there is in him a deep consciousness about the enterprise of knowledge. He not only collects esoteric bits of knowledge, the range of which stretches from East European Jazz to the intricate sociological patterning of the Incas religiously but also shapes his own and the narrator's orientation towards it.

Tridib is a stock character Bengali literature and folklore is replete with. Images of such figures abound, so whether it is the distant uncle in

Notes

Satyajeet Ray's film *Agantuk* or as Meenakshi Mukherjee in the essay 'Maps and Mirrors: Coordinates of Meaning in *The Shadow Lines*' points out the 'traveller/imaginist reminding the Bengali reader occasionally of the Ghana –da stories by Premananda Mitra and ...Pheluda stories by Satyajeet Ray in both of which a boy is held spell bound by a somewhat older person's encyclopedic knowledge of other lands and civilizations.'

The narrator gets his first lessons on the business of scholarship from Tridib-he is presented with a Bartholomew's Atlas as a childhood gift which remains a symbol of this transference and which resurfaces years later in the author's hostel room in Delhi-thus signifying a lasting influence that Tridib has on the narrator and the uncle's symbolic gift of the worlds to travel in and the eyes to see them with. That he receives Tridib's gift of this knowledge thereafter becomes a kind of metanarrative that the author will subsequently want to break out of and interrogate.

However there is another aspect of Tridib that the author shows- that of a glib talker. Tridib, the eccentric uncle of the narrator has an audience in the people of the addas in the Calcutta neighbourhood of Gole Park. Nivedita Bagchi in the essay 'The Process of Validation In Relation To Materiality and Historical Reconstruction in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* ' defines the Bengali word *adda* which is seen as the place of dissemination of the historian's discourse. According to Bagchi the Bengali word describes 'long, leisurely conversations within a group of people which characterises a Bengali day.'

She further states that the acknowledgement of the Bengali community within the narrative is a feature of the oral narrative where the narrative is the secret of the community which further links to the idea that narratives are connected to an identifiable group. He takes on the center stage in these public street corners where people pour over chai and talk quotidian concerns. He is more of a performer than historian in these spaces. The Tridib of the addas exaggerates and manipulates information

for an audience that listens to him in rapt attention with their mouths gaped in awe of his knowledge.

There is another space that Tridib occupies, that of his book lined quiet room in his family house in Calcutta. The narrator confesses 'it was that Tridib that I liked the best: I was a bit unsure of the Tridib of the street corners.' Tha'mma, too thinks this behaviour at the addas as totally abominable and a way of making his time stink. What is it about Tridib of the addas that is distrustful? The book in describing Tridib of the addas and his behavioural pattern there and by ascribing to him certain statements only highlights a very important issue that the book deals with:

that of the seat of the Historian and how he occupies it in disseminating knowledge. It is also significant to note that here we come into contact with two facets of a historian: the diligent, quiet fact-finder and the powerful, loud mouthed one in public sphere and through the latter the book goes on to throw some questions about the political role of history. The narrator gets a lesson in combining precision and imagination as a strategy of gaining knowledge from Tridib.

The employment of imagination being necessary because a historian does not and cannot possibly has an access to all the relevant sites of the event all the time. The time and space of a historically important event may be removed many throws from the historian in which case the quality of his mastery on the event becomes dependent on his own imagination or either the imagination of historians before him. The compound word precise-imagination also becomes a paradox in bringing the limiting, exacting precision to bear upon the soaring, sky kissing imagination.

The perspicuity of vision that the narrator cultivates thereafter by this lesson is evident in his extraordinary reactions to the space of London during his visit. He not only recognizes old buildings that Tridib had merely mentioned to him as a child, but with the same eloquence

Notes

questions missing ones, the ones bombed out in action and the like. The old club building that Tridib had fondly talked about to the narrator years ago is intact in his imagination decades later while on a visit to London. His suggestions of its existence are brushed aside by his cousin Ila whose opinion is supported by the club's absence, however the external evidence fails to satisfy him and after much effort they find out from an old timer that the club had indeed existed at the exact spot that he had pointed out and that it had been targeted during a war and reduced to rubble.

The author's theoretical knowledge, therefore, of the existence of the building beats the Ila's very real but thoughtless existence. Tridib's vision works, at the same time he has the historian's itch to classify and know events completely rather than experience them spontaneously as Ila does. Tridib as a young man falls in love with May who is the daughter of the Price family of England. The friendship of the Datta- Chaudhary family and the Prices goes back to the Colonial times when their English grandfather, Tresawsen had come to Calcutta as an agent of a steel-manufacturing company and had later become a factory owner.

The relationship between Tridib and May starts from exchange of friendly letters till the one that Tridib writes. In his letter he proposes to her by elaborately describing an intimate lovemaking episode between two people in a war ravaged theatre house in London. He proposes to meet her 'as a stranger in a ruin.... as completest of strangers, strangers-across seas' without context or history. May is initially perplexed but cannot resist his 'invitation' and finally reaches India to see him. However soon the romance in the relationship is replaced by discord.

They assign meanings to happenings and things around them differently. While driving along with the child narrator towards Diamond Harbour they come across an injured, profusely bleeding and badly mauled dog. While the narrator shuts his eyes to escape the ugly sight, Tridib drives on with a nonchalance that shocks May completely. She asks him to drive back to the mangled animal after which follows her extraordinary

show of endurance and fortitude with which she relieves the animal of its pain by assisting it to a peaceful death. Exasperated by the whole experience she tells Tridib in a huff that he is worth words alone.

The quality of activism that we see in May resurfaces in London years later when she collects donations for destitute children. This is in sharp contrast to Tridib who is an armchair historian and lives and feeds on ideas alone. A similar situation arises in Dhaka while they along with Tha'mma, Mayadebi and child Robi are trapped in the communal frenzy that takes place while they are bringing back the old uncle left behind in Dhaka since Independence. While they meander through the riot ravaged streets of the city in their chauffeur driven car, the old uncle is following them in a rickshaw steered by the Muslim who looks after him. May observes how the mob which first turned to them, on being repulsed, attacked the old man on the rickshaw and instead of saving him, Tha'mma displays the same nonchalance that Tridib had earlier shown towards the dog and asks the driver to drive on without looking back.

May is struck with the old impulse and getting out of the car, she heads towards the mob to save the old man. Tridib cannot allow her to embrace death and therefore follows her. In the melee, the mob attacks Tridib and he is killed. The incident powerfully evokes the earlier dog episode and the promise that Tridib gets from May at that time, about giving him too the peaceful death like the dog if a situation ever arose, uncannily turns true. Of this incident the narrator gets to know only in the end when dissatisfied with other people's versions, he asks May to recount to him the cause of Tridib's death. The incident as recounted by May becomes like that missing part of the jigsaw puzzle of Tridib's death that the author is trying to look for.

Ila, the narrator's cousin is another important influence on the young, impressionable narrator. She, owing to her father's job is a globetrotter and comes to settle in London. Her experience of places as diverse as Colombo and Cairo and her school years at all these exotic places woven into delightful anecdotes for the child narrator initiate for the latter his

Notes

first ever flights of imagination. Along with Tridib's encyclopedic knowledge, it is cousin Ila's descriptions of her vibrant life abroad that give the narrator a flight outside the confines of his drab Gole Park flat.

The cousin's colourful Annual Schoolbooks become his initiators into an unseen but alluring world outside. For Ila the immediacy of experience – personal/political is so overwhelmingly important that its context and historicity remains suspended in the background. Earlier the mere description of the city of Cairo brings to the mind of the atlas educated, historically aware narrator, the first pointed arch in the history of mankind whereas for Ila 'Cairo is merely a place to piss in.' She flits from experience to experience with a heightened sensual gusto but failing to 'arrive' at any stage in the novel to a state of greater knowledge, insight or evolution. Tridib often said of her that 'the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places she had not travelled at all.' 'For Ila the current was the real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of past and future by steel flood gates.'

However this uninhibited flow of experience in her throws up certain questions that the other narratives have either suppressed, not acknowledged or either failed to account for. This realm does not have history's linear progression of and no casts to mould and reshape experience. Her experience as an Indian in London becomes another model of citizenship that the book explores along with Partition Diaspora and the modern Calcutta Middle class. However her personal experience first as a student in London and later that of marrying a white man throws up an entire polemics about the diasporic communities.

When she narrates the story about the fantasy child Magda to the narrator, it is quite evident that the child is a consequence of her mixed marriage . The absolute dread that she associates with the imagined classroom of the child betrays her own sense of complexity as a woman faced with questions about race in a mixed marriage. In this regard it is

important that Ila in this conversation displays a hyper emotionality, enough indication of some deep complex of feelings within her about race. Finally when Nick betrays her, her insecurity as a woman and especially as a one disadvantaged due to her race comes out in the open. Her life comes full circle from that anxious schoolgirl boasting about nonexistent boyfriends to the distraught adult finding it difficult to come to terms with an unfaithful husband.

‘You see you’ve never understood; you’ve always been taken in by the way I used to talk in college. I only talked like that to shock you and because you seemed to expect it of me somehow. I never did any of those things: I’m about as chaste ...as any woman you’ll ever meet.’ The narrator is introduced as an eight-year-old child who is ensconced in a genteel middle-class existence where young children are concerned only with doing well in studies. However the narrator finds means to escape it through

his uncle Tridib who sensitizes him to the exciting enterprise of acquiring knowledge.

The narrator is gifted an Atlas as a birthday gift and that becomes a symbol of sorts for the ‘transference of knowledge’ that takes place between the two. What the narrator acquires from Tridib is an extraordinary sensitivity towards knowledge, which later becomes crucial to the role of narration that he undertakes. The narrator is not only a storyteller but also the strand that brings together other available versions in order to make a complete picture. It is significant that the author himself comes across as more of a storyteller than a historian or an anecdote teller. Stories in this book are in circuitry, without definite beginnings and endings, they are indiscreet and seem to belong to no one. Here it is pertinent to point out that the author, in spite of his omniscience, is unnamed and his stories are mostly in the form of renderings of the other characters.

These stories become more intelligible when the narrator joins them into meaningful wholes after collecting all the possible versions of the incident described from various sources. A case in point is the truth

Notes

behind Tridib's death in Dhaka. Tha'mma, Mayadebi, Tridib's girlfriend May and Robi are the eyewitnesses to the lynching of Tridib during the Dhaka riots. His death, its cause and manner is however not made known to the narrator in its entirety: the parents are reluctant to reveal anything just like middle class people are used to avoiding all the talk of death in front of young children. The child Robi talks of the experience with a hyper emotionality characteristic of a traumatic childhood experience that he hasn't let go off even as an adult.

At a later time Robi as an adult recounts all that happens while on an evening out with the narrator and Ila. His account is complete to the extent that he as a child can only observe partially. His partial perception is not only a result of his intellectual inadequacy but also due to the fact that he is physically limited- 'an effect of that difference in perspective which causes all objects recalled from childhood to undergo an illusory enlargement of scale'- this makes him incapable of even observing the incident objectively. His account of the incident is therefore more of a cathartic outburst because it has been long repressed than an informative or insightful reconstruction of the past. The last strand in the experience is May to whom the narrator then turns for an adequate explanation. It is in London that the narrator gets to know the truth behind the death.

Another aspect of modern India that the narrator brings out through the novel is the typical 20th Century phenomenon of Civil strife and rioting especially the one that results from communal discord. It is important to mention here that *The Shadow Lines* written in 1988 was the author's response to another unprecedented event in Post-Colonial Indian scene: the 1984 Anti-Sikh riots that swept the nation after the then Prime minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. To begin with allegedly State sponsored these riots in their magnitude were comparable to the earlier communal frenzy of 1947 partition.

The novel situates the 1964 communal riots in Calcutta experienced by the narrator as a young school going boy centrally in the boy's psyche as well as in his analysis of the difference of perception that pervades the

recording of such incidents. In the book these riots and the riots at Dhaka become the occasion for the acid test of our recording systems whether of our history or of our newspapers. The author does a brilliant job by the use of excessive and mundane journalese that drowns the powerful dominance that it exerts in the author's consciousness. The author finds an inadequate portrayal of such historical events in these sources and then goes on to analyze the reasons behind such silences:

By the end of January 1964 the riots had faded away from the pages of the newspapers, disappeared from the collective imagination of 'responsible opinion', vanished without leaving a trace in the histories and bookshelves. They had dropped out of memory into the crater of a volcano of silence. The theatre of war where the Generals meet is the stage on which the states disport themselves :they have no use for the memory of riots.

Through an extensive description of a day during the 1964 Calcutta riots, the narrator tells us of his experiences of the day as a school student. Through the day he along with the other children are caught in a fear psychosis while going to school. He describes the empty bus ride home where the driver falters, drives into wrong lanes and makes all the unexpected detours into unknown, deserted lanes of Calcutta to escape the mad mob. Years later while talking of the incident to his College friends in Delhi he is surprised to find that none of them seem to remember the fateful day. Eager to prove his memory right he leads some of them to the archives where he digs out old papers to support his memory.

To his dismay, the newspapers paint the incident in regular journalese. While reading retrospectively about his own experience of communal riots in Calcutta as a child, he stumbles upon other events of the fateful day, one of which is a description of a similar riot in Dhaka. It is at this time that he is able to link up the two seemingly unrelated events and the fact strikes him that it was indeed the same riot in Dhaka that had claimed its victim in Tridib. What the others in his college cannot even

Notes

seem to remember owing to their location in places that are far from Calcutta, is ironically a mirror experience of people in another country , ‘the two cities face each other at a watchful equidistance across the border.’

What follows is the author’s meditation on the idea of distance as a physical reality and as a political and psychological construct. The insignificant physical distance between the two cities is stretched to an unfathomable, unconquerable political and psychological distance, often making them as different as two civilisations. Returning to civil strife and its portrayal, why are there these silences in History? Probably because, the author says, these do not cohere well with constructs like a nation that the state has so painfully nurtured earlier: ‘the madness of a riot is a pathological inversion, but also therefore, a reminder of that indivisible sanity that binds people independently of their governments. And that prior, independent relationship is the natural enemy of the government, for it is the logic of states that to exist at all they must claim the monopoly of all relation between people... ’

Is history, then an objective telling of the past events or choosing what to write in order that the underlying form is not distorted? It chooses to write about that which serves it while the rest is irretrievably silenced. The author points out that the silence he sees in history results when happenings cannot be accounted for in a given manner ‘the kind of natural silence that descends when nearness /distance, friend /enemy become terms that are impossible to define.

However these definitions in the first place become difficult because artificial differences are imposed by the state. Riots and their memory become a case in point because as Ghosh puts it they are an instance of ‘pathological inversion’ -i.e. violence of a state turning inwards unlike in other conflicts like war where it turns outwards. The clear definition of enemy/friend, ingroup/outgroup, I/other becomes difficult. Who is to be described as a perpetrator and who the victim becomes problematic for the state and also the reasons, if documented, subvert the idea of the idea

of the nation, therefore having no value for the governments as historical object.

It is because of this choice based reportage that history is said to have an underlying literary structure. In the event of wars, on the other hand there is a well-defined enemy, a self-righteous we group and a legitimate action that reaffirms our notions of nationhood and our projected ideology. So there is a glory to wars, which is also violence, but one that makes sense within our defined notions of the ideas described above.

4.3 CHARACTERS

Tridib – The protagonist is a middle class boy who grows up in a middle-class family; he is the narrator's uncle. He is in love with May.

Tha'mma – She was the headmistress of a girls' school in Calcutta. She is a very strict, disciplined, hard-working, mentally strong and patient lady. She is the one who wants to bring her uncle, Jethamoshai, to India to live with her, eventually leading to his and Tridib's deaths by a mob in Dhaka.

Ila – She is the narrator's cousin who lives in Stockwell, London. The narrator is in love with her, but she marries Nick.

May – She is the Price family's daughter. She is in love with Tridib and blames herself for his death.

Nick – He is the Price family's son, distinguishable by his long blond hair. He wants to work in the 'futures industry'. He marries Ila during the course of the novel, but it is later found that he is allegedly having an affair. He worked in Kuwait for a brief period of time but quit his job .

Mayadebi – She is the narrator's grandmother's younger sister and Tridib's mother.

Check your Progress-1

1. Who is the Mayadebi?

2. Who is May?

3. Who is Tridib?

4. Who is Tha'mma?

4.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied about summary and analysis and characters of “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh.

4.5 KEYWORDS

- Inimical: Not friendly
- Licentious: Lacking moral discipline
- Plaudit: Enthusiastic approval

4.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Summarize “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh.
- Analyze “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh.
- Mention the characters of “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh.

4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Dube, P.D. ^aPostcolonial Discourse in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*,^o ed. Basavaraj Naikar. *Indian English Literature: Vol.I*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002.93.
- Joshi, u. ^aNarrative Techniques in *The Shadow Lines*.^o*Interpretations: Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines* ed. Nityanandan et al. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2000.112.
- Neogy, Alpana. ^aTwo Exiles and One at Home: A Study of *The Shadow Lines*^o in Novy Kapadia ed. *Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines*. New Delhi: Asia Book Club, 2001. 219
- Bagchi, Nivedita. ^aThe Process of Validation in Relation to Materiality and Historical Reconstruction in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*.^o *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39.1, Winter 1993. 188.
- Bhatia, Meetu. ^aAmitav Ghosh: Transfiguration of Memory in *The Shadow Lines*^o in Rajul Bhargava ed. *Indian Writing in English: The Last Decade*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications. 2002. 262.

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Mayadebi is the narrator's grandmother's younger sister and Tridib's mother.
- May is the Price family's daughter.
- Tridib is a middle class boy who grows up in a middle-class family and he is also the narrator's uncle.
- Tha'mma was the headmistress of a girls' school in Calcutta.

UNIT-5 AMITAV GHOSH - THE SHADOW LINES - 2

STRUCTURE

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Themes

5.3 Problematics of National Identity

5.4 Omniscient Narrator as Historian

5.5 RETROSPECTION OF PAST EVENTS

5.6 Concerns about Cross Border Humanity and Cosmopolitanism

5.7 Geographical Fluidity and Cultural Dislocations

5.8 Demarcations as Arbitrary and Invented Divisions

5.9 A World Torn Asunder by History and Religion

5.10 Reevaluation of Historical Reality

5.11 Let us sum up

5.12 Keywords

5.13 Questions for Review

5.14 Suggested Reading and References

5.15 Answers to Check your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would go through the themes of “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh,
- you would also go through the Problematics of National Identity of “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh,
- and further, you would also go through the Omniscient Narrator as Historian of “The Shadow Lines” by Amitav Ghosh.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Though the Partition of British India is mostly a background event in *The Shadow Lines*, it is partially responsible for the conflicts that the narrator and his family experience over the course of the novel. Many European powers developed colonies and established trading relationships with India from its "discovery" in the fifteenth century onward. Great Britain gained control over most of the Indian subcontinent in the early nineteenth century, which led to it being known as British India or the British Raj. Indian people, however, began pushing for independence, especially in the early twentieth century. Great Britain promised India freedom in exchange for fighting for them in the two world wars, and Great Britain only followed through after the second. This resulted in Partition, during which British India split into East Pakistan, West Pakistan, and India. The Partition happened in August of 1947, and though the British, Indian, and Pakistani governments took religion into account, the new borders created minorities of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs where there hadn't been before. This caused extreme violence, especially in the region of Punjab, which was split between West Pakistan and India. This religious animosity continued, and it's partly what led to the riots that the narrator and Tridib experience in 1963-1964 in Calcutta and Dhaka, which became the capital of East Pakistan. The riots began when an important religious relic—a lock of hair that is believed to be the Prophet Muhammad's—mysteriously disappeared from the Kashmir region of India. Though the relic had been respected by all three religions, adherents of each religion soon turned on each other in various cities in India and Pakistan, which resulted in extreme violence.

Like much of Amitav Ghosh's work, *The Shadow Lines* is a work of historical fiction that deals with the geographical area around the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean—an area that Ghosh has expressed special interest in. Most notably, his *Ibis* trilogy explores the colonial history of the area. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* takes place in much the same time period as *The Shadow Lines* and is

told in a similarly fragmented and nonlinear style. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is a historical novel that focuses on the human costs of the Partition of India in 1947. In addition, in *The Shadow Lines*, Queen Victoria's cook makes a direct reference to *The Ramayana*, a classic epic poem from the ancient Kosala Kingdom in India.

5.2 THEMES

Youth vs. Maturity

The Shadow Lines follows the unnamed narrator, the youngest member of the Indian Datta-Chaudhuri family, as he pieces together his family history. This history spans several decades and follows many different family members—including his grandmother's youth in Dhaka in the 1910s and 1920s, his uncle Tridib's experiences of World War II in England as a child, the Partition of India in 1947, and finally, the riots in Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964, which unfold when the narrator is eleven. As the narrator recounts these events in a nonlinear fashion, he seeks to make sense of his family and his history by reevaluating initially youthful and simplistic understandings of people and events. The novel suggests that in doing so, the narrator is finally able to reach maturity and a greater sense of his place in his family and in the world.

The novel pays close attention to the different ways that characters approach things based on their age, particularly in regards to the narrator. To this end, the narrator often tells stories multiple times, sometimes from different perspectives, to explore these differences. This is most evident first in the narrator's interpretation of the story Ila tells him while they're playing a game called Houses. She tells him a story about how their "daughter," her doll Magda, was attacked by a racist classmate on her way home from school. Ila and the narrator are eight years old at the time that Ila tells this story, and in his youthful ignorance, the narrator doesn't realize that this isn't a made-up narrative—this event actually happened to Ila. As a child herself, Ila attempts to make the event easier to bear by using the doll as a stand-in for herself and altering the story so that it ends happily. Because the narrator doesn't realize that Ila's story is part of her lived experience, he becomes angry when cries while telling

the story—as far as he's concerned, the story shouldn't matter, since it is just make-believe. However, Ila's version of the story does develop Nick Price, the savior figure, as the person with whom the narrator must compete for Ila's affection. Three years later, when the narrator recalls Ila's story and tells it to May, Nick's older sister, she explains what actually happened: Ila herself was the victim, and Nick didn't save her. In fact, he ran away, as he didn't want to be seen with an Indian girl. When the narrator learns what actually happened, it helps him to move towards maturity by developing a greater sense of understanding of those people around him. Especially since the narrator idolizes both Nick and Ila as a child, this shows him that he must be willing to allow his perspectives and understandings to mature and develop in order to grow up.

This idea that understanding one's family history allows a person to reach a point of emotional maturity reaches a conclusion when the narrator, now an adult in his late twenties or early thirties, reconnects with May in London and learns about May's brief romantic relationship with Tridib almost twenty years prior, as well as the truth of Tridib's death. These were events that the narrator witnessed or heard about as a child, but he never fully understood—Tridib died before he could help the narrator make sense of the riots or Tridib's seemingly mysterious relationship with May. When the narrator accompanies Tridib and May on their tourist activities in Calcutta, he is frustrated to realize that there are things between them that he doesn't understand, such as when Tridib mentions "ruins" belonging to them. It's cathartic for the narrator to finally be able to piece together some of those mysteries, such as when May explains that the "ruins" referred to a letter he wrote in which he confessed his love for her. She also tells the narrator that contrary to what his parents told him, Tridib didn't die in an accident. Rather, he died a grotesque and violent death attempting to protect May and his great uncle Jethamoshai from a riot. Following these revelations, the narrator and May have sex. In doing so, they connect in a very adult way over events they barely understood in their youth, which left them lost and uncertain of what even happened. By finally giving words to what happened and looking at each other as equal adults, rather than continuing to relate to each other like they did when May was in her

Notes

early twenties and the narrator was a child, both of them achieve a sense of relief at finally uncovering a mystery that kept them chained to that place in time.

Overall, Ghosh presents youth and childhood as a period of both blissful innocence and shocking, anxiety-inducing uncertainty. By framing the novel around the narrator's quest to understand his childhood more fully—and his childhood desire for a more adult understanding of the people and events he experiences—the novel suggests that while youth and adulthood are two distinct states of being, each state continuously informs the other. Further, because it's not necessarily the happy moments that the narrator dwells on, either in the past or the present, the novel ends with the assertion that growing up, becoming mature, and making sense of one's childhood necessarily hinges on losing one's childish sense of innocence and self-importance, and in doing so, coming to grips with the violent, awful, and nonsensical world.

Memory, Storytelling, and Reality

The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* is endlessly fascinated by the relationship between memories as they exist in people's minds and memories that are transformed into stories and passed on through the spoken word. As a child, he lives for the stories his uncle Tridib tells him of living in England, as well as other stories about the Price family, which is the family that Tridib and his parents stayed with. As the narrator grows up and experiences others challenging these stories that Tridib told him, he becomes even more convinced of what Tridib always insisted: while stark reality has its place, one can live an even richer life when a person allows stories and memories, both one's own and those of others, to inform and influence their reality.

The narrator grows up idolizing Tridib, mostly because Tridib is an exceptional storyteller. He can craft worlds and situations with great detail—and the narrator takes the stories to heart to such an intense degree—that as an adult, the narrator is able to find his way around parts of London he's never been to, based purely on his uncle's stories and the mental maps Tridib created for him. This illustrates how, for the narrator,

Tridib's memories and stories are extremely real—something that the narrator's cousin, Ila, doesn't understand. Though Ila also enjoys the stories when she's a child, they don't hold the same importance for her as an adult. The narrator suggests that this is because Ila, who grew up wealthy and privileged, never had to use her imagination to travel or see things. Essentially, the novel suggests that because Ila's lived experience is so rich, she has no reason to make memories that contain the same degree of richness. She, unlike the narrator, can always buy a ticket to a faraway land or find another interesting lover. However, because of this disregard for memories and stories alike, the narrator interprets Ila's life as actually less rich, as she doesn't rely on the "clamoring voices" to mediate her experiences with the world, as the narrator does.

Despite the fact that the narrator relies so heavily on Tridib's stories and memories, the instances when the narrator either cannot gain understanding outside of his own memories or simply doesn't have Tridib's memories to color his experience are telling. This suggests that Ila's method of moving through the world has its place, given that she doesn't struggle with the issues the narrator does of whose stories take precedence: his own, or someone else's. This is most apparent in the case of Tridib's death, something that Tridib himself cannot tell the narrator about and the truth of which the narrator's family keeps from him. They originally tell him that Tridib died in an accident in Dhaka, and at eleven years old, the narrator doesn't find this particularly interesting—accidents, he insists, aren't that compelling for a child, unlike other means of death. However, as the narrator grows older, he begins to wonder about the truth of his parents' story. He finally consults both the newspaper from the day Tridib died and May, who witnessed firsthand what happened. The narrator discovers that though he also experienced the riots that gripped Calcutta and Dhaka and was understandably terrified by what happened, the power of his own memories of the event, coupled with his youth, meant that he never connected his experience of the riots in Calcutta with Tridib and May's experience in Dhaka. When the narrator learns from May that Tridib was murdered by a mob while attempting to save her, his great-uncle Jethamoshai, and his great uncle's

Notes

caregiver, Khalil, the narrator is finally able to make sense of Tridib's story, his own story, and the story of the riots as a whole.

With this understanding, which completes the narrator's understanding of his uncle's entire life, the narrator finally realizes the impact and the importance of telling stories and holding onto other people's memories. May's memories allow the narrator to, for the first time, grasp the reality and the scope of what happened. This echoes the way that Tridib's stories about World War II made that war feel real for the narrator. With this, the novel ends by asserting that though reality as Ila experiences it has its place, memories and stories offer unique insight into an event that simple experience doesn't allow.

Freedom and Identity

The *Shadow Lines* centers on the relationship between freedom and how people try to achieve that freedom. In this way, the novel seeks to parse out the meanings of different kinds of freedom and how one's perception of freedom influences their identity. Further, the novel also suggests that the idea of freedom is enough to drive someone mad, even if freedom is ultimately unreachable.

The novel explores the idea of freedom primarily through the opposing definitions held by Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother, and Ila, his cousin. Tha'mma, who was born in 1902, grew up during the British occupation of India. As a young woman, Tha'mma believed that there was nothing more important than securing freedom from British rule, even telling her wide-eyed grandson that she wanted to join the terrorists and assassinate British government officials to meet those ends. Despite being so intent on this freedom as a young woman, when Partition finally took place in 1947, Tha'mma was far too busy working and raising a family as a widow to even celebrate, let alone consider the gravity of what happened. It's not until much later that 62-year-old Tha'mma, as she prepares to return to Dhaka for the first time since she was a young woman, realizes the implications of the colony's divisions. While she identifies proudly as an Indian and Hindu woman, the fact that she was born in Dhaka means that, in light of current borders, she was born in East Pakistan—a Muslim-majority country. This realization

shakes her sense of identity to its very core, especially in light of her growing nationalism in her old age. This nationalism, which reaches its height after Tridib dies on this trip to Dhaka, leads Tha'mma to sell her beloved gold chain to fund the Indian fight against Muslims. When the narrator confronts her about it, she screams at him that she did it to ensure his freedom from "them". This suggests that Tha'mma's desire for freedom and an easy identity very literally drives her mad, and this nationalism only increases in the following years until her death.

As far as Tha'mma is concerned, Ila's desire for and definition of freedom is a direct attack on her own beliefs about freedom. This is primarily because Ila seeks her freedom by escaping to England, where she can live as a modern western woman: she can sleep with or flirt with men if she feels like it, she can travel around the world, and most importantly, she's no longer under the control of her male relatives in India. However, the novel questions if the "freedom" Ila finds by living in England is even real when it describes the man she marries, Nick Price. Though Ila's marriage to Nick is supposed to free her from obligations to her family and give her a platform of support, Nick admits mere months into their marriage that he has several other girlfriends and no interest in giving them up. When Ila refuses to leave her marriage because she loves Nick too much, she chooses to exist in a place where her freedom is compromised. The narrator interprets this as an indication that in some ways, Tha'mma was right: Ila can't be free. This is reinforced in a point that comes later in the novel but earlier chronologically, when the narrator tells his dying grandmother that Ila lives in England so that she can be free. Tha'mma calls Ila a whore and insists that Ila is in no way free—as per Tha'mma's understanding, freedom can't be purchased in the form of a plane ticket, especially since her own first and only plane ride to Dhaka resulted not only in an identity crisis, but the loss of family.

As the narrator speaks to others about the meaning of freedom, from his uncle Robi to May, he comes to understand though everyone desperately loves the idea freedom and wants it for themselves, actually achieving true freedom is nearly impossible. Robi believes he'll never be free of the traumatic memories of Tridib's death, which he witnessed firsthand; Ila

Notes

chooses to never free herself from her unhappy marriage that was supposed to free her; and the narrator asserts that the Indian subcontinent will never truly be free from the spite and animosity caused by British rule, long after Partition. With this, the novel suggests that freedom is an impossible idea, and no one can ever be truly free, no matter how hard one might fight for it or attempt to escape oppression.

Social Standing and Pride

For all of the characters in *The Shadow Lines*, social standing is a major motivating factor in their lives. By exploring how people's desire for wealth and social standing gets out of control as a result of excessive pride, the novel suggests that these things should be treated with caution and not be taken too seriously. The narrator notes that though his education and his family's standing have had innumerable positive effects on his life, he also shows how the same things tear apart different factions of his family and prove to be, in some cases, lethal.

Over the course of the novel, the characters make it abundantly clear that even more important to them than climbing the social ladder is highlighting the differences, real or imagined, between themselves and those who exist on the social ladder below them. Ila's mother, who goes by the nickname Queen Victoria, is one of the most overt offenders. Although the woman she hires to nanny Ila, Lizzie, speaks fluent English and is semi-conversational in Hindi, Queen Victoria insists on speaking to Lizzie in her own made-up language designed to make Lizzie seem stupid and uneducated. In reality, Lizzie is just poor and from a different part of the country. Tha'mma also relies heavily on her sense of pride. When her husband died prematurely, leaving Tha'mma with a young son and no job, Tha'mma was too prideful to ask her wealthy family members for help. Instead, by a stroke of luck, she got a job as a teacher that she then held for the next thirty years, and impressed upon her son, the narrator's father, the importance of education. In her old age, she construes her relatives as greedy and unhelpful for not coming to her aid, though they didn't help her exactly because she refused their help. However, by juxtaposing Tha'mma's sense of pride in her self-made wealth and her sister's family's inherited wealth with an open distaste for

poor people and an implied fear of living like poor people, the novel suggests that the characters' desire for wealth and standing is somewhat understandable. It's in their best interests to make sure their children attend the best schools and achieve the highest marks, as that will ensure that they don't end up poor.

Chronologically speaking, pride is the first thing that begins to destroy the narrator's family. When Tha'mma and Mayadebi are young girls, they live in a large house in Dhaka with a number of extended family members. When their father begins fighting with their uncle Jethamoshai, the two men decide that the only way to deal with the conflict is to divide the house in two with a wall and never speak to each other again. For Tha'mma, who is old enough to remember a time when the house was not divided, she sees that her father and uncle's excessive pride is what causes them to feel that their only option was to divide the house in a completely nonsensical way and cut off the other half of the family. Further, the prideful natures of both parts of the family don't end after the division: the patriarchs forbid their children from playing with each other, and thus, the two halves of the family fall out of contact. Most chilling is what Tha'mma discovers when she returns to the house in her sixties. Jethamoshai still lives there, an ancient man in his nineties, and is still very clearly upset about the conflict with his brother: he rants and raves about wanting to take his brother's family to court to legally claim the other half of the house, and indeed, ran out several family members who at various points tried to return to the house. By this point, Jethamoshai is completely unable to care for himself, and he certainly would not be taken seriously in a court of law. In this way, the novel offers a dark cautionary tale of the consequences of pride, as Jethamoshai's pride leads to his own death, the death of his caretaker, Khalil, and Tridib.

Tha'mma believes wholeheartedly that it's important to make good use of one's social standing—a belief that stems from her own bootstraps story of success. As far as she's concerned, Tridib blatantly ignores this, which makes him untrustworthy and stupid in her eyes. Instead of becoming a professor, Tridib spends his time on the streets, talking—a sin to trump all others, according to Tha'mma. Again, however, Tha'mma turns this

Notes

all on its head when, on the day before she dies, she writes a letter to the dean of the narrator's school, informing him that the narrator has been visiting brothels and therefore should be expelled—essentially, attempting to deprive her grandson of the social standing he would achieve through education. The narrator understands that his grandmother did this because she resents that the narrator is deeply in love with Ila, who attempts to reject her own high social standing by becoming involved with Trotskyism in London, a political movement that seeks to upend the class system altogether. Though Tha'mma is unsuccessful in ruining her grandson's chances at a better life through education, this instance illustrates again the dangers of excessive pride and obsession with social standing. Tha'mma ensures that her grandson will think poorly of her after her death, destroying her family in yet another way. The novel illustrates the innumerable ways that pride and fear can tear apart a family, ending with the assertion that though the reasoning behind people's pride can, in some cases, be understandable, the means absolutely do not justify the ends.

Borders, Violence, and Political Unrest

The events of *The Shadow Lines* center primarily around riots that took place in Calcutta, India, and Dhaka, East Pakistan, in late 1963 and early 1964. Though the narrator doesn't discover the truth until the very end of the novel, it's this riot in Dhaka that kills Tridib, a realization that suddenly forces the narrator to reevaluate his experience of the conflict from his hometown in Calcutta and consider the ways in which the riots were an even bigger defining moment in his life than he realized at the time. As the narrator, in his late twenties or thirties, finally pieces together what happened, he begins to consider the role that British colonialism and the border between India and East Pakistan played in the conflict, and how the political unrest of the period truly impacted his understanding of his family and the world.

When the British finally granted their colony of British India independence in 1947, they divided the colony along religious lines, creating the Hindu-majority country of India and the Muslim-majority countries of East Pakistan and West Pakistan. As the narrator, who grew

up in the Indian city of Calcutta, describes, these borders meant that he was relatively unaware of anything happening outside his home in India—cities that were a thousand miles away but still in India were in the forefront of his consciousness and understanding, while cities that were a day's drive away, but in another country, simply didn't exist in his mind.

5.3 PROBLEMATICS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Thematic Concern: A highly innovative, complex and celebrated novel of Amitav Ghosh, „The Shadow Lines” Presents the trauma of partition/partition riots. “Ghosh has edged up his novel to confront the memory of traumatic events.” What implies the partition is not linear as Ghosh’s novel which is written in the non-linear mode – an aspect which implies its title also – the shadowiness of the border line. But this border line – as an abstract construction – contributes only to problematize the situations and relations of a large number of people across it. Keeping this aspect in mind, this paper is prepared as a critique of Ghosh’s treatment of the problematic of national identity. The novel depicts a wide, cosmopolitan scenario- most of the major events take place either in London or Dhaka and the protagonist, at present, lives with his family in Calcutta. “The novel superbly demonstrates the arrival of modernism in India.” Partition of people and that way, the issue of national identity need to be viewed from two angles – political and social – cultural or psychological. Issues like identity within a constructed national identity and feeling of oneness/nationality „/ nationhood crossing one’s political territory are central to the discussion of the problematic of national identity in “The Shadow Lines”. To conceptualize these aspects, it seems necessary that we clarify the idea of identity and „in – between” space in Ghosh. Standing as a unique creative writer in English following Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh deals with effects of colonialism. His writings while resisting generic divisions problematize the dominant discourse of history. One of the persistent idea in Ghosh’s writing is the „in – between” Space. It is evident that Ghosh contests the contractedness of various borders

separating one nation / race / culture from the others. In his quest for identity, Ghosh revises his approach to history; destabilizes the borders and Scrutinizes the suppressed voices.

Problematics of Individual Identity: Identity is a very debatable proposition/ question, both theoretically and practically. The theoretical debate about identity concerns its nature, process of formation and its existential questions. Whereas essentialists believe in singularity of individual's identity, the post – modernists deny any such identity. Identity construction has been thus debated time and again, but one must acknowledge that an individual's identity is to as large extent formed by his / her social location which include his/her race, class, gender, etc. These problematics of individual identity have been applied / noticed in the national context in Ghosh's novel "The Shadow Lines" – the title itself suggesting the unreality and invalidity of constructions such as nation and nationality . The Shadowiness of the border line puts a question mark to the geographic boundary line between countries / nations and thus its identity. Ghosh considers space / place as non neutral, non objective. To him „a place does not merely exist It has to be invented in one's imaginations“. Ghosh presents it through Tridib's concept of space which was vast and comprehensive. Tridib's mind strove to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror.

Problematics of National Identity: "Ghosh problematizes nationalism in his search for identity". [5] „The Shadow Lines“ interrogates national division backed by political consciousness and underlines the idea of emergence of a new world situation being hatched by the capitalist world economy. With the trans-nationalization of the forces of production and spread of market, the familiar national boundaries are pushed back to the darkness or the shadow. In this novel „a world beyond nation“ has been posited as an ideal form of existence. This is most desirable in view of the growth of international capitalism and global market which demand freedom from the obstruction of national boundaries. „The Shadows Lines“ interrogates the process through which a sense of national identity is constructed. The construction of national identity is said to be the result

of a dual dynamics- one homogenizing and the other differentiating. Construction of the idea of a nation or community as homogenous, i.e. unified & single, also suggests its difference from other nations or communities. Thus being Indian means being members of a single unified family sharing common goals and aspirations. This very concept of Indian will differentiate him / her from a Pakistani, an American or a British. Ghosh, striking at this very core of the dynamics of nationhood, shows that the idea of a nation is a misleading construction. One fundamental question the novel raises is –“Is the nation a homogeneous entity?” which is univocally answered with a firm and emphatic, No“. The incidents that inspired Ghosh to write the novel - inhuman massacre of the Sikhs following assassination of Indira Gandhi by the non-Sikh countrymen which deeply pained Ghosh [6] – is a proof that the claim of a homogenized nation is baseless. Though the riots erupting in the aftermath of Indira’s assassination are not mentioned in the novel, there are a number of incidents to prove that the nation of India as a homogenous community was shattered for Ghosh. Communal riots consequent to defilement of Hazratbal Shrine in 1964 is a fitting example. The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* as a school boy remembers how ill-feelings & suspicions poisoned the harmonious life of the Hindus & the Muslims. Rumors were that one community had poisoned the water supply to exterminate the other community. The whole atmosphere was filled with suspicions, fear and hatred. Now the narrator’s best friend transformed into a feared enemy. Such internal divides interrogates the homogenous body polity of the nation, Ghosh focuses another very important point relevant to this – that is – the history of the nation shallows up the story of the individual: In the riots of 1964, the narrator’s uncle Tridib had lost his life as a helpless victim to the maddening frenzy of communal hatred. This was a key moment in the story of the narrator’s life. But, when after fifteen years later in 1979, the narrator attempts to recover the traces of this event in the archives of the Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi, he does not find any mention of Tridib’s death in the newspapers. It seemed as if private story was not at all important for the nation’s memory.”

Notes

Through the narrator's growth from childhood to adulthood, Ghosh has shown that the idea of a national border is just a mirage. The deceptive nature of the national borders that are constructed to project an image of difference across political division is revealed in the novel. The narrator's grandmother firmly believes in the ability of national borders to differentiate her own community from other communities. Her nationalistic beliefs seem to be undermined as the novel unfolds. In 1964 when she plans to visit Dhaka, she wonders whether she would be able to see the borders between India and East Pakistan from the air. When her grandson mocks her asking - if the border line was a long black line, she says, "of course not. But novel, the grandmother is forced to realize the fact that the two sides of the border were merely the mirror image of each other. This realization in a sense pains her and forces her to interrogate the very purpose of the nationalist movement and the reasons of war between the nations. She tries to assert the necessity of a real demarcation. As borders to Tha'mma are absolute physical & tangible realistic, she says,

"But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference, both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then – Partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn't something in between? surely there's something – trenches perhaps, or soldiers or guns pointing at each other, or even just barren strip of land. Don't they call it no-man's land?" with her experience of the traumatic events of the partition, grandmother's expectation of a border line is natural to her though absurd to others/us. With the unfolding of the demarcation. As borders to Tha'mma are absolute physical & tangible realistic, she says,

Shadowiness of Identity Construction: The novelist brings out the arbitrary nature of the partition logic – that is, partition of India & Pakistan is illogical and arbitrary. The border lines are none but the arbitrary product of the politicians' whims. These arbitrary lines cannot really determine the cultural difference between the two

communities living across the border. One way or the other India/Calcutta will remain connected to East Pakistan/Dhaka. The fact that Jethamosai, Thamma's uncle, refuses to leave Dhaka and migrate to India endorses this sort of thinking. To quote Jethamosai, "I don't believe in this India – Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you set there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will ever have you anywhere."

The Shadowiness of the border line, and that way, the implication of the title of the novel, thus clearly stands stated. Political division is arbitrary as it is arbitrarily taken and as such identity of the people across the so-called national border lines are imbalanced all the time. Notably this temporality of individual identity also suggests the temporality of the nation/national identity. The situation is succinctly brought out by Sadat Hassan Manto in the short story „Toba Tek Singh“, where the so-called lunatic only presents sanity. To say, political division of nation is nothing but a farcical act. "The partition of the country is..... projected in the novel as an act of meaningless violence" In the novel there is a growing sense that the logic of the nation state is necessarily at odds with various forms of sub continental community – that to be Indian is to be perversely and perhaps unsuccessfully defined oneself against one's mirror image from across the border.

Ghosh has shown in the novel that riots and distances at the social and national level do not really beget any solution through partition of the bigger nation – state. He has shown that violence does not get driven to the borders. Dhaka and Calcutta - the two different cities in two independent states - do not drift apart and become the other reality as they flare up at the slightest pretext. The pattern of violence in these cities relates them to each other. The narrator undertakes a voyage into this land which exists outside space, an expense without distances and a land of looking glass events. He is simply amazed to discover that the border could not separate these places, rather locked them into irreversible symmetry. He witnessed identical scenes of violence on both sides, with few human incidents of saving lives - indicative of indivisible

Notes

sanity that binds people to each other independent of their governments. The border line becomes just “a looking glass border”.

Ghosh acknowledges no separate national or cultural realities because for him all such demarcations are shadow lines, arbitrary and invented divisions. “The author boldly tackles political themes both national and international.”

Ghosh in this way problematizes the idea of national identity. Interrogating Grandmother’s fervent nationalism, Ghosh explores the unreality and invalidity of traditional identity constructions such as nation, nationality and nationalism. This he has brought to the forefront through three aspects : . Political borders are questioned and shown to be arbitrary – as they are whimsically taken by politicians, The idea of nationality – nation as a homogenous whole – has been contrasted – with inhumane activities poisoning the fraternal relationship among different races of the country and . The looking glass border has been set up – showing identical scenes of violence across border on the one hand and feeling of oneness with people of other countries on the other. Ghosh in “The Shadow Lines” attempts to create the image of the global umbrella which includes and encompasses various cultures and create a single unified global picture.

5.4 OMNISCIENT NARRATOR AS HISTORIAN

In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator’s personality merges with that of the historian. For him the past exists only in memory and has no visible traces left in the present to go by. Here memory is more adequate than history, and works as a channel into past. The only resources, which the narrator-historian possesses to graft history, are memories, photographs, and Tridib’s stories which are difficult to dismiss because they are factually correct yet set in other time and space. The events are reconstructed, often as accurately and as carefully by any historian, putting real people in imaginary situations, and fancy conditions in documentary archives, augmenting the significance of historical events

by plausible and internally consistent depictions of events. Ghosh invokes the archives as a key organizing principle in his novels making it coherent historical narratives.

5.5 RETROSPECTION OF PAST EVENTS

The Changeability of time and place blur as the process of recollection transforms the past events into a throbbing sense of what has been lost. The historical events documented by the novel includes the freedom movement in Bengal, the Second World War, the Partition of India in 1947, and the spontaneous communal combustion in the form of riots in East Pakistan and India following the '64 Hazratbal incident in Srinagar.³ The novel is not a bare and bland recapitulation of those tense historical moments; it captures the trauma of emotional rupture and estrangement as also the damaging potential of the psychological siege within people sundered by bigoted politics. Ghosh's novel as re-appropriated history moves through the narratives and melds the historical moments into a compelling tale. The reconstruction of the past through houses, photographs, maps, road names, newspapers, advertisements and other concretisations allows us to collate the text with concurrent co-texts and validate the author's perception of the time and milieu covered by the novel. The principal episodes viewed in a simultaneous focus seem to be part of a historical continuum and the narrator's insight into the characters falling into insane frenzy or wallowing in stolid indifference to transcultural currents can be palpably located.

5.6 CONCERNS ABOUT CROSS BORDER HUMANITY AND COSMOPOLITANISM

While *The Shadow Lines* explores the author's major concern about wider, cross-border humanity with striking insights into the issues of ethnic nationalism, multiculturalism and communalism, it also reveals new levels of his technical prowess. Ghosh has departed from Rushdie's mode of "imaginative serio-comic storytelling" or "the disjointed magic realism" evident in his apprentice novel. What he now offers is a supple

and sophisticated mnemonic narrative. He weaves together different strands of history by mnemonic process or “wistful evocations of memory” to reflect on communal carnage and sectarian tension in the Indian subcontinent. The novel derives its material from Ghosh’s experience of the fracture following the Partition and the resultant rupture in the affiliative bonds of the communities across the border. What makes his experience worthy of investigation is the technique by which his experience is moulded into a fascinating and coherent narrative.

5.7 GEOGRAPHICAL FLUIDITY AND CULTURAL DISLOCATIONS

Ghosh engages with the limits of essentialist nationalism and barriers to empathy across geographical borders. The novel eventuates into a search for the strategies for survival in a violent, hate-filled world of narrow divisions and finds in cross border interaction an effective antidote to the miasma of ethnic tension. Thus the novel also addresses the challenge of geographical fluidity and cultural dislocations with a salutary insight into history. For this purpose he uses the metaphor of ‘family’. The cross-border movement of aliens and immigrants under the increasingly globalized scenario endorses, or rather validates, the novel’s larger project of cultural accommodation, of making sense of ontological confusion in intricate spatiality and seeking adjustment to the emerging demands of multicultural world. As Brinda Bose rightly notes, it is no doubt fitting that in the age of an extravagantly embracing of globalization, we may claim to have closed the gap between the other and straddling it; certainly, the legacy of postcolonial angst today appears to have settled into a potentially numbing acceptance of bi- or multi-cultural euphoria. In such a circumstance, the diasporic imagination of Amitav Ghosh – that wrestles with an understanding of bi-culturalism as it ‘yokes by violence together’ discrete and distant identities – is essential to our understanding of our history even as it is being created.

In my view, Ghosh appeals to creative multicultural impulses and communal harmony. He perceptively shows how different cultures and communities are becoming antagonistic to the point of no return. He makes a plea for cross-border ties and anticivilization alliance which amounts to making a new world order. To quote Edward Said, “the new economic and sociopolitical dislocations and configurations of our time [begin] with the startling realities of human interdependence on a world scale” . Such re-appropriations of history or “desirable constructions of the past” also do away with the partitioning of the past to open out common doors from the corridors between cultures through “creative improvisations”.

5.8 DEMARCATIONS AS ARBITRARY AND INVENTED DIVISIONS

Ghosh does not totally accede to the claims of historicism. His preoccupation with shadow lines or demarcations as “arbitrary and invented divisions between people and nations” has also been closely questioned by A.N. Kaul. In his opinion, *The Shadow Lines* “ends up attributing value and a higher reality to a sort of amorphous romantic subjectivity” . Kaul argues that unlike Henry James and E.M. Forster, who recognize the barriers to cultural crossings due to a variety of political and cultural complexities, Ghosh privileges the world of private refuge over historical and political realities and thus regards these harsh realities or historical formations as immaterial; at any rate, he blithely disregards them. As Kaul notes, the novel insists on a sentimental resolution and as such it lacks an authentic resonance. He also underlines some signifying and profound statements about life in the novel as “postmodern banalities” or mere “conundrums.” Kaul perhaps sidesteps the implications of Tridib’s advice to the narrator that he uses his “imagination with precision” . Kaul further quotes Ernest Gellener’s unequivocal statement that nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist”. Tridib’s insistence on the material moorings of imagination – its temporal and spatial co-ordinates – is plainly missing from Kaul’s explication of “imagination” as romantic retreat from historical realities in *The Shadow Lines*.

5.9 A WORLD TORN ASUNDER BY HISTORY AND RELIGION

The *Shadow Lines* embarks upon a journey of discovery of roots and reasons. It also portrays a world torn asunder by history, and depicts forms of violence that extreme of nationalism sometimes manifests. Through an intricate web of memories, relationships and images Amitav Ghosh builds a vivid and moving narrative. It is unlike the novel of previous era, firstly because it is not linear in narration. The interaction of Indians with English people, their journey to other continents, their issues of political freedom, self-identity and the forces of nationalism have all been very vividly described. The first impression one gets in reading this novel is that the people delineated belong to many different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds that make the scope of novel formidable. The very opening of the novel describes the writer's aunt Maya Debi going to England with her husband and son. This was in 1939 and since then the interaction with them and separation from them has been projected through memories. Through the cinematic technique of flashback, the action moves to and fro from London to Calcutta and to Khulna and Dhaka. Here narrative time coincides with the consciousness of narrator. In a globalized world, it is no longer possible for any writer to write the novel in Jane Austen fashion from the center of her place.

5.10 REEVALUATION OF HISTORICAL REALITY

Although, chronologically, the story begins with a passage of time in colonial India when the narrator was not even born, it embraces a good deal of postcolonial moments, and all the episodes are held in simultaneous focus to illuminate the narrative resolution. The novel begins thus: "In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father's aunt Maya Debi went to England with her husband and her son Tridib". The year 1939 is historically significant for the outbreak of the Second World War and the phenomenal upheavals on the Indian subcontinent coming in its wake. Mayadebi's visit to London around this time, her intimate

contact with the Price family and the Tridib-May component of the story are recounted by Tridib twenty-one years later to the narrator, an eight-year-old inquisitive child. May was a little baby when Tridib saw her in London. A romantic relationship between them has developed through correspondence, transcending the shadow lines of nationality and cultural boundaries. Amitav Ghosh explores the mysterious pull between Tridib and May and the abiding bond between the two families defying distance and physical frontiers even as the countries they belong to are pitted against each other, and this superbly provides thematic framework of novel.

The narrator's voice appears to be the author's voice and suggests that the issues of boundaries and national culture are illusory and non-existent. There cannot be any divisions of universal humanity. The concept of time in the story can be taken as a metaphor for the national borders. It seems to suggest that divisions between nations are illusion and that frontiers between nations should not exist, and it tends to justify the title of the novel itself. In this way, Ghosh reveals a firm grasp of socio-cultural and historical material that underlies his narrative.

Check your Progress-1

1. What is the background event in The Shadow Lines?

2. Who gained control over most of the Indian subcontinent in the early nineteenth century?

3. When did the partition happen?

4. Khushwant Singh's which novel is historical?

5.11 LET US SUM UP

Thus a historicist approach to text is nothing but an evaluation of a segment of historical reality as projected by the novelist whose techniques of writing fiction enable him or her to describe his or her world-vision. In all his writing, Amitav Ghosh's engagement with history is not the same kind as that of a regular historian, but this does not, in any way, lessen its significance as historical fiction. The fictional framework renders history more readable and lively and he is able to involve the reader more than what actual history does. Ghosh's fiction reveals that the novelist's involvement with history is his prime obsession. Indeed, he interjects a new dimension into his encounter with history. His fiction is imbued with both political and historical consciousness. While offering memory as a better or more valid means of assessing past, Ghosh is thus a novelist who virtually bends his novels to the needs of history; they largely derive their purpose and shape from it. The novel narrates the events taking place in 1939-40, 1960-63 and 1978-79 in a jumbled way but the adult narrator focalises on these recollections in the 1980s and manipulates these blurred temporal and spatial fragments into a coherent stretch to stage postcolonial situations as well as cultural dislocations and anxieties, and presents the issue of fractured nationalities in close and telling encounters for good measure. All the narration comes to us filtered through authorial voice.

5.12 KEYWORDS

- Irreverence: A mental attitude with lack of respect
- Penchant: Liking
- Pulchritude: Pretty, beauty, physical appearance of a woman which is pretty or beautiful
- Intimation: A slight or vague suggestion

5.13 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a note on Geographical Fluidity and Cultural Dislocations.
- Write in brief about the Concerns about Cross Border Humanity and Cosmopolitanism.
- Describe about Reevaluation of Historical Reality.
- Short note on Omniscient Narrator as Historian.

5.14 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Sing, Kushwant. "Traveller in the Tortured Orient." *The Hindustan Times*, 16 May, 1998
- Kumar, ShivK; and Keith Mc Kean, ed. *Critical Approaches to Fiction*. New York: Mc Graw ± Hill, 1968. 262.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois "The postmodern condition," *Literary theory: An Anthology* ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. UK: Black Well publishers, 1998. 509-10.
- Wolf, Howard. "Of Manhattan the Son; Autobiography as a Creative Form of American Writing." *Indian Journal of American studies*, vol 17, Nos 1&2, 1987. 45-5
- Eliot, T.S. "Four Quartets." *Collected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974
- Brass, Paul R. "Elite Competition and Nation-Formation," *Nationalism* ed. John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994. 3-13

5.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- The Partition of British India is mostly a background event in *The Shadow Lines*.
- Great Britain gained control over most of the Indian subcontinent in the early nineteenth century.
- The Partition happened in August of 1947.
- Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is a historical novel.

UNIT-6 MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY – JAYANTA MAHAPATRA, NISSIM EZEKIEL, ROBIN S NGANGOM - 1

STRUCTURE

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 About Jayanta Mahapatra
- 6.3 Jayanta Mahapatra's Poems
 - 6.3.1 A Missing Person
 - 6.3.2 Hunger
 - 6.3.3 Freedom
 - 6.3.4 Dawn at Puri
 - 6.3.5 Twilight
- 6.4 Let us sum up
- 6.5 Keywords
- 6.6 Questions for Review
- 6.7 Suggested Reading and References
- 6.8 Answers to Check your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about Jayanta Mahapatra's "A Missing Person";
- you would also go through about Jayanta Mahapatra's "Hunger";
- you would get to learn about Jayanta Mahapatra's "Freedom";
- and further you would also learn about "Dawn at Puri" and "Twilight".

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian English poetry is the oldest form of Indian English literature. Indian poets writing in English have succeeded to nativize or Indianize English in order to reveal typical Indian situations.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is considered the first poet in the lineage of Indian English poetry followed by Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt among others.

6.2 ABOUT JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

Jayanta Mahapatra is a major Indian English poet. He is the first Indian poet to win Sahitya Akademi award for English poetry. He is the author of popular poems such as *Indian Summer* and *Hunger*, which are regarded as classics in modern Indian English literature. Jayanta Mahapatra was awarded Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honor in India in 2009. However, he returned the Padma award in 2015 to protest against the rising intolerance in India.

Indian Poets Trio

Besides being one of the popular Indian poets of his generation, Mahapatra was also part of the trio of poets who laid the foundations of Indian English Poetry. He shared a special bond with A. K. Ramanujan, one of the finest poets in the IEP tradition. Mahapatra is also different in not being a product of the Bombay school of poets besides R. Parthasarathy. Over time, he has managed to carve a quiet, tranquil poetic voice of his own—distinctly different from those of his contemporaries. His wordy lyricism combined with Indian themes put him in a league of his own. In one of his interviews, Mahapatra says, "Meeting with A D Hope, especially in his warm home in Canberra, and with his charming wife, Penelope, is an unforgettable happening in my life. The man's humility was amazing, it humbled me. It was a lesson. I wrote a sort of editorial piece on him in the magazine I was editing—*Chandrabhaga*, and I'd like you to read what I had said. This appeared in the journal in 1979."

Notes

The Captive Air of Chandipur on Sea is a fine nature poem by Jayanta Mahapatra. The poet stands at the seashore at Chandipur and he experiences the sadness in the atmosphere. When he listens the mystic song of the sea, he states that the sweet pleasant music of the sea is finished with the cries of fishermen, who didn't returned from the sea. The poet mourns for the glory of nature in the past.

The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore is a fine poem by Jayanta Mahapatra. Once he visited the British Cemetery at Balasore. During that visit he was influenced due to ruins of stones and marbles. The poets anguish is caused not by the sight of ancient graves of unknown people but by the morbid thought of countless lives that continue to be needlessly lost in their prime. The poem is full of beautiful and unusual images.

Early Life and Education

Born into a prominent Odia Christian family, Mahapatra went to Stewart School in Cuttack, Odisha. He completed his M. Sc. in Physics from Patna University, Bihar, India. He began his teaching career as a lecturer in Physics in 1949. During his professional life, he taught Physics at various government colleges in Odisha including Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur, B.J.B College, Bhubaneswar, Fakir Mohan College, Balasore and Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. He superannuated at the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and retired from his government job as the Reader in Physics in 1986. He began his writing career very late already in the late sixties. His short stories as well as poems were initially rejected by several publishers. Then his poems got published in international literary journals such as Critical Inquiry, the Sewanee Review, the Kenyan Review, and the New Yorker. His poems were also published in other poetry magazines in India. He received many literary awards for his published poems. He was invited to participate in the International Writing Program at Iowa among twenty two selected international poets. This gave him an opportunity to go out of India and acquire international exposure.

Literary Works

Mahapatra has authored 27 books of poems, of which seven are in Odia and the rest in English. His poetry volumes include *Relationship*, *Bare Face* and *Shadow Space*. Besides poetry, he has experimented widely with myriad forms of prose. His published books of prose include *Green Gardener*, an anthology of short stories and *Door of Paper: Essay and Memoirs*. Mahapatra is also a distinguished editor and has been bringing out, for many years, a literary magazine, *Chandrabhaga*, from Cuttack. The magazine is named after Chandrabhaga, a prominent river in Odisha. His poems appeared in many prestigious poetry anthologies like *The Dance of the Peacock: An Anthology of English Poetry from India*, published by Hidden Brook Press, Canada.

He began writing poems only when he was in his forties. The publication of his first book of poems, *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, in 1971 was followed by the publication of *Close The Sky Ten By Ten*. One of Mahapatra's better remembered works is the long poem *Relationship*, for which he became the first Indian English poet to win the Sahitya Akademi award in 1981.

Mahapatra has also translated from Odia into English simultaneously while he was composing his original poems in English and Odia. He has translated poems of senior as well as young writers of Odisha, of Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Some of his translations are published in the bi-monthly literary magazine titled *Indian Literature* published by the Central Sahitya Akademi of India and some are in his own magazine titled *Chandrabhaga*. Some anthologies of his translations have been published by different publishers of India.

Awards, Recognition & Legacy

In 1981 Jayanta Mahapatra Mahapatra won Sahitya Akademi award for his book "*Relationships*". He is also a recipient of the Jacob Glatstein memorial award conferred by Poetry magazine, Chicago. He was also awarded the Allen Tate Poetry Prize for 2009 from The Sewanee Review, Sewanee, United States. He received the SAARC Literary Award, New Delhi, 2009. He was conferred with the Padma Shri award in 2009 by the president of India and was awarded an honorary doctorate

Notes

by Ravenshaw University on 2 May 2009. He was also awarded D. Lit. degree by Utkal University, Odisha in 2006.

Poetry Readings

Outside India

- University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1976
- University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, 1976
- University of the South, Sewanee, 1976
- East West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1976
- Adelaide Festival of Arts, Adelaide, 1978
- P.E.N. Centre, Sydney, 1978
- Australian National University, Canberra, 1978
- International Poets Conference, Tokyo, 1980
- Asian Poets Conference, Tokyo, 1984
- Books by Jayanta Mahapatra

Poetry

- 1971: Close the Sky Ten by Ten, Calcutta: Dialogue Publications
- 1971: Svayamvara and Other Poems, Calcutta: Writers Workshop
- 1976: A Father's Hours, Delhi: United Writers
- 1976: A Rain of Rites, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press
- 1979: Waiting, Samkaleen Prakashan
- 1980: The False Start, Bombay: Clearing House
- 1980: Relationship, Greenfield, New York: Greenfield Review Press

Prose

- 1997: The Green Gardener, short stories, Hyderabad: Orient Longman
- 2006: Door of Paper: Essay and Memoirs, New Delhi: Authrospress
- 2011: Bhor Moitra Kanaphula. In Oriya. Bhubaneswar, Paschima

Poetry in Odia

- 1993: Bali , Cutack: Vidyapuri
- 1995: Kahibe Gotiye Katha , Arya Prakashan
- 1997: Baya Raja, Cuttack: Vidyapuri
- 2004: Tike Chhayee , Cuttack; Vidyapuri
- 2006: Chali , Cuttack: Vidyapuri
- 2008: Jadiba Gapatie , Cuttack: Friends Publisher
- 2011: Smruti Pari Kichhiti , Cuttack: Bijayini

Translations into English

- 1973: Countermeasures: Poems, Calcutta. Dialogue
- 1976: Wings of the Past: Poems, Calcutta. Rajasree
- 1981: Song of Kubja and Other Poems, New Delhi. Samkaleen
- 1994: I Can, But Why Should I Go: Poems, New Delhi. Sahitya Akademi
- 1996: Verticals of Life: Poems, New Delhi. Sahitya Akademi
- 1998: Tapaswini: a Poem, Bhubaneswar. Orissa Sahitya Akademi
- 2001: Discovery and other Poems, Kolkata. Writers Workshop
- 2003: A Time of Rising , New Delhi. Har-Anand

Awards

- Kanhaiya Lal Sethia Award for Poetry - 2017
- RL Poetry Lifetime Achievement Award for Poetry, 2013, Hyderabad.
- Second Prize – International Who's Who in Poetry, London, 1970.
- Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award – Poetry, Chicago, 1975.
- Visiting Writer – International Writing Program, Iowa City 1976–77.
- Cultural Award Visitor, Australia, 1978.
- Japan Foundation – Visitor's Award, Japan, 1980.

Appearances in the following poetry Anthologies

- A New Book of Indian Poems In English ed. by Gopi Kottoor and published by Poetry Chain and Writers Workshop, Calcutta

- Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets ed. by R. Parthasarathy and published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi

6.3 JAYANTA MAHAPATRA'S POEM

6.3.1 A MISSING PERSON

A Missing Person is a countryside woman delineated and depicted in the poem, telling of life and personae of the rural scape in reality. A Missing Person is not an artiste of at theatre or a so-called bar tender, a nautch girl or a devadasi, but a countryside rural woman living namelessly. A persona non-gratia, she does the household jobs and lives she namelessly. Had it been Burquawalli or Purdahwalli, it would have better. The bibi under the ghumta has the tales of her to tell. The drawn out and circled need not be crossed as the courtyard of the house is the periphery round which moves it the life of a woman. Sad to refer in this context there had been the monstrous Sati system in the past. There was the child marriage system. Widows were not at allowed to marry again as they used to restrain themselves from. Even the women were not allowed to utter the names of their godly husbands. sometimes the tattoo used to tell the name of the husband imprinted on the hand of the wife. Under these circumstances given, how to tell the story, depict the picture, flash the light upon, do the portrait of hers?

To see it otherwise, A Missing Person is the Mona Lisa of Jayanta Mahapatra which he keeps portraying and silhouetting or maybe it. The Last Duchess of Robert Browning whose photo lies it on the wall of with the smiles snatched and scrapped from her suspicious lips. But definitely she is not A Missing Person of Adil Jussawalla, the poetical text of his to make a way for into the realms of Indian English poesy nor is she the Adil Jussawalla the missing person of poetry who is resurfacing after a 35-year break from creativity. She may be the Purdah Nashin of Sarojini Naidu.

In the dark room a woman cannot find her reflection is the truth no doubt and that too in the villages of Indian countryside, mostly built from mud and haystacks, bamboos and straw-thatched though the roc#-built

temples may be for the gods and goddesses to house in. Even now those who build great mansions live in the shanty is the truth! the masons as daily wagers, laborer's and workers which the foreigners startle to view it in utter surprise

The villages scattered and secluded, away from human haunt generally lurk in darkness and loneliness, gloominess spread all around. Without the post-office, the school, the library, the bazaar, is the reality to be envisaged. To study it all under that backdrop is the truth to be felt. If not of today, these were definitely the things of yesterday. Let us think of those times when there was the want, scarcity of resources, when there was no accessibility, there were no roads, connect-ways linking the countryside.

Tired of full-day labor and work, she appears to be taking naps, half-sleepy and waiting for. Apart from that state, there is a lamp burning in her hands whose drunken yellow flames know it where her body hides.

A Missing Person

In the darkened room
a woman
cannot find her reflection in the mirror

waiting as usual
at the edge of sleep

In her hands she holds
the oil lamp
whose drunken yellow flames
know where her lonely body hides

An image-maker Jayanta though may be a feminist, but is not free from the twitches of the body and its intricate relationships. As a poet he is not only Wordsworthian, Keatsian and Yeatsian, but Lawrentine too. Personal and private matter is his top priority. Here the missing persona or protagonist is but a rural woman in the ghumta, the Andrew Marvellian To His Coy Mistress or The Dark Lady of William Shakespeare. E.M. Forster too in one of his essays tells of the burqua-clad women of Hyderabad. The Fakir of Jungheera too by Derozio is one such poem reminding us of the Sati system and its brutal impact on society. Jayanta

Notes

as a poet suffers from sexuality. Jayanta is Wordsworthian when he takes to solitude, space and landscapes lurking around, meeting the ground. He is Keatsian when he takes to beauty and truth and is Lawrentine side by side when he is full of sexuality and its twitches, the intricacies of man-woman relationship tangling it all.

But the marvel is in it that in a poem of just a few lines, he has said it all what he had to, picturing the whole of India and its society, life and living which but cannot be negated. How had it been life in the villages), you can feel from it. How had it been the Indian villages scattered and far flung, unreachable and inaccessible, not connected with ways linking them all) In addition to it, you just feel it, how did superstition and fatal creep in, the purdah system and all other social evils) How did the foreigners loot, plunder and devastate it, pulling all the glories of it) How did it lapse in misrule and maladministration)

Though he does not say it all, the missing persona is no doubt an Indian rural woman, living a nameless life to be redeemed by great man like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the British system of education. The arrival of the person for which she is waiting is perhaps the husband of the woman under our discussion. What she does, lives for is her husband and the family. There is nothing outside it. The husband is her parameshwara, the greater god. But she as a woman has no identity of her own. She just continues to relish upon the identity of his. Now the question is it better to be a Sita or a Draupadi or who is more modern? Were Putana and Surpanakha described in bad light? Our mistake is we have not heard others' tales. We have only Aryanized our tales, but the tales of India are Dravidic and Austro-Asiatic too apart from Tibeto-Chinese.

Or, is it that Jayanta Mahapatra is drawing the image of a woman in his art studio, cleaning and copying it to be reflected through the photo-negative? An Indian rural woman, a nameless person figuring in as the heroine and protagonist or mouthpiece and spokesperson of the seminar on feminism may be the truth hidden inside. A Missing Person as a poem foreshadows the use of the dark daughter theme in Relationship.

She will not take the name of husband on the lips as it will be a sin to take his name. Just the tattoo saying her name and if that too is inscribed upon otherwise she will keep mum unless and until someone else tells her name. If this be the thing then how to tale of feminism and women liberties in masculine and patriarchal India full of medieval and fanatical people? But the context of the poem is one of an image, a picture drawn, a portrait of an Indian woman from the countryside.

A Missing Person is not the woman trafficked and sold in brothels for flesh trade, but an Indian woman without an identity of her own. The pathos of her life, the pains and pines of hers, none has felt it. What have they got after the attainment of freedom? Still now honor killing marauds her self. The purdah system is the worst of all and the geni of it have not left. The fanatics and zealots keep throttling the freedom of hers, will not allow her to live a life of her.

6.3.2 HUNGER

It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back

The fisherman said: Will you have her, carelessly,
trailing his nets and his nerves, as though his words
sanctified the purpose with which he faced himself.

I saw his white bone thrash his eyes.

I followed him across the sprawling sands,

my mind thumping in the flesh's sling.

Hope lay perhaps in burning the house I lived in.

Silence gripped my sleeves; his body clawed at the froth
his old nets had only dragged up from the seas.

In the flickering dark his lean-to opened like a wound.

The wind was I, and the days and nights before.

Palm fronds scratched my skin. Inside the shack
an oil lamp splayed the hours bunched to those walls.

Over and over the sticky soot crossed the space of my mind.

Notes

I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...
Feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine.
The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wife.
Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.
She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,
the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside.

One cannot admonish the poet's love for sexuality as he refers to here and there very often and the flesh is heavy upon him. Jayanta as a poet is very intriguing and loves to play with words. He dusts the blackboard in such a way that one can never catch him red-handed. The twitches of the body and intricacies of human relationships have never left him and he loves to portray them. Sexual tirades and escapades have not left Jayanta and Pritish behind as they love make a detour of sexuality.

When we read the poem, the images of the Thai and Ukrainian girls engaged in flesh trade come to the purview. & here have we reached? How poverty and modernity have taken a toll upon? For livelihood what can a man not do? Secondly, this human life too is very complete to be understood, the intricacies of our relationships. There are the words referring to carnal desire strongly.

Hunger is one of the thoughtful poems ever written by Jayanta Mahapatara who is not merely an imagist, but a realist, a feminist, a modernist, a post-modernist and what not apart from being a nihilist, an existentialist and an iconoclast. Photography is his hidden love. Light and darkness the shades of his delving and he interprets in the form of creational sunrays falling and retreating so the images of life a study in silhouettes and shadows as seen through and opined. Poems come to him as photo-negatives to be washed for images. Nothing is what it seems to be and what seems to be is nothing.

A poet whose subject is physics here describes in what it has been left untouched. Flesh trade and woman trafficking is the point of deliberation. How the situations of life, impoverished circumstances

force one to be at the crossroads of life? The small fisher girl is the mute artist of the poem whereas there lie in some main protagonists. The father and the customer, their indirect exchanges add to the poem and make it gloomier. A woman's life, who knows it, what it in her palm lines? &here was she born, where will she go away? The criss crosses of her fate-lines, who to foretell and predict it? Though the poem is of a confessional slant, we are not sure of who the unknown listener is in the poem with whom the fisherman is talking for an exchange of money for body business. A poem of human lust and hunger, carnal desire and affection, it bears out from his within with a view to possessing the body and satisfying the voluptuous greed. The weight of the flesh he could not resist it. The fisherman just by the way asked him if he liked to have her trailing the nets which a father should not have, but did he did as for making a livelihood with so much of struggles and suffering.

The writerly protagonist followed him across the sprawling sands and his mind was engrossed in the flesh's desires and inclinations. When enquired about the ride or adventure, he actually wished to be with and it culminated finally.

In the third stanza of the poem, the poet grows philosophical taking liberties with the language and escapades. He analyzes differently turning the persona impractical, holding it not responsible for, personifying. He tells of the poor shanty of the fisherman by the sea side made from haystacks, palm leaves and so on.

In the last stanza, he relishes upon, enjoys the physical contact. A small girl was offered to and she gave in. The father went away to appear again. The sky seemed to be scrambling, fell upon with the deal struck down.

The poem *Hunger* reminds us so many things, the life of the poor fisherman facing the furies of the sea, risking the life going to strike down in the sea. Even when the winds keep sighing by, foams and waves keep surging, they go down to fling the net and draw. *Hunger* as a poem reminds us of the flesh trade. J.M.Synge's *Riders to the Sea* too is very much like it though the context may be different.

Notes

Hunger as a poem mesmerizes human hunger with the hunger of flesh. Why do people go to flesh trade? The human belly is at the root of all evils. The lust for the body too has not left behind man since the temptation and Adam and 've and the resultant fall from heaven.

What is most painful is this that the silent sufferer of the poem is the fisher girl, a teenager of just fifteen. She is not the speaker of the poem. The writer and the fisher man are themselves the spokesmen, speakers of the poem striking a deal.

Jayanta Mahapatra as a poet too is sexual, not at all free sexual lust and greed. In Calcutta too he fails not to see the whorehouse and its billboards with the posters of the beauties dressing behind the curtain of the theatre. Hunger is a poem of bodily lust, sexual gratification and voluptuous desire, possessive love, give and take relationship, love and hate theme, attraction and repulsion story. Man-woman relationship is the theme of the poem. It is better if we see the terracotta plates of the temples showing erotic love through ancient art.

Sarojini Naidu, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt among others.

6.3.3 FREEDOM

At times, as I watch,
it seems as though my country's body
floats down somewhere on the river.

Left alone, I grow into
a half-disembodied bamboo,
its lower part sunk
into itself on the bank.

Here, old widows and dying men
cherish their freedom,
bowing time after time in obstinate prayers.

While children scream
with this desire for freedom
to transform the world
without even laying hands on it.

In my blindness, at times I fear
I'd wander back to either of them.
In order for me not to lose face,
it is necessary for me to be alone.

Not to meet the woman and her child
in that remote village in the hills
who never had even a little rice
for their one daily meal these fifty years.

And not to see the uncaught, bloodied light
of sunsets cling to the tall white columns
of Parliament House.

In the new temple man has built nearby,
the priest is the one who knows freedom,
while God hides in the dark like an alien.

And each day I keep looking for the light
shadows find excuses to keep.

Trying to find the only freedom I know,
the freedom of the body when it's alone.

The freedom of the silent shale, the moonless coal,
the beds of streams of the sleeping god.
I keep the ashes away,

Notes

try not to wear them on my forehead.

Freedom is the leitmotif in the poem- a different type of freedom from what we usually understand. The poet draws upon the Indian belief system about death as freedom from the body, the bondage of the world, from the physical aspect of life. The imagery of the poem is largely concerned with death and its associated activities .

..my country's body floats down somewhere on the river

A body is cremated on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi and its half-burnt remains are left in the river to float down somewhere. Nobody knows where the remains finally land, may be, in the vastness of the ocean , the ultimate destiny for the river. "somewhere" is unspecified destination in the vast expanse of space.

The body here is not an individual human being but an entire country, a collection of human beings ,now a mere body floating along on the river to an unspecified destination.

Inasmuch as the body is freely floating on the river it is freed from its bondage of mortal life.

The country is now free in another sense. It is now, in 1997, fifty years of freedom from the colonial rule. What if the woman and her child had no sufficient rice even for a daily -one meal , all these fifty years. Freedom from foreign rule did not give them freedom from hunger.

Old widows in Brindavan or Varanasi are free of their worldly attachments. Their kin have abandoned them and they had to live alone in desolation, uncared for and unloved. But don't our old widows and dying men cherish their freedom bowing time after time in obstinate prayers ?

Obstinate prayers are said despite the hopelessness of the situation with an eternal hope that some day God will listen to them and grant a miracle to lift them out of their misery.

While the old and dying pray for their deliverance, the young too pray to change the world even before they have faced it. They have their notions

of Utopia , to which the poet cannot subscribe . Nor can he join the old and the dying in their desire for freedom from bondage. This way he is left to be alone and not meet the starving woman and child or try to find a political solution to the economic and social ills of the society by resorting to the parliament.

In the new temple man has built nearby,
the priest is the one who knows freedom,
while God hides in the dark like an alien.

Beautiful lines .It is the priest who is free against God in the temple, who hides in a dark corner of the temple. The priest retains his own freedom and enjoys the freedom to let God interact with the devotees as and when he wants it . He alone has the power to decide God's availability to the devotees.

The priest is our man and one of us. God is an alien , accessible to us only through this middleman of a priest.

A very interesting juxtaposition is achieved by contrasting things/people who have a choice with those who do not have it.

I watch ::Country is lifeless body with no freedom to watch or participate .

Upper part of bamboo is free::lower part of bamboo is sunk into itself.

Old women and dying men pray for release from physical bondage::Young children want to be in it and transform it.

Priest is free to move about :: God has to hide in a corner.

I keep looking for light that is hid in shadows: shadows keep looking for excuses to keep light

I try to find the only freedom I know: the freedom of the body to be alone

Let us list below all the things involved with freedom or lack of it:

Country's body has to float down the river

left alone :freedom to be alone

bamboo sunk in itself in the lower half

it is necessary for me to be left alone, not meet...etc.

Notes

old women and dying men cherish their freedom but how? By bowing in obstinate prayers

children scream their desire for freedom to change the world

the poet has no choice other than to be alone. Otherwise he has to see this, this..

priest knows freedom but not his God who has no choice

the freedom of the body to be alone

the freedom of the silent shale, a freedom of which the shale is not aware, a freedom that means little.

6.3.4 DAWN AT PURI

Dawn at Puri is one of the most beautiful poems written by Jayanta Mahapatra laced with thought and idea, imagery and reflection. A modern poem by a modern Indian English poet, it is short, but reflective. Just a few lines of poesy mesmerize our imagery and thought which the readers can feel it. The poem is scenic and landscapic too. The Jagannath Puri temple complex with the sea beach is the purview of deliberation.

Crows, innumerable in number, keep cawing, crowing and flying around with the skull lying on the sands tell of different stories. A void all around and a kingdom hit by want, hunger and depravity. This is how he begins the poem set with the three-liners. This is but one scene.

While on the other the white-clothes wearing widows are lined up in rows and queues to enter the Great Temple, who have nothing left with them, all standing in utter submission, held by strong faith and belief.

Their eyes with the looks cast appear to be the ones caught in a net hanging by the dawn's shining strands of faith. Faith and doubt, uncertainty of living and shaky presence of man seem to possess unawares. What is faith? Where is God? What it in one's karma, what it in one's dharma? How the suffering?

Again, the light dazzling light, radiating and glistening is so frail and flimsy that it takes to, falls upon the lepers lying defaced and assembled

together clamoring for deliverance. Here one can reflect upon life's meaning if one likes to search for. Here lies the pity of life. The element of pity purges and galvanizes us. What to ask for? What to get?

And in the meantime, a little far off, one can see the solitary pyre burning on the sands adjacent to the temple complex which also engages the ageing mother of his.

She also wants it that she be cremated here after her death keeps shifting and changing places as do keep desire, shadow, light and imagery.

Endless crow noises

A skull in the holy sands

tilts its empty country towards hunger.

White-clad widowed Women

past the centers of their lives

are waiting to enter the Great Temple

Their austere eyes

stare like those caught in a net

hanging by the dawn's shining strands of faith.

The fail early light catches

ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another,

a mass of crouched faces without names,

and suddenly breaks out of my hide

into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre

that fills my aging mother:

her last wish to be cremated here

twisting uncertainly like light

on the shifting sands

The title of the poem is just and appropriate as it is about the dawn breaking upon in the vicinity of Puri as if someone were photographing

Notes

the Puri temple complex and the sea adjacent to. The idea is one of imagery, thought and reflection and the images like those of the photographer. Endless crow with the noises is the trailer of the starting, the picture of the poem. A holy skull spooky and reminiscent of tells a different story of man and the world, life and afterworld imagery. What is existent here? What is it that lives in here? Human hunger, the hunger of the belly is the main thing.

The smoky blaze of the pyre too is a heart-rending scene. One day he was alive, one day he is burning on the funeral pyre, is the thing. The wish of the poet's mother represents the wish of every Hindu as Jagannath Puri is the swargadwara through which one may enter the gateway to heaven. The cawing of the crows tells of hunger, want and scarcity.

The words which the poet has used in are very beautiful words and expressions. What is life? Where to go? He has taken them all while clutching it all with just one dawn. Endless crow noises, a holy skull in the sands, white-clad widowed women, dawn's shining strands of faith, ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another, the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre, twisting uncertainty light, etc. add to the beauty of the poem.

Jayanta Mahapatra as a poet is first of all an imagist and then anything else we call him. There is word-play; there is photographic quality in him. A professor of physics, here he pictures a dawn break so nicely, engaging in thoughts and ideas so serious and profound.

Dawn at Puri clearly shows it how imagery has been used and applied in while dealing with the topic in hand. There is nothing as to derive for pleasure sake as he does not write with that in his mind. Those who do not know Mahapatra may not understand him at first go. They may take time to understand him as he is not a simple poet to be understood so easily. A poet of some Oriya background, he lapses into abstract thinking. Oriya places and things engage the poetic canvas of his and he longs for them in his creativity. Puri, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Baleshwar and others figure in his poetry so often.

The words he has used in are very meaningful and his poems are really a break from tradition and convention. The linguistic beauty is so prominent in him in the form of word-play and imagery shifting as do man's times and situations.

The starting lines of the small poem outwit us with the use of imagery and reflection, thought and idea, picture and penetration:

Endless crow noises

A skull in the holy sands

tilts its empty country towards hunger.

Crows cawing and flying and the skulls on the holy sands of Jagannath Puri lie in contrasting with each other, telling of a country hit by hunger, want, greed, thirst and the desire for fulfillment. Human thirst, human hunger, how to quench it, how to calm down, overcome it? The skull on the holy sands is a different view of life felt after the asthi-kalasha and the pinda-dana.

The smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre burning is indeed a very beautiful expression full of meaning and picture indescribable:

and suddenly breaks out of my hide

into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre

that fills my aging mother:

One who has not visited Puri will like to visit after reading the poem. Such is the charm of the poem, but the meaning lies in hidden from us. As the dawn-light is frail and shaky so is faith hankered after and professed by us. The world is full of contraries and contradictions. We are just walking shadows. Nothing exists here, lasts in. Nothing is permanent here. Where is God? In service or piety? One needs to reckon with. What are the widows left with? The poet leaves so many questions unanswered just for the readers to feel in. What should we done for them? What is our duty towards them? We have forgotten all that. Just as a photographer keeps taking the snaps so does he with his poetical

camera under the shadow of the Great Temple of Jagannath Puri at dawn-break drawing parallels and comparing them with to reflect upon.

6.3.5 TWILIGHT

An orange flare
lights the pale panes of the hospital
in a final wish of daylight.
It's not yet dark.
In the children's ward
under a mother's face
the dead, always so young.
Water startles in the river's throat.
Its cry:
a plea to share in its curse?
Somewhere, this twilight shall fall
and hide the whiteness of jasmines about to bloom.
Newly-lit lamps
in the houses across the street
make me look out at the wet August evening
that holds up the vast unknown
in such small delicate hands.

Before writing about Twilight, one needs to know it that Jayanta Mahapatra is not a simple writer to be taken simply as is tedious and complex, hard to comprehend and mean. If one knows him not or has no idea with regard to his traits, one may not comprehend him in full as because nihilism and existentialism take the readings away from him. A poet who plays with words and images is very often seemingly meaningless as do come and light and darkness breaking upon and retreating back, as is the creation of the universe is, the break of the sound, who can ever resolve the mystery of life and the world? What is that permanent and durable here and lasting? Everything but short-lived, be that human glory or noteworthy attainment. Nothing, nothing, a poet

of nothing and nothingness, nihilism and existentialism, he walks down the ways never trodden, never laid it bare where words mean it not.

So many evenings, mornings, dawn breaks, twilights, dusks, eve falls, night falls and midnights constitute the crux of his poetry so the moods after taking in various turns and twists of thought and idea and reflection. There is not one, so many poems named as Twilight, which Twilight is it, the matter will tell you, you need to know it by the body of the poem, not the title. Here the twilight he is relaying is one falling on the window-panes of a hospital with a flare, flashing upon and picturing the patients and the wards and the waiting or attending relatives, the kith and kin, the near and dear. An afflicted mother glancing or staring at the dead young tells a different story of pain and anguish.

Jayanta Mahapatra as a poet writes not for our pleasure and joy, but to tax the mind and brain with his observation and the other thing that he means to say is this that the things of the world and Nature go in their own way and they have nothing to be penitent or broodful about. The other aspect too is that there is a vacuum all around. What is written here? How to write the unwritten? Life of moments, hours, years and decades and each of the moment is passing by. Everything lies in a contradictory position. This moment we feel something with, the next moment not with is the thing.

The hospital wards with the children and morose mothers lighted by the orange flare of the twilight are the first imagery that we come across. Again, the scene shifts and takes sides with another set of imagery. The jasmines blooming in the hide of the twilight, about break open and spread a redolence of own, is another set of imagery and reflection.

Again, the newly-lit lamps in the houses of the street make him look at the wet August evening holding the vast space and vacuum to be lifted into such delicate hands.

Twilight is an excellent poem from Jayanta Mahapatra wherein the imagery is splendid and extraordinary. It is a poem to see and feel rather than meaning it. The words used in the poem are beautiful, as such, orange flare, hospital pane, final wish of daylight, children's ward,

Notes

mother's face, whiteness of jasmines, newly-lit lamps in the houses, the vast unknown, delicate hands, etc.

Twilight as a poem does not remain a literary piece, but turns into an image, as the children do while attempting to draw, sketch and paint, pencil it. A small poem it says many a thing unsaid and undescribed. The language employed for the imagery is excellent and a brief poem can contain in so much amazes us.

This is what differentiates from other poets. Jayanta Mahapatra has really come a long way from where it is difficult to look back. Into the poetry structure of a small poem, he fuses in art and craftsmanship with his master strokes of imagery and landscape-painting. Almost all the lines, words and images add to the poetic beauty of his poems. In the beginning one may not take to liking, but one keeps track of his poems, one will be definitely to comprehend his vision. A poet of nothing is what it seems to be and what it seems to be is nothing, he has miles and miles to go into the domain of poesy, this much we can assure about. What one can do is this that one may compare this Twilight with other poems if really one wants to make a comparative study and thinks to be endowed with.

Check your Progress-1

1. Who wrote the poem "Twilight"?

2. Who wrote the poem "Dawn at Puri"?

3. Who wrote the poem "Freedom"?

4. Who wrote the poem “Hunger”?

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learned about Jayanta Mahapatra’s “A Missing Person”, “Hunger”, “Freedom”, “Dawn at Puri” and “Twilight”.

6.5 KEYWORDS

Uncouth: lacking good manners, refinement, or grace

Indirabehn: Madam Indira. The poet is probably alluding to Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, India’s first and only female Prime Minister. ‘Behn’ is the usual Gujarati word of respect while addressing a lady.

Lassi: An Indian drink made of curd

Gujaratis: People living in the Gujarat province of India

Maharashtrians: People living in the Maharashtra province of India

6.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Summarize the “A Missing Person” by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- Analyze the “Hunger” by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- Critically analyze “Dawn at Puri” by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- Write the summary of “Freedom”, and “Twilight” by Jayanta Mahapatra.

6.7 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

- "Jayanta Mahapatra". Poem hunter. Retrieved 16 April 2016.
- "Jayanta Mahapatra : A profile". orissagateway.com. orissagateway.com. Retrieved 9 September 2019.

Notes

- "Sahitya Akademi : Who's Who of Indian Writers". Sahitya Akademi. Sahitya Akademi. Retrieved 27 October 2015.
- "Padma Awards". Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2015. Archived from the original on 15 November 2014. Retrieved 21 July 2015.
- "Jayanta Mahapatra returns Padma Shri protesting 'intolerance'". 23 November 2015.

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- "Twilight" was written by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- "Dawn at Puri" was written by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- "Freedom" was written by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- "Hunger" was written by Jayanta Mahapatra.

UNIT-7 MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY – JAYANTA MAHAPATRA, NISSIM EZEKIEL, ROBIN S NGANGOM - 2

STRUCTURE

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 About Nissim Ezekiel

7.3 Nissim Ezekiel's Poems

7.3.1 Night of the Scorpion

7.3.2 The Patriot

7.3.3 Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher

7.3.4 Background, Casually

7.3.5 Island

7.3.6 Jewish Wedding in Bombay

7.4 Let us sum up

7.5 Keywords

7.6 Questions for Review

7.7 Suggested Reading and References

7.8 Answers to Check your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about Nissim Ezekiel's life;
- you would also go through Nissim Ezekiel's Poems like Night of the Scorpion; The Patriot; Poet Lover and Birdwatcher; Background, Casually; Island and Jewish Wedding In Bombay.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Nissim Ezekiel is one of those poets of modern Indian English poetry, more specially of the post-1947 period who are generally credited with giving some dimension and shape, literary vigour and verve to this nondescript evolving genre of literature, but his contribution is as such that the new critics even go to the extent calling him the father of modernism, which we are not sure of whether right to designate so or not. Whatever be their perception with regard to him, but he is definitely one who matters more for us and the readers of modern Indian English poetry. But it should be kept in mind that Harindranath had still been alive to continue as an old-timer. Had time favored, Burjor Paymaster, Adi K. Sett and others would have grown. P.Lal reviewed the book of Burjor Paymaster negatively. Whatever be that, we do not want to discuss in a supposed to be a way of interpretation.

7.2 ABOUT NISSIM EZEKIEL

Nissim Ezekiel was an Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, editor and art critic. He was a foundational figure in postcolonial India's literary history, specifically for Indian Poetry in English.

He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his poetry collection, "Latter-Day Psalms", by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters. Ezekiel has been applauded for his subtle, restrained and well-crafted diction, dealing with common and mundane themes in a manner that manifests both cognitive profundity, as well as an unsentimental, realistic sensibility, that has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry. Ezekiel enriched and established Indian English language poetry through his modernist innovations and techniques, which enlarged Indian English literature, moving it beyond purely spiritual and orientalist themes, to include a wider range of concerns and interests, including mundane familial events, individual angst and skeptical societal introspection.

Early life

Ezekiel was born on 16 December 1924 in Bombay in Maharashtra. His father was a professor of botany at Wilson College, and his mother was

principal of her own school. The Ezekiels belonged to Mumbai's Marathi-speaking Jewish community known as the Bene Israel.

In 1947, Ezekiel earned a BA in Literature from Wilson College, Mumbai, Bombay University. In 1947-48, he taught English literature and published literary articles.[8] After dabbling in radical politics for a while, he sailed to England in November 1948. He studied philosophy at Birkbeck College, London. After three and a half years stay, Ezekiel worked his way home as a deck-scrubber aboard a ship carrying arms to Indochina.

Career

Ezekiel's first book, *The Bad Day*, appeared in 1952. He published another volume of poems, *The deadly man* in 1960. After working as an advertising copywriter and general manager of a picture frame company, he co-founded the literary monthly *Jumpo*, in 1961. He became art critic of *The Times of India* and edited *Poetry India*. From 1961 to 1972, he headed the English department of Mithibai College, Bombay. *The Exact Name*, his fifth book of poetry was published in 1965. During this period he held short-term tenure as visiting professor at University of Leeds and University of Pondicherry. In 1969, *Writers Workshop*, Ezekiel published his *The Damn Plays*. A year later, he presented an art series of ten programmes for Indian television. In 1976, he translated Jawaharlal Nehru poetry from English to Marathi, in collaboration with Vrinda Nabar, and co-edited a fiction and poetry anthology. His poem *The Night of the Scorpion* is used as study material in Indian and Colombian schools. Ezekiel also penned poems in 'Indian English' like the one based on instruction boards in his favourite Irani café. His poems are used in NCERT and ICSE English textbooks.

Nissim Ezekiel is often considered the father of Modern Indian English poetry by many critics.

He was honored with the Padmashri award by the President of India in 1988 and the Sahitya Akademi cultural award in 1983.

Editor

Notes

He edited The Indian P.E.N., the official organ of P.E.N. All-India Centre, Bombay from The Theosophy Hall, New Marine Lines, Bombay now Mumbai and encouraged poets and writers.

Death

After a prolonged battle with Alzheimer's disease, Nissim Ezekiel died in Mumbai, on 9 January 2004 as doyen of Indian English poetry.

Books by Ezekiel

- 1952: Time To Change
- 1953: Sixty poems
- 1956: The Discovery of India
- 1959: The Third
- 1960: The Unfinished Man
- 1965: The Exact Name
- 1974: Snakeskin and Other Poems, translations of the Marathi poet Indira Sant
- 1976: Hymns in Darkness
- 1982: Latter-Day Psalms
- 1989: Collected Poems 1952-88 OUP

Plays

- 1969: The Three Plays Kolkata: Writers Workshop, India
- Do Not Call it Suicide Madras: Macmillan India, 1993.

Prose

- 1992: Selected Prose
- Naipaul's India and mine- an essay

Editor

- 1965: An Emerson Reader
- 1969: A Joseph King Reader
- 1990: Another India, anthology of fiction and poetry

Poems

- The Couple
- Enterprise[32]
- A Time to Change
- Philosophy
- Island
- For Elkana
- The Professor
- Soap
- Marriage
- In the country cott
- The Paradise Flycatcher
- Night of The Scorpion
- Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.
- Entertainment
- “Background, Casually”
- Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher

Appearances in the following poetry Anthologies

- The Golden Treasure of Writers Workshop Poetry ed. by Rubana Huq and published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta
- Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets ed. by R. Parthasarathy and published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi
- The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets ed. by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi

7.3 NISSIM EZEKIEL’S POEMS

7.3.1 NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

I remember the night my mother

was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours

of steady rain had driven him

to crawl beneath a sack of rice.

Notes

Parting with his poison - flash

of diabolic tail in the dark room -

he risked the rain again.

The peasants came like swarms of flies

and buzzed the name of God a hundred times

to paralyze the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns

throwing giant scorpion shadows

on the mud-baked walls

they searched for him: he was not found.

They clicked their tongues.

With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in
Mother's blood, they said.

May he sit still, they said

May the sins of your previous birth

be burned away tonight, they said.

May your suffering decrease

the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.

May the sum of all evil

balanced in this unreal world

against the sum of good

become diminished by your pain.

May the poison purify your flesh

of desire, and your spirit of ambition,

they said, and they sat around
on the floor with my mother in the centre,
the peace of understanding on each face.
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
more insects, and the endless rain.
My mother twisted through and through,
groaning on a mat.
My father, sceptic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an
incantation.
After twenty hours
it lost its sting.
My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
And spared my children.
"Night of the Scorpion" is a poem by Nissim Ezekiel included the AQA
Anthology. It starts in a house at night where it is raining and a scorpion,
in order to take some shelter, comes to the house. This poem is about
how the scorpion stung the poets mother and the mother's love for her
children.
“ I remember the night my mother

Notes

was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours
of steady rain had driven him
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.”

The poem opens in a way that suggests reflection—the speaker remembers the night his mother was stung by a scorpion, which bit the mother because of its predatory impulse, while hiding beneath a bag of rice to escape from the rain. The speaker specifically remembers this night due to this event—namely, the mother getting bitten. The way in which the mother is bitten is also shown in 'flash of diabolic tail'; the speaker manages to suggest that the scorpion is demonic with its "diabolic" tail, and emphasizes its speed with the word flash. The scorpion then flees the scene and, thus, risks the rain again. A picture of a religious village is created by what the neighbors do to paralyze the scorpion. Their reason for this is that they believe that as the scorpion moves, his poison moves in the blood of the mother. It is also implied that they live in a caring, close-knit village by the fact that the neighbors feel welcome at all. The speaker is displeased by their arrival, comparing them to flies as they veritably buzzed around the mother. They tried to provide reasons and many relied on superstition to guess what the problem was. The villagers tried to find the scorpion but they couldn't. By saying, "With candles and with lanterns throwing giant scorpion shadows on the sun-baked walls." the speaker is implying there is still evil haunting the house, even after the scorpion had left the house. This could also be implying that the shadows of the various house hold utensils and other items are converted by the brain of the searchers into the shadow of a scorpion— as that is what they are looking for. Many things were tried to help relieve the mother's pain but none worked. The speaker watches, helpless. The speaker's father who was sceptic and rationalist, tried to save his wife by using powder, mixture, herbs, hybrid and even by pouring a little paraffin upon the bitten toe and put a match to it, this reflects to one of the village peasant saying, "May the sins of your previous birth be burned away tonight." Which the father tries to do; Not for burning her sins but to burn away the poison residing inside the mother, which reflects her sins being atoned for. The speaker watches

the vain holy man performing his deceptive incantations but he cannot do anything to stop it. The peasants, finally accepting the fate of the mother, try to put a positive spin on the situation by saying that even if the mother died, her next life would be less painful, as she atoning for her future sins by enduring this pain. After twenty hours, the poison loses its sting and the mother dies, the poison from the scorpion killed the mother, it is scientifically impossible for the mother to survive. A sign of her prevailing love and affection for her children is shown when she thanks God that she was stung and not her children. It came from a religious background and Nissim wrote this poem trying to give the impression of anger, but also an underlying message of motherly love, along with a hint of culture and superstition..

"After twenty hours

it lost its sting.

My mother only said

Thank God the scorpion picked on me

And spared my children." - Nissim Ezekiel

Mother does not die at the end as what the poem says at one place. The end of the poem brings a positive turn. The effect of the poison dies down making mother recover and relieve herself of the pain. She even thanks the God for scorpion stinging her and not her kids as she thinks they couldn't have endured the pain of the scorpion sting.

7.3.2 THE PATRIOT

I am standing for peace and non-violence.

Why world is fighting fighting

Why all people of world

Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,

I am simply not understanding.

Ancient Indian Wisdom is 100% correct,

I should say even 200% correct,

Notes

But modern generation is neglecting -
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.
Other day I'm reading newspaper

How one goonda fellow
Threw stone at Indirabehn.
Must be student unrest fellow, I am thinking.
Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I am saying
Lend me the ears.
Everything is coming -
Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception.
Be patiently, brothers and sisters.
You want one glass lassi?
Very good for digestion.
With little salt, lovely drink,
Better than wine;
Not that I am ever tasting the wine.
I'm the total teetotaller, completely total,
But I say
Wine is for the drunkards only.
What you think of prospects of world peace?
Pakistan behaving like this,
China behaving like that,
It is making me really sad, I am telling you.

Really, most harassing me.

All men are brothers, no?

In India also

Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Hindiwallahs

All brothers -

Though some are having funny habits.

Still, you tolerate me,

I tolerate you,

One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.

You are going?

But you will visit again

Any time, any day,

I am not believing in ceremony

Always I am enjoying your company

Nissim Ezekiel, known as the father of modern Indian English poetry, wrote "The Patriot" in an Indianized English. The poem doesn't seem British in style and diction. In fact, there are a lot of Hindustani words used in the poem to give a native and humorous taste. It can be said that it is written keeping in mind English-speaking Indians. The poem satirizes Indian conventions yet the narrator is ready to embrace Indian culture and its diversity.

The narrator hails and supports the Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence. He is fed up of all "fightings" sprouting in the world. He criticizes people to ignore Mahatma Gandhi and his principles. The narrator then proclaims the "Ancient Indian wisdom" and its authenticity. He takes a jibe at the modern generation's tendencies featuring nothing but excessive flaunting of fashion and imported items.

Notes

He reveals that he reads Times of India to improve his English language skills. In the Daily, he reads a story of a man who hurled a stone at "Indirabehn [Indian Prime Minister]". The narrator alleges that the man must be a student. In his head, he addresses his "friends, Romans, countrymen" to hear his voice or opinion. He refers to contemporary political controversies through "Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception". He tries to maintain cool by advising patient and offering lassi . He adds that it is good for digestion and better than wine. Even though he clarifies that he is not going to taste wine ever. He boasts that he is a total teetotaler and refers to wine as a drink for drunkards only.

He asks someone's opinion of world peace. The response is that Pakistan and China behaving belligerent . All this tussle makes him sad. He raises the idea of brotherhood of all men and gives instances of Indian fraternity belonging to different states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and North-India. He finds some of their practices funny as he was a Jew and majority of people living in his vicinity were either Hindus or Muslims. He admits that they have their oddities and differences, still they tolerate each other. He envisages the advent of "Ram Rajya" i.e. a Utopian state. He asks one if he is leaving India but hopes that he/she will return again any time, any day. He denounces welcome ceremony but likes to receive company from the visitor.

7.3.3 POET, LOVER, BIRDPWATCHER

To force the pace and never to be still

Is not the way of those who study birds

Or women. The best poets wait for words.

The hunt is not an exercise of will

But patient love relaxing on a hill

To note the movement of a timid wing;

Until the one who knows that she is loved

No longer waits but risks surrendering -

In this the poet finds his moral proved
 Who never spoke before his spirit moved.
 The slow movement seems, somehow, to say much more.
 To watch the rarer birds, you have to go
 Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow
 In silence near the source, or by a shore
 Remote and thorny like the heart's dark floor.
 And there the women slowly turn around,
 Not only flesh and bone but myths of light
 With darkness at the core, and sense is found
 But poets lost in crooked, restless flight,
 The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

In "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher," the speaker describes the process of writing poetry and compares it to being a lover or a birdwatcher. The speaker notes that "to force the pace and never to be still" will not get one very far if one wants to "study birds / or women" . The speaker then reveals the point of these comparisons: "The best poets wait for words" .

The speaker notes that this waiting should not be strenuous and instead should be as peaceful as "patient love relaxing on a hill" . From this relaxation, the poet/lover/birdwatcher can notice details, like a bird's wing or the moment a woman gives in to love.

The speaker moves on to say that he finds much more meaning from "slow movement" . In order to find the rarer birds, the speaker advises, one must go off the beaten path toward areas that are "remote and thorny" . Once one arrives at such a location, the bird or woman one was chasing will "slowly turn around" . Poetic creativity is discovered in this place, a power so transformative that because of it, "the deaf can hear, the blind recover sight" .

Analysis

"Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" is known as one of Ezekiel's more 'serious' poems, as is evidenced by the content and the form. Ezekiel does not use an ironic tone at all in this poem, which is relatively rare for him. The seriousness of the content is reflected in a strict meter and rhyme scheme. The capitalizations at the beginning of each line have returned. Additionally, the poem is broken up into two stanzas with two lines each, which visually signals symmetry and perfection for the reader. All of these formal elements slow the reader down and force her to digest that which she is reading and in turn take it more seriously.

Because this poem is essentially about writing poems, it can be classified as an *ars poetica*. Ezekiel has written many an *ars poetica* throughout his career, but "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" is by far his most famous. Perhaps this is because it is only partly about the writing process; the rest of the poem is about nature and love. In fact, the transition from one image to another is so seamless in this poem that the poet, lover, and birdwatcher melt into one persona in order to carry the poem to the end.

This poem contains the theme of self-examination, which pops up again and again throughout Ezekiel's work. He notes that his process is hardly orthodox: "and sense is found / By poets lost in crooked, restless flight". It is this "restless" flight that the poet is forced to complete in the search for inspiration. Likewise, the bird in the poem is symbolic for the quest for self-knowledge, which turns out to be elusive, restless, and often rare in Ezekiel's writing. In the same vein, the female image can be read as representing a fertile creative impulse. No real advancements are made in the poem, however, until the poet, lover, and birdwatcher become one.

7.3.4 BACKGROUND, CASUALLY

1

A poet-rascal-clown was born,
The frightened child who would not eat
Or sleep, a boy of meagre bone.
He never learnt to fly a kite,

His borrowed top refused to spin.

I went to Roman Catholic school,
A mugging Jew among the wolves.
They told me I had killed the Christ,
That year I won the scripture prize.
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears.
I grew in terror of the strong
But undernourished Hindu lads,
Their prepositions always wrong,
Repelled me by passivity.
One noisy day I used a knife.

At home on Friday nights the prayers
Were said. My morals had declined,
I heard of Yoga and of Zen.
Could I, perhaps, be rabbi-saint?
The more I searched, the less I found
Twenty-two: time to go abroad.
First, the decision, then a friend
To pay the fare. Philosophy,
Poverty and Poetry, three
Companions shared my basement room.

2

The London seasons passed me by.
I lay in bed two years alone,
And then a Woman came to tell
My willing ears I was the Son
Of Man. I knew that I had failed
In everything, a bitter thought.
So, in an English cargo-ship

Notes

Taking French guns and mortar shells
To Indo-China, scrubbed the decks,
And learned to laugh again at home.

How to feel it home, was the point
Some reading had been done, but what
Had I observed, except my own
Exasperation? All Hindus are
Like that, my father used to say,
When someone talked too loudly, or
Knocked at the door like the Devil.
They hawked and spat. They sprawled around.
I prepared for the worst. Married,
Changed jobs, and saw myself a fool.

The song of my experience sung,
I knew that all was yet to sing.
My ancestors, among the castes,
Were aliens crushing seed for bread

3

One among them fought and taught,
A Major bearing British arms.
He told my father sad stories
Of the Boer War. I dreamed that
Fierce men had bound my feet and hands.
The later dreams were all of words.
I did not know that words betray
But let the poems come, and lost
That grip on things the worldly prize.
I would not suffer that again.
I look about me now, and try

To formulate a plainer view:

The wise survive and serve to play

The fool, to cash in on

The inner and the outer storms.

The Indian landscape sears my eyes.

I have become a part of it

To be observed by foreigners.

They say that I am singular,

Their letters overstate the case.

I have made my commitments now.

This is one: to stay where I am,

As others choose to give themselves

In some remote and backward place.

My backward place is where I am.

After coming back from England, now his heart wants it not to go anywhere. This is his land of birth and schooling; his karma and dharma. Where to move away? He feels within. The ancestral, paternal link can never be shaken off. He has become an indivisible part of it.

A background casually not, seriously too not, but lightly, jokingly is the point of our rehearsal. Poet Nissim is in the theatre of poetry and is rehearsing the drama of his life just as a convent boy does. None but he himself is introducing and none but he himself is admiring with claps and bravos and well-dones. Nissim the showman, the artiste is the thing, just a disco jockey not, but as a hotelier, a hosteller he is introducing.

A poet rascal, bloody-bastard, tomnoddy, idiot, how silly, whatever he knows he is using to start the poem and this is but convent style of gossiping, joking, introducing oneself which but Nissim is following. As after the break the convent school boys and girls in ironed shirts and shorts and canvas shoes come out with the badges, looking modern, smart, frank and bold, talking and gossiping., bidding hi-hello, bye-bye,

Notes

see you so is the case here with Nissim. Nissim is trying to speak in English, thinking himself an Englishman, but with whom to talk and joke in India if the circle is not like-minded?

Let see what the poet rascal is saying, who the poet rascal abusing himself? This is just a technique of introducing oneself in a comical style whose master is he definitely as he knows the art as how to recreate and do the jokes. The word means a cruel or annoying fellow. It also means a mean, unprincipled, or dishonest person; a mischievous person or animal. After reading the poem, we feel it within to look up the words stupid, silly, idiot and so on in the dictionary used in sentences. The word stupid means lacking ordinary quickness and keenness of mind, dull, inane, pointless, silly, unwise, showing poor judgement or little intelligence.

When the poet says that he has some commitments to make, he makes us remind of Robert Frost and his lines relating to the dark and deep woods and the miles to go and that he has some duty and obligation to fulfill as he is committed to his family, society and the nation before he goes away finally.

When he talks about his family and the setting of their foot on India and one from his them participating in the Boer War, the context reminds us of the shipwrecked brothers of H.W.Longfellow's A Psalm of Life.

The jokes of the convent boys he recreates and regales them, the talks, gossips and tidbits of the going to be Englishmen in India to our amazement and astonishment, how could the Europeans be on Indian soil.

This is his introduction by the way, just by the way which he wished to introduce, none but he himself telling about his identity, race, ethnicity and tradition and coping up in the midst of multi-lingualism and culturalism.

Background, Casually is a poem of race, ethnicity and family background, personal, confessional and anecdotal, dramatic, ironic, poetic and philosophical. Herein lies it the philosophy of life; the poetic narration of the self, the personal. A master poet of the ironic mode he

caricatures, jokes and comments upon the ways of life and the world seen through personally. A Jewish persona lived and brought up in India he tells of the shipwrecks and the missing links. One of his uncles went to participate in the Boer War who told about the sad stories of war. His forefathers used to press oil and the hooded bullocks used were used in to extract it.

Let the people call it a backward place if it is, but he as a man has many commitments to execute from here. The place where he is now is it all. He belongs to it and has nowhere to go. The casual and clownish background is interesting indeed, rarely has been given in such a way he is giving. The wise make placed in different situations of life may even play the fool to study the inner and outer storms which is but a type of introspection. The song of experience tells him that where to move out, this is but India where lived the ancestors or yours.

7.3.5 ISLAND

Island as a poem is but a history of Bombay, what had it been, what has it become now-a-days. When it had been a landscape of villages, how would it have looked. But today it is not the same Bombay which it used to be once. Bombay is the place of his birth and nativity. The sea waves come washing the shore; the breeze entertains it. As Pritish is attached to Calcutta so is Nissim , so Adil Jussawalla to Bombay which has grown from a cluster of villages.

The island which used to be a collage of the seven island imagery and landscape how has it changed and turned over the years, if to contrast with the past and the present, is the thing of deliberation here. Had it been that, the scenery would have been different, but land fill and reclamation have given it a new look of own, commercial, developmental, cosmopolitan, artificial and modern with the skyscrapers and slums engaging the landscape, reflecting the growth of mind otherwise. Sometimes he seems to cry for help, but takes to his counsel ultimately. What to do? Change is the law of nature and man keeps going. To stop is to close by, come to an end. But life cannot and if it has to, progress will stop.

Notes

The poet hears distorted echoes of his own ambiguous voice and of dragons calling themselves man. How can it be? Humanity has still hopes from. How can the dragons finish it off so easily? Whatever be that, oblivious of that all, the breeze keeps refreshing, tempting and soothing, the fresh sea breeze windy and wavy enough to take us far forgetting the things. The things will keep changing even in future as it is the song of progression. What it is after, what to say about? Quite ignorant of all that, leaving it all, let us keep going. To go is the best. Where to go from? This is the place to get salvation from ultimately and this engages the mindscape when the things will close by naturally.

Unsuitable for song as well as sense
the island flowers into slums
and skyscrapers, reflecting
precisely the growth of my mind.
I am here to find my way in it.
Sometimes I cry for help
But mostly keep my own counsel.
I hear distorted echoes
Of my own ambiguous voice
and of dragons claiming to be human.
Bright and tempting breezes
Flow across the island,
Separating past from the future;
Then the air is still again
As I sleep the fragrance of ignorance.
How delight the soul with absolute
sense of salvation, how
hold to a single willed direction?
I cannot leave the island,
I was born here and belong.
Even now a host of miracles
hurries me a daily business,

minding the ways of the island
 as a good native should,
 taking calm and clamour in my stride.

Taking the calm and clamour of the Island, Nissim sings the song of life and the world here in this poem. Even though miracles continue to strike him, the poet as a good native loves and likes it very much. The din and bustle, the humdrum and routine work of it, full of hectic activity and bristle, keep him busy all through.

Nissim Ezekiel has really given us a very good poem in the form of Island, but had he elaborated the history, growth and development of it in terms of loss and gain, it would have been excellent as many may not cope with his history of Bombay said indirectly. Which matter who knows it? Everything is not known to everybody.

Though the poet mentions them not, but geographically and historically the names of Isle of Bombay, Colaba, Old Woman's Island, Mahim, Mazagaon, Parel and Worli flash over the mind's eye while reading the poem, how were they in the beginning. An archipelago of islands was it, but it changed and changed after land reclamation and land fill. Bombay had not been that Bombay which we see it today. History of Bombay under the Portuguese, history of Bombay under the British and history of Mumbai we need to know it. Old Bombay of the early twentieth century and that of the twenty-first century are contrasting from each other.

A beautiful Bombay which was it initially has turned over populous and overcrowded, a natural scape so wide and varied with the sea view refreshing now has taken a different look with modern build-up and pile. Whatever be the point of deliberation Nissim has no qualms, nothing to complain. Bombay will go in its way which it has been perusing for so long, chartering the course of development and progress.

Island is a modern song resonant with the imagery and landscape of Bombay. A panoramic view of it will really tell of how it has grown over the years, how cosmopolitan and developed looks it today? How overgrown and populated has it become today apart from the scenes and

sites natural, landscapic and refreshing? Bombay is Bombay, the life of Nissim.

Whatever say we,

without reading Auden, Wordsworth and Dylan Thomas, can one such a poem? A place poem it has the specific beauty of its own. The poem reminds us of Bombay: A History of A City, how had it been geographically, scenic and panoramic, but it does not mean that engineering, technology and construction have done nothing to it. Nissim should also note it how it has changed Bombay to Mumbai.

7.3.6 Jewish Wedding In Bombay

Jewish Wedding In Bombay is one of the most interesting poems of Nissim in which the poet as a bride describes what it happened to when he went to marry as per the Jewish nomenclature and protocol, ritual and tradition. The poem though of an autobiographical note hinges on the anecdote and the art of narration. The confessional detail also needs to be taken into consideration. Though he calls it a Jewish wedding, but the pranks are almost those of ours.

The mother of the bride shed a tear or two, but was not really crying as it appeared to the poet, as he had been marking it at that time and came to notice it himself. It was a thing to do and so she did it enjoying the moment. The bride laughed when he sympathized and noticing it he asked her not to be silly. "Don't be silly. It's a prestige matter. What will they say if laugh you? Or laugh I?," perhaps is the thing. Nissim Ezekiel should mark it that some mothers of the daughters weep and cry in such a way that it will melt the on-lookers. At that time what would he have done?

Her brothers had a shoe of his with them, stolen or hidden by them and for that he paid money to get them back. The game delighted all the children of the neighbours who never stopped staring at him, though felt himself like a reluctant groom of the day. "Don't mind, don't mind, it happens in", should he not add on.

Nissim as a bridegroom never demanded for any dowry nor had been in support of it. A modern man he never liked to take from the father of the bride. A good boy indeed. When the father of the girl asked about the jewellery to be given to him, he said, "I don't know." It made him laugh.

There were brass bands out the synagogue. One or two chanting processions followed it thereafter with the people in skull caps and hats and shawls. The grape juice was given to the husband and the wife from the same glass.

The glass was broken and the congregation scattered with a clapping as per the Mosaic Law. Well, that is all about the function, the ceremony on the midway. There was nothing as solemn or beautiful to strike. Everything but was ordinary and interesting. The people including himself had not been sure of their belief which held they, but were participating in the function.

The most orthodox was the taking cheap beef which they ate and some took to pork as the Sabbath was for betting, swearing and drinking.

His father liberal and good never liked those orthodox people drawing their lines in their own way which suited him not. His mother was quite progressive to be clutched along.

After the clapping, the bride and the bridegroom went to the studio of Lobo and Fernandes , world class specialists in making wedding portraits. Lying on the floor-mattress of the wife's apartment kitchen they kept gossiping. They went on saying let us be doing this or that, darling.

Years before she had said that she felt disappointed. Where had he been for so many years? Where had she been is she had to come to? But when quarreled they for the first time, she said it to him to return the virginity he stained, but hearing it he felt amused and perplexed as what to say, but said cutely, curtly? He responded had he known after reading one of the books instructing so, he would have definitely. The lovers' hush is it in this poem; love's secret gossips. All those who love will only be able to say about. Into the lovers' paradise Nissim and his counterpart seem to be partaking of the gossip. The jingling wedding bells of the poem

Notes

enthrall the readers. Wedding costume, decoration, photography, strange guests, relatives, bands, rituals, prayers, good wishes, occasional gala and gaiety add to the beauty of the poem.

There is something as that of Strange Fits of Passion and Lost Love in Jewish Wedding In Bombay. A lover's words only a lover can take to as love is a matter of the heart. But apart from love and love-making, he uses and applies in fun, humour, joke, caricature and irony.

Her mother shed a tear or two but wasn't really crying. It was the thing to do, so she did it enjoying every moment. The bride laughed when I sympathized, and said don't be silly.

Her brothers had a shoe of mine and made me pay to get it back. The game delighted all the neighbours' children, who never stopped staring at me, the reluctant bridegroom of the day.

There was no dowry because they knew I was 'modern' and claimed to be modern too. Her father asked me how much jewellery I expected him to give away with his daughter. When I said I didn't know, he laughed it off.

There was no brass band outside the synagogue but I remember a chanting procession or two, some rituals, lots of skull-caps, felt hats, decorated shawls and grape juice from a common glass for bride and bridegroom.

I remember the breaking of the glass and the congregation clapping which signified that we were well and truly married according to the Mosaic Law.

Well that's about all. I don't think there was much that struck me as solemn or beautiful. Mostly, we were amused, and so were the others. Who knows how much belief

we

had?

Even the most orthodox it was said ate beef because it was cheaper, and some even risked their souls by relishing pork.

The Sabbath was for betting and swearing and drinking.

Nothing extravagant, mind you, all in a low key and very decently kept in check. My father used to say, these orthodox chaps certainly know how to draw the line in their own crude way. He himself had drifted into the liberal creed but without much conviction, taking us all with him. My mother was very proud of being 'progressive'.

Anyway as I was saying, there was that clapping and later we went to the photographic studio of Lobo and Fernandes, world-famous specialists in wedding portraits. Still later, we lay on a floor-matress in the kitchen of my wife's family apartment and though it was part midnight she kept saying let's do it darling let's do it darling so we did it.

More than ten years passed before she told me that she remembered being very disappointed. Is that all there is to it? She had wondered. Back from London eighteen months earlier, I was horribly out of practice.

During our first serious marriage quarrel she said Why did you take my virginity from me? I would gladly have returned it, but not one of the books I had read instructed me how.

Though we call him a faded romantic, he is very interesting and charming indeed and can amuse to the core which a romantic too cannot do so easily. Nissim is an expert in love-making, as he knows the art and craft of pleasing and winning over.

Notes

Jewish Wedding In Bombay is a poem of love and marriage. Outwardly he appears to be faded, but from his inward within he is a very amusing fellow. He dwells in the lovers' paradise and sings of love marriage, birthday parties , late night dances and park meets. The other poem titled Marriage too is just like it. Jewish Wedding In Bombay as a bridal song is remarkable. None ahs depicted in such a way the pleasure and joy of marriage. Andrew Marvell's To His Coy Mistress and John Donne's The Sun Rising can be quoted in this context.

Nissim's Jewish Wedding In Bombay is famous for the whispers of love and love-making, pairing of the couple, meeting of the hearts, playing of the bands and music, dancing of the parties, smiling of the bride and the bridegroom, taking of juice from the same tumbler and doing of prayers to scatter around. The beauty of the synagogue as the attic of the poem foreshadows it in adding to Maharashtrian Indianness and liberal perspective held in.

Check your Progress-1

1. Who wrote the poem "Jewish Wedding in Bombay"?

2. Who wrote the poem "Night of the Scorpion"?

3. Who wrote the poem "Background, Casually"?

4. When was Nissim Ezekiel awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983

7.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learned about:

- Nissim Ezekiel's life.
- Nissim Ezekiel's Poems :
 - Night of the Scorpion
 - The Patriot
 - Poet Lover and Birdwatcher
 - Background, Casually
 - Island
 - Jewish Wedding In Bombay

7.5 KEYWORDS

- Dialectic: Holding two different opinions or points of view at the same time
- Equipoise: Even distribution of weight; even balance; equilibrium
- Élan: Energy, style, and enthusiasm
- Bacilli: Rod-shaped bacteria
- Gethsemane: The garden outside Jerusalem mentioned in Mark 14. The setting of the arrest of Jesus.

7.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write about Nissim Ezekiel's life.
- Summarize the poem "Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel.
- Analyze the poem "The Patriot" by Nissim Ezekiel.
- Write the summary of the poem "Poet Lover and Birdwatcher" by Nissim Ezekiel.

7.7 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

- Verghese, C. Paul . "The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel". Indian Literature. jstor.org. 15 : 63–75. JSTOR 23329802.
- Dwivedi, A. N. . "Modernity in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry". World Literature Today. jstor.org. 66 : 432–434. doi:10.2307/40148360. JSTOR 40148360.
- Dulai, Surjit S. . "NISSIM EZEKIEL : The Father of Contemporary Indian English Poetry". Journal of South Asian Literature. jstor.org. 35 : 123–177. JSTOR 40873766.
- "Poets who took Indian poetry to the next level". timesofindia.indiatimes.com. timesofindia.indiatimes.com. 21 March 2017. Retrieved 24 August 2018.
- "The Indian P.E.N". Google Books. 1978. Retrieved 15 January 2016.
- http://www.profkvdominic.com/?page_id=384

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- “Jewish Wedding in Bombay” was written by Nissim Ezekiel.
- “ Night of the Scorpion” was written by Nissim Ezekiel.
- “ Background, Casually” was written by Nissim Ezekiel.
- Nissim Ezekiel was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983.