Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi
Tandon Open University

Master of Arts

MAEN-116(N)

Indian Literature in English Translation

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BLOCK-I INTRODUCTION

Block-I explores the concept of Indian Literature and how it expanded in the course of time and how it is different from other literatures of the world. It highlights the concept of nation and how Indian Literature played significant roles in strengthening the unity of the nation. This Block covers the major literary works produced before independence and after independence of India. It also discusses about the advent of translation in India and how the tradition of translation unified Indian culture and civilization.

UNIT-1 INTRODUCING LITERATURES OF INDIA

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Imagining Nation as an Idea

1.3 Defining Indian Literature

1.4 Indian Literatures in Ancient Period

1.5 Indian Literatures in Medieval Period

1.6 Summing Up

1.7 Questions

1.8 Suggested Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this *Unit* we propose to explore and analyze the concept of Indian Literature and how it is distinct from the literatures of other countries. As India is distinct from other countries so is its literature. Keeping in mind the specifications of India as a nation, we aim to arrive at the following key points :

- India as a nation;
- The concept of Indian Literature; and
- Indian literature in ancient and middle period.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since this Unit aims to familiarize the learners with the concept of 'Indian literature' and its growth during ancient and medieval periods, it is imperative to first know the character of the country and thereafter it would be possible to discuss literatures of the country. The history of India is so old that it cannot be recorded chronologically with exactitude. Indian civilization is one among the oldest surviving civilizations of the world. The important and surprising thing about Indian civilization is that it has survived in all eras.

Having read carefully this Unit, we hope that learners will enrich their knowledge about the language and literature of India. It is expected from them that they will prepare their own answers to the questions asked in section 1.7. It is also hoped that they will make sure the study of more books as suggested in the section 1.8.

1.2 IMAGINING NATION AS AN IDEA

Imagining a nation is an act of mind. Political and geographical characteristics definitely evoke a picture in our minds but they do not offer the holistic view of a nation. When we are asked in regard to the idea of a nation, we are immediately taken to points such as the language spoken and written, literature, history, religion, values, food habits, clothing sense, behaviour and greetings. These pointers help to form a total view of a nation significantly. Political and territorial information of a nation do form but the partial view. To western scholars, nation is meant for a monolithic construct. That is, one well-marked territory, one government, one language, one religion, one literature, and one culture. Thus, plurality is abnegated and homogeneity promoted. Benedict Anderson, a quite

popular scholar and authority on the concept of nation, in his book *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991) defines nation as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). A nation is of course imagined because no one can meet each and every person living in a region. It is the mental mapping of the community. It is actually fraternity that makes the 'imagining' possible. The community sense is strengthened through print-capitalism that is, newspapers, novels and anthems.

Parth Chatterjee does not subscribe to the views of Anderson in his book *The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993). The reason was that Anderson was interested only in political mappings and was oblivious of cultural mappings. In the context of Indian freedom struggle, Parth Chatterjee terms the political imagining of the nation 'the derivative discourse' because it was westernized method. The west won the east politically but the former could never rule over the latter culturally.

Earnest Renan in the essay "What is a Nation?" published in *Nation and Narration* (1990) does not think race, religion, language, commerce, and border very much important in the imagining of a nation and that is why he lay emphasis on commonality among its people. Renan, also like Anderson, bears Eurocentric lens. Renan in the same essay "What is a Nation?" defines :

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present- day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. (*Nation and Narration* 19)

For Renan, a nation subscribes to the large-scale solidarity made from sacrifices. It is, according to him, 'a daily plebiscite'. The idea of a nation does not impress the feeling of stagnancy because it survives to be in process. Saying precisely, it is an incomplete project.

Homi K. Bhabha in his "Introduction" to *Nation and Narration* (1990) criticizes all efforts being rendered towards forming Third World Countries into a homogenous entity. He points out that all ideas of nationhood, nation, and nationality are subjected to simply narration. He writes that "nations… find full scope in minds' eye" (Bhabha 1).

To Bhabha, nation is a social construct. It is narrativized. The narration of nation is ambivalent and aporic. Homi K. Bhabha challenges liberal notions of national identity. He does not deny ideological and political attributes to the notions of nation acknowledging its historical limitations. The identity of a nation is narrated by two ways- pedagogical and performative. The former deals with sociological facets whereas the latter the open and becoming nature of narration about nation. The national identity is endlessly formed. Nation is an ideological construction which is changed and re-changed.

To this end, it is certain that nation is an idea and "if we take nation as an idea for granted, there may be thousands of versions of a nation. A nation as an idea can flourish multiple times across the political boundaries. If a nation is not tangible, it cannot be successfully measured in a concrete term. If a nation fails inhabiting the minds of people as one, it cannot be really a nation. In postmodern era, the term nation cannot be defined strictly in regard to history, culture, border, language, and ethnicity" (Mishra 2)

1.3 DEFINING INDIAN LITERATURE

India, being a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-cultural nation cannot be looked at and evaluated from the principles that support monoletheism. Its diverse and complex character evades any kind of generalization. India as an entity is deeply rooted in pluralism. It is for sure politically one entity but it is subcontinental culturally. Its all-encompassing and all-inclusive spirit and character promotes tangible diversity and abstract unity. It honours every kind of singularity. India inheres all types of colourful divergences pertaining to language, literature, dialect, food, clothing, festival, manner and so on so forth. The colourful singularities of India have been always mind-boggling for all those who are unfamiliar with it. India as a nation has always existed and occupied the minds of Indians. It was only intensified during the anti-colonial movements. So, India as an imagining construct seems to be "less territorial" but "more spiritual" (Das xiii). More than one thousand languages and dialects are surviving and continuously flourishing which bear testimony to the all-inclusive spirit and nature of India. All these languages and dialects have been found well enough for the expressions of emotions, feelings and thoughts. As India is marked by its diversity and adapting potential so is its literature. Multidimensionality is the defining feature of Indian literature.

The phrase 'Indian Literature' is usually used as a collective noun meaning all types of writings originated in the soil of British India and thereafter in the Republic of India, worthy to be read, discussed and evaluated across the country and the world. But the phrase 'Indian literatures' is sometimes used to address all literary works written in regional languages of India. But on the whole, "Indian literature is a complex of literatures, related to one another, at times by geographical proximity, at times by the shared history" (Das xiv). Indian literature works towards the preservation of the uniqueness of the literature and history of each language and community. However, some critics see the concept of 'Indian Literature' is untenable in India for its multilingualism. The concept of 'Indian Literature' resists linguistic homogenization or standardization of any kind. In this regard, the statement of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a great Indian educationist that "Indian literature is one, though written in different languages" (Satchidanandan online) holds good though stated in nationalist context.

Dr. K. M. George, the pioneer of comparative Indian studies and literatures, in his book *Comparative Indian Literature* (1984) points out that the Indian Literature "is the sum total of the literatures produced in the Indian languages, modern and classical" (ix). He likens Indian Literature to the wicks of the old traditional brass lamp : "Just as many wicks produce one light, India's many languages produce one literature" (George x). What Dryden has said about Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* that is, 'Here is God's plenty' is very much true to Indian Literature. India is a salad-bowl carrying all kinds of salad ingredients keeping their identity and nature unaffected. Indian Literature truly believes in promoting and respecting every variety. Jawaharlal Nehru had the same opinion about India. He had found similar "moral and mental qualities" (61) in every Indian. In clearer terms, it is the cultural binding that has held all seen diversities together.

1.4 INDIAN LITERATURE IN ANCIENT PERIOD

Ancient Indian literature or Classical Indian literature is as old as Indian civilization. Therefore, "The history of Indian civilization is shrouded in mystery; it is ageless and beyond human measurement of time" (Srivastava 3). A large portion of the earliest works of Indian literature was subjected to oral transmission. The classical Indian literature originated in the Vedic period. The *Vedas* are the earliest works of Indian literature. The hymns of the Vedas have been preserved through the subtle recital system without the loss of a single syllable down the centuries. The time of the Vedas cannot be pinpointedly ascertained. Some scholars who think that the Vedas are younger

than the Indus Valley Civilization ascertain the Vedic age from 2000 BC or 1500 BC. According to Max Muller, the *Rig Veda* was written before 1000 BC. According to Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the Vedas are eternal and ageless. These are the origin of all kinds of knowledge.

The all four Vedas- the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda and two hundred (though 108 recognised) Upanishads are written in Sanskrit. These works are the treasure house of knowledge. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two great epics. The former was written by the Adi Kavi Maharshi Valmiki and the latter by Maharshi Ved Vyas. The Ramayana shows us the image of an ideal society whereas the Mahabharata is about the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Bhagavada Gita, which is the essence of divine wisdom, is contained in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is the longest and masterly work of the world. It is the earliest text, which draws the map of Bharat in political sense only to keep it up as a unit. It focusses on social, political, religious and philosophical aspects of life. Hereafter, the Puranas, eighteen in number, are the sacred works of Indian literature. These Puranas propagate spiritual messages through stories, myths, legends and sermons to teach ordinary people.

Bharatmuni (3^{rd} century BC) is the earliest critic on the art of drama. His *Natyashastra* is still considered to be the lone reliable text on dramaturgy. Panini is the earliest grammarian of ancient India. He belonged to the extreme north-west part of India. He flourished probably in 4^{th} century BC. His *Ashtadhyayi* consisted of some 4000 sutras is the most trusted work of Sanskrit grammar. Patanjali who belonged to 2^{nd} century BC is popular for his *Yoga-Sutra*. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, a 3^{rd} century BC text, deals with nuances of statecraft and economics. Bharavi, a six-century playwright, wrote *Kiratarjuniyam* based on the dialogue between Kirata (Lord Shiv) and Arjuna. Bhartrihari, who lived in the first half of 7^{th} century, was a poet and grammarian. He wrote *Vakyapadiya,* which deals with the philosophy of grammar. Bhasa, who flourished in 3^{rd} century, wrote many plays on the stories of *Mahabharata*. His famous plays are *Madhyamavyayogam* (Bhim-Hidimba reunion), *Dutavakyama* (Krishna as emissary to Kauravas' court) and *Urubhangam* (Bhim-Duryodhana duel).

The Gupta Era is said to be the golden period by several historians. It existed from the mid 3^{rd}century BC to mid 6^{th}century AD. During that period, writers such as Kalidas, Aryabhata, Varahamihira and Vatsyayana wrote ageless texts. These were the gems of their times. Kalidas has always enjoyed the readership down the centuries. He is presently on the syllabi of most of the Indian universities. Kalidas is the greatest playwright of Sanskrit. His major plays include the *Abhigyan-Shakuntalam*, *Meghadutam*, *Kumarasambhavam*, and *Raghuvansham*. Varahamihir was a famous astronomer and astrologer of the Gupta era. He wrote the books on astronomy and astrology. His chief work was *Pancha-Siddhantika*. He had done many researches in plant sciences and suggested several herbal medicines. Aryabhata was a famous mathematician and astronomer. His famous work is *Arybhatiya* or *Arya-siddhanta*. Vatsyayana immortalized himself by the work *Kama-Sutra*.

Sanskrit as a language and medium dominated the whole of Ancient Indian literature for many centuries. The works of literature (poetry, drama, prose), history, politics, economics, and science were written in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is considered to be the mother of several languages. Global recognition of Indo-European Family of Languages is its best example. It had influenced many world languages. As Sanskrit grew and flourished in the northern part of India so was Tamil in southern part of India.

Among Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam), Tamil is the oldest. Tholkappiam is the earliest work in Tamil dealing with the grammar of the language. It was prepared by Tholkappiar in 5^{th} or 6^{th} century BC. The Sangam poetry is in Tamil. Besides Indo-Aryan and

Dravidian languages, many other languages such as Pali, Prakrit too grew up, but Sanskrit remained as a link language in the ancient India. It was Sanskrit that bound the whole country together. The texts of Sanskrit were mastered and translated into regional languages, which resulted in the cultural unity of India. Classical Sanskrit was the literary language.

1.5 INDIAN LITERATURE IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The medieval period is roughly ascertained between 600 AD and 1700 AD. With the end of the Gupta Era, the early medieval period begins. King Harshvardhana, who ruled from 606 AD to 647 AD, was a playwright and the patron of poetry. After his death, an era of conflict and instability prevailed in both northern and southern India. By the time, Sanskrit was considered to be the language of elites and it was spoken by Brahmins, especially. A kind of tension was felt that whether one should express feelings and thoughts in Sanskrit or in the language of the masses. Buddhists chose the language of the mass- Pali, and Jains Prakrit. However, they didn't abandon Sanskrit altogether. By the end of 12th century, Pali lost its relevance and use, and again Sanskrit was adopted. In fact, a sentiment to challenge the supremacy of Sanskrit was developing over the years among the people that led to the emergence of many languages and their respective literatures. In this sense, medieval period is the golden period. It led to the evolution of multi-linguistic literature. Arabs, Persians and Mongols entered into India in the 4th century AD. During medieval period, Persian writing in India surpassed the literature of Persia itself. The cross-pollination of Persian and Hindi finally led to the birth of Urdu.

The major portion of medieval Indian literature was transmitted orally by skilled story-tellers, singers and art-performers. The medieval Indian literature was produced at royal courts intended for kings, the elite and educated people. The literature of masses was performed at temples. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas continued affecting the medieval literature. The Bhakti literature shifted the attention from kings to God. The Bhakti poets of the medieval period showed in their writings God as hero. The idea of God as the central force of everything had become the part of thinking. Their sole motto was to glorify God and unify all artistic and creative activities of medieval India. Andal (a Tamil saint of 9^{th} century), Meera (16^{th} century), Tukaram (15^{th} century) and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (16^{th} century) and others associated with the Bhakti tradition. The Bhakti tradition worked towards the building of the nation.

The medieval Indian literature was largely concerned with differences between Shaivas and Vaishnavas, and dualists and non-dualists. Non-dualist philosophy was popularized by Shankaracharya, and Dualist by Ramanujan. However, a few philosophers and poets were working towards the religious harmony. For the establishment of religious harmony, authors such as Kabirdas, Vidyapati, Chandidas, Surdas, Jayadeva, Tulsidas, Rahim, Guru Nanak, Dadu, Sarala Das, Narasimha Mehta, etc. wrote several texts during the latter half of the medieval period.

1.6 SUMMING UP

We saw the ancient and medieval Indian literature largely and deeply rooted in religious ethos of the country. Most of the works were written in Sanskrit. All Vedas, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Puranas, the Upanishads, the Smritis, the Dharma Shastras, dramas, prose works, stories, critical treatises, and grammar texts were written in Sanskrit. This verifies the wide use of Sanskrit. Sanskrit etymologically means to put together. Thus, ancient India was bound together by Sanskrit literature. Medieval India saw the emergence of the plethora of languages and their literatures but the ancient works especially the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* continued regulating the thought-patterns of Indians. These texts continue disciplining Indian mentality and thought-process. Nation as an idea had never been foreign to Indian sages.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Define Indian Literature.
2. What is nation?
3. Write a note on the Classical Literature of India.
4. How did the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the Puranas help in shaping India as a nation?
5. Throw light on the Bhakti tradition.
6. Discuss origin and growth of Sanskrit language in ancient India.
7. What is 'derivative discourse'?

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT-2 INDIAN LITERATURE IN MODERN PERIOD

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 What is Modern Indian Literature?

2.3 Indian Literature in Pre-Independence Period

2.4 Indian Literature in Post-Independence Period

2.5 Summing Up

2.6 Questions

2.7 Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous *Unit* we studied the concept of Indian literature, its glorious past and its role in shaping India as a whole. In this *Unit* we propose to look at the rise of Indian literature in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Our attempts will be to cover the major literary works that have earned recognition at national level though written in various regional languages. We aim to arrive at the following key points :

- What does constitute modern Indian literature?
- Indian literature during pre-independence era; and
- Indian literature in post-independence era.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian literature is so diverse, multifarious and heterogenous that all its branches and sub-branches cannot be tied by one thread. It needs a strong cord made of several threads. It would not be over to claim that many languages and dialects of India have developed their own literatures. Plurality is in the core of Indian literature. Introduction of English education system and printing press in India paved the path of modern Indian literature. English education in India gave birth to the elite class because it was made available only for upper class and middle class. Indians developed proficiency in English and made it the medium of expression along with their mother tongues. The knowledge of English language gave them identity. However, the compulsory English education could not finish off regional languages. English could become only one of the languages for Indians. Indian writing in regional languages continued besides Indian writing in English. The British government established printing press machines at various parts of the country to accelerate book publishing in English at low prices. Before English education policy in India, Persian was the language of the court. Urdu as a language was taught and spoken. English education policy dislodged Persian and replaced it with English.

Having read carefully this *Unit*, we hope that learners will enrich their knowledge about the language and literature of India. It is expected from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 2.6 in the light of given hints and suggestions. It is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 2.7.

2.2 WHAT IS MODERN INDIAN LITERATURE?

The Muslim invasion and rule and thereafter British rule in Indian subcontinent largely halted the literary pursuits. Modern Indian literature is roughly dated from 1800 AD when Fort William College, Calcutta and The Baptist Mission Press in Serampore, Cacuatta, were established. The East India Company established the college with a view to providing knowledge about Indian literature, language, custom, religion, and law to the English civil servants. Thus, modern Indian literature is rooted in colonialism. Colonials introduced English literature in India to justify themselves. With the implementation of Macaulay's famous draft regarding Indian education system in 1835, English became the medium of instruction at educational institutions all over the country. Since colonial administration was rendered in English language, it became quite necessary for Indians to learn English language.

The modernization of Indian sensibility began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Bharatendu Harishchandra, Munshi Premchand, Jai Shankar Prasad, and Surya Kant Tripathi Nirala who were born in mid and late 19th century. Indian literature in English as well as in regional languages is characterized by a range of themes particularly the search for national as well as individual identity, conflict between tradition and modernity, religion, the psychological and cultural impact of colonialism on Indian society, casteism, class conflict, gender issues, poverty, corruption, politics, self-respect and pride, Dalit and tribal concerns, post-Partition migration and trauma, and environmental concerns. Thus, we see the modern Indian literature covers all aspects.

2.3 INDIAN LITERATURE IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Dean Mahomet, C. V. Boriah, and Raja Rammohun Roy were the earliest Indians who acquired proficiency in English. Sheikh Dean Mahomet (1759-1851) is the first Indian author who wrote *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* in 1794. This is a memoir consisted of 38 letters. It is considered to be the first non-fictional work of any Indian followed by *The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan* (1810) translated by an orientalist scholar, Charles Stewart. Cavelli Venkata Boriah (1776-1803), a polyglot Tamil Vaishnav Brahmin published an article of twenty-eight pages, "Account of the Jains" in the journal *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 9, London, 1809.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who had achieved proficiency in English even a decade before Indian educational policy 1835, used English for creative expression. His early works *The Precepts of Jesus* and *The Guide to Peace and Happiness* were prose pieces. Ram Mohan Roy, a polymath and the morning star of Indian renaissance, wrote an essay "A Defence of Hindu Theism" in 1817, which is considered the first original work of Indian English literature. He had proficiency in at least twelve oriental and occidental languages. Rabindranath Tagore called him the inaugurator of modern age in India. His political essays and orations show his command over English. His essay, "Letter on English Education" dated 11th December 1823 is exemplary. He wrote two famous essays in 1820 on religion : "The Precepts of Jesus" and "The Guide to Peace and Happiness". He is considered the begetter of Indian English prose.

Henry Vivian Louis Derozio is the Indian poet who published a collection of poems simply *Poems* in 1827. His most famous work *The Fakir of Jungheera : A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* was brought out in 1828. Kashiprasad Ghosh, a contemporary poet brought out a volume of poetry *The Shair and the Other Poems* in 1830. Michael Madhusudan Dutt published two volumes of verse in English *Vision of the Past* (1848) and *The Captive Ladies* (1848). One can see the influence of Byron, Homer, and Dante in his poetry. He is said to be the first Indian poet who knowingly used Indian images to create Indian ethos in his poetry. *Nil Darpan*, the most famous play of Bengali was

published in 1858-59 by Dinabandhu Mitra. It portrays Indigo-Revolt of Bengal farmers in 1859. It inspired Girish Chandra Ghosh to establish the National Theatre in 1872 in Calcutta.

Toru Dutt (1856-1877), like Derozio, died in her prime when her poetic sensibility had just started achieving maturity. She had proficiency in several languages- Bengali, English, French, German, and Sanskrit. Her *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1883) and *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) bear testimony to her poetic sensibility and talent. She served foreign readers Indian legends, myths, and folklores in standard English.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), born as Sarojini Chattopadhyaya, is known as 'the Nightingale of India'. She was a poetess, a patriot and a politician simultaneously. She, like Toru Dutt, was a polyglot. She was proficient in Urdu, Telugu, English, Bengali, and Persian. She very beautifully had versified Indian life, images, themes, symbols, songs, legends, and folklores to keep her native sensibility intact. *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1912) enjoy tremendous readership both in India and abroad.

Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore brought Indian spirituality and intellectuality into the west. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) made his mission to wake up Indians by his 'tongue of flame' (Romain Rolland). He was "the most effective interpreter of Indian thought to the world, Vivekananda is a prophet with an imperishable message to his own countrymen" (Naik, *A History* 84). His *Complete Works* runs into nine volumes (1907-1951). His widely circulated anthology *Selections from Swami Vivekananda* was published in 1944 and republished in 1975. His *Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga,* and *Raja Yoga* are most popular spiritual treatises. His works have been welcomed in the world as 'hurricane', 'storm', 'thunder', 'cyclone', 'lightening', and so on so forth. Swami Vivekananda picked up the noblest fruits of knowledge from Indian scriptures like the Vedas, the Puranas, the Upanishadas to run like fire all over the world.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) famed as 'Mahakavi' and the spokesperson of all Indians was a poet, a dramatist, a story writer, an essayist, a philosopher, and a nationalist at a time. He is the first Indian who got the prestigious award the Noble Prize in 1913 for his work the *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*). His every work has some specific purpose. One or more contemporary concerns are found being addressed in his works along with possible remedies. For his humanist point of view, he claims international readership. His lectures and letters are in prose prepared for various occasions to address Indian life and culture. His prose writings are marked by lyrical notes. His *Sadhana* (1913) is a collection of lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1912-13. His Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College, Oxford, delivered in 1930 were brought out with the title *The Religion of Man* in 1931. His *Nationalism* (1917) deals with various aspects of nationalism.

Aurobindo Ghosh, whose father was a great admirer of English life, is well famed for his mystic poetry *Savitri*. *Savitri* is his masterpiece. It is considered as the greatest epic of India. His other poems such as *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* express Hindu emotions. He had mastery over many languages such as French, German, Italian, Greek, and Latin. Like T. S. Eliot, Aurobindo was also polyphonic. Returning to India in 1893, Aurobindo learnt Sanskrit, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, and Hindi as well. His collection of essays was brought out in book form. Some of these are *The Renaissance in India* (1920), *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1953), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919, revised in 1962), and *The Future Poetry* (1953). His major religious works include *The Life Divine* (1939-40), *Essays on the Gita* (1928), *Heraclitus* (1941), and *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948). Aurobindo's prose is westernized.

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) had well amalgamated the best of eastern and western wisdom for the benefit of humanity in general. He is considered to be the ambassador of Indian and oriental art. His essays focus on art, religion, language, philosophy, culture, and

metaphysics. Some of his famous works include *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908), *Essays in National Idealism* (1909), *The Dance of Shiva* (1918), *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927), and *Figures of Thought* (1946).

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were two great prose writers of pre-independent India. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), since his childhood days, was drawn towards Indian legends and stories like Harishchandra, Shravan, and Rama. He was influenced by the *New Testament*, the *Gita*, *Unto This Lost* by John Ruskin, David Thoreau's essay 'Civil Disobedience', Edward Carpenter, and Leo Tolstoy. His *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927-28) and *Hind Swaraj* (1910) are famous works.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), a noted public speaker and writer was educated at Harrow, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple. As a writer, his major works include *Glimpses of World History* (1939), *An Autobiography* (1936), and *The Discovery of India* (1946). He wrote these works during his stay in various jails of India. Nehru was against fundamentalism, exploitation, corruption, bigotry, and obscurantism. His vision for independent India and his contributions to the development of India in the fields of education, science and technology, agriculture, etc. are uncomparable.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), the architect of Indian Constitution and the most brilliant visionary that India ever had, is known for his noteworthy writings in which *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), *Who Were the Shudras?* (1946), and *The Untouchables* (1948) are most important. His childhood experiences of the worst form of untouchability, the age-old social evil, and lack of opportunities of formal education are really life lessons for all. He is one of the most brilliant writers, orators, social reformers and humanists that India had ever produced. His influence on Indian society is vividly observed, as day-by-day his popularity increases. His popularity strengthens the social cause for which Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar) and some other sons and daughters of Mother India fought for. B. R. Ambedkar is the most cited intellectual of modern India along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad.

Hindi literature during pre-independence era took flights in poetry, prose, fiction and drama in the hands of Bhartendu Harishchandra, Jaishankar Prasad, Suryakanta Tripathi Nirala, Mahadevi Verma, Sumitranandan Pant, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya Hariodh, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi and so on so forth.

In the Sanskrit tradition, we had prose fictional works such as *Dasakumarcharit* of Dandin and *Kadambari* of Bana Bhatta but the first Indian fictional work on western style is *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, published in 1864. It was about a middle-class patriarchal family where the wife is oppressed by her husband. His other noted works include *Anandmath* (1882), *Kapalkundala* (1885), and *Durgeshnandini* (1890). Earlier to him, Peari Chanda Mitra had published his novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* in Bengali in 1857. Same year, Baba Padmanji published his novel *Yamuna Paryatam*. It is the first novel of Marathi language. The first novel *Karan Ghelo* in Gujarati was published in 1866 by Nandashankar Mehta. The first novel of Urdu was published in 1869 by Nazir Ahmad. It was *Miratul Urus*. The first novel in Telugu was published by Gopal Krishnamma Chetty in 1872. It was *Ranga Raja Charitra*.

After Bankim Chandra, Raj Lakshmi Devi published her novel in 1876 titled *The Hindu Wife*. It was followed by Toru Dutt's *Bianca*, or *The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) in English. Samuel Vedanayakam Pillai wrote the first novel in Tamil language. It was *Pratap Mudaliyar Charitram* (1879). Three years later, the first novel of Hindi came out in 1882. It was *Pariksha Guru* written by Srinivas Das. *Kudalata* is the first novel in Malayalam published in 1887 by Appu Nedangadi. However, *Indulekha* (1889) by Chandu Menon is considered as the first regular novel of Malayalam. Hari Narayan Apte published his novel *Ganpatrao* (1887-88) in Marathi. His novels

deal with social problems of middle-class society. *Bhanumati* is the first novel of Assamese published in 1891 by Padmanath Gohain Barua. Ramashankar Rao published *Bibasini*, the first novel of Oriya in 1891. Lakshmana Rao Gadagkar brought out the first Kannada novel *Suryakanta* in 1892. Bhai Vir Singh brought out *Sundari*, the first novel of Punjabi in 1897. Mohammad Hadi Ruswa's famous Urdu novel *Umrao Jan Ada* was published in 1899.

Romesh Chunder Dutt wrote six novels in Bengali based on the stories the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. He translated two of six novels *Sansar* and *Madhvi Kankan* into English titled *The Lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). Joginder Singh wrote four novels. These are *Nur Jahan* (1909), *Nasrin* (1915), *Kamla* (1925), and *Kamini* (1931). In the second decade of twentieth century, Rabindranath Tagore translated many of his novels written in Bengali. Some of them are *Gora* (1910), *Ghare Baire* (1916), and *Chaturanga* (1916). Saratachandra Chatterjee earned wide recognition for his two novels in Bengali *Pather Panchali* (1929) and *Aparijita* (1931).

Munshi Premchand, a great Hindi novelist of social commitment, wrote a number of novels of classical vibes. Some of his famous Hindi novels are *Rangabhumi* (1925), *Nirmala* (1926), *Karmabhumi* (1932), and *Godan* (1936). These novels deal with social, economic and cultural concerns of his time.

During Gandhian era, big changes took place in the field of politics as well as in creative writing. Mulk Raj Anand, the oldest of 'big three', in his novels took up problems of urban labourers, untouchables, orphans, casteism, hunger, poverty, and class conflict. His first novel *Untouchable* published in 1935 earned him huge popularity. His other novels include *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941), *The Sword and Sickle* (1942), and *The Big Heart* (1945).

R. K. Narayan, known as a regional novelist, had focused on the problems of middle-class people living in towns. Most of his novels were published after the independence of India. His pre-independence novels include *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1936), *The English Teacher* (1945), and *The Dark Room* (1938). Raja Rao is the third among the 'big three' after Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His notable works published earlier to Indian Independence include *Kanthapura* (1938) and *The Cow of Barricades* (1947). In these works, Raja Rao beautifully weave Gandhian freedom struggle into its fabric.

It is the fact that literatures in regional languages besides English- Hindi, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Assamese, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu are equally important. These regional languages have achieved maturity structurally as well as contextually. The works of these languages have achieved recognitions nationally and have earned national awards as well.

2.4 INDIAN LITERATURE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

After independence, Indian poetry speedily grew and so many creative writers came up with their poetic creations. They firmly footed Indian poetry as an independent category. Dom Moreas, Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Kamla Das, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, K. N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, A. K. Mehrotra, etc. paved the path of Indian poetry in English solidly. At present, many creative writers express Indian sentiments and images in their poems. The future of Indian poetry is very bright.

After Independence, a number of Indian prose works were also published. S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) made his mark in the field of religious and philosophical prose writing. He, like Vivekananda, interpreted Indian philosophy to the western world. His major works include *The Hindu View of Life* (1926), *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (1939), *Religion and Society* (1947), *The Principal Upanishads* (1953), and *Religion in a Changing World* (1967).

Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri (1897-1999) is perhaps the most influential prose writer of post-independence India. His major works include *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), *A Passage to England* (1959), *The Continent of Circe : An Essay on The Peoples of India* (1966), *The Intellectual in India* (1967), *To Live or Not to Live* (1972), *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (1976), and *Hinduism* (1979). His first ever attempt at the genre of biography was *Scholar Extraordinary : The Life of Friedrich Max Muller* (1974) that bagged him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975.

Ved Prakash Mehta (1934-2021) also dedicated himself to non-fictional prose writing in post-independence era. His first book is his autobiography *Face to Face* (1957). His other non-fictional writings include *Walking the Indian Streets* (1961), *The Fly and the Fly-Bottle* (1963), *The New Theologian* (1966), and *John is Easy to Please* (1971).

R. K. Narayan published his autobiography *My Days* in 1975 and his brother R. K. Laxman, a cartoonist published his autobiography *The Tunnel Time* in 1998. Ruskin Bond's autobiographical works *Scenes from a Writer's Life : A Memoir* was published in 1997 and *The Lamp is Lit : Leaves from a Journal* was published in 1998.

Abdul Kalam (1931-2015), a noted scientist, humanist, and the 11th President of India wrote some good prose works such as *Wings of Fire : An Autobiography* (1999), *Ignited Minds : Unleashing the Power Within India* (2002), *India 2020 : A Vision for the New Millennium* (1998). Amartya Sen (1933-), a Nobel Prize winner for Economics wrote a book titled *The Argumentative Indian* (2005). It is a collection of essays focussing on Indian history, identity, and the tradition of doing debates among people, and intellectual plurality.

Among fictional writings of post-independence era, we have a huge list but all cannot be accommodated here. Post-independence novels of R. K. Narayan include *Mr. Sampath* (1952), *The Financial Expert* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Vender of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1977), and *Talkative Man* (1986). Raja Rao published three books after independence. These are *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978). Govindas Vishnoodas Desani famous as G. V. Desani published a famous novel *All About H. Hatterr* in 1948 and revised it in 1972. It is about East-West encounter and search for identity.

Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988) began writing fiction in his 30s. His novels deal with socio-historical and realistic contexts. He wrote six novels. These are *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1967), and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1975). Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010) started writing very late. His major novels are *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princess* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), *Spy in Amber* (1971), *The Devil's Wind* (1972), and *Shalimar* (1978). Khushwant Singh (1915-2014) wrote many novels such as *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Delhi : A Novel* (1990), *The Company of Women* (1999), and *The Sunset Club* (2010).

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004), in her novels mostly writes about her life experiences in India. East-West encounter is one of the favourite concerns in her novels. Her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) earned international fame for her. Her other novels include *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession : A Novel* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), and *Pleasure City* (1982).

Chaman Nahal (1927-2013) wrote a number of novels such as *My True Faces* (1973), *Azadi* (1975), *The English Queen* (1979), *The Crown and the Loincloth* (1981), *The Gandhi Quartet*

(1993), and *The Triumph of the Tricolour* (1993). He was awarded *Sahitya Akademy Award* in 1977 for his novel *Azadi*.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927-), though raised in political ambience, argues for issues such as human existence, man-woman relationship, and human values in her novels. Her major novels include- *A Time to be Happy* (1958), *The Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Indira Gandhi : Her Road to Power* (1982), *Rich Like Us* (1985), and *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989).

Anita Desai (1937-) in her novels portrays female characters suffering isolation, alienation, domestic violence and ecological concerns. Her major novels include *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaka* (1995), and *Feasting, Fasting* (1999).

Shashi Deshpande (1938-) is a novelist of balance and harmony in man-woman relationship. Her popular novels include *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004), *In the Country of Deceit* (2008), and *Strangers to Ourselves* (2015).

Vikram Seth (1952-) belongs to the young generation of Indian writers. There are three notable novels and eight volumes of poetry to his credit. His novels are *The Golden Gate* (1986), *A Suitable Boy* (1993), and *An Equal Music* (1999). Shashi Tharoor (1956-) a noted novelist and diplomat wrote three novels- *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1992), and *Riot* (2001). All these novels have been in the list of bestsellers. Amitav Ghosh (1956-), well exposed to the situations in India, Bangladesh, England, and Southeast Asia, uses the technique of 'magic realism' wrote a number of novels. Some of them are *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Arundhati Roy (1961-) was born in Shillong, Meghalaya. *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) are two novels to her name. Amit Chaudhuri (1962-) is a novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic, and music composer. His major novels include *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993), *Freedom Song* (2000), *A New World* (2001), *Real Time* (2002), and *Friend My Youth* (2017). Anees Salim, an Indian author was born in1970 in a small town Varkala of Kerala. His major works include *Vanity Bagh* (2013), *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014), and *The Small-Town Sea* (2017).

Among Indian playwrights, Vijay Tendulkar of Marathi, Girish Karnad of Kannada, Badal Sarkar of Bengali, and Mahesh Dattani of English are the most famous names. Most of their plays are available in translation and widely acclaimed.

2.5 SUMMING UP

Indian literature of every regional language is equally effective and purposive. Indian literature of every language is worth reading. For reading all regional literatures, we need translation. We can enjoy and learn a work of Assamese, if it is in translation for those who do not know Assamese. Indian writers are mostly bilingual. They write in regional language and English too. Most writers of Indian languages worked towards gaining transformation of Indian societies. Writers of pre-independence period had focused upon socio-cultural, economic, political and religious problems and their eradication. Post-independence writers too continued the tradition with contemporary concerns of Indian societies keeping in center. Literatures of all regional languages are today available in many other regional languages in addition to English.

2.6 QUESTIONS

1. What is Modern Indian literature?
2. English is one of the many Indian languages. How did it shape Indian literatures?
3. Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore and Vivekananda are credited for bringing Indian spirituality to the West. Discuss.
4. Introduction of English as a medium of education could not finish off regional languages. Do you agree?
5. Throw light on the post-independence Indian literature.

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UNIT-3 SURVEY OF INDIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Defining Translation and its Relevance

3.3 Indian Literature in Translation in Pre-Independence Period

3.4 Indian Literature in Translation in Post-Independence Period

3.5 Summing Up

3.6 Questions

3.7 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In the last two *Units*, we learnt about the Indian literature along with its origin and development. In this *Unit*, we propose to discuss the tradition of translation in India. Indians used the potential of translation before the British rule for the solidarity of the nation and for the well-being of Indian civilization and culture. To the contrary, the colonials invoked translation to know Indian culture and thereafter its disintegration. History of translation is quite old. Here, in this Unit, we seek to discuss the following key issues :

- The concept of translation;
- Literature in translation up to medieval period; and
- Indian literature in translation in modern period.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Nobody can gain absolute knowledge of Indian literature for its pluri-linguistic potential. Every recognized language has its own literature. Even in some parts of the country, English is reduced to regional level. Indians are polylingual. Translation plays crucial communicative roles wherever multilingualism exists.

Having read carefully this *Unit*, we hope that learners will enrich their knowledge about the language and literature of India in translation. It is expected from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 1.6. It is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 1.7.

3.2 DEFINING TRANSLATION AND ITS RELEVANCE

The term ‘translation’ etymologically means to carry across. It is derived from Latin word ‘translatio’ which is made of two words ‘trans’ and ‘latum’, the former means across and the latter carrying. It is very liberal term and can be used in different contexts comfortably. By the act of translation, we carry across a message, idea or thought from one person to another, from one language to another and sometimes from one dialect to another dialect. Translation is both strategy and produce. As a produce, it is an extension of personal, linguistic and cultural distinctions. Translation in wider context seems to be very parallel to human civilization. It arose almost with the tradition of written literature. Through translation, an original text takes on new clothes. In a sense, a translator translates a particular text qua co-creator. In the act of translation, it is sense or intent that

matters most. It is often complained against the practice of translation that there always lurks the danger of losing something in it. But the fact is that loss and gain both happens in the said act. Today, translated version is considered to be as original as the original version. Many works written in regional languages have fared very well after being translated into English or other regional languages. More or less, Indians are Indians across the country and the world. Homi Bhabha and Salmon Rushdie used the term 'translation' in etymological sense. Rushdie called all diasporic writers 'translated men'.

India as a political entity is one but culturally multi. It is a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multicultural country. The plurality of the country resists simple generalizations. To manage all its diversities, translation plays very important roles. It can knit all of its diversities together. Translation "is a great tool of intercultural synergy" (Asaduddin 1). The mission of nation-building was closely connected with the wide circulation of translated works. In fact, Indian world was kept safe in translation. A cluster of languages and dialects survive and flourish continuously in India. One dialect differs from another just at a few miles distance in India. In this regard, translation seems to be imperative to understand national diversity and therefrom to nourish national solidarity. Translation empowers the language it uses and brings to the equal level. In the act of translation, all languages achieve equal status and thereby linguistic dominance syndrome is easily done away with. In this globalized world, translation as a tool becomes more and more needful for the inter-lingual communication. It is in many ways a tool of survival. It is a democratic tool. In ancient India, translation was used for national and cultural solidarity, and during colonialism, it was used for the perpetuation of imperial rule. It can be used for both positive and negative purposes. Therefore, translation as a tool must be used intellectually, judiciously, and objectively. A good translator is supposed to be intellectually sound (in grammatic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects) in both the source language and the target language, well exposed to cultural specifics and practices of both languages and to have depersonalized motif.

3.3 INDIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Before the onset of writing culture, in India oral culture prevailed. A major portion of Indian literature was orally transmitted from region to region in the form of songs and folklores. The early works of Indian literature were written in Sanskrit. The *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the Mahabharata, the *Bhagavad Gita* were in Sanskrit. Stories culled from these ancient Sanskrit texts in various versions were in circulation. Sanskrit as a language and medium dominated the ancient Indian literature. Up to 6th century AD, most of the texts were written in Sanskrit. The *Panchatantra* (Five Treatises) was written in Sanskrit in 2nd century BC. It is a non-religious story-book written by Vishnu Sharma. It is said about the book to be the next to the *Bible* in terms of its global circulation. It was/is most frequently translated work in the world. Around 6th century it was turned into Persian and therefrom into Greek, Hebrew, Latin, German, Italian, etc. Presently, it is available in more than fifty world languages and in more than two hundred versions.

By the time, Sanskrit was considered as the language of elites and it was spoken mostly by Brahmins. In different quarters, a need was realized to develop a language for mass or general people leading to the emergence of Tamil in south, Pali and Prakrit in north. Buddhist sacred texts are in Pali whereas Jainism is in Prakrit. Both Pali and Prakrit are mix of Sanskrit derived dialects. Gradually, a number of languages emerged.

With the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century by Turks, Arabic (it was introduced earlier to Persian in South India by Arab traders and had mixed itself with Indo-Dravidian languages) and Persian were introduced to major parts of the country. Consequently,

Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit were discouraged. Indians learnt and nativized these languages and gave birth to many hybrid languages. Urdu was one among them. Since Persian was the language of court during the Mughal period, there were scholars who were translators too to explain matters in regional and Persian languages and vice-versa. The *Baburnama*, the autobiography of Babur was translated from the original Chagatay into Persian by Bairam Khan at the behest of Humayun. The Mughal emperor Akbar reined from 1556 to 1605. He brought most part of the Indian subcontinent under his rule. To keep his empire safe and united, Akbar used to organize religious debates in his presence among Hindus, Parsis, Christians and Muslims. He was in fact interested in developing religious tolerance, and understanding about Hindus whom he ruled. In this direction, Akbar set up a *Maktabkhana* (translation bureau) and commissioned the translation of Sanskrit classics such as the *Vedas*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, into Persian. The first translation of the *Ramayana* into Persian was completed by a mulla named Badayuni in 1580. Mulla Badayuni accomplished the project to evade punishment however it was not less than spiritual punishment to him. Akbar even arranged for the translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Yoga-Vasishtha* and the *Harivansha* (also known as *Harivansha Purana*) into Persian. The West came to know about the sacred literature of India through Persian translation. This kind of initiative led to the meeting of civilizations.

Prince Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), the great grandson of Akbar was a great author. He continued the tradition of translation like his great grandfather and made it his mission. His was interested in the comparative study of Islam and Hinduism. In the guidance of the Pundits of Banaras, he translated fifty *Upanishads* by 1657 into fluent Persian and titled it *Sirri-Akbar* or *Sirri Asrar* (*The Great Secret*). Motif behind Dara Shikoh's interest in Hindu scriptures was actually to find out a common cord among Hindu-Muslim religious practices and thereby evolving a synthesis of intellectual, social and spiritual wisdom.

Translation in India continued during the heyday of British colonialism. During the last decades of the 16th century, the British, the Portuguese and the French entered into India as tradesmen. These traders first learnt Persian to do business with Mughals. Once again, the role of translators was important. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General from 1772 to 1785 recommended in a meeting that Hindus could be controlled only by the Hindu *Dharmashastras* (law books). Hence, study of Hindu sacred scriptures for gaining intimate knowledge of Indian life and civilization became urgent need. It was also necessary for the perpetuation of colonial dominion in India. In this way, Indology began. 18th century orientalist activities were largely focused on translations.

During colonial period, Persian became the link language between Sanskrit and English. Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751-1830) had learnt Persian and Arabic before coming to India. He was also in the contact of William Jones. He was the first Englishman who was commissioned to prepare a book of Hindu law. For this project, eleven pundits and a Bengali Muslim were recruited. All pundits prepared laws in Sanskrit titled *Vivadarnavasetu* (across the sea of litigation). The Bengali Muslim was entrusted to prepare commentary on it in Persian. Halhed translated the Persian commentary into English as *A Code of the Gentoo Laws or Ordinations of Pundits* in 1776. It became Europe's key to know about India's legal system. Halhead had also translated Persian *Sirri-Akbar* by Dara Shikoh into English.

Halhed could not learn Sanskrit in his life but inspired Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) who achieved sizable mastery of Sanskrit. He became the first European translator who directly used Sanskrit to prepare *Grammar of Sanskrit Language* in English. It became the handbook to all English officials who were about to visit India. Charles Wilkins, in collaboration with the Asiatic Society of Bengal, brought out the very first complete translation of *Bhagvat-Geeta* into English in

1785. It became Europe's key to have insight into India's religion. It was prepared directly from Sanskrit text.

William Jones (1746-1794) came to India as a judge in 1783 with an aim 'to know India better than any other European ever knew it'. He was not happy with Halhed's Code so he decided to learn after all. Jones translated *Manusmriti* into English as *Institutes of Hindu Law* or *The Ordinances of Menu* that was published in 1796. Jones did the translation of Kalidas' *Abhigyanshakuntalam*. It was titled as *Sakontala* or *The Fatal Ring* and appeared in 1789. This translation opened eyes of the West to the East. Jones was the first English scholar who turned the West towards the East for literary inspirations. Kalidas' *Abhigyanshakuntalam* is considered as the very epitome of Indian consciousness. Later on, it got into more than ten Indian languages- Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Bengali.

The programme of translation was accelerated under the principalship of John Gilchrist, a Scottish of Fort William College, Calcutta established in 1800. Along with his clerks (*munshis*), he undertook the job of translating Sanskrit and Persian texts into English. Mir Amman's *Bagh O Bahar* was translated from Urdu into English by Duncan Forbes in 1862. The purpose was to familiarize colonials who came to India to rule with Indian culture. Early translations of Indian texts were carried out in collaboration with Indians. Colonial officials of the East India Company undertook translation for the purpose of controlling Indians. By the time, many Hindu law books were available in Persian. With 1857 Indian Nation Freedom Uprising, the mission and programme of knowing about India received setback and declined. The translation of ancient classical texts continued to be translated but the contribution of English scholars was negligible. Scholars like James Mill and Lord Macaulay worked towards the demise of Indian civilization and regional languages by narrating negatively.

Macaulay formalized Indian education in English in 1835. Indians got exposed to English language and literature and began making expressions in English quite comfortably. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian who realized and recognized the economic and cultural benefits of English language. He translated Sankaracharya's *Vedanta* into English in 1816. The same year, he brought out *Isha* and *Kena Upanishads* to debunk western conceptions about India. Ishwarchandra Vidysagar's essay on *Marriage of Hindu Widows* (1856) and *Sermista : A Drama in Five Acts* were translated into English from original Bangla by Michael Madhusudan Dutt in 1859. Romesh Chander Dutt (1848-1909), a civil servant in British government translated the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* into English from Sanskrit. He called these texts the national property of Indians.

The play *Nildurpan* was written in Bengali by Dinbandhu Mitra in 1860. The story of it was based on the problems of peasants of Bengal. Within seven-month time, it was translated into English for English readers. It irked the colonials and its publisher James Long was imprisoned. It was the first work translated from Bhasha to English. Bankimchandra Chatterji's novels (in Bengali) and Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (in Malayalam) were translated into English with the help of Englishmen. Bankim's novels were translated into Kannada by B. Venkatachar.

Sri Aurobindo was a prolific translator, who translated certain portions of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavada Gita* and Kalidas' plays into English. Rabindranath Tagore translated himself his *Gitanjali* from original Bangla into English in 1912 and bagged the Noble Prize in 1913. Soon after, it got into several other Indian languages. Dhoomketu turned it in Gujarati. Tagore also translated some of his plays into English. Tagore's achievement drew scholars of other languages towards Bengali surprisingly. Dwijendralal Ray's *Bhisma* was translated into Gujarati in 1919 and *Mebar Patan* in 1920. His six plays were translated into Gujarati during freedom

movement and thirteen plays were translated into Telugu from original Bangla. The first half of the twentieth century was the golden period for translation within Indian languages.

3.4 INDIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Soon after the declaration of Indian independence in 1947, translation was institutionalized by establishing two institutions, the *Sahitya Akademi* in 1954 and the *National Book Trust* in 1957 for promoting all-character of India. Later on, this mission was supported by individual publishers like Jaico, Asia, etc. Writer's Workshop, under the aegis of P. Lal, contributed to this mission successfully.

Among UNESCO sponsored translated works, Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel *Pather Panchali : Song of the Road* translated from Bangla to English by T. W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji; Manik Bandopadhyay's *The Puppet's Tale* translated from Bangla to English in 1968 by Sachindralal Ghosh and retranslated in 2022 by Ratan Kumar Chattopadhyaya; Sridhar Pendse's Marathi novel, *Wild Bapu of Garambi* translated into English in 1968 by Ian Raeside; T. S. Pillai's Malayalam novel, *Chemmeen : A Novel* translated into English in 1962 by Narayana Menon; Premchand's Hindi novel, *Godan : The Gift of a Cow* translated into English in 1968 by Gordon Roadermal, and Aziz Ahmad's Urdu novel, *The Shore and the Wave* translated into English in 1971 by Ralph Russell are world-known. These novels have been translated into more than half a dozen other languages too.

Like *The Puppet's Tale*, Fakir Mohan Senapati's Oriya novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* originally written in 1902 went into three English versions between 1967 and 1969. Its translators were C. V. Narasimha Das, B. M. Senapati and A. M. Senapati, and Nuri Misra. All versions differ from one another slightly. A. K. Ramanujan who was well versed in Sanskrit, English, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. Some of his famous translations are *The Interior Landscape* (1967), *Speaking of Siva* (1973), and *Sanskara* (translated from U. R. Anantha Murthy's Kannada novel in 1976).

In the mid 1980s the Penguin Books India brought in a scheme of publishing fictional works of regional languages in English translation. As a result, Satyajit Ray's Bengali stories, short novellas, and Bhishm Sahni's Hindi novel, *Tamas : Darkness/Ignorance* (1989) were among the list of bestsellers.

Mohan Rakesh's Hindi plays such as *Ashadha Ka Ek Din* (*One Day in Ashadh*, 1958) and *Adhe -Adhure* translated into English by Bindu Batra as *Halfway House* (1968). Similarly, plays of Vijay Tendulkar written originally in Marathi got into English mostly by Priya Adarkar, Shanta Gokhale and Kumud Mehta made the playwright contemporary and relevant.

Mahasweta Devi writes about the underprivileged castes and tribes of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa. She had written some one hundred novels in Bengali. Some of them are available in English translation such as *The Rani of Jhansi* (1956), *Mother of 1084* (1974), and *The Rights of the Forest* (1977). Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak and Samik Bandyopadhyay translated some of her works into English and made them available for the readers of the world. Lakshmi Holmstrom translated Bama's Tamil novel *Karukku* into English and published in 2000. Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991) had written eight novels in Urdu. Her notable works in English translation include *The Innocent Girl* (1961), *The Heart Breaks Free* (1966), *The Crooked Line* (1943), *A Very Strange Man* (19970) and *Wild Pigeons* (1970). *The Crooked Line* is considered to be the magnus opus of Ismat Chughtai. Qurratulain Hyder's Urdu novel *Aag Ka Dariya* was translated into English by herself as *River of Fire* (1988). It is widely read by lovers of literatures.

Amrita Pritam's works are in Punjabi and Hindi. She got the attention of English knowing readers when her famous novel *Pinjar* (*The Skeleton*) written in 1950 was translated into English by famous novelist Khushwant Singh in 2009. Its memorable character Puro is an epitome of violence against women, loss of humanity, and surrender to fate during the terrible occasion of Partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan as two independent nations. Her central focus was on the impact of the Partition on the lives of women.

K. R. Meera, a Malayalam writer wrote many novels and a few of them went into English version and earned for her surprising readership and appraisal. These are *The Poison of Love*, *The Gospel of Yudas*, *Hangwoman : Everywoman Loves a Good Hanging* and *The Assassin*.

3.5 SUMMING UP

On the basis of foregoing discussion on Indian literature in translation, it is quite clear that translation has been the very part of Indian Knowledge System. Indian history has always adapted shifts. Consequently, new languages outside the subcontinent were nativized. Indian translators are not considered to be second to the original. For instance, Tulsidas and Kamban are more read than the original writer of the *Ramayana* these days. In the hands of the colonials, translation was turned into knowledge-creating domain about India. Before the 1857 Indian Freedom Struggle, the colonials were preoccupied with the task of learning Indian culture and civilization but after the struggle, they used knowledge of whatsoever in degree and amount about India politically by downplaying everything that is Indian. In post-Independence phase, translations in regional languages are strengthening Indian sensibility. It is serving towards the solidarity of the nation. Translation makes sure the all-India character. It should be promoted and encouraged for the better understanding of Indian spirit and sensibility.

3.6 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the need and relevance of translation.
2. How did the literary excellence of India reach the West?
3. How did colonial mission of learning and translating Indian texts into English decline?
4. How did translation begin in Indian regional languages?
5. Throw light on the post-independence translation in English from regional languages.

3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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BLOCK-II

INTRODUCTION

Block II has introduced U. R. Ananthamurthy, an Indian contemporary writer and critic in the Kannada language, and his popular novel *Samskara* that deals with the religious aspects of Hinduism. It sheds light on the caste system and how it functions in Indian society. It discusses the allegorical form of the novel, its major features, characterization, structure, themes and the narrative techniques that make it different from others.

UNIT-4 INTRODUCING U. R. ANANTHAMURTHY

Structure

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 U. R. Ananthamurthy : Biography

4.3 Literary Works and Award

4.4 Summing Up

4.5 Questions

4.6 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, learners will be able to

- study the biography of novelist U. R. Ananthamurthy;
- know U. R. Ananthamurthy as a novelist and his literary works;
- study the contribution of U. R. Ananthamurthy in Indian Literature.

4.1 INTRODUCTON

This unit will introduce you to U. R. Ananthamurthy, an Indian contemporary writer and critic in the Kannada language and one of the pioneers of the Navya movement. In 1994, he became the sixth Kannada writer to be honored with the Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour conferred in India. In 1998, he received the Padma Bhushan award from the Government of India. He was the vice-chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala during the late 1980s. He was one of the finalists of Man Booker International Prize for the year 2013. He remained a fervent critic of nationalistic political parties until his death from kidney failure and cardiac arrest on 22 August 2014.

4.2 U. R. ANANTHMURTHY : BIOGRAPHY

Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy (21 December 1932 – 22 August 2014) was born into a Kannada-speaking Brahmin family in Melige, in Tirthahalli taluk in the Shimoga District. His education started in a traditional Sanskrit school in Doorvasapura and continued in Tirthahalli and Mysore. After receiving a Master of Arts degree from the University of Mysore, U. R. Ananthamurthy taught in the English department at University of Mysore for a while before embarking to England for further studies on a Commonwealth Scholarship. He earned his doctorate from the University of Birmingham in 1966 for his dissertation entitled "Politics and Fiction in the 1930s."

Ananthamurthy started his career as a professor and instructor in 1970 in the English department of University of Mysore. He was the Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam, Kerala from 1987 to 1991. He served as the Chairman of National Book Trust India for the year 1992. In 1993, he was elected as the president of Sahitya Akademi. He served as a visiting professor in many Indian and foreign universities including Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Tübingen, University of Iowa, Tufts University and Shivaji University. Ananthamurthy served twice as the Chairman of the Film and Television Institute of India. In 2012, he was appointed the

first Chancellor of Central University of Karnataka. Later, in 2012, he served as a visiting faculty at Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities, Manipal University for four months.

Ananthamurthy participated and delivered lectures in numerous seminars both in and outside the country. He was the member of the committee of Indian writers and visited countries like the Soviet Union, Hungary, France and West Germany in 1990. He visited Moscow in 1989 as a board member for a Soviet newspaper. He met his wife, Esther in 1954 and they were married in 1956. They had two children Sharath and Anuradha. He resided in Bangalore for most of his later life. His son-in-law Vivek Shanbhag is also a famous writer in Kannada.

U. R. Ananthamurthy made an unsuccessful run for the Lok Sabha in 2004 in which he stated that his prime ideological objective in opting to contest the elections was to fight the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Prime Minister of India H. D. Deve Gowda had made an offer for Murthy to contest the election for his party. However, after the Janata Dal (Secular) worked a power sharing agreement with the BJP, Ananthamurthy also contested for the Rajya Sabha elections in 2006. The idea proposed by Ananthamurthy to rename ten cities in Karnataka including Bengaluru from their colonial forms to actual native forms was accepted by the Government of Karnataka.

Ananthamurthy died of cardiac arrest on 22 August 2014 at Manipal Hospital, in Bangalore, aged 81. He had been suffering from kidney related disease for some years, and was undergoing dialysis treatment with diabetes and heart problem. He was admitted to Manipal Hospital on 13 August with an infection and fever, and underwent treatment on a multi-support system.

4.3 LITERARY WORKS AND AWARDS

U. R. Ananthamurthy was a vigilant writer, and professor. His works have been translated into several Indian and European languages and have been awarded with important literary prizes. His main works include Prashne, Aakasha Mattu Bekku, Samskara, Bhava, Bharathipura, and Avasthe. Several of his novels and short fictions have been made into movies. Most of his literary works deal with psychological aspects of people in different situations, times and circumstances. His writings supposedly analyse aspects ranging from challenges and changes faced by Brahmin families of Karnataka to bureaucrats dealing with politics influencing their work. Most of his novels are on reaction of individuals to situations that are unusual and artificial. He portrays Hindu societies of India and clashes due to such influences – between a father and a son, husband and wife, father and daughter and finally, the fine love that flows beneath all such clashes in his works. This can be read in Sooryana Kudure (The Sun's Horse), Mouni (Silent Man), Karthika, Ghatashraddha, etc. His novel Bara (Drought) portrays the dynamics of a drought-stricken district of Karnataka and the challenges and dilemmas a bureaucrat faces in such situations.

The central figure of Sooryana Kudure, Venkata, is shunned by his son and wife for his easy-going attitude that does not take him anywhere. Venkata is a non-achiever who could not achieve any material or monetary success in his life. He likes to see life as living in the love of Amma (or mother-goddess). In all sufferings of life, he has the child-like curiosity about the smallest things in life like a grasshopper (Sooryana Kudure). The evening after his son revolts and leaves the house, he would be engrossed in a sight in his yard a grasshopper shining in the sun's light. His several novels were made into films Samskara, Bara Avaste, Mouni, Sookha, *Ghatashraddha and Diksha.*

AWARDS

1984 : Rajyothsava Award

1994 : Jnanpith Award

1998 : Padma Bhushan

2004 : Sahitya Akademi Fellowship

2008 : Nadoja Award by Kannada University

2011 : Shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize (*Bharathipura*)

2012 : D. Litt. *Honoris Causa* of the University of Calcutta

2012 : Basheer Puraskaram

2013 : Nominated, Man Booker International Prize

Karnataka State Film Awards

1970-71 : Best Story Writer – *Samskara* (1970)

1977-78 : Best Story Writer– *Ghatashraddha* (1977)

1987-88 : Best Dialogue Writer

1987 : (for *Avasthe*, shared with Krishna Masadi)

2002-03 : Best Story Writer (for *Mouni* in 2003)

4.4 SUMMING UP

U. R. Ananthamurthy was one of the pioneers of the Navya literary movement in contemporary Kannada literature. He was one of India's major literary figures and public intellectuals. His extensive publications include novels, short stories, poetry, translations, and essays. He was awarded the Jnanpith in 1994, and the Padma Bhushan in 1998. He was also a translator, and a columnist with *Bangalore Mirror* and *Deccan Herald*.

4.5 QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief life sketch of U. R. Ananthamurthy.
2. Discuss the contribution of literary works of U. R. Ananthamurthy to Indian literature.

4.6 SUGGESTED READING

- Ananthamurthy, U. R. *Samaskara : A Rite for a Dead Man*. Translated by A. K. Ramanujan. Oxford UP, 1976.

UNIT-5 *SAMSKARA* : TITLE, THEME, AND CHARACTERIZATION

Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Significance of Title *Samskara*

5.3 Summary of the Novel *Samskara*

5.4 Analysis of the Novel *Samskara*

5.5 Major Themes of the Novel *Samskara*

- 5.5.1 Quest for Identity Towards a New Birth
- 5.5.2 Brahminism and Anti- Brahminism
- 5.5.3 Moral Dilemma
- 5.5.4 Asceticism and Eroticism
- 5.5.5 Tradition versus Modernity
- 5.5.6 Individual versus Society
- 5.5.7 Caste and Social Hierarchy
- 5.5.8 Ritual Pollution
- 5.5.9 Gender Roles and Morality
- 5.5.10 Symbolism of the River
- 5.5.11 Societal Transformation
- 5.5.12 Existentialism
- 5.5.13 Identity and Belonging

5.6 Characterization

- 5.6.1 Praneshacharya
- 5.6.2 Bhagirathi
- 5.6.3 Naranappa
- 5.6.4 Chandri
- 5.6.5 Garudacharya
- 5.6.6 Sitadevi
- 5.6.7 Lakshmanacharya
- 5.6.8 Anasuya
- 5.6.9 Shripati
- 5.6.10 Belli
- 5.6.11 Durgabhatta
- 5.6.12 Dasacharya

5.6.13 Lakshmidevamma
5.6.14 Manjayya
5.6.15 Putta
5.6.16 Padmavati
5.6.17 Durvasapura
5.6.18 Parijatapura
5.6.19 Thirthahalli
5.6.20 Kaimara
5.6.21 Shivamogge
5.6.22 Shirnalli
5.6.23 Kundapura
5.6.24 Melige
5.7 Summing Up
5.8 Questions
5.9 Suggested Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, learners will be able to

- study the novel *Samskara* not dealing with the spiritual aspect of Hinduism only and the caste system, but also orthodoxy in rituals;
- know the significance of the title; and
- critically analyse the novel *Samskara.*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel, *Samskara*, originally written in Kannada in 1965, sheds light on the caste system and ways of Brahmanism in the contemporary world. The word 'Samskara' has several meanings : rite of passage, ritual, transformation, as well as death rites. This unit begins with a discussion of the allegorical form of the novel and then goes on to discuss the major themes in it.

5.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE SAMSKARA

The title Samskara holds profound significance in the novel, symbolizing the central theme of ritual, tradition, and identity crisis within a Brahmin community. Derived from Sanskrit, Samskara refers to rituals or sacraments in Hinduism that sanctifies and purifies life events, such as birth, marriage, and death.

Samskara is a Sanskrit word with many meanings. A 'rite of passage or life-cycle ceremony', 'forming well, making perfect', 'the realizing of past perceptions', preparation, making ready, are some of the meanings of this word. The sub-title of this novel, *A Rite for a Dead Man*, is the most concrete of these many concentric senses that spread through the work. The novel incorporates most of the meanings of the word *Samskara* in its scope and content. According to A. K. Ramanujan, who translated the novel into English, the title refers to a concept central to Hinduism. The sub-title of his

translation, is *A Rite for a Dead Man.* The title *Samaskara* is a rich and multifaceted term that encapsulates the core themes and conflicts explored in Ananthamurthy's novel. The novel is set in an orthodox Brahmin village in South India and explores themes such as caste, religion, gender, tradition, and modernity. It also represents rituals, transformation, purification, identity, moral dilemmas, and the clash of tradition and modernity. The primary thematic preoccupation of the writer in *Samskara* is the conflict between tradition and modernity.

The novel provides an argument on the caste system in Indian society and sheds light on the hierarchical structures that extend from the Brahmin to the Shudra based on Brahminic Hinduism's *Varna dharma analogy*. The title *Samskara* itself has many strata of meaning. It means culture, ritual and refinement, power of memory, sacred consecration, purificatory rite and funeral obsequies.

Aspects of the Title's Significance

a) Ritual and Tradition

The novel explores the rigidity of Brahminical rituals and the conflict they create when faced with Naranappa's unorthodox life. The title underscores the importance of these rituals in defining the community's identity and values.

b) Identity Crisis

The crisis over Naranappa's last rites reflects the broader identity crisis within the community. The Brahmins are torn between adhering to tradition and acknowledging the changing social fabric.

c) Challenge to Orthodoxy

Naranappa's death forces the community to confront its own hypocrisy and the limitations of its rigid beliefs. The title highlights the tension between tradition and the need for reform.

d) Philosophical and Moral Inquiry

The novel uses the concept of samskara to delve into deeper philosophical questions about purity, pollution, and the nature of human existence. It challenges the characters—and readers—to reflect on the true meaning of these rituals. The title "Samskara" encapsulates the novel's exploration of tradition, identity, and morality. It serves as a metaphor for the internal and external conflicts faced by the characters as they navigate the complexities of their beliefs and the changing world around them. Through this title, the novel invites readers to question the rigidity of tradition and the true essence of rituals in defining human life.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL SAMSKARA

The novel Samskara unfolds within the fictitious village of Durvasapura, exploring intricate themes of tradition, morality, and societal norms in a Brahminical community in rural Karnataka. This novel is a corner stone in modern Kannada literature, delving into the clash between tradition and modernity.

The novel Samskara by U.R. Ananthamurthy is a significant religious and philosophical exploration of a decaying Brahmin colony in South India. Set against the backdrop of a traditional Hindu village, the novel delves into the tensions between orthodox religious practices and modern ethical dilemmas. It critiques the caste system that has been deeply rooted in Hindu society and perpetuated through ancient religious texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, Rigveda, and Manusmriti. These scriptures, while forming the foundation of Hindu philosophy and moral order, have also been interpreted to justify caste-based discrimination and social hierarchy.

Through the character of Praneshacharya, a highly orthodox Brahmin torn between duty and desire, the novel raises questions about the relevance of these ancient scriptures in a changing social order. The death of a defiant outcaste Brahmin, Naranappa, sets the moral and spiritual conflict in motion, exposing the hypocrisy and rigidity of religious customs. Samskara thus becomes a critique of moral decay hidden beneath the surface of ritual purity. Ananthamurthy's narrative does not simply reject tradition but calls for introspection and reform. It urges a re-evaluation of spiritual values in light of individual freedom, social justice, and human compassion in modern Indian society.

The central theme of the novel is the death of Naranappa and the complications connected with the issues of his burial. Naranappa, the rebel character, is anti-Brahminical in deeds but Praneshacharya who earned the title, *"the crest jewel of Vedic learning"* rejects the double standard thinking after the death of his wife Bhagirathi. He wants to settle his life with Chandri a prostitute. The sudden death of Naranappa brings the real examination of Acharya's ideals, learning, and wisdom. This event brings a real man out of Acharya's being, burdened with suffocating scriptural knowledge. He wants to live like an ordinary man neither a righteous Brahmin nor the crest jewel of Vedic learning.

At the core of the story is Praneshacharya, a devout Brahmin scholar, deeply committed to orthodox Hindu values. His life revolves around rituals, prayers, and scholarly pursuits. The narrative takes an unexpected turn with the death of Naranappa, an unconventional Brahmin whose departure triggers a moral and religious crisis in Durvasapura. Naranappa's unorthodox life challenges the traditional beliefs of the Brahmin community, forcing the villagers, particularly Praneshacharya, to confront their convictions and question established moral codes.

The main theme of the novel is the death of Naranappa and the complications connected with the issue of his cremation. Naranappa was an anti-Brahminical Brahmin who spent all his life in defying Brahmin beliefs and lifestyles. He brought a lower-caste prostitute to the agarahara and lived with her in his house. He even invited Muslim friends to the agrahara and openly consumed alcohol and non-vegetarian food so as to insult the other Brahmins.

When Naranappa died, his cremation became a complicated issue. The Brahmins did not want to do the last rites of Naranappa because they were afraid that the guru at Shringeri might excommunicate them for cremating a heretic. At the same time, they wanted the cremation to be over as soon as possible because they were not even permitted to eat or drink anything while a Brahmin corpse awaited cremation in the agrahara. Finally, they left the issue to Praneshacharya who was the head of the village.

Praneshacharya searched all the holy books to find a solution to this problem. Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa, submitted all her jewels at his feet to meet the expenses of the burial rites. This act of Chandri further complicated the issue because all the Brahmins suddenly turned greedy on seeing such a large quantity of gold. Now they all wanted to do the rites to get the gold. Praneshacharya became afraid that the love of gold might corrupt the whole agrahara. Praneshacharya could not find a solution to the dilemma of the burial issue even after consulting Manu and other holy texts. Therefore, he went to the Hanuman temple and prayed for some divine direction. However, the God Hanuman refused to enlighten him in anyway. While he was returning from the Hanuman temple, Chandri tempted him in the darkness. He fell to the temptation and made love to her immediately. The sexual relationship with Chandri totally transformed Praneshacharya. He felt that he no longer had any moral right to continue as the spiritual leader of the agrahara. Therefore, he refused to direct the Brahmins in the issue of the burial.

Chandri became desperate and she approached the lower caste people to do the burial. However, they refused to meddle with a Brahmin corpse. Finally, she went to the Muslim section and pleaded to Ahmed Bari, the fish merchant. Ahmed Bari accepted the challenge and secretly cremated the dead body at midnight. Chandri wept for her dead lover and returned to Kundapura, her native village.

Praneshacharya's internal struggle becomes a focal point, representing the tension between individual autonomy and societal expectations. Chandri embodies traditional values, and her interactions with characters like Putta, an outcaste woman, highlight the complex dynamics of caste, gender, and morality in the village. In the last chapter of the book, the narrative takes a dramatic turn, culminating in a shocking and symbolic resolution that compels characters and readers alike to confront the consequences of their choices and the inescapable impact of societal transformation.

5.4 ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL SAMSKARA

Praneshacharya, the spiritual leader of Durvasapura agrahara

Praneshacharya is a very learned and orthodox man belonging to the community of Madhva Brahmin. He has had his Vedic education in Kashi (Banaras) gaining the title, 'The Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning' (Vedanta Siromani). He lives in the highly orthodox village of Durvasapura in Mysore Malnad. He is the judge of the agrahara in all matters of religion, ritual, and conduct. His very life is a model of self-sacrifice and religious conventions. He married an invalid girl, Bhagirathi in order to render disinterested service and earn salvation. As advised in the *Gita*, he practices *Nishkama Karma Yoga*, performing his duty without desiring the fruit thereof. He believes that the merciful Lord has put him to this way of ascetic life to test him. His heart overflows with gratitude for his bed-ridden wife Bhagirathi who, by becoming an invalid, has obliged him with the opportunity of becoming perfect and mellower on the road to salvation, and he incessantly rejoices in his fate.

Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa, the reprobate Brahmin of the agrahara, brings the news of his death to Acharya

The story opens on a hot and humid mid-summer day. As Praneshacharya is about to sit down to his mid-day meal, after attending to the daily routine of serving his invalid wife with bathing, medicine and porridge, Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa the degenerate Brahmin of the agrahara, brings the news to the Acharya that he is dead of plague as readers come to know later on. Naranappa was no ordinary reprobate. His unorthodoxy was planned and cultivated in deliberate opposition to Praneshacharya's orthodoxy. He defied Brahminhood with a malicious glee. He ate meals cooked by the low caste Chandri, and he ate even meat and that too in public. He drank liquor and abused the Brahmins of the agrahara and their orthodox ways. He threw the sacred stone (saligrama) into the temple pond offending the religious sentiments of his fellow Madhva Brahmins of the agrahara. He befriended the Muslims of the village and made them catch all the sacred fish in the pond dedicated to the temple of Ganapati for curry, though, he very well knew that it was an act of sacrilege and the offender would bleed to death.

The close relatives of the deceased raise their objections to perform the Samskara for him to their leader Pranesha

On hearing the news through Praneshacharya, all the Brahmins of the agrahara gather before his house. The question before the Brahmins- the close relatives of Naranappa and others equally is whether this willful defiant of Brahminic ways is entitled to Brahminic rites of cremation. They all look up to the authoritative pronouncement of Praneshacharya. It transpires that at least two of them- Garudacharya and Lakshmanacharya had close family ties with the deceased Naranappa and are

entitled to perform the last rites for him. But they aver to the Acharya that they have broken their ties with the dead man and are unwilling to perform the samskara for him as he had deviated from Brahminhood and denigrated it openly by packing his cards with sin and the devil.

Chandri's offer of her gold jewels for Naranappa's cremation expenses complicates the issue

Unfortunately, the issue is that Naranppa's concubine Chandri offers her gold jewels for the funeral expenses and the two close relatives of Naranappa, Garuda and Lakshmana were unwilling to perform the cremation of Naranappa. Garuda wants to use the gold for getting the discharge of his son in the army and Lakshmana wants to get the gold as it belonged to his late sister-in-law. Praneshacharya, a genuine honest soul, is nonplussed at the warring greediness of Garuda and Lakshmana. He retires to study the books of *shastra* and find an answer out of this dilemma. It had better be a quick one. Unpleasant things happen to corpses rather quickly in a hot climate. Moreover, the Brahmins of the agrahara cannot eat anything until the dead body is cremated. An empty Brahmin stomach in midsummer is a well of anguish.

The predicament of Praneshacharya to solve the vexatious problems created by the unorthodox ways of the reprobate Naranappa

To the utter disappointment of Praneshacharya, the books of *shastra* are very unhelpful in solving this predicament. He sits down to reason out the matter in his mind : The problem has arisen because Naranappa was not excommunicated from the cast while he was alive. They had not dared to do it since Naranappa had threatened to become a Muslim and defile the Brahmin agrahara. However, Praneshacharya asks himself if this was the real reason; if there was not also compassion or a firm resolution to redeem the sinner Naranappa with saintly patience and goodness from his side. However, the basic question remains : "Why did Naranappa break away Brahminhood at all in the first instance?" The books say that none can be born a Brahmin without the merit of many good deeds in former births. Naranappa, having thus born to a valuable heritage, proceeded to throw it into the gutter. But, in the final analysis, readers see that all at the mercy of our inner nature. Naranappa's dying lips have probably muttered the name of God, and he has reached God. Whereas for himself (that is for Praneshacharya) who wears out in work and worship, birth after birth is laid down to achieve salvation. Who knows but Naranappa's inner being was taken up with God but his own is with what? Thus begins Praneshacharya's quest for self-discovery, for his inner identity, which forms the theme of the novel.

The visit of the Durvasapura Brahmins to Parijatapura

In the meanwhile, the agrahara Brahmins, at the suggestion of Dasacharya and with the knowledge of Praneshacharya, proceed to Parijatapura where late Naranappa has had good friends. They precede to the house of Manjayya, the good friend of Naranappa and seek his help to cremate Naranappa's body. However, on seeing the complications in the issue, Manjayya offers to bear the expenses to cremate the body of his late friend, Naranappa. Therefore, the Durvasapura Brahmins return home disappointed to seek the guidance of Praneshacharya. As the Acharya has gone to seek the divine guidance of Maruti at the temple nearby, they wait for him patiently at his house.

The accidental mating of the Acharya with Chandri while returning from the temple of Maruti to get a divine decree to solve the problem of Naranappa's cremation

As the books do not offer him any guidance for the pressing problem on hand, Praneshacharya decides to seek a sign from the community deity, Hanuman, housed in a temple nearby. Before going to the temple, he hands over Chandri's gold ornaments to her for her upkeep. With his wet dhoti, he prays to Hanuman until the fall of night to give him a sign whether to proceed with the cremation of Naranappa or not. There is no sign from the deity. He seems to be wholly preoccupied

with the mountain, the Sanjeevi Parvatham, he has uplifted (for affecting the cure of the mortally wounded Lakshmana, the brother of Rama). Naranappa's concubine, Chandri, is anxiously waiting outside the temple for the verdict.

Praneshacharya comes out of the temple dejected and exhausted. Chandri is moved at the sincerity of this lone Brahmin, the solitary genuine specimen in Durvasapura agrahara and goes down on her knees by groping in the darkness for his feet. Her breasts accidentally touch Praneshacharya's knees. Those knees already weak and unsteady with physical hunger and spiritual disillusionment, give way. He strokes her hair and wishes to pronounce a benediction in Sanskrit. However, the appropriate words evade him at this critical juncture. Chandri warms up at the tenderness of this gesture, and embraces the Acharya tightly. As soon as her firm breasts press against him, the sleeping tiger in the Acharya wakes up all of a sudden. Chandri has no difficulty in making him sit down and lean against her for support. The hunger that he has not so far appeased begins to make its urgent claims now and the Acharya faintly calls out 'Ma'. Chandri feeds him with the bananas that she had helped herself with while slow starvation was eroding the wits of the Brahmins of Durvasapura. Afterwards, she takes off her sari and spreads it on the ground and tightly clasping the Acharya, sobs her heart out. The first part of the novel ends here.

Praneshacharya's awakening in the forest

The second part of the novel begins with Praneshacharya's awakening in the forest- both literal and metaphorical. He tells Chandri that she should announce to the agrahara Brahmins what transpired between them in the forest, and he confesses that he has no longer the authority to decide for the agrahara. Chandri is unwilling to expose the Acharya before the Brahmins of the Agrahara. She goes direct to Naranappa's house. As she cannot see the sight of Naranappa's body rol and reek, she manages to cremate it with the help of a Muslim fish-merchant by name Ahmad Bari whom late Naranappa had helped in difficult times. However, the agrahara people do not know about this.

The efforts of the young friends of Naranappa to cremate the body of their patron, Naranappa

The young friends of late Naranappa practicing a drama rehearsal at Parijatapura feel sad at the demise of their good friend and patron. They decide to rush to his house at Durvasapura at night. Finding that the house deserted without the body of Naranappa they become scared and think that the spirit of Naranappa has walked away. They rush out of the house in fear and panic. The nocturnal movement of the cart and the sound of the feet of people rushing in and out make Lakshmidevamma, the mad widow, belch and screech at night adding to the eerie atmosphere of the agrahara. The women and children remain indoors in breathless fear and anxiety.

Praneshacharya's altered persona after his sexual affair with Chandri

When Praneshacharya goes back home to his invalid wife, his hand becomes unsteady while giving her the daily dose of medicine and porridge. The sensation that he had often experienced in his dreams, of falling into a bottomless pit and drawing up his legs in instinctive terror, revives to him when he sees the virtually visionless eyes of his flat-chested, utterly lean, and skinny wife who has served to function as a symbol of his sacrifice. The sight of her recoils him as if she were the source of all stink that troubled his nostrils. He feels like a small monkey that has left the safe refuge of his mother's body and springing from branch to branch has happened to miss its hold. He is at a loss to know what made him attend on this ailing woman compassion or a sense of obligation deriving from a Decalogue. He was sixteen and she twelve when he married her. Either a life of sanyasa or a life of self-mortification out of this sour resolve had emerged his choice of a stemless invalid girl. He left her with a grateful father-in-law and went away to Banaras to become a Vedanta Siromani. When he returned he gladly engaged himself in the nursing of his wife, for it had seemed to him that God had made her invalid and deposited her with him to test his perseverance in desireless action (nishkama

karma). He attended on her, he cooked food for her, worshipped the idols of the domestic deities, and in the evening ladled out discourses on the Holy Scriptures to the agrahara Brahmins and widows with shaven heads. Like a miser, he had hoarded all the pretty coins of his daily penance. Now he felt he was back where he was in sixteen.

The Acharya disowns all responsibilities

Thus, when the Brahmins troop to him again to ask what they should do with the corpse of Naranappa, he tells them they are free to do what they like.

The Acharya lacks courage to admit to the Brahmins of his agrahara that he slept with Chandri in the forest

He calls out to Chandri to strike off his shackles, to take down from his throbbing head the increasing weight of gurudum. However, after the meeting in the forest, Chandri was nowhere to be seen; she had walked away, like Urvasi. He cannot bring himself to admit to the Brahmins that he too shared in the cestasy of Naranappa. For the first time in his life, the desire is born in him to lie, to hide, and to plan for his own security. He finds he does not have the courage to run the risk of blasting the trust the Brahmins have in him. Is this remorse or anxiety to save his skin, or an automatic habit or a hidden guile in his character?-He wonders. The prayer (mantra), which had become a habit of his being, comes to his mind : "I am the sin : I am the sinner…" (Papaham, papakarmaham). No, that is a lie too. One must eject all the mantras that have squatted in one's soul and make one's life clean and clear like that of a young boy.

The Acharya is happy that Chandri is not there to depose for him to the Brahmins

He did not feel "sin" (papoham) when he pressed Chandri's breasts. In a way, he is glad that Chandri is not there to strip him of his respectability before the Brahmins. What one thinks after the experience is over, when awareness returns, is one thing, but what one feels while the experience lasts, when awareness has absconded, is altogether different. He feels he must banish his awareness again in Chandri's arms and while still in her embrace, recall it; only thus, he can heal the self-division within**.**

The Brahmins proceed to Kaimara at the suggestion of Dasacharya

Surprised at the reply of Praneshacharya, the Brahmins of Durvasapura set out to Kaimara to meet Subbanacharya. He feeds the Brahmins but says that he cannot offer them any guidance in the matter of performing *samskara* for Naranappa, which the great Praneshacharya himself cannot decide. As they are about to leave for meeting the guru at the Mutt, Dasacharya develops high fever and goes into a coma. Therefore, they leave him behind and meet the guru and explain to him their predicament. He promptly orders them to burn the body of Naranappa and hand over the gold to the Mutt, as Naranappa has died heirless. The Brahmins leave the Mutt after taking the ceremonial meals there. They leave Gundacharya behind as he develops a crippling fever like Dagacharya.

The Acharya goes for a swim in the village river, his nostalgic thoughts of his boyhood days and his visit to the place in the forest where he took Chandri

After departure of the Brahmins, Praneshacharya goes for a swim in the village river. Swimming about in the cool waters, he recollects his boyhood when giving a slip to the vigil of his mother; how he would swim in the river and afterwards roll about on the warm sands to dry him lest his mother should detect his escapade. He is surprised that the long forgotten desire of his boyhood should revive now. Is there, he wonders, a pleasure to equal that of rolling in the warm sands on the riverbank after a cool swim in the river? He gets up and goes back to the spot in the forest where Chandri and he had laid together-the spot where his life had changed course. The print of their

bodies on the green turf still lay afresh. He plucks the tender grass shoots and smells them. To rest thus in the shade of the tree seems to him in itself a goal of life. He wants to remain thus awake to the grass, to the flower, to shine and shadow, to set aside all desire and wealth and to live unaccommodated receiving gratefully whatever emerged from the unmanifest calling outs.

Praneshacharya walks out of the agrahara after cremating his wife Bhagirathi

Praneshacharya comes back home from the forest. His wife has caught plague and soon died. He cremates her and sets off without going back home towards the east. The fifteen lace-embroidered shawls, the two hundred rupees, the balsam necklace set in gold, all that were conferred on him by the Mutt in honour of his erudition and forensic skill are left behind in the deserted house. The second part of the novel ends here.

Pranesha's meeting of Putta during his aimless wanderings and Putta sticking to him like the sin of his previous birth

The third part of the novel describes Praneshacharya's wanderings. He decides to proceed towards Kundapura and meet Chandri. On the way, a village headman offers him fruits as the Acharya denies his suggestion to cook his own meals. He mistakes the Acharya for mendicant Brahmin seeking alms. As the Acharya leaves the village, he meets a young man by name Putta belonging to Malera caste. Putta wants to come with the Acharya to Kundapura and follows him like the sin of his previous birth. He is highly talkative and plies the Acharya with riddles. Try as he does, the Acharya is not able to give a slip to Putta and go on his own way.

The Acharya's experiences with Putta at Melige and his meeting with Padmavati

Putta takes the Acharya to the temple festival at Melige. The Acharya sees the decorated temple car surrounded by people offering worship to it. He also sees a crowd of people in festive mood. He sees a cockfight nearby and then a young girl full of curves performing acrobatics on a bamboo poll. The Acharya is attracted to the serpentine curves of the acrobatic girl and is reminded of Chandri's charms. Putta takes the Acharya to a restaurant and gets him a cup of coffee. Then he takes him to the house of a young woman by name Padınavati living alone in a farmhouse. Padmavati is very charming. Putta suggests that the Acharya should stay there in the cottage of Padmavati for the night and proceed to Kundapura in the morning. Telling Padmavati that he will return with the Acharya, Putta takes him to the temple feast intended only for Brahmins. He stays outside and waits for the Acharya to finish his meals.

The Acharya's sudden decision to return to Durvasapura to redefine his personality without any fear or guilt

At the temple meals-line, the Acharya eats the ceremonial-meal. His neighbour in the line seeks the help of the Acharya to marry his young girl of before she comes of age. The cook serving the meals is able to identify the Acharya after some hard thinking and proceeds to inform his master about the presence of the great Praneshacharya. So the Acharya abruptly breaks the meal and rushes out. Putta catches up with him and helps him wash his hands in the nearby pond. Then he asks the Acharya to come along with him to Padmavati's house. But the Acharya overcomes his temptation, decides to return to Durvasapura, and tells the truth to the Brahmins and completes the Samskara for Naranappa. He wants to overcome his fear of socicty for transgressing its code. To get rid of this fear, he must go back to the village and tell the Brahmins the whole truth, not in confession or repentance but simply as the truth, one's truth. So he tells Putta that he has to return to his village, as a relative of his is very serious. Putta offers to accompany him, as he wants to meet his friend Naranappa for an obligation. But the Acharya desists from telling Putta the death of Naranappa as it may lead to fresh complications. As they proceed on the road, a bullock cart proceeding to

Durvasapura offers to take one of them. Putta asks the Acharya to go by the cart and proceeds to meet his wife living with her parents at Tirthahalli. The novel ends with Praneshacharya journeying back to Durvasapura in anxious expectation.

5.5 MAJOR THEMES

5.5.1 Quest for Identity Towards a New Birth

The salient theme of the novel is a quest for identity. This quester is, of course, the central character of the novel, Praneshacharya. The quest for identity takes the form of a journey and it is a journey of self- discovery. Praneshacharya, after his experience of sex with Chandri in the forest finds himself in a spiritual turmoil. Following the death of his wife, he thinks, there is nothing to hold him back in Durvasapura and he sets himself adrift and is ready to go where his feet take him. In the course of the journey, he experiences what he had not experienced so far in the cloistered Brahmin community of Durvasapura. He has his lessons in humility for he is taken to be an ordinary mendicant Brahmin on his beggarly rounds. He meets a half-caste young man Putta, who offers him a bidi (which he refuses) and later offers him some eatables, which he accepts. He moves around with his young companion in the car-festival in Melige, is persuaded to drink coffee, watches a fight between two roosters who get bloody in the process, and also visits a prostitute, barely managing to get away with the promise to return later, and finally sitting down to meals among the poor Brahmins in the temple. The last three experiences that are particularly frightening are the cockfight, the visit to the prostitute, and sitting down to meals in the temple. In the cockfight, he has his first brush with life in the raw, with violence and cruelty in the ordinary world and in the second he experiences the stirrings of lust when he is face to face with Padmavati. The third experience that proves the most frightening and that precipitates matters is the experience of being identified in the temple.

This journey also gives him an opportunity to analyze himself or rather to continue his self-analysis that had begun after mating with Chandri. He seeks answers to several questions : Why did he not go back to agrahara after the death of his wife? Was it because of his fear of being caught? Then, what was the extent of his responsibility for making love to Chandri? Initially he believes that his union with her was 'undesired, as if it was God's will' and that he was absolutely not responsible for making love to her (95). But he keeps wrestling with himself and feels himself to be in a Trishanku-state till he has finally decided to accept full responsibility for his sexual union with Chandri ('In that moment, decisive of which way I should turn, the decision was taken to take Chandri. Even if I lost control, the responsibility to decide was still mine. Man's decision is valid only because it's possible to lose control, not because it's easy' (96). He also agonizes over his realization that his individual action affects others also (...there's this deep relation between our decisions and the whole community (106). He realizes that he can free himself from this Trishanku-state through a free, deliberate wide-awake, fully willed act (107). Earlier he had decided to go where his legs took him (85). But now he decides to act and to 'remake myself in true wakefulness' (107). In the course of his musings, he thinks of going to Kundapura and living with Chandri. He comes back to this thought many times during these spells of self-analysis (pp. 107, 109, 112, 113, 114, 122, 125, 127, 129). This suggested least the possibility of his finally going to live with Chandri.

Praneshacharya has no sense of regret and naturally no feelings of guilt. However, he is constantly haunted by the fear of his old identity as the spiritual leader of Durvasapura Brahmins being discovered. In the temple, he is recognized but before he is exposed, he runs away from the temple and decides to proceed to Durvasapura in order to make a complete confession before the Brahmins and to cremate Naranappa's dead body. "Only then will he be free from fear and be really free to do whatever he wants to do. … In full view of the frightened Brahmins, I'll stand exposed

like the naked quick of life; and I, elder in their midst, will turn into a new man at midnight.... When I tell them about myself, there should be no taint of repentance in me, no trace of any sorrow that I am a sinner" (132). It is very natural that the writer should use the metaphor of rebirth or remaking while talking of Praneshacharya's new identity. Near the end when he has taken the final decision of confession, he imagines that he "will turn into a new man at midnight" (131). The rebirth motif reminds us that the title *Samskara* not only means a rite for a dead man but, as Ramanujan suggests, also transformation : "The rite for a dead man becomes a rite of passage for the living" (137). Another related metaphor that Praneshacharya uses to describe his uncertain spiritual state is that of a lost soul, a ghost. After the loss of his wife, he says, he entered limbo, a lost soul (120-21). But he also dreads entering the real world, the demonic world of cock-fights, a world of cruelty and violence and passion. "I dread it. It's the dread of being transformed from ghost to demon" (118). The encounter with Padmavati also offers him another chance to leave "the ghostly stage" behind and "move to the next stage of soul" (121) but he still dreads the moment of transition and goes away for the temple. It is only in the temple that he decides to take the final plunge and be a fully autonomous person.

Readers see Praneshacharya moving out of himself and undergoing experiences that he had not dreamt of but significantly he finally decides to come back home.Clearly the movement is from the identity given by a moribund, closed, god-drivencommunity to the identity as a fully responsible individual. When the novel ends, the confession is still several hours away and so is the new identity that he would make for himself. Though he is autonomous, he feels himself to be accountable to his community. Hence, his decision to go back to his agrahara. Praneshacharya could be called an insider-rebel but he is not an iconoclast of the kind Naranappa is.

5.5.2 Brahminism and Anti-Brahminism

Brahminism and anti-Brahminism are another important thematic strand in the novel. Ananthamurthy is himself a Madhva Brahmin reared in an agrahara. The writer's presentation of Brahminism as being decadent is almost savage. The Brahmins are greedy and gluttonous, and lead a parasitic existence. They are ignorant and grossly superstitious. The only exception is Praneshacharya. Naranappa is a lapsed Brahmin who knows the different sins the Brahmins are guilty of and who brazenly indulges in all those things that are held sacred by the Brahmins. The life of Brahmins is circumscribed by taboos and the fear of pollution. The inability of their leader Praneshacharya to find a solution to the question : who will cremate the heretic Naranappa? - brings the entire agrahara to a halt.

5.5.3 Moral Dilemma

In *Samskara*, the quest for the right moral choice is indeed a central theme. The protagonist, Praneshacharya, faces a moral dilemma when he must decide whether to cremate Naranappa, a heretic Brahmin and pleasure seeker, and if so, who should perform the cremation. This dilemma raises questions about adherence to tradition, social norms, and the conflict between asceticism and pleasure seeking. Praneshacharya's initial identity is rooted in his role as an ascetic and spiritual leader of the Brahmin community. However, his encounter with Naranappa's mistress, Chandri, and their intimate relationship disrupts his established beliefs and challenges his identity. This event forces Praneshacharya to grapple with larger moral questions and reevaluate his relationship with Chandri and his former followers. The novel presents him with the task of forging a new and more authentic identity for himself. The passing of Naranappa sparks a moral crisis within the community. Praneshacharya, a devout Brahmin, confronts a profound moral dilemma as he grapples with conflicting demands, torn between traditional values and the moral responsibility to perform the last rites for a man who lived outside accepted norms.

5.5.4 Asceticism and Eroticism

It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the Hindus believe in four ashramas or four distinct stages of life : that of the student, the householder, the hermit, and the ascetic. A related concept is that of the four ends (pursharthas) of life : dharma or righteousness, duty or virtue, artha or material gain, Kama, love or pleasure, and finally moksha, liberation from worldly life. Clearly, pursuit of asceticism is but one stage of life and physical pleasure is an important goal of it. However, in popular imagination, asceticism, other worldliness and a life-denying ethic have been over-valourized.

Samskara represents a society where asceticism is prioritized and valorized beyond what is due to it and is opposed to the pursuit of pleasure

The following points may also be kept in mind :

(i) Asceticism and eroticism are represented allegorically and in opposition to each other. The novel presents the inadequacy of asceticism and the growth of the central character to a new awareness of the need to go beyond the duality of asceticism and eroticism.

(ii) The opposition between the two ideals is stated in extreme terms. Praneshacharya is a householder, at sixteen he married an invalid wife. She was incapable of bearing children and has been living the life of an ascetic. So great is his self-denial, that even though, he tells sexually exciting stories from Puranas and othe ancient books, he himself remains unaffected by them.

(iii) On the other hand, Naranappa is a heretic Brahmin who has rejected his own wife, broken every known Brahmin taboo, and has been living with a whore for ten long years.

(iv) The turning point comes when Praneshacharya has his first experience of physical pleasure with a low-caste voluptuous woman.

(v) Readers read a close-up of the interior monologue of Praneshacharya as he comes to terms with his past and as he endeavours to deal with the real world around him shown by Putta. He owns complete responsibility for his mating with Chandri and is possibly thinking of living with her.

(vi) Praneshacharya emerges as a fully autonomous human being who accepts complete responsibility for his actions – his responsibility to cremate Naranappa and also explain his liaison with Chandri to his community of Brahmins. However, he also recognizes the difficulty of making moral choices without infringing the autonomy of other individuals. He wants to transcend the duality of asceticism and eroticism.

(vii) The Acharya's confrontation with Naranappa loses much of its meaning. Really, Praneshacharya of parts two and three belongs to Naranappa's party and he knows it.

5.5.5 Tradition versus Modernity

The narrative revolves around the tension between traditional Brahminical values and the challenges posed by modernity. Naranappa's unconventional lifestyle prompts the community to question age-old customs and grapple with the necessity for adaptation in the face of changing social norms.

5.5.6 Individual versus Society

Praneshacharya's internal struggle epitomizes the conflict between individual autonomy and societal expectations. The choices made by individual characters underscore the tension between personal desires and the demands of a conservative community.

5.5.7 Caste and Social Hierarchy

The novel delves into the complexities of a caste-based society, portraying the rigid social hierarchy prevalent in the Brahminical community. Interactions between characters from different castes, such as Chandri and Putta, illuminate deep-seated prejudices and societal norms.

5.5.8 Ritual Pollution

A central theme explores the concept of ritual pollution. The fear of contamination and the quest for ritual purity highlight characters' adherence to established norms. Naranappa's departure challenges these norms, prompting a reevaluation of the consequences of deviating from traditional practices.

5.5.9 Gender Roles and Morality

Traditional gender roles within the Brahminical community are explored. Chandri, Praneshacharya's wife, embodies traditional values, while her interactions with characters like Putta raise questions about the role of women and the morality assigned to their actions within the societal framework.

5.5.10 Symbolism of the River

The river flowing through Durvasapura serves as a potent symbol, representing the passage of time and the inevitability of change. The river's perpetual flow becomes a metaphor for the transient nature of life and the imperative for adaptation.

5.5.11 Societal Transformation

The novel captures a moment of societal transformation, reflecting broader changes in post-independence India. Characters' responses to Naranappa's death symbolize the challenges and uncertainties accompanying societal evolution.

5.5.12 Existentialism

Praneshacharya's internal turmoil and philosophical contemplations introduce existentialist themes. The novel raises questions about the meaning of life, the nature of moral responsibility, and the consequences of one's choices.

5.5.13 Identity and Belonging

Characterss grapple with questions of identity and belonging. Naranappa's non-conformity challenges the established identity of the Brahmin community, prompting a reevaluation of what it means to belong to a particular social and cultural group.

5.6 CHARACTERIZATION

5.6.1 Praneshacharya

Praneshacharya is presented as a model of piety and adherence to tradition. His commitment to his Brahminical duties and rituals is unwavering. However, as the narrative unfolds, we witness his gradual transformation. The conflict arises when he encounters Chandri, a lower-caste woman, and desires her, challenging the strict norms of his community. Praneshacharya is initially portrayed as an example of devotion to tradition and piety. He is steadfast in his devotion to his Brahminical responsibilities and customs. Nevertheless, as the story progresses, we see steady change in him. When he falls in love with Chandri, a woman from a lower caste, he defies the rigid customs of his community and causes strife. The internal turmoil Praneshacharya experiences and his quest for a resolution make him a compelling character. His internal struggles reflect the broader tension between tradition and individual desires. Praneshacharya's character invites readers to contemplate the complexities of morality and the consequences of breaking societal norms.

5.6.2 Bhagirathi

She is the invalid wife of Praneshacharya, the protagonist of the novel. She feels that she is a burden to her husband and often advises him to marry a healthy and fruitful woman. She is very proud of her husband and she thinks that anybody will be willing to give his daughter in marriage to him as he is just forty and an acknowledged scholar of Vedanta. But the Acharya thinks that by marrying her, he is making a sacrifice for attainting salvation. She dies of plague when the agrahara of Durvasapura is afflicted by it. In mythology, Bhagirathi is the river goddess Ganga, a symbol of fertility and wild energy. But Pranesha's wife Bhagirathi is sterile and invalid.

5.6.3 Naranappa

A pivotal figure in *Samskara* is Naranappa, a character who rejects his caste identity and embraces a life of dissent, thereby defying Brahminical norms. He acts as a counterbalance to Praneshacharya, offering a different take on religion and society norms. The village's orthodoxy is questioned by Naranappa's rejection of conventional Brahminical practices, which include his conversion to Islam. He represents dissension and poses a threat to the status quo because of his rebellious spirit and unwillingness to fit in. Questions concerning the rigidity of social norms and the repercussions of defying them are brought up by Naranappa's persona. Readers might find Naranappa's character appealing for his defiance and non-conformist stance. His story adds a layer of complexity to the novel, forcing readers to confront the limitations of a system based on strict social hierarchies. Naranappa's fate also serves as a cautionary tale about the challenges one faces when challenging deeply entrenched traditions.

5.6.4 Chandri

Another fascinating character in *Samskara* is Chandri, a lower-caste woman Praneshacharya falls in love with. She draws attention to the strict caste system that is in place in the village and stands in for the downtrodden and oppressed segment of society. She first sets in motion Praneshacharya's ethical predicament. Her presence pushes the limits of morality and caste, upending the existing social order. Chandri is a living example of the effects of discrimination and prejudice in society. Her life is characterized by hardship and poverty, which stands in sharp contrast to the privilege enjoyed by Brahmins. Readers may empathize with Chandri due to her vulnerability and the societal injustices she faces. Her character prompts reflection on the deeply ingrained caste-based hierarchies and the impact of such systems on individual lives. Chandri's presence in the narrative adds a layer of social critique, inviting readers to question the inherent inequalities in traditional Indian society.

5.6.5 Garudacharya

He is a Madhva Brahmin belonging to Durvasapura agrahara. No relationship lasts between Naranappa's family and that of Garudacharya after he has fought and won a lawsuit with his father over the orchard. They do not attend any functions and do not take even a sip of water each other's family. Further Naranappa is said to have been instrumental in Garuda's son Shyama joining the army deserting his regular Sanskrit classes under the great Praneshacharya. Lakshmana's wife Sitadevi believes that he has cast a black magic on her relative Naranappa making him desert his wife and his Brahminhood by taking Chandri, a low-caste woman, for his concubine. Garuda is also considered to have robbed the property of the widow Lakshmidevamma and caused her mental wreck. Though he first refuses to perform samskara for Naranappa, he alters his stand under the goading of his wife tempted by the gold jewels offered by Chandri for the cremation of her lover Naranappa. At Kaimara Mutt when he meets their Guru with the other Madhva Brahmins, the latter asks them to cremate Naranappa at once and surrender his gold to the Mutt as he has died without any heir. But Garuda tells the Guru that the gold belongs to him by the court degree in favour of him.

At this, the Guru becomes angry with him by calling him a scoundrel and dismisses him and others with the contempt they deserve. Garuda is highly money-minded and unscrupulous.

5.6.6 Sitadevi

She is the wife of Garudacharya. She bears a grudge against Naranappa for making her son Shyama go astray and join the army without the knowledge of his parents. When the question of Naranappa's cremation first comes, she cautions her husband Garuda not to be rash to accept to undertake the cremation of the reprobate Naranappa and incur the wrath of the Guru. She admires her husband's arguments for cleverly dodging the responsibility of cremating Naranappa. Later on, when she sees that Chandri offers her gold for the cremation of Naranappa, she wants to grab the gold and redeem her son Shyama from the army as she is afraid that he will be forced to deviate from his Brahminic ways as people say that in the army he will be made to eat meat and drink alcohal. But neither Sitadevi nor her husband Garuda knows that the gold has gone back to Chandri's hands from the Acharya.

5.6.7 Lakshmanacharya

He is one of the Madhva Brahmins of Durvasapura agrahara. The deceased Naranappa is related to him through his wife Anasuya for Naranappa has married her sister whom he has discarded soon after his marriage. But he does not want to undertake the cremation of Naranappa for he has been responsible for his sister-in-law to become hysterical and die soon after. Naranappa has not even attended the funeral of his wife. He has taken to unbrahminical ways by sleeping with a low caste woman, keeping company with Muslims eating meat and fish from the temple dedicated to Ganapati. Lakshmana is also inimical towards Naranappa for he has been responsible for ruining his son-in-law Shripati by initiating him into his ways of living. Lakshmana is a penny pincher and highly suspicious that his wife will be very liberal with her relatives and so he keeps a careful watch over her dealings with her people whenever they visit their house. He makes dry banana leaves and cups and sells them to the people of the nearby villages and towns and makes money out of it. He is disappointed when the Guru at the Kaimara Mutt gives the Brahmins a gift of one anna after their meals. He takes exception to the miserliness of the Guru who has given up all attachments. He follows Garuda and other Brahmins to Parijatapura and Kaimara to find a solution to the cremation of the heretic Brahmin Naranappa.

5.6.8 Anasuya

She is the wife of Lakshmanacharya. She is related to late Naranappa through her sister whom he had married and jilted in favour of the seductive low-caste Chandri, his concubine. She is angry with Naranappa for neglecting her sister and causing her premature death. She is equally angry with him for ruining his son-in-law Shripati, an orphan, whom they have brought up and given their only daughter Lilavati. Under the tutelary of Naranappa, Shripati discontinues his Sanskrit lessons with Praneshacharya and begins to loaf around by taking to evil company. She first advises her husband not to undertake the cremation of Naranappa. But later on seeing Chandri's gold, she alters her stand and goads her husband to accept the cremation of Naranappa, as the deceased is after all her uncle's son first and her sister's husband next. She foolishly advises her daughter Lilavati not to oblige to her husband's sexual demands too easily and thinks that this will make him stick to her and long for her. But her advice misfires as Shripati easily fulfils his sexual demands from Belli, the low-caste woman of the slum, what he does not get from his conjugal basket.

5.6.9 Shripati

Garuda and his wife pick up Shripati as an orphan and bring him up and later marry their daughter Lilavati to him. He learns Sanskrit under the great scholar Praneshacharya for some time. He comes

under the influence of Naranappa, the heterodox Brahmin of his village Durvasapura. Fired by the erotic descriptions of Sakuntala espoused by the Acharya, he rushes to the village pond and copulates with Belli, the low-caste woman bathing there. His wife's non-cooperation in bed also makes him to rush to Belli to appease his sexual hunger. He joins the dramatic troupe founded by Naranappa at Parijatapura and spends more time with his young friends there in the house of Manjayya. He does not know about the death of Naranappa as he is away at Shirnali at that time. When he returns to see him at his home, he is shocked to see his mentor dead. He rushes to Parijatapura and participates in a dramatic rehearsal with his friends Nagaraja, Manjunatha and others all the time feeling sorry for the death of their patron and friend, Naranappa. At the suggestion of Manjunatha, they want to show their gratitude to Naranappa by cremating his body. When they go to Naranappa's house at night, they find the house empty. They have the shock of their lives and rush out thinking that Naranappa's spirit has walked away in disgust for they do not know that Chandri has already cremated him with the help of Ahamad Bari, the fish merchant.

5.6.10 Belli

She is a young woman with provocative sex appeal. She has a pair of lusty breasts that will disarm even an ascetic. She is the concubine of Shripati, the son-in-law of Lakshmana and Anasuya. Shripati falls for her sexual charms and prowess induced by the erotic descriptions from Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* through the discourses of the epic by his guru, Praneshacharya. The Brahmin youth of Durvasapura and Parijatapura long for her company, though they do not dare to take her because of her low caste origin and fear of being ostracized. But Shripati, who is a hedonist like his mentor Naranappa, finds the sexual company of Belli more congenial than his frigid wife Lilavati. Even the great Praneshacharya, after his affair with Chandri, begins to think about and longs for Belli's breasts. Her sexual charms are as seductive as that of Chandri, if not more. Belli, like the other members of her clan believes that the plague is the result of the anger of demon, which can be appeased by sacrificing fowls and animals. Belli loses her parents who become victim to the plague that enters their slum through the agrahara like Chandri, Belli is also a symbol of eroticism and a contrast to the disenchanting Brahmin women.

5.6.11 Durgabhatta

He is the only Smarta Brahmin in Durvasapura agrahara housing the Madhva Brahmins. He has his own prejudice against the orthodoxy of the Madhvas who consider the orthodoxy of Smartas lower in rank. He does not like Dasacharya's suggestion to ask the Parijatapura Smarta Brahmins to perform the samskara for the reprobate Brahmin Naranappa. He considers the suggestion an affront on the Smarta Brahmins to undertake the samskara for Naranappa, which the Madhvas of his own agrahara do not want to perform. He tells Praneshacharya that they need not make much fuss over Naranappa taking to a low caste woman, Chandri. He says that a Brahmin is not lost because he takes a lowborn prostitute. He points out that their ancestors who all came from the North cohabited with the Dravidian woman as per historical accounts. While the Madhvas deliberate the question of Naranappa's samskara, he secretly ogles at Chandri and assesses her sexual charms and admires the taste of Naranappa for having picked up such a nice concubine. Durgabhatta has partiality for the Smarta Brahmins of Parijatapura agrahara as he has enjoyed their hospitality to the hilt. Further he has an eye for the young unshaven widows of that agrahara with their lips made red by their betel chewing. He has an eye for feminine charms and has Ravi Varma's painting of Matsyagandhi, the fisherwoman shyly trying to hide her breasts bursting through her poor rag of a sari, hung up in his bedroom. He has nothing but contempt for the Madhvas' orthodoxy but he plays safe in their presence but considers them 'bastards who make love with shaven widows'. Durgabhatta is Naranappa's anti-self.

5.6.12 Dasacharya

Dasacharya is one of the poor Madhva Brahmins of Durvasapura agrahara who thrives mainly by ritual meals served in the houses of the agrahara Brahmins during ritual functions and ceremonies in their houses. What lust is to Naranappa, hunger to Dasacharya. He loses his patience with Garuda and Lakshmana for postponing the cremation of Naranappa on grounds of propriety. He is ready to cremate the body of Naranappa with the help of four Brahmins, if Pranesha permits him to do so. For him, it is a question of appeasing his hunger. When vultures hover around the agrahara to pick up the dying and dead rats there, the other Brahmins try to shoo them away but they do not budge. Dasacharya suggests that they blow their conches and beat their pones. This trick works and the vultures retreat. The agrahara Brahmins hesitate to undertake the cremation of dead Naranappa thinking that they will lose their Brahminhood by cremating the body of a reprobate Brahmin. In order to overcome this trouble, he suggests that they approach the Brahmin friends of Parlatanura to perform the samskara for the late friend Naranappa, as they are not very orthodox as the Madhvas of Durvasapura. Taking this suggestion, a gang of Brahmins with Dasacharya goes to Parijatapura seeking the help of Manjayya but returns disappointed as the Parijatapura Brahmins do not want themselves to look low in the eyes of the Madhvas. Unable to bear his hunger any longer, Dasacharya makes a secret visit to Manjayya's house and appeases his hunger by humoring him and his clan. Again, when the Acharya disowns his responsibility in the matter of performing samskara for the late Naranappa, it is Dasacharya who suggests that they go and meet Subbanacharya at Kaimara. Unfortunately, he contacts plague and succumbs to it. The Brahmins who have come with him to Kaimara know about his death later.

5.6.13 Lakshmidevamma

She is a child-widow of Durvasapura agrahara. The agrahara Brahmins consider her an ill-omen. Whenever they meet her head on, they walk back four paces to undo the ill-luck. They all call her 'Sour Belch'. Her best-known name is 'Half-Wit Lakshmidevamma'. Her life is a Purana by itself. She married at eight, widowed at ten. Her parents-in-law had died when she was fifteen. She lost her parents before she was twenty. The agrahara steered at her as the ill-starred girl. Garuda's father took charge of her and her little property and jewelry. After the death of his father Garuda gobbled up her jewelry and property and drove her away. Long suffering and disappointment make her lose her wits. She becomes the object of contempt and segregation by the agrahara Brahmins. On account of the injustice meted out to her by Garuda, she often goes at night to his house and heaps down abuses on him and his house followed by her eerie belch and laughter. She is a victim of social alienation and economic exploitation by her own community.

5.6.14 Manjayya

He is a rich and affluent Smarta Brahmin belonging to Parijatapura agrahara. He is a good friend of late Naranappa. The terrace of his palatial house is a hub of activities by the young men of the nearby agraharas. They rehearse the plays staged from time to time by their dramatic troupe named after Parijatapura. Manjayya knows that Naranappa has gone to Shivamogge but comes to know about the death of his good friend Naranappa only through the team of Madhva Brahmins who come to him to find a solution to cremate Naranappa, the rebel Brahmin. He is very courteous and hospitable to the guests from the neighbouring agrahara. He consults Parijatapura priest Shankarayya and offers to bear the funeral expenses of Naranappa but keeps away from taking the responsibility of performing samskara by the people of agrahara as it would lower their status in the eyes of the proud Madhvas. Later when he comes to know from Dasacharya that Durvasapura is afflicted by plague, he informs the people of his village not to go to Durvasapura until his return and proceeds to Tirthahalli by cart to inform the municipal authorities about the outbreak of plague in Durvasapura

and for inoculating the people of the village to prevent the epidemic from spreading to other villages including his. Manjayya is noted for his personal relationship and high sense of social consciousness.

5.6.15 Putta

Putta, a young and impressionable Brahmin boy in the village, is another character worth exploring. As he grapples with the moral crisis surrounding Praneshacharya's actions, Putta represents the younger generation caught between tradition and modernity. His internal conflict mirrors the larger societal tensions within the village. His struggle to reconcile the teachings of his elders with the changing world around him resonates with readers navigating their own paths between tradition and progress. Putta's character provides a lens through which readers can examine the generational shifts in values and the impact of societal changes on individuals. Putta's journey of self-discovery and moral questioning reflect the universal experience of coming of age and challenging inherited beliefs. His character offers a perspective on the evolving nature of tradition and the difficulties faced by those who seek to find their own ethical compass in a rapidly changing world.

The novel *Samskara* stands as a literary masterpiece that delves into the complexities of tradition, morality, and societal norms in a Brahmin village in Karnataka. The characters of Praneshacharya, Chandri, Naranappa, and Putta contribute to a rich narrative that challenges established norms and prompts readers to reflect on fundamental aspects of human existence.

Praneshacharya's internal conflict serves as the novel's focal point, representing the broader tension between individual desires and societal expectations. Chandri embodies the consequences of a rigid caste system, Naranappa challenges orthodoxy through rebellion, and Putta represents the younger generation caught between tradition and modernity. Together, these characters create a nuanced exploration of the human experience and societal dynamics.

Praneshacharya's internal struggles, Chandri's vulnerability, Naranappa's defiance, and Putta's coming-of-age journey are important aspects of the novel. The novel's enduring appeal lies in its ability to provoke thought and introspection, inviting readers to question their own beliefs and assumptions about tradition, morality, and societal norms.

5.6.16 Padmavati

Padmavati is a beautiful young woman belonging to the half-caste living alone in a tenement looking after herself and her holdings. She is on a good and familiar relationship with Putta and he too never misses to meet her whenever he visits the town Melige. As Putta's wife often leaves him and goes to her parents' home, Putta, it seems, has developed a physical intimacy with the charming Padmavati. Padmavati tries to tempt the Acharya by her sex appeal while offering betel leaves and areca nut to the visiting guest. The Acharya feels that it is a great temptation to resist. When Putta tells Padmavati that the Acharya will stay with her for the night and proceed to Kundapura on the following morning, she looks forward to a night of pleasure with the Acharya. But the Acharya suddenly changes his decision and leaves for Durvasapura. Padmavati is a courtesan whereas Chandri is a prostitute.

5.6.17 Durvasapura

It is a colony consisting mainly of Madhva Brahmins except for Durgabhatta who belongs to the Smarta sect. Praneshacharya, the Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning is the local guru of the Brahmins. The aprahara is famous in and around because of the great Praneshacharya. Naranappa, the reprobate Brahmin who has been a problem to his clan both when alive and dead also belongs to this agrahara. Chandri, a prostitute from Kundapura lives in the agrahara with Naranappa as his concubine in his house till his death causing much chagrin to the fellow Brahmins of the agrahara.

5.6.18 Parijatapura

It takes it name after the Parijata flower, sacred to Lord Krishna. It is known for Smarta Brahmins. The Durvasapura Madhvas consider the Smarta Brahmins of Parijatapura less pure than they are. Manjayya, the good friend of Naranappa, is a rich and affluent person of this agrahara. He is a patron of the dramatic troupe named after the agrahara. Manjayya of Parijatapura goes to meet the municipal authorities at Tirthahalli to tackle the plague-ridden Durvasapura.

5.6.19 Thirthahalli

It is the municipal town serving the villages like Durvasapura and Parijatapura. It is where Manjayya proceeds to inform the municipal authorities there to clear the body of Naranappa afflicted with plague and inoculate the persons in the village of Durvasapura.

5.6.20 Kaimara

It is where the Brahmins of Durvasapura proceed to meet Subbannacharya to find a solution to the problem of performing the funeral rites for the reprobate Brahmin, Naranappa. It is where the Madhva Brahmins have their Mutt and they proceed to meet the head there after failing to find any solution from Subbannacharya.

5.6.21 Shivamogge

Naranappa on his return from Shivamogge to Durvasapura develops high fever because of plague, and passes away after four days.

5.6.22 Shirnali

Shripati, the good friend of Naranappa is away at Shirnali the previous day to see Jambavati's wedding performed by the troupe from Kelur. So he does not know about the death of Naranappa. When he goes to meet his mentor alive, he has the shock of his life to see his dead body lying uncared.

5.6.23 Kundapura

It is the native place of Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa. It is where Praneshacharya tells Putta that he is heading to.

5.6.24 Melige

It is a temple town where Praneshacharya meets Putta, and through him Padmavati. It is where Putta exposes the Acharya to a vista of sensuous/sensual experiences. It is the place where the Acharya decides to cast off his fear, tear his mask of falsehood and return to Durvasapura to make a new beginning.

5.7 SUMMING UP

Samskara by U. R. Ananthamurthy is a literary masterwork that explores the intricacies of customs, ethics, and social dynamics among a community of Brahmins. The work forces readers to consider important issues about personal decisions, society expectations, and the unavoidable progression of cultural norms through deep characterizations, striking symbols, and thought-provoking ideas. The internal conflict of Praneshacharya is a microcosm of the larger changes in Indian society following independence. The novel's eternal importance is attributed to the conflict between tradition and modernity, the examination of caste dynamics, and the river's symbolism. The last chapters' unexpected and symbolic denouement has a profound effect on readers, making them consider the ramifications of their decisions and the certainty of change.

Samskara remains relevant as a timeless work of literature, offering insights into the intricate tapestry of Indian society and the universal challenges faced by individuals navigating the complexities of tradition and change.

5.8 QUESTONS

1. Disccuss the significance of the title *Samskara* in your own words.
2. Write a summary of the novel *Samskara*.
3. Analyse the major characters.
4. Explain the major themes of the novel.

5.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Ananthamurthy, U. R. *Samskara* : *A Rite for a Dead Man*. Translated by A. K. Ramanujan. Oxford UP, 2000

UNIT-6 *SAMSKARA :* STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Structure

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Structure of the novel

6.2.1 Plot Structure

6.3 Technique in the Novel, *Samskara*

6.3.1 Focalization

6.3.2 Intertextuality

6.4 Key Aspects of *Samskara*

6.4.1 Mythgial Reinterpretation

6.4.2 Symbolic Language

6.4.3 Post-Modern Elements

6.4.4 Mythological Subconscious

6.5 Allegory and Symbolism in the Novel, *Samskara*

6.6 Romance and Realism in the Novel, *Samskara*

6.6.1 Romantic Elements

6.6.2 Realistic Elements

6.7 Summing Up

6.8 Questions

6.9 Suggested Reading

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss major features of the narrative techniques particularly focalization and intertexuality;
- examine structure and style of the novel.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Samskar is a novel originally written in Kannada by U. R. Ananthamurthy and published in 1965. It was translated into English by A. K. Ramanujan in 1972. It sheds light on the caste system and ways of Brahminism in the contemporary world. The word 'Samskara' has several meanings : rite of passage, ritual, transformation, as well as death rites. It refers to the death rites of a man as well as the personal transformation of a renowned man living in a community that refuses to change with

time. Rich in allegory, *Samskara* is a powerful tale about a caste system that challenges its staunch followers and effectively proves that it has no place in modern society.

6.2 STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

There are three parts in the novel and they coinside with important stages in the life of its principal character, Praneshacharya.

Part 1

Part 1 consists of ten chapters and ends with the failure of his Brahminical mission at the Lord Maruti temple and sexual union with Naranappa's mistress Chandri**.**

Part 2

Part 2 consists of six chapters and ends with the death of Praneshacharya's invalid wife and his decision not to return to the agrahara but to walk whenever his legs take him.

Part 3

Part 3 consists of two chapters. One is short and another is long. These chapters see a spiritually agitated Praneshacharya traveling with a half-caste young man Putta and arriving at a new equation with him. The guided tour of the fair and the festival that he undertakes with putta makes him aware of a demoni world of passion and sensation. His uncertanity ends his decision to go back and confess to Brahmins and hopefully, to begin a new life with a new identity for himself.

6.2.1 Plot Structure

U**.** R**.** Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* is structure in three parts, detailing the crisis of a Brahmin commumity's inability to perform funeral rites for a deceased apostate, Naranappa, and the subsequent existential journey of the protagonist, Praneshacharya**.** The novel explores themes of tradition versus modernity, the hypocrisy of rigid social norms, and the quest for self-identity through the disillusionment and eventual transformation of Praneshacharya**.**

- **The Dead Man and the Dilemma**

The novel opens in Durvasapura, a deovut Brahmin colony, with the death of Naranappa, transgressor of Brahminical codes who lived with a lower-caste woman and openly defied traditions**.** Naranappa's death in the Brahmin village of Durvasapura ignites a conflict**.** He had violated numerous Brahminical rules, including choabiting with a low class woman Chandri and consuming alcohol and meat, which were strictly prohibited**.** The community is paralyzed by indecision on how to perform his funural rites, fearing excommunication if they do so, yet unable to let his body remain uncremated**.** As a village spiritual leader Praneshacharya is exected to guide the community**.**

- **Praneshacharya's Crisis and the Journey**

Praneshacharya's search for answers through the scriptures proves fruitless**.** Seeking divine guidence at a temple, he encounters Chandri, Naranappa's former mistress. In a pivotal moment, he experiences a spiritual and physical union with Chandri, which leads to a profound personal crisis and a sense of impurity**.** This event challenges his understanding of his own Brahmanhood and identity**.** He leaves the village, embarking on a journey of self- discovery and confronting various aspects of human experiences, incuding violence, desire and societal norms**.**

- **Transformation and Return**

Praneshacharya's journey is a rite of passage, transforming him from a rigid adherent of a man grapping with his own imperfections and the complexities of life. He eventullay returns to

Durvasapura, a changed man whose very identity is uncertain but also liberated from the strictures of former life. The novel concludes not with a resolution, but with a sense of ongoing transformation, leaving the reader to complete the nature of identity, and the human condition.

- **Thematic Exploration**

The novel critiques the hypocrisy and rigidity of the caste system, the limitations of religious orthodoxy and the challenges of reconciling tradition with the realities of human exrperiences.

- **Symbolism**

The novel uses symbolism to represent various aspects of Indian society, with Naranappa representing rebellion and Praneshacharya embodying the complexities of religious and social norms.

- **Open Ending**

The novel concludes with Praneshacharya leaving the reader to contemplete the future of Durvasapura and his possibilites for a change.

6.3 TECHNIQUE IN THE NOVEL SAMSKARA

Narrative technique has been used in the novel. There are two important features used in it :

6.3.1 Focalization

The story is told by a fictive omniscient narrator who stands outside the action of the novel and tells the story in the third person. He is omniscient because he has the God-like ability to enter into the minds of all the characters and know their thoughts. Naturally, he is also the chief focalizer. He can be called as narrator-focalizer.

The novelist adopts narrative strategy. He gives enough flexibility and maneuverability. His choice of omniscient narrator allows him to probe the minds of all the characters and it particulary enables him to present Naranappa as a worthy opponent. The omniscient, third person narrator comes in the opening scene of the novel where there is a kind of conflict. Praneshacharya is, of course, the chief character but we also get to know the points of view of other characters. The focalizer can view the represented events from outside or from inside. A great part of the novel is concerned with the Acharya's thought processes and his reactions to others around him.

In chapter one of part one, readers not only see Praneshacharya watching himself but also other characters like Naranappa, Chandri, Putta and Padmavati. That means he also serves as a focalizer, so far as three characters are concerned. Another important charcter who is also a focalizer is Putta. He remains with Praneshacharya. So the focalizer's vision is supplemented by that of Praneshacharya and Putta. If Acharya keeps a tab on himself, there is Putta who does so on behalf of common humanity. It hardly needs to be said that by the end of the novel, Putta has emerged as a friend and companion of Archarya, whom he can defend.

6.3.2 Intertextuality

Intertetuaity in U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* is a significant aspect of the novel, contributing to its "mythological subconscious" by drawing upon and reinterpreting ancient Hindu myths, particuarly those related to asceticism and eroticism, and engaging with contemporary social and philosophical concers. The novel's intertextual imension is crucia for understanding its allegorical references and its critique of traditional Brahminical society and its rituas.

6.4 KEY APECTS OF SAMSKARA

6.4.1 Mythgial Reinterpretation

The novel frequenty employs intertextual reference to Hindu mythology, notably the figure of sage Durvasa, who is associated with Lord Shiva and his anger, bringing in a layer of meaning related to asceticism and temptation, a theme also explored in the novel through the character of Praneshacharya.

6.4.2 Symbolic Language

Samskara uses symbolic language and myths to defamaliarize and ritique the isible world and the rigid social structures. It depits such as the ecaying Brahminical community and their adherene to outdated rituals.

6.4.3 Post-modern Elements

The novel incorporates postmodern literary techniques like intertetuality, which cntributes toits cmpleityan its engagment with themes of tradition and modernity, questioning established norms and structures.

6.4.4 Mythological Subconscious

Mythological Subconsciousmeaning that the novel's deeper meanings and resonancces are often found in its implicit and explicit connetions to a rich tapestry f myths and cultural narratives.

6.5 ALLEGORY AND SYMBOLISM IN THE NOVEL SAMSKARA

Critique of Brahminism

The novel is largely considered an allegory of the superstitions, backwardness, and eventually downfall of Brahmanism in south India, with the decaying agrahara Brahmin clony) sevring as a realistic yet allegorical setting.

Symbolic Characters

a) Praneschary represents orthodox and traditional Brahmanism. His journey ,particulary his eparture from his ilage and subsequent search for self –knowledge,symbolize the internal conflicts and potential for change within rigid system.

b) Naranappa symbolizes apostasy and rebellion agaainst Brahminical norms, embodying a sensuous and critical spirit within community.

Symbolic imagery and Events

a) Vultures and Rats

These are used as potent images of horror and fear, reflecting the somber and decaying atmosphere of the agrahara.

Naranappa's Death and funeral Rites

The controversy surroundings Naranappa's unBrahminial death and the subsequent refusal of a proper funeral by the community highlight the hypocrisy and rigidty of the caste system, which the novel critiques.

Praneshacharya's Journey and Return

His quest and eventual return to the village are symbolic of a journey from outer rigidity to inner self-knowlwge brings unertainty and a cnfrontation within the self.

Symbolic Characters and Events

Characters like Praneshacharya embody the confict between tradition and modernity, while Naranappa's can be a symbol of rebellion against rigid reigious dogma His unconventiona life style and death and subsequent diemma of his cremation, serve as a catayst for exporing these themes.

Thematic Resonance

The allegrical nature of the novel allows it to transcend its specific setting and explores universal questions about the meaning of life, the search for self-knowedge, and the tension between spiritual purity and wordly desires.The contrast between the ritualistic flowers in Brahmins' courtyards and those in Naranappa's yard, which meant for Chandri, highights the disparity between detachment and sensuaity.

6.6 ROMANCE AND REALISM IN SAMSKARA

U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* masterfully intertwins romance and realism to explore the hypocrisy of a decaying Brahmin community and the existential crisis of its protagonist, Praneshacarya. While the novel presents a reaistic depiction of social and religious stagnation, particularly within the Brahmin agrahara. It also employs romantic ellements, especially in the portrayal of Chandri, to challenge traditional norms and awaken Praneshacharya's senses.

6.6.1 Romantic Elements

a) Chandri's Portrayal

Chandri, a Dalit woman is described with romantic and almost quaities, drawing comparisions to cassical beauties and igniting Praneshacharya's awakening senses Her physicaity and sensuality are central to the novel exploration of repressed desire.

b) Existential Awakening

The novel romanticizes Praneshacharya's eventual journey of sefl discovery and his abandonent of rigid dogma, as he ulimately seeks to confront his internal conflict and the decaying rituals of his community.

6.6.2 Realistic Elements

a) Social Critique

Samskara provides a starkly realistic portrayal of the hypocrisy, caste prejuidce, and spiritual decline within the Brahmin community of the agrahara.

b) Plague as Catalyst

The plague serves as a realistic backup that highlights social unpreparedness and societal anxieties, further exposing the cmmunity's vunerabilities and the decay beneath its utward appearance.

c) Praneshacarya's Internal Struggle

His initial adherence to strict reigious doctrines and subsequent internal turmoil are depicted with a raw realism the psychologiacal pressures of his circumstances.

d) The setting

The novel is rooted in the realistic setting of a karnataka village bringing to life the daily struggles and complexities of its inhabitants.

e) Realistic Characters

While allegorical in their boarder representation, the characters in Samskara are presented with human flaws, desires and internal conficts that are retable and grounded in reality, such as Naranappa's defiance of Brahminical norms and Chandri's provocative presence.

f) Realism in Samskara

The novel provides a vivid and realistic depiction of agrahara, Brahmin colnoy in Durvasapura, including its customs, social structures, and the daily lives of its inhabitants. Descriptns of courtyard, flowers, and the general atmosphere contribute to this realistic prtrayal.

Thus U. R. Ananthamurthy's novel *Samskar* is a blend of realism and allgory. It realistically portrayed a decaying Brahmin colony in Karnatake while using its characters and setting to explore deeper allegorical themes. The novel is characterized by its realistic detail in describing the setting and social miieu, but also functins as an allegory, where characters and events represent broder ideas about traditions, modernity, and human existence.

6.7 SUMMING UP

Samskara, A Rite for a Dead Man by U. R. Ananthamurthy is a novel that explores the complexities of religion, tradition, modernity and social life within a Brahmin community in India. The story revloves around the death of Naranappa, a Brahmin who defied traditional norms by living with lower – caste woman and embracing non- Brahminic practies. His death creates a crisis, as no one is willing to perform his last rites due to fear of social and religious repercussions. The novel delves into themes of caste, class, gender, and the clash between tradition and modernity. The protagonist Praneshacharya, a respected Brahmin scholar, is tasked with resolving the diemma of Narranappa's creamation. However, he himself grapples with his own moral shortcomings and a crisis of faith, further complicating the situation.

6.8 QUESTONS

1. Disccuss the structure of the novel *Samskara.*
2. Explain the plot structure of the novel.
3. Analyse the narrative techniques used in the novel.
4. Explain the role of allegory and symbolism in the novel.
5. Discuss romance and realism in the novel.

6.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Ananthamurthy, U. R. *Samaskara : A Rite for a Dead Man*. Translated by A. K. Ramanujan. Oxford UP, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

Block III has introduced Munshi Premchand, one of the pioneering figures in modern Hindi and Urdu literatures. It has explored the life and works, particularly *Godan*, of Premchand and his influence on Hindi literature. It has also discussed how he created Hindi readership in India through the portrayal of real pictures of Indian society in his novels and short stories. It has presented the socio-political and cultural context of colonial India, humanistic approach of the writer, his art of characterisation, narrative techniques, important themes and significance of the title *Godan.*

UNIT-7 INTRODUCING MUNSHI PREMCHAND

Structure

7.0 Objectives
7.1 Introduction
7.2 Premchand's Progressive Themes and Literary Contributions
7.3 Premchand's Role in the Progressive Writers' Movement
7.4 Premchand's Novels : A Glimpse into Pre-Independence India
7.5 Fighting for Freedom
7.6 Summing Up
7.7 Questions
7.8 Suggested Readings

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to :

- Introduce Munshi Premchand as a pioneering figure in modern Hindi and Urdu literatures.
- Explore Premchand's early life, education, and literary journey from Urdu to Hindi.
- Analyze Premchand's socio-political contributions through his literature, focusing on themes of social justice, humanism, and progressivism.
- Examine the major themes in Premchand's works, such as caste, gender, poverty, and the struggles of the marginalized.
- Understand Premchand's role in the Progressive Writers' Movement and his influence on Indian literature.
- Appreciate the narrative style and literary techniques employed by Premchand in his novels and short stories.
- Discuss Premchand's impact on Indian literature and his relevance in contemporary literary studies.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

"Munshi Premchand, often referred to as the 'Upanyas Samrat' (*Emperor of Novels*), is one of the most celebrated authors in Indian literature and occupies a pivotal place in the canon of modern Hindi and Urdu fiction" (Mishra). Born as Dhanpat Rai Srivastav in 1880, Premchand's literary career spanned multiple phases of India's socio-political history, including colonial rule and the pre-independence nationalist movement. Writing primarily in Hindi and Urdu, Premchand's works reflect his deep concern for the socio-economic conditions of his time, especially the lives of farmers, labourers, women, and the marginalized sections of society. Premchand began his literary journey as a writer by writing in Urdu under the pen name Nawab Rai, before transitioning to Hindi. His early novels, such as Sevasadan and Rangbhoomi, focused on pressing social issues like the plight of widows, the conditions of labourers, and the exploitation of the poor. Premchand's narratives are marked by their realism, humanism, and a strong ethical foundation. His novel *Karmabhoomi* (1932) is another notable work that highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity in colonial India. However, it is *Godan* (1936), his final and most accomplished work that solidifies his reputation as a master storyteller and a profound social commentator.

Premchand, born as Dhanpat Rai Srivastav in Lamhi, a village near Varanasi, on July 31, 1880, is regarded as one of India's most eminent literary figures. His early education was at a madrasa in Lalpur, where he learned Urdu and Persian, followed by missionary schooling that introduced him to English. Premchand's mother passed away when he was eight years old, and his father, a postal clerk, died nine years later, interrupting his education.

Premchand supported himself as a tutor for several years before securing a position as an assistant teacher in Bahraich district in 1900. Around this time, he began writing fiction under the pen name Nawab Rai. His first novel, *Asrar-e-Ma'abid* (*Secrets of the Temple*), critiqued corruption among temple priests and the exploitation of the poor. Serialized in the Urdu weekly *Awaz-e-Khalk* between 1903 and 1905, it marked the beginning of his literary career. Although he initially wrote in Urdu, Premchand transitioned to Hindi, establishing himself as a pioneering voice in modern Indian literature.

His first short story, "Duniya ka Sabse Anmol Ratan" ("The Most Precious Jewel in the World"), was published in 1907 in the magazine *Zamana*. The story melodramatically portrayed the ultimate sacrifice for India's freedom as the most valuable "jewel." In 1908, his first collection of short stories, *Soz-e-Watan (Dirge of the Nation),* was banned and its copies burned by the colonial government for its incendiary themes. Despite this setback, Premchand continued to write stories portraying the suffering and struggles of marginalized communities. His writing often employed broad strokes to generalize societal issues, occasionally appearing sentimental or moralistic to modern readers. However, his themes of justice, compassion, and resistance against exploitation remain timeless, resonating with readers even today.

7.2 PREMCHAND'S PROGRESSIVE THEMES AND LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Premchand's writings from the last two decades of his life were deeply influenced by the socio-political movements of the time, particularly Mahatma Gandhi's ideals and the Russian Revolution. His works tackled critical issues such as widow remarriage, the dowry system, untouchability, land reform, and the challenges faced by landless laborers. Stories of *Nirmala* and "Narak ka Marg" reflect his advocacy for reforms such as the Sarda Bill, which aimed to raise the legal age of marriage for girls and secure inheritance rights for widows.

Unlike many contemporary women writers, Premchand did not portray women as passive victims. His female characters, such as Gangi, display strength and resilience in their defiance of societal norms. For example, in her attempt to fetch clean water for her sick husband despite the restrictions imposed by caste hierarchies, Gangi symbolizes the courage to challenge oppressive traditions. Though her efforts fail, Premchand's portrayal of her struggle provided inspiration for the progressive writers who followed, turning characters like Gangi into torchbearers for lasting social change. "Premchand whenever creates a character, he makes it so human that while we may despise its evil tendencies, we do not hate the person themselves" (Mishra).

7.3 PREMCHAND'S ROLE IN THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' MOVEMENT

Premchand's alignment with socially conscious literature is evident in his endorsement of the Progressive Writers' Movement, which emerged in the 1930s. He published the movement's manifesto in his influential Hindi journal Hans in October 1935, albeit in a slightly modified form. Later, as the first president of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA), he delivered an iconic speech at its inaugural meeting in April 1936 in Lucknow. His address, *Sahitya ka Uddeshya (The Aim of Literature),* emphasized the role of literature as a mirror to society and as a

vehicle for truth, beauty, freedom, and humanity. Premchand argued that literature must evolve with the times, addressing contemporary issues rather than perpetuating escapist narratives like the fasana or dastan of earlier traditions.

7.4 PREMCHAND'S NOVELS : A GLIMPSE INTO PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

Premchand's novels offer a comprehensive depiction of the socio-political and economic conditions of pre-independent India. His works blend social critique with poignant storytelling, addressing issues of caste, gender, poverty, and colonial exploitation.

7.4.1 *Sevasadan* (1916)

Sevasadan remains relevant even after a century due to its bold commentary on the condition of women in Indian society. The novel narrates the story of Suman, a Brahmin woman who transitions into prostitution. It critiques societal hypocrisies surrounding women's rights, dowry, and the stigma attached to concubines. Written at a time of heightened discourse around women's reforms, the novel highlights the reformists' failure to address the root causes of women's marginalization.

7.4.2 *Nirmala* (1928)

Nirmala poignantly portrays the plight of a young girl married to an older man due to the dowry system. The protagonist's struggles expose the social evils of child marriage and dowry, offering a sensitive yet incisive critique of these practices. The novel's nuanced characters, grappling with their own flaws, add depth to Premchand's exploration of human frailty and societal injustice.

7.4.3 *Gaban* (1931)

Focusing on corruption and socio-economic struggles in rural India, *Gaban* (meaning embezzlement) tells the story of a man driven to corruption by his wife's materialistic desires. The novel highlights how ordinary individuals succumb to systemic exploitation and moral decline, offering an insightful commentary on life under colonial rule.

7.4.4 *Karmabhoomi* (1932)

Set in 1930s Uttar Pradesh, *Karmabhoomi* explores themes of Hindu-Muslim unity, non-violent resistance, and moral dilemmas in the context of the Indian independence movement. Drawing on Gandhian principles of peace and ahinsa, the novel interrogates the true meaning of dharma while advocating for social change and collective sacrifice.

7.4. 5 *Godan* (1936)

Widely regarded as Premchand's masterpiece, *Godan* is a searing critique of the socio-economic conditions of rural India. The novel centers on the life of Hori, a poor farmer, and examines caste oppression, gender exploitation, and the relentless cycle of debt faced by peasants. As his final work, *Godan* stands as a testament to Premchand's literary genius, capturing the harsh realities of agrarian life with unflinching honesty. "Godan is Premchand's finest work. It seems as if all his earlier novels—Sevasadan, Rangbhumi, Karmabhumi—were merely milestones on the path leading to this masterpiece" (Mishra).

7.5 FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

Premchand believed that contemporary literature should be measured by its ability to evoke profound emotional and intellectual engagement in readers. He maintained that the primary aim of literature was to refine the minds of its audience. While he acknowledged that the purpose of art is to enhance the sense of beauty, he also argued that art, like any other aspect of life, should be evaluated for its utility. Declaring that the definition of beauty must evolve, he stated, "*We need to redefine the parameters of beauty" (Hamein khubsoorti ka mayaar badalna hoga."* Premchand viewed language as a means rather than an end. Although he believed that a writer's talent is innate, he emphasized that natural ability could be cultivated through education and curiosity about the world. He argued that literature was no longer confined to individualism or egotism but had increasingly become psychological and social. According to him, literature must recognize the individual as an inseparable part of society rather than viewing them as isolated entities.

For Premchand, a writer needed more than just a quick wit and an agile pen; they must also stay informed about scientific, social, historical, and psychological developments. He noted that while international literary forums actively engaged with these issues, Indian literature often avoided them, thus underscoring the urgent need for socially engaged literature. He asserted, "We must raise the standard of our literature so that it can serve society more effectively." Moreover, he advocated for Indian writers to create original works that expand the corpus of Indian literature rather than relying on borrowed ideas and influences from foreign languages.

Speaking as the president of the inaugural session of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) in 1936, Premchand identified himself closely with its mission and objectives. He advocated for the establishment of literary centers across provinces and in every language, emphasizing the importance of nurturing and strengthening their collective goals. His address went beyond promoting the PWA's vision; it tackled broader literary concerns, such as transcending divisive linguistic debates (Hindi, Urdu, or Hindustani) and uniting writers across languages under common ideals.

Premchand urged writers to abandon individualistic and self-centered themes, instead encouraging them to adopt a collective voice that embraced public and political roles. He argued that literature, which had traditionally been limited to entertaining or educating readers, must now advance human knowledge and freedom in response to the demands of the times.

7.6 SUMMING UP

Premchand is widely regarded as the first Hindi author to prominently feature realism in his works. His novels highlight the struggles of the poor and the urban middle class, portraying a rational and critical perspective on societal and religious values. He used literature as a tool to raise public awareness about national and social issues, often addressing topics such as corruption, child widowhood, prostitution, feudalism, poverty, colonialism, and the Indian independence movement.

Premchand's interest in political affairs began during his time in Kanpur in the late 1900s, and this political engagement is reflected in his early writings, which exhibit strong patriotic undertones. Initially influenced by the moderate nationalist leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he later aligned with the more radical ideology of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He critiqued the Minto–Morley and Montagu–Chelmsford reforms as inadequate and supported calls for greater political freedom. In his early stories, such as "A Little Trick' and "A Moral Victory", he satirized Indians who collaborated with the British government. Due to strict colonial censorship, Premchand often used historical and medieval settings to mask his critiques of British rule.

Premchand's writings were also shaped by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and, later, Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement during the 1920s. This period saw his works addressing social issues such as poverty, zamindari exploitation (*Premashram*, 1922), the dowry

system (*Nirmala*, 1925), educational reform, and political oppression (*Karmabhoomi*, 1931). He was a strong advocate for economic reforms that benefited peasants and the working class, opposing rapid industrialization, which he believed would harm farmers and lead to the exploitation of laborers.

Premchand's words and ideals remain as relevant today as they were in his time. His legacy as a literary pioneer and social reformer offers timeless insights into the role of literature in addressing social inequalities and advancing freedom. Reflecting on his works on his 140th birth anniversary serves as a reminder of the enduring purpose and power of literature.

7.7 QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Munshi Premchand and his literary career.
2. Who was Munshi Premchand, and what is his contribution to Hindi and Urdu literature?
3. Discuss the major themes addressed in the novels of Premchand.
4. How did Premchand's personal life and education influence his literary works?
5. Explain the significance of the Progressive Writers' Movement and Premchand's role in it.
6. What are the key features of Premchand's narrative style, and how does it reflect the socio-political conditions of his time?
7. Identify and analyze the portrayal of women in the works of Premchand.
8. How do Premchand's works address the social issues of colonial India?
9. In what ways do Premchand's later works reflect his alignment with Gandhian ideals and the Indian independence movement?

7.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Premchand, Munshi. *Godan*. Translated by Jai Ratan and P. Lal. Jaico, 2011.
- Mishra, Satya Prakash. *Godan ka Mahatva*. Sumit Prakashan, 5th ed., 2014.
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UNIT-8 *GODAN* : TITLE, THEME, CHARACTERIZATION

Structure

8.0 Objectives
8.1 Introduction to the Novel *Godan*
8.2 About the Novel
8.3 Premchand's Approach to *Godan*
8.4 Understanding the Plot of *Godan*
8.5 Title of *Godan*
8.5.1 Symbolism of the Title
8.5.2 Irony and Social Critique
8.6 Themes
8.6.1 Poverty and Exploitation
8.6.2 Tradition vs Modernization
8.6.3 Concept of New Women
8.6.4 Hypocrisy of Religion and Cultural Values
8.6.5 Theme of Love
8.6.6 Rebel against Societal Norms
8.6.7 Theme of Duty, Family and Honour
8.7 Characterization in *Godan*
8.7.1 Hori : The Tragic Peasent
8.7.2 Brave Women Characters
8.7.3 Young Rebels
8.7.4 Fleecing Money Lenders
8.7.5 Raisahab and Other Zamindars
8.8 Significance of *Godan*
8.8.1 Microcosm of Indian Society
8.8.2 Universal Tale of Human Struggal
8.8.3 Landmark in Indian Literature
8.9 Summing UP
8.10 Questions
8.11 Suggested Readings

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to :

- Examine the socio-political and cultural context of colonial India as depicted in *Godan*.
- Analyze the plot structure of *Godan*.
- Analyse the Approach to *Godan*.
- Understand the significance of the title in the novel *Godan*

- Analyze the suitability of the title *Godan.*
- Contextualize the different thematic concerns associated with the novel *Godan*.
- Examine the significance of the symbols used in the novel.
- Develop an understanding of Munshi Premchand's Art of literary symbolism.
- Understand the characterization of *Godan* and the representational nature of its various characters.
- Develop an understanding of Munshi Premchand's Art of Characterisation.

8.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL GODAN

The novel *Godan*, which was written by Munshi Premchand and translated into English by Jai Ratan and Purushottama Lal, is one of the greatest novels of Indian literature, which was written during colonial India. Premchand was a progressive writer and his aim was not only to present the situation of small farmers during his time but also to highlight the disparity between the rich and the poor. He chooses to write about the ordinary people living in villages and towns with their everyday problems.

Godan is not a tale of misery but it is also a realistic representation of rural India. The protagonist of the novel, Hori Mahato, symbolizes the struggles and socio-political realities of Indian peasants during the colonial period. He is a poor tenant farmer who dreams of owning a cow, a modest but significant aspiration that reflects his desire for stability and dignity in life. Hori's will to have a cow is not just a personal ambition but is also a symbol of his cultural identity and social position. His desire, however, clashes with the crushing realities of poverty and oppression by the upper class. Premchand, through his character Hori, portrays the suffering of the rural poor, where peasants are burdened with debts, exploited by landlords and moneylenders, and crushed under social obligations.

8.2 ABOUT THE NOVEL

In his last novel, Godan, Premchand portrays the life of a pre-independence Indian village that was governed by social hierarchies and caste dynamics. He was aware of the transitional phase in Indian social life, and he wrote about poor labourers, farmers, women, and the oppressed class. In his novel, he represents the then-present problems like poverty, starvation, poor health, misery, death and humiliation. The novel addresses several significant themes : economic exploitation, social and religious traditions, and the unending struggles of the working class. Premchand highlights how peasants like Hori are caught between feudal landlords, corrupt officials, and oppressive religious customs. The author critiques the social evils present in rural India, exposing how the caste system and societal expectations reinforce inequality. Premchand also criticises the hypocrisy and self-interest of the upper classes, who often discuss reform and progress of the lower class but remain detached from their struggles.

Alongside the story of Hori, *Godan* introduces an array of supporting characters from different social strata, characters from rural and weak economic backgrounds, Dhaniya and their children, and characters from wealthier or educated backgrounds like Rai Sahib, Mr Khanna, Mr Mehta and Miss Malti belong to this category. Premchand contrasts the lives of villagers with urban dwellers, representing the growing influence of Westernization and modernity.

Premchand also presents contrasting perspectives on Indian society, especially through characters like Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti, who represent the urban, educated, and modern middle class. While Hori's story reflects the struggles of rural life, Mr. Mehta and Malti illustrate the

intellectual and ideological developments taking place in the cities, where people were facing the effects of modernization, Western influence, and changing social norms. The bond between Mr Mehta and Malti is rooted in their mutual respect and shared vision for a modern India, free from the shackles of social injustices. Their platonic love is a reflection of the changing attitudes toward relationships and companionship in modern society. Premchand uses their relationship to highlight the shift away from traditional romantic relationships based solely on marriage or social status. Instead, he presents a bond born of intellectual attraction and ideological unity.

8.3 PREMCHAND'S APPROACH TO GODAN

Premchand's genius lies in his ability to craft a story that is both specific to its context and universal in its appeal. Unlike his earlier works, which often revolved around a central social issue, *Godan* does not focus on a single problem but instead presents a panoramic view of rural Indian society. The novel addresses a range of issues, including poverty, caste hierarchies, economic exploitation, and the intersection of tradition and modernity.

While Rangbhoomi and Karmabhoomi explore themes of resistance and transformation, *Godan* is characterized by a static society where change appears elusive. The characters, especially Hori, are trapped in a cycle of poverty and social obligations, their struggles often ending in futility. Premchand's narrative approach in *Godan* is marked by a profound sense of detachment, which allows him to critique the society he depicts without sentimentality or overt moralization

8.4 UNDERSTANDING THE PLOT OF GODAN

Godan centers on Hori Mahato, a poor farmer living in a rural village, whose primary aspiration is to own a cow, a symbol of prosperity, stability, and cultural pride in Indian agrarian life. The novel begins with Hori's quest for a cow, which he eventually acquires but at great personal and financial cost. His troubles mount when the cow dies, and he is burdened with debt due to oppressive landlords, exploitative moneylenders, and the expectations of his family and community.

Parallel to Hori's struggles, the novel explores urban life through characters like Mr. Mehta, Miss Malti, and Mr. Khanna. These urban intellectuals and industrialists embody the tensions between modernization, capitalism, and social reform. Their lives provide a stark contrast to the despair and stagnation of rural existence.

The story culminates with Hori's death, marked by his inability to perform the godan (gift of a cow), a ritual deemed essential for spiritual salvation. This unfulfilled act serves as a powerful metaphor for the systemic oppression that denies rural peasants even their most basic aspirations. The novel does not have a conventional linear plot with a climactic resolution; rather, it is a series of interconnected events that depict the unending struggles of Hori and his family. The narrative is interspersed with the stories of other characters, including those from urban settings, who provide a contrast to Hori's life. Ultimately, Hori's death symbolized by his inability to fulfil the titular godan or "gift of a cow" serves as a tragic commentary on the exploitation and despair that define the lives of India's rural poor.

8.5 TITLE OF GODAN

8.5.1 Symbolism of the Title

The title of Premchand's novel, *Godan,* is deeply symbolic and reflects the novel's central themes of sacrifice, social oppression, and the complex realities of rural India under colonial rule.. At first glance, the title *Godan* might appear to be a reference to the Hindu practice of donating a cow, an act believed to bring spiritual merit and salvation. However, in this novel, the title has multiple layers of

meaning and it presents a critique of the societal structure that perpetuates poverty, exploitation, and suffering.

In Indian culture, the cow holds a sacred status, and it is also a symbol of wealth and prosperity. The traditional act of "*Godaan*" involves donating a cow, usually by a person close to death, as it is believed to grant moksha (salvation) and cleanse one's sins. Thus, on a cultural level, *Godan* refers to the spiritual values ingrained in Indian society, particularly among the poor, for whom owning a cow is important for prosperity and stability. Premchand has ironically used the title of the novel *Godan* at the end of the narrative to intensify and heighten the tragedy of Hori. His sufferings, pain and helplessness rows the sympathy of the readers. In the novel, however, *Godan* is both a literal desire, and it also works as a symbol of an unattainable dream of the protagonist. Hori is a poor farmer who yearns to own a cow to improve his social standing and gain respect in his village. Despite his hard work and moral integrity, Hori's poverty and due to the exploitative social system, he is unable to meet his this little ambition. In the novel the cow eventually becomes a metaphor for his unattainable dreams, representing the basic needs and aspirations that the protagonist, Hori, is unable to attain. Hori's struggle to own a cow underscores his longing for a dignified life amidst poverty and oppression.

8.5.2 Irony and Social Critique

Through Hori's story, Premchand critiques the rigid caste and social hierarchy that traps individuals in cycles of debt and suffering. Even as Hori strives to fulfil his traditional obligations and embody the virtues of honesty, family loyalty, and sacrifice, he is crushed by an oppressive economic and social structure. Ultimately, he sacrifices his life and health for his family, dying in poverty without realizing his simple wish to own a cow.

Thus we can say, Hori's entire life becomes an unending act of "*Godan*," as he continuously sacrifices his desires, comfort, and well-being for others. The title, therefore, signifies not only the literal act of giving a cow but also the deeper sacrifices that poor, rural Indians like Hori are forced to make due to social and economic injustices. Premchand uses this title to suggest that the ultimate gift or sacrifice demanded by society is the very life and labour of people like Hori.

The title *Godan* also reflects Premchand's critique of the spiritual and cultural ideals that fail to address the harsh realities of life. While Hori hopes that his sacrifices will lead to eventual salvation or peace, his suffering goes unacknowledged by both society and religious institutions. Premchand subtly questions whether the promise of "salvation" can ever truly compensate for the suffering and exploitation of the lower classes.

The title *Godan* encapsulates the core themes of the novel—sacrifice, oppression, and the elusive pursuit of dignity. By using the title, Premchand emphasizes the irony and tragedy of Hori's life, showing how a simple wish for a cow transforms into a lifelong struggle for survival. In the end, *Godan* is more than just the story of a poor farmer's dream; it is a searing commentary on the social structures that entrap and exploit the most vulnerable members of society. Premchand's title thus conveys the irony and futility of Hori's life, challenging readers to question the social order and to consider the real cost of human suffering within a deeply hierarchical society.

8.6 THEMES IN GODAN

Munshi Premchand has been recognized as the leading progressive writers of Hindi fiction in the twentieth century. His works resonate with a profound understanding of human emotions and social realities, making him a torchbearer of realism in Indian literature.

As a writer of fiction, Munshi Premchand has been accredited for his realistic approach towards such societal issues that formed the leading concern of his age. In his age of the Indian society was marked by British colonialism, rapid social transitions and political unstability. While in the rural sphere a great number of farmers or agrarian peasants still struggled helplessly against the tyrannous social setup that subjugated them through taxes, interest rates on loans and other societal restrictions, the urban society was witnessing stark transformation of human mindsets opening gateways for progressive modern consciousness. Published in the year 1936, his last novel, *Godan*, has been considered both as his finest literary product, and also the best representative of his age. It spreads light on the struggles, aspirations, and sacrifices of ordinary people while offering a vivid portrayal of rural and urban life in colonial India.

As a work of literature *Godan* explores a variety of themes, such as poverty, social injustice, the conflict between tradition and modernization, the role of women, the theme of love and the hypocrisy of religious and cultural values. These themes make *Godan* a powerful social commentary and a timeless piece of literature.

8.6.1 Poverty and Exploitation

One of the central themes in *Godan* is poverty and the exploitation faced by the rural poor. In fact *Godan* depicts the tragedy of the Indian peasantry in the hands of the zamindars and the money lenders. It realistically portrays the economic condition of Indian farmers. The protagonist, Hori, represents the life of peasants in colonial India who lived under oppressive economic conditions. Hori dreams of owning a cow, symbolizing stability and respect, but his poverty forces him into a constant struggle for survival.

Despite his hard labour, he remains in debt due to high-interest loans from money lenders, unfair land taxes, and exploitative practices by the zamindars (landlords). It is this theme of exploitation of farmers by money lenders and zamindars that forms the central theme of *Godan*. The protagonist, Hori, is a tradition-loving person who tolerates exploitation by money lenders but cannot show dis-contempt for traditions that represent the essential traits of the Indian peasantry. The greedy money lenders like Dattadeen harness the peasants with the trap of debt over poor farmers like Hori, and the depth doubles itself every year. It is his son Gobar who exposes the villainous action of the moneylenders. All this indicative of how the rural poor are trapped by a system that allows little chance for social or economic mobility. Through Hori's character, Premchand highlights the differences between the wealthy and the poor, showing how those in power exploit the vulnerable lower classes.

8.6.2 Tradition vs. Modernization

Godan explores the conflict between tradition and modernization, particularly within the context of colonial India, where Western influences and reformist ideas were beginning to shape urban life and challenge established social structures. This theme is powerfully represented through the contrast between the rural characters—such as Hori, Dhaniya, Gobar, and Jhunia and the urban characters like Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti. Hori, as a symbol of traditional rural life, is deeply bound to the customs and expectations of his community. His deference to the zamindar, his participation in age-old rituals, and the symbolic act of gifting a cow (godan) upon death reflect his cultural and religious obligations. The tragic consequences of the cow's death underscore how tradition governs not only Hori's identity but also his fate.

On the other hand, the theme of modernization is reflected in the urban narrative. Characters such as Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti embody modern, progressive values education, rationality, and a questioning of social norms. Their views on individual freedom, gender roles, and class hierarchy represent a stark contrast to the fatalistic and hierarchical world of Hori. For example, their platonic

relationship, grounded in intellectual companionship and mutual respect, challenges the traditional understanding of male-female relationships, which are more functional and patriarchal in the rural setting.

The theme is also illustrated through Gobar's journey from the village to the city. While Hori remains rooted in the soil of tradition, Gobar seeks economic independence and social mobility by breaking away from rigid rural norms. His rebellion both against his father's submissiveness and the oppressive caste system marks the generational and ideological shift occurring in Indian society.

Premchand uses this juxtaposition of rural tradition and urban modernity to highlight the widening gap between two Indias one clinging to centuries-old customs, the other slowly embracing reform and change. However, the novel does not completely reject tradition. Rather, it suggests that while cultural heritage is important, exploitation in the name of tradition must end. Through this nuanced portrayal, Premchand raises important questions about the direction of Indian society and the challenge of finding a balanced path between progress and preservation.

8.6.3 Concept of New Women

Premchand has written most of his novels to highlight the miserable light of Indian women. Premchand focuses his attention on discrimination and injustice done to women, and it became a regular theme in his novel. *Godan* Premchand's other novels, like Nirmala seva Sadan Premashram, concentrate on the problems of Indian women in an orthodox social setup. He has highlighted many issues of his contemporary society, like the dowry system, the problem of Hindu widows, prostitution, and remarriage.

In his novel, *Godan* Premchand addresses the restrictions and sacrifices imposed upon women in a patriarchal society. Female characters exhibit resilience and strength, often managing household affairs and supporting their families through difficult times. Dhania, Hori's wife, is a strong and resilient character who faces her own struggles but remains a pillar of support for her family. Dhaniya is more practical and brave than Hori. Her courage and loyalty reflect the quiet strength of women in rural India, whose contributions often go unrecognized yet are essential for family survival.

Siliya is a lower-caste woman whose love for Matadin, a Brahmin priest, defies caste boundaries. Her relationship is a symbol of rebellion against the caste system, and through her, Premchand portrays the double oppression that lower-caste women face both as women and as members of marginalized communities.

In contrast, the urban character Malti represents a liberated, modern woman who challenges traditional gender roles. She is educated, independent, and vocal about her opinions, unlike rural women who are expected to be submissive. She advocates the dominance of women in the male-dominated society. Malti's freedom and individuality serve as a critique of the limited roles assigned to women in traditional society and emphasize the potential of women when given the opportunity to express themselves fully.

8.6.4 Hypocrisy of Religion and Cultural Values

Premchand also critiques the hypocrisy embedded within religious and cultural values in *Godan*. While the text upholds the ideals of charity, devotion, and sacrifice as noble components of Indian tradition, it simultaneously exposes how these values are often manipulated by the elite to serve their own interests. Hori, the novel's protagonist, is portrayed as a deeply religious and tradition-bound man. He reveres customs, obeys societal norms, and internalizes the belief that suffering is a moral duty. Raised in a society steeped in orthodoxy, Hori's sense of right and wrong is shaped by a religious framework that demands obedience but offers no protection from exploitation.

One significant example of this critique is Rai Sahib's Basant Mahotsav, a festival ostensibly organized to celebrate cultural heritage and spiritual renewal. However, the event is steeped in hypocrisy. Rather than being a sincere spiritual observance, it becomes a performance of piety and privilege. The elite participate in this festival more to display their wealth, power, and social status than out of genuine religious devotion. The poor are either excluded or included only to serve the elite, reinforcing the divide between the sacred and the superficial. Rai Sahib's Basant Mahotsav, thus, becomes a metaphor for the empty rituals of the upper class, contrasting sharply with Hori's earnest but unfulfilled desire to engage in religious acts like godan.

Along with the paternal property he had also inherited the devotion to Rama which every year found expression in a religious tableau and, incidentally, provided some entertainment. On this occasion invitations went to a large circle of friends and officials. For a day or two the place put on a gay face and hummed with life (*Godan,* P. Lal).

This passage shows how Rai Saheb uses religion (devotion to Rama) as a pretext to organize a grand show, inviting influential people, entertaining them, and reinforcing his social prestige. The ritual of godan—the donation of a cow for attaining moksha (spiritual liberation) becomes the novel's central symbol of religious irony. Hori, who lives and dies trying to fulfill this sacred duty, never attains it due to his economic and social limitations. For him, religion is a matter of faith and responsibility. But for those in power, like Rai Sahib, religion and culture are tools of spectacle and social control.

Through this, Premchand questions the moral authority of religious customs that promise spiritual rewards while failing to address or alleviate real suffering. He presents a society where the external performance of piety masks internal corruption, and where the rich manipulate sacred values, while the poor, like Hori, carry their burden with sincerity and sacrifice but receive no justice in return.

8.6.5 Theme of Love

In *Godan*, Premchand explores the theme of love through a range of relationships, each reflecting different aspects of Indian society. Hori and Dhania's love is grounded in loyalty, sacrifice, and resilience. Their bond, while not overtly romantic, demonstrates a deep commitment to each other and their family, showcasing the strength of traditional, duty-bound love in rural life. "Dhania stood by Hori in every crisis. Though poor and oppressed, their bond never broke" (*Godan,* P. Lal). This reflects marital loyalty and emotional depth despite hardship.Matadin and Siliya represent a forbidden love that defies social and caste barriers. Their relationship faces intense societal opposition, highlighting the rigid caste divisions and the risks involved in love that challenges social norms. Gobar and Jhuniya's relationship also reflects rebellion, as they defy family expectations and choose love over societal approval. Their union represents a younger generation's desire to prioritize personal happiness and love over rigid customs. "He [Gobar] did not care about caste or village rules. He loved Jhunia and that was enough". *(Godan,* P. Lal) This shows their love crosses caste boundaries, directly challenging traditional norms. Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti's connection is an intellectual and platonic love, reflecting urban, modern ideals. Their bond is rooted in mutual respect and shared progressive values, representing a break from traditional romantic relationships and a vision of love based on equality and intellectual companionship. Together, these relationships illustrate love's many forms in *Godan*—from traditional and sacrificial to rebellious and progressive offering a portrait of how love navigates and challenges societal boundaries.

8.6.6 Rebel against Societal Norms

Premchand's *Godan* delves into the complexities of societal norms and individual aspirations in rural India. Hori, the protagonist, embodies the traditional values of family and community, even in

the face of adversity. He is an epitome of humility, sacrifice and servitude before such forces of society that pose themselves as the guardians of the established social order, while actually acting as agents of subjugation and exploitation of those who lie downtrodden in the hierarchy of social status.

However, Hori's son, Gobar, is the representative of a younger generation's desire for change. His decision to marry Jhuniya, a widow, was a choice against societal disapproval. Gobar's act is a significant rejection of rural India's strict codes surrounding marriage and widowhood, highlighting his willingness to prioritize love and individual happiness over restrictive customs. "They can keep their caste and customs," Gobar told his father. "I won't live under such rules" (*Godan*).Here we can see Gobar rejects the very system that condemned his love for Jhunia. "Jhunia walked away from her father's home to live with Gobar, knowing it would bring shame and punishment." (*Godan*)

These lines show a powerful act of rebellion by a woman against patriarchal and caste norms. Gobar's rebellion extends beyond his personal life to economic matters. His refusal to tolerate the exploitation of his family by village moneylenders reflects a younger generation's frustration with rural oppression and economic injustice. By leaving the village for the city, Gobar seeks a future marked by greater freedom and economic opportunity, rejecting the submission and endurance shown by his parents.

In the urban setting, there are characters like Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti who further embody the idea of rebellion against the cog of societal dogmas. Through their progressive ideals of freedom, equality, and companionship the duo challenges the traditional roles in individual relationships and social outfits. Through these characters, Premchand highlights the tension between tradition and modernity, showcasing the growing desire for individual freedom and social justice. The novel ultimately underscores the importance of questioning and resisting oppressive norms to create a more equitable society.

8.6.7 Theme of Duty, Family and Honour

In *Godan* by Premchand, the themes of duty and family are central to the narrative and are intricately portrayed through the character of Hori. Premchand's novel *Godan*, an important text of Hindi literature, delves deep into the socio-economic struggles of rural India and the moral dilemmas faced by its inhabitants. Hori's sense of duty is most prominently displayed in his commitment to his family and his role as a farmer. Despite facing numerous hardships, he remains dedicated to fulfilling his responsibilities. This sense of duty is manifested in several ways. Hori's primary duty is towards his land which provides sustenance to him and his family. He works tirelessly on his farm despite the relentless cycle of debt and poverty. His efforts to acquire a cow, a symbol of prosperity and stability, underscore his commitment to improving his family's situation. Hori's sense of duty extends deeply into his familial relationships. Hori's duty towards Sobha who poisons the cow, Hori's duty towards Jhunia…He strives to uphold his responsibilities as a husband, father, and brother. His actions are often driven by a desire to provide for his family and ensure their well-being, even when it requires personal sacrifices. Hori's moral compass is guided by his understanding of duty. He often faces ethical dilemmas where he must choose between his personal desires and societal expectations. His decision to protect his brother Heera, despite the latter's wrongdoing , highlights Hori's adherence to familial duty over personal gain or justice. The pressure on Hori to maintain the family's honor and provide for them underscores the patriarchal expectations of the society.

On the contrary the rich like the Rai Sahab display sincerity in their social attire but prove carefree and are not bound by duty towards the welfare of their subjects. Rai Sahib has neither time

nor interest to care about social atrocities and suffering being faced by his subjects. His only proven role is of a tax collector.

In *Godan*, Premchand explores the complex social fabric of India, delving into issues of poverty and exploitation, theme of love, role of women and the conflict between tradition and modernization. Through Hori's and Dhaniya's character and the contrasting figures of Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti, the novel critiques an unequal society and calls for empathy, reform, and compassion. The themes in *Godan* go beyond the specific context of colonial India and resonate universally, making the novel a timeless reflection on human dignity, social ethics, and the sacrifices demanded by an unjust system. Premchand's portrayal of these themes makes *Godan* an enduring work that continues to inspire readers to question societal norms and advocate for a more equitable world.

8.7 CHARACTERIZATION IN *GODAN*

Premchand mastered himself in the art of characterization, he created a number of characters in *Godan* and all of them are full of varieties. His characters are mostly representatives of different classes in society, since his aim was to make an analytical study of the social condition of his time during colonized India.

In his last novel, Munshi Premchand crafts a variety of characters that collectively depict the social, economic, and cultural landscape of rural and urban India in the early 20th century. Every character represents different aspects of his time, from the struggles of poor peasants to wealthy landlords, the women characters display immense resilience and the younger generation struggling for change. Through Hori, Dhania, Gobar, the moneylenders, Rai Sahab, and others, Premchand presents a complex web of individuals, each navigating life's trials with unique perspectives.

8.7. 1 Hori : The Tragic Peasant

The central figure of Godan is Hori, who resembles the archetypal Indian peasants whose life deals with the problems faced by the rural poor. In the novel the themes of duty and family are central to the narrative and are intricately portrayed through the character of Hori. Hori's commitment to his family and societal expectations underscores his sense of duty. He sacrifices his well-being for the sake of familial and social obligations, which, while noble, also highlights the burdens placed on individuals by traditional values. He works hard and is a decent man but is unable to make any changes in his and his family life as he is caught up in poverty, debts and social ties. His love for the family and the culture often makes him take decisions which adversely affect him financially. The tragedy of Hori is that he cannot overcome the chains of the oppressive system. Even his dreams of owning a cow, which is a symbol of wealth and respect in rural India. However, due to his poverty, he is unable to achieve this dream. His story shows the difficulties faced by poor farmers in India, who are often exploited by money lenders and landlords.

Hori's story is a tragic one, but it also highlights the strength and resilience of the rural poor. However, his character also contrasts with younger characters like Gobar, who are more willing to challenge tradition and seek change.

8.7.2 Brave Women Characters

Premchand's women characters are brave and upright in morals. The women in *Godan* stand out as symbols of resilience and strength.Dhania, Hori's wife, is the most prominent among them, embodying the qualities of a traditional yet strong rural woman. She stands by Hori despite the seemingly endless misfortunes that fall in their family, including crushing debt, social shame, and physical hardship. Dhania is not afraid to confront her husband when she disagrees with his

decisions, and she also openly challenges the injustices of their social world. Her determination and sharpness provide a contrast to Hori's often passive acceptance, making her one of the novel's most courageous figures.

Jhuniya Gobar's wife, is another brave character who defies social norms. As a widow, her relationship with Hori's son, Gobar, is seen as scandalous by their community. Yet, Jhuniya's resolve to follow her heart reflects her inner strength and willingness to go against traditional expectations. She symbolizes a new woman who asserts her right to live with dignity despite the disapproval of others. Siliya, who belongs to a lower caste, also stands against caste-based discrimination through her love affair with Matadin, a Brahmin. Her character illustrates the double oppression faced by lower-caste women and the courage required to challenge social divisions. These women in *Godan* embody both the struggles and strengths of rural Indian women, offering a subtle critique of patriarchy and caste hierarchies.

8.7.3 Young Rebels

The younger characters in *Godan* like Matadin, Jhuniya Siliya and particularly Gobar, represents a growing spirit of rebellion against the injustices of rural life. Unlike his father, Hori, who portrays hardship and devotion towards tradition, Gobar dreams of a life beyond the poverty and social restrictions of his village. His relationship with Jhuniya is one expression of his rebellion, as he openly defies social conventions by marrying a widow. For Gobar, love and personal happiness take precedence over rigid traditions, marking a generational shift in attitudes toward marriage and relationships.

Apart from his individual choices, economic independence is also a primary motivating force behind Gobar's revolt. Tired of working in a perpetual cycle of debt imposed by the village moneylenders, Gobar eventually leaves for the city, where he hopes to find opportunities that rural life cannot provide him. This move symbolizes his rejection of the economic exploitation that supressed his family financially for generations. Gobar's actions highlight a sense of youthful rebellion, as he pursues a life of freedom and self-respect, contrasting sharply with the passivity and endurance displayed by the older generation. Matadeen broke down the difference of class and caste. Siliya was a poor chamar. Matadin's going to live with her was a revolutionary spirit. Junior broke new grounds of widow marriage which was considered as sin in Premchand time.

8.7.4 Fleecing Moneylenders

Moneylenders in *Godan* embody the exploitative forces that prey on the vulnerabilities of poor peasants. Characters like Dattadeen and other moneylenders operate within a system that keeps the poor perpetually indebted, trapping them in cycles of economic hardship. They exploit the lack of financial literacy and options available to the peasants, charging exorbitant interest rates and seizing land or assets when debts cannot be repaid.

Moneylenders are part of a broader system that keeps peasants like Hori in a state of helpless dependency. Hori's inability to escape debt illustrates how the economic structure benefits only those at the top, leaving peasants with little hope for financial freedom. The moneylenders in *Godan* are thus more than mere villains; they represent an institutionalized injustice that has taken root in rural society, with devastating effects on the lives of ordinary people.

8.7.5 Rai Sahab and Other Zamindars

At the apex of the social and economic hierarchy in *Godan* are the zamindars, or landlords, such as Rai Sahab. Rai Sahab represents the feudal elite who control vast amounts of land and wield significant power over the lives of the peasants who work on it. (Indira Gandhi National Open University 6). While he appears to be generous and benevolent on the surface, offering charity and

guidance, his actions ultimately reveal a self-serving agenda. Rai Sahab maintains his status and influence by upholding the existing social structure that keeps peasants impoverished and dependent on his goodwill. His occasional acts of kindness are insufficient to alleviate the systemic issues that plague rural society, and his wealth and power remain insulated from the hardships experienced by people like Hori.

Other landlords in the novel also exploit the peasantry to maintain their luxurious lifestyles, often indifferent to the suffering of those who labor on their land. The zamindars enjoy a life of comfort and privilege, disconnected from the reality of the peasants' struggles. This class divide is one of Premchand's main critiques in *Godan* : the inequality that pervades Indian society and prevents social mobility for the poor. Through characters like Rai Sahab, the novel illustrates the deep divide between the rural elite and the common people, exposing the systemic exploitation that sustains the feudal order.

8.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF *GODAN*

8.8.1 Microcosm of Indian Society

Godan is significant because it provides a panoramic view of Indian society during the colonial period. Through its rich tapestry of characters and events, the novel captures the essence of a society in transition, grappling with the forces of tradition and modernity.

The novel addresses themes such as caste hierarchies, economic exploitation, social obligations, and the influence of Western ideas. By presenting a realistic portrayal of rural and urban life, Premchand critiques the systemic inequalities that define Indian society.

8.8.2 Universal Tale of Human Struggl

While rooted in the specific context of colonial India, *Godan* transcends its setting to address universal themes of poverty, resilience, and moral integrity. Hori's story, with its emphasis on human suffering and sacrifice, resonates with readers across cultures and time periods.

8.8.3 Landmark in Indian Literature

Godan is widely regarded as one of the greatest novels in Indian literature. It represents the pinnacle of Premchand's literary career and serves as a model of social realism in fiction. The novel's enduring appeal lies in its ability to combine a critique of society with a deep exploration of human emotions and values.

8.9 SUMMING UP

Munshi Premchand's *Godan* stands as a landmark in Indian literature offering a profound critique of the socio- economic and cultural realities of colonial India. The novel portrays the dichotomy between rural and urban life emphasizing the struggles, sacrifices and development of its characters. Hori the tragic protagonist becomes the symbol of the exploited peasantry, while characters like Gobar, Dhaniya, Mr. Mehta, and Miss Malti reflect the generational and ideological shifts within society.

The title *Godan* is deeply symbolic, representing both literal and metaphorical acts of sacrifice, and critiques the oppressive social system that trap individuals like Hori and Siliya. Themes such as poverty, exploitation, tradition vs modernization, the role of women, love and the hypocrisy of cultural values are interwoven into the narrative, making the novel a timeless social commentary.

Through a diverse cast of characters, *Godan* presents a multifaceted view of rural Indian society, revealing the layers of oppression, resilience, and defiance that define the lives of its people. The brave women characters—Dhania, Jhuniya, and Siliya—illustrate the strength and resilience of rural women, even as they challenge the norms imposed on them. The younger rebels like Gobar signify a shift toward individual autonomy and resistance against oppressive social and economic structures. The fleecing moneylenders and exploitative zamindars like Rai Sahab represent the forces that perpetuate poverty and social inequality, trapping the peasants in cycles of suffering.

We can say that, *Godan* is a powerful commentary on the enduring inequalities of rural India. Premchand's characters embody both the tragedy and the resilience of human life, highlighting the injustices of a society that favors the wealthy and powerful while marginalizing the poor. Through their struggles and their courage, *Godan* continues to resonate as a timeless narrative on social justice and the quest for dignity amidst hardship.

Ultimately, Premchand's masterful use of language, character driven storytelling, and social critique highlights the complexities of human dignity and social inequalities. Through all this ultimately *Godan* still continues to inspire society for social reforms.

8.10 QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the title *Godan*?
2. How does Premchand use the act of '*Godan*' as a metaphor in the narrative?
3. Give a brief discription on the characterization of *Godan*.
4. How does Premchand use the relationships in the novel to explore the theme of love?
5. How does Premchand critique the hypocrisy of religious and cultural values in *Godan*?
6. How does Premchand use Hori's character to represent the struggles of Indian peasants during colonial times?
7. How does *Godan* reflect the socio-political conditions of colonial India?
8. What makes *Godan* a timeless piece of literature despite being rooted in the context of colonial India?
9. Explain the plot and setting of *Godan*?
10. Why is *Godan* still relevant in contemporary world?

8.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT-9 *GODAN* : STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Structural Framework

- 9.2.1 Rural and Urban Sphere
- 9.2.2 Humanitarian Approach
- 9.2.3 Interconnection of Narrative Threads
- 9.2.4 Thematic Juxtaposition and Structural Cohrence
- 9.2.5 Tragrdy as a Structural UnifyingElements : Life, Death, and Human Struggle
- 9.2.6 Structural Critiques and Realist Tradition : Premchand's Narrative Innovation

9.3 The Technique in *Godan*

- 9.3.1 Narrative Technique and Realism
- 9.3.2 Characters-Driven Storytelling
- 9.3.3 Symbolism and Motifs
- 9.3.4 Parallel Narratives
- 9.3.5 Dialogue amd Language
- 9.3.6 Social Commentary

9.4 Summing Up

9.5 Questions

9.6 Suggested Readings

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to :

- Understand the structural framework of *Godan*.
- Understand the humanistic approach used in *Godan*.
- Examine how Premchand used the Realist narrative techniques and how critics reacted to it.
- Understand the symbolic techniques used by Premchand in *Godan*.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian novel *Godan* is not only an epic of the middle class, but a grand narrative of peasant consciousness, a claim that is most strongly supported by critics. Dhanpat Rai Shrivastav's *Godan* (1936) is widely regarded as one of the most significant works of Indian literature. It is undoubtedly Premchand's most important timeless work and holds a novel place in the history of Hindi novels and, broadly speaking, Indian novels. More than a simple narrative, it is a profound reflection of the socio-economic and cultural realities of colonial India. It must be said that Godan is a story of the struggles of rural life in India, in which glimpses of other forms of Indian society also appear. The

gap visible in the structure or framework of Godan the coexistence or parallel of the stories of the city and the village—is both a defining characteristic of the novel and its historical-social foundation. The spread of this novel is significant—its structure or narrative cannot be reduced to a singular demand. However, it is not lacking in several aspects. Comparing it to introspective psychological novels would also be unjust to its literary value. Its structural narrative, while seemingly loose and slow, is a deliberate construct that mirrors the rhythm of Indian society. The novel's structure and technique are marked by realism, symbolism, character depth, and social critique, which elevate it as a masterpiece in the realist tradition.

9.2 STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

9.2.1 Rural and Urban Sphere

The structure of *Godan* revolves around two parallel yet interconnected spheres :

a) **The Rural Narrative** : At the centre of the novel is Hori, a poor farmer, and his family, whose lives encapsulate the struggles and aspirations of rural India. The narrative follows Hori's persistent desire to own a cow, symbolizing his cultural and economic aspirations. The rural narrative delves into themes of caste oppression, feudal exploitation, and poverty, making it an example of Indian agrarian life during the colonial period.

b) **The Urban Narrative** : Running parallel to the rural storyline is the depiction of urban life, represented by characters such as Dr. Malti and Mr. Mehta. This narrative explores themes of modernity, intellectualism, and the evolving social order. The urban sphere provides a counterpoint to the rural narrative, offering insights into the ideological and cultural shifts occurring in colonial India.

This dual structure creates a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, rural stagnation and urban progression, ultimately, emphasizing their interconnectedness in shaping India's socio-economic fabric.

9.2.2 Humanitarian Approach

Premchand's *Godan* delves deeply into the human condition, portraying a spectrum of characters whose lives are intertwined with themes of struggle, resilience, and ethical dilemmas. At the heart of the novel are Hori and Dhania, whose lives embody the essence of rural India's relentless toil and endurance. Hori's tragic sacrifices to maintain societal norms and his unfulfilled desire to own a cow symbolize the crushing weight of economic exploitation and social expectations." The truth is that the important thing about Hori is not how he died, but how he lived — his life is more poignant than his death"(Mishra 2014). Dhania, his wife, complements his character with her unwavering strength, resilience, and pragmatic outlook, representing the silent yet significant role of women in navigating familial and societal hardships.

Gobar, their son, offers a contrasting perspective as he rebels against the traditional values upheld by his parents. His decision to leave the village and move to the city reflects the aspirations of a younger generation seeking freedom and opportunities beyond the confines of rural life. His relationship with Jhuniya, a woman from a lower caste, challenges the entrenched social hierarchies, highlighting the humanistic theme of equality and love transcending societal norms. Jhuniya's inclusion in the family despite societal opposition underscores Premchand's critique of rigid caste structures and his emphasis on compassion and acceptance.

In the urban narrative, Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti represent the intellectual and modern aspects of colonial India. Mr. Mehta, an idealistic thinker, grapples with questions of morality and social reform, embodying the philosophical and ethical dimensions of humanistic thought. His

interactions with Miss Malti, a progressive and independent woman, reveal the evolving dynamics of gender and modernity. Malti's character, while symbolizing the emerging autonomy of women in urban spaces, also reflects the complexities of privilege and the quest for meaningful relationships amidst a rapidly changing social landscape.

Through these interconnected characters, Premchand weaves a narrative that transcends individual struggles to present a collective human experience. The novel's humanitarian approach emphasizes empathy, social justice, and the enduring human spirit, making *Godan* a timeless reflection of universal values.

9.2.3 Interconnection of Narrative Threads

Premchand's *Godan* skillfully interweaves multiple narrative threads, each representing distinct yet interrelated life. The rural narrative, centered on Hori's family, illustrates the persistent struggles of agrarian India, marked by caste oppression, economic exploitation, and societal restrictions. This narrative intersects with the urban storyline, which introduces characters like Dr. Malti and Mr. Mehta, symbolizing the intellectual and cultural shifts in colonial India.

The interconnectedness between these spheres is neither superficial nor incidental. Hori's struggles are implicitly tied to the larger structures of power represented by characters like Rai Sahib, while the urban narratives indirectly impact rural lives. For example, Hori's son, Gobar, finds temporary refuge in the urban sphere under Mr. Mehta's patronage, bridging the rural and urban domains. These interconnections highlight the underlying tensions between tradition and modernity, rural stagnation and urban progress, and individual aspirations versus systemic exploitation.

9.2.4 Thematic Juxtaposition and Structural Coherence

Premchand employs juxtaposition as a narrative technique to maintain structural coherence within the seemingly loose framework of *Godan.* Structure, settings, and situations from both rural and urban spheres are deliberately contrasted to explore broader socio-political dynamics. For instance, Hori's tragic downfall due to his allegiance to traditional values contrasts sharply with Gobar's pursuit of a modern, urban life. Similarly, Malti's evolving relationship with Mr. Mehta underscores the ideological tensions between progressive modernity and lingering societal hypocrisies.

This juxtaposition also operates on thematic levels, as seen in the comparisons between characters like Hori and Rai Sahib or Dhania and Malti. These parallels and contrasts reflect broader socio-economic realities, such as the growing convergence of feudal and capitalist systems to perpetuate exploitation. The use of symbolic elements, such as the cow representing both cultural aspiration and systemic oppression, further unifies the structure, creating a narrative that mirrors the complexities of Indian society during the colonial period.

9.2.5 Tragedy as a Structural Unifying Element : Life, Death, and Human Struggle

Godan is not only a grand saga of peasant consciousness but also an important tale of female consciousness and a tale of shared human tragedy, particularly embodied in the lives of Hori and Dhania. Dr. Ramvilas Sharma, in his book *Premchand Aur Unka Yug*, has emphasized that the tragedy in *Godan* does not stem from the character of just one individual but is a product of the intertwined lives of both Hori and Dhania. Hori's relentless sacrifices and Dhania's resilience against societal and economic hardships together form the core of the novel's emotional resonance. (Sharma 1977)

The theme of death, woven into the narrative from the beginning to the end signaling a harsh truth, acts as a unifying element in the loose structure. The premonition of death at the start,

followed by its eventual arrival, underscores the inevitability of suffering and loss. The novel begins with moments of humour amidst the difficult struggles between Hori and Dhania. Hori's remark, "Dhania, we won't live long enough to see sixty; we'll leave before then!" is nothing less than a forewarning of the impending death. As for Dhania, it is already mentioned : "She was only thirty-six, but her hair was entirely grey, her face wrinkled, and her body weakened."While interpreting the tragedy of *Godan,* Ramvilas Sharma notes that the essence of the tragedy lies not in death itself but in the persistent struggles inherent in life. "This existential dimension adds depth to the novel's structural design." (Mishra).

In *Godan*, Premchand's approach to his subject matter reflects, on one hand, his sensitivity toward society and, on the other, his critical and analytical stance toward history. Through these two elements, Premchand exposes, with remarkable authenticity, the sorrowful reality of rural life trapped in the colonial and economically exploitative systems of his time.

9.2.6 Structural Critiques and Realist Tradition : Premchand's Narrative Innovation

Godan is not only Premchand's last important work but it is also the most noteworthy creation in terms of the evolution of realist narrative traditions in Hindi literature. The structural elements of *Godan* have been subject to critique. Nirmal Verma, a prominent storyteller, has offered critical insights into *Godan*. According to him, Premchand adopted a European literary form without sufficiently examining it to the cultural and narrative ethos of Indian society. According to Verma, the narrative form lacks organic integration with the characters' lived experiences. As Verma writes : "On one hand, Premchand gives rural Indian insight evident in the characters of *Godan;* on the other hand, there is a ready-made westernised form which has been adopted and which has no connection with the values, personality, racial experiences, and their lifestream of these letters." (Sharma) However, Premchand's use of a realistic narrative structure serves a deliberate purpose to authentically reflect the fragmented and cyclical realities of rural and urban India.

The apparent looseness of *Godan's* structure is, in fact, its strength. It mirrors the disjointed yet interconnected aspects of Indian society during the colonial era. The juxtaposition of rural and urban narratives highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity, while the overarching theme of struggle unifies these disparate elements. Premchand's integration of content and form creates a novel that is not only thematically rich but also structurally innovative.

9.3 THE TECHNIQUES IN *GODAN*

Premchand's literary techniques elevate the narrative, making it a landmark in Indian literature.

9.3.1 Narrative Technique and Realism

The slow and episodic rhythm of *Godan* aligns with the slow pace of Indian rural life, reflecting its struggles, joys, and sorrows. This narrative style presents the Indian story-telling tradition, which allows Premchand to capture the nuances of everyday existence. The transitions between the rural and urban spheres may seem loose but are thematically unified, portraying the larger socio-economic canvas of colonial India.

One of the most defining techniques in *Godan* is its commitment to realism. Premchand paints a vivid and unembellished picture of Indian society under colonial rule, focusing on the hardships faced by farmers like Hori and the societal contradictions in urban life. Through meticulous details, Premchand captures the stark realities of rural poverty, caste oppression, and feudal exploitation. The dialogues, often colloquial, enhance the authenticity of the narrative, providing readers with an immersive experience.

Premchand's commitment to realism is evident in his detailed portrayal of both rural and urban settings. The novel does not romanticize the peasant's struggles but presents them in their stark and often tragic reality. Through this, *Godan* transforms from a story and becomes a sociological document that records the historical and social dynamics of its time.

According to George Lukács, the characteristic of a great realist writer is that he tries to ruthlessly get rid of his strongest prejudices and the most sacred beliefs that themselves become an obstacle to the natural artistic development of the situations and characters depicted in his works. (Studies in European Literature). Among Indian novelists, Premchand stands out as the one who most closely meets Lukács's criteria. In his creative vision, Premchand continuously examines, tests, and aligns his perspective on life with social awareness and self-analysis, grounding his work in objective realities. (Mishra)

9.3.2 Character-Driven Storytelling

Premchand's technique involves a focus on character development rather than relying heavily on a plot-driven narrative. Hori and Dhania, the central characters, are crafted with remarkable psychological depth. Hori's aspirations, sacrifices, and tragic downfall symbolise the plight of Indian peasants, while Dhania's resilience adds a crucial dimension to the story.The urban characters, such as Dr. Malti and Mr. Mehta, represent intellectual and ideological aspects of modern India. These contrasting yet interconnected characters allow Premchand to explore the multiplicity of Indian life. The gradual unraveling of their lives and choices gives the narrative its unhurried, reflective rhythm.

9.3.3 Symbolism and Motifs

Premchand employs a rich tapestry of symbolism and motifs in *Godan* to add layers of meaning to the narrative and critique societal structures. The cow stands as the central symbol of the novel, representing wealth, social status, and cultural aspirations in rural India. Its sacred status in Hindu tradition elevates it to an emblem of spiritual salvation and prosperity. For Hori, the cow becomes a lifelong aspiration, symbolizing his yearning for dignity and societal acceptance. Even in the whole novel the cow is shown as the symbol of wealth. However, this aspiration is the warted by the harsh realities of systemic oppression and economic disparity, making the cow a poignant metaphor for the unattainability of dignity and stability for the rural poor.

Another powerful symbol in the novel is the plough, which embodies the ceaseless toil and sacrifices of the peasant class. The plough is not merely an agricultural tool but a representation of the relentless labor that sustains the livelihoods of farmers like Hori. It underscores the exploitative nature of the socio-economic systems that benefit landlords and moneylenders while leaving the laborers in perpetual poverty. Through this imagery, Premchand captures the resilience and struggles of the rural community.

Death, a recurring motif in the novel, acts as both a literal and symbolic element. The premonition of death at the beginning and its eventual realization at the end reflects the harsh inevitability of life's struggles. These symbols enrich the narrative and give it a universal resonance.

Symbolic violence emerges as a critical theme in *Godan*, revealing the implicit oppression enforced through cultural norms and social practices. The dowry system exemplifies this, as Hori and Dhania face immense financial strain to arrange an extravagant dowry for their eldest daughter, Sona. This act, driven by societal expectations, plunges the family into debt, transforming Sona into a symbol of their social capital. When financial resources run dry, Hori is forced to marry his younger daughter, Rupa, to an old widower, exposing the devastating consequences of these oppressive traditions.

The act of gifting a cow, or *Godan*, represents another form of symbolic violence. Rooted in Hindu ideology, it is perceived as essential for achieving spiritual salvation. Hori's inability to fulfill this obligation reflects the exploitative nature of these rituals, which disproportionately burden the economically disadvantaged. Both the dowry system and *Godan* demonstrate how societal norms perpetuate inequality and demand sacrifices from those least equipped to bear them.

Wealth and debt are recurring motifs in the novel, symbolizing the unyielding pressures of economic inequality. Hori's life is marked by an endless cycle of borrowing and repayment, driven by survival needs and societal obligations. His financial struggles underscore the systemic exploitation of the peasant class, trapped in a cycle of poverty under the control of landlords and moneylenders. This motif serves as a critique of the structural inequalities that keep the rural poor in a state of perpetual despair.

Through these symbols and motifs, Premchand constructs a narrative that transcends its immediate context to address broader themes of socio-economic oppression, human resilience, and the complexities of cultural traditions. The cow, plough, dowry, and other elements serve as metaphors for societal critique, adding depth and universality to the story. By embedding these symbols into the fabric of the novel, Premchand creates a timeless exploration of human aspirations, dignity, and the enduring struggle against systemic injustices.

9.3.4 Parallel Narratives

The dual narrative structure of *Godan*, rural and urban, demonstrates Premchand's innovative storytelling technique. While the rural narrative captures the timeless struggles of Indian peasants, the urban storyline introduces the changing socio-cultural landscape of colonial India. The interplay between these two narratives highlights the interconnectedness of tradition and modernity, poverty and privilege, and rural and urban life. Despite their differences, the two narratives converge thematically, emphasizing the universal nature of human struggles and aspirations. This structural technique adds depth and complexity to the novel, making it more than a linear tale.

9.3.5 Dialogues and Language

In Hindi literature, Premchand emerges as a highly self-aware storyteller who employs a proverbial mode of expression, wherein language is not confined to the level of isolated sentences but is intricately woven into a coherent and sequential narrative structure (Mishra).

The dialogues in *Godan* are simple yet profound, reflecting the everyday speech of rural and urban India. Premchand's use of colloquial Hindi grounds the novel in its cultural context, while his ability to convey complex emotions and ideas through seemingly straightforward language demonstrates his mastery as a writer. The language also serves as a tool for social critique. Premchand uses dialogues to expose the hypocrisy of landlords, the exploitation of peasants, and the tensions between traditional and modern values.

9.3.6 Social Commentary

Another key technique in *Godan* is its ability to seamlessly weave social critique into the narrative. Premchand uses his characters and their struggles to address broader issues such as caste inequality, gender roles, colonial exploitation, and the changing dynamics of Indian society.

Hori's sacrifices highlight the exploitation inherent in the feudal system, while Dhania's resilience and strength bring attention to the plight of women. The urban narrative critiques the superficiality of modern intellectualism, making the novel a comprehensive examination of Indian society.

9.4 SUMMING UP

The structure and techniques of *Godan* are integral to its enduring impact and literary significance. The dual narrative framework, which juxtaposes the rural struggles of Hori and his family with the urban lives of intellectuals like Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti, reflects the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of colonial India. This interconnected structure bridges tradition and modernity, poverty and privilege, and stagnation and progress, emphasizing the complexity of Indian society.

Premchand's narrative techniques enhance the depth and realism of the novel. His commitment to realism is evident in the detailed portrayal of rural poverty, caste oppression, and urban ideologies. The use of symbolism, such as the cow and the plough, adds layers of meaning, representing both cultural aspirations and systemic exploitation. Dialogues in the novel, rooted in colloquial language, lend authenticity and reinforce its socio-cultural context.

Through character-driven storytelling, Premchand crafts a narrative that delves deeply into human experiences and societal structures. His integration of symbolic motifs, episodic rhythm, and parallel narratives captures the interconnectedness of individual lives and broader socio-economic realities. The novel's structure and techniques combine to create a rich, nuanced depiction of the struggles, aspirations, and transformations in colonial India, making *Godan* a masterpiece in the realist tradition.

As a pioneering work in the realist tradition, *Godan* remains a timeless masterpiece, resonating with universal human struggles and aspirations. Its structural and technical innovations solidify its place as a landmark in Indian literature, offering a profound and enduring reflection of society.

9.5 QUESTIONS

1. Describe the structural framework of *Godan*.
2. Describe the narrative techniques used in *Godan.*
3. How does the dual narrative structure of *Godan* contribute to the thematic development of the novel?

9.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Premchand, Munshi. *Godan*. Translated by Jai Ratan and P. Lal, Jaico, 2011.
- Mishra, Satya Prakash. *Godan ka Mahatva*. Sumit Prakashan, 5th ed., 2014.
- Sharma, Ramvilas. *Premchand Aur Unka Yug*. Rajkamal Prakashan, 1977.
- Verma, Nirmal. *Shabd aur Smriti*. Rajkamal Prakashan, 1982.
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BLOCK-IV

INTRODUCTION

Block IV has introduced Mohan Rakesh, an eminent Indian playwright, fiction writer, essayist, and one of the founding figures of New Story (Nai Kahani) Movement in Hindi Literature. It has discussed his classic play, *One Day in Ashadh* (*Ashadh Ka Ek Din*). It has brought to light the significance of language and dialogue used in the play, its major themes, the art of characterization, imagery, metaphor, symbolism, the clash between realism and idealism, a relation between tradition and modernity all that make it a profoundly philosophical and introspective play.

UNIT-10 INTRODUCING MOHAN RAKESH

Structure

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Mohan Rakesh : Life, Education and Career

10.3 New Story Movement and the Rise of Middle Class

10.4 Mohan Rakesh : Evolution as a Writer

10.4.1 As a Short Story Writer

10.4.2 As a Novelist

10.4.3 As a Dramatist

10.5 Key Features in the Plays of Mohan Rakesh

10.6 Summing Up

10.7 Questions

10.8 Suggested Readings

10.0 OBJECTIVES

- To acquaint with the life, education and career of Mohan Rakesh.
- To identify and understand the concept of the New Story Movement in Hindi literature in the 1950s.
- To observe the rise of Middle class in Post independent India and understand its relevance.
- To estimate the evolution of Mohan Rakesh as a writer of short story, as a novelist and as a playwright.
- To analyse the salient features of the plays of Mohan Rakesh.
- To evaluate the contribution of Mohan Rakesh in Hindi theatre.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the founding figures of New Story (Nai Kahani) Movement in Hindi Literature, Mohan Rakesh is a prominent Indian playwright, fiction writer, and essayist. He is known for his significant contributions to Hindi literature and theatre. His works, characterized by innovation, introspection, and a deep understanding of human psychology, have left a lasting impact on the Indian theatrical landscape. As a writer is the product of society and consequently influenced by social, political and cultural happenings also has the capacity to influence society with his/her writings. Mohan Rakesh's early short stories, in which he depicts persons and events with extraordinary sensitivity, show his own awareness of the contemporary era. He enthusiastically carried on with this creative involvement in his later plays, novels, and stories. His writing was distinguished by an uncommon bravery and sincerity, which helped him garner praise and widespread recognition.

10.2 MOHAN RAKESH : LIFE, EDUCATION AND CAREER

Mohan Rakesh (actual name Madan Mohan Guglani) was born in Amritsar, Punjab, on January 8, 1925, to a middle-class Sindhi family. His father, Shri Dharamchand Guglani, was a famous lawmaker with a strong interest in literature, and his mother was deeply spiritual while fulfilling her responsibilities as a mother and wife. Though his father's financial situation was not good, his home was a gathering point for literary enthusiasts, where his father would welcome scholars from many fields and hold hours-long discussions on various elements of art, music, and literature. Mohan inherited his father's deep interest in books and music. He received his early education in the well-known Arya Samaj ethos. He learned Sanskrit and Hindi simultaneously and became adept in both languages. This exposed him to both contemporary literature and classical Sanskrit writings, sharpening his brain. This early education sparked his interest in languages, which would serve him well later in life.

Rakesh had to deal with life's hardships as a diligent child who was thirsty for knowledge when his father sadly passed away. He continued his studies and earned an M. A. in Sanskrit from Oriental College in Lahore, nonetheless, without losing heart. But because he was interested in studying Hindi, he went on to "Punjab University : to earn an M.A. in Hindi. He had a fondness for short stories from the start of his professional career. He thereafter produced a number of plays and novels.

Mohan Rakesh started his career as a postman at Dehradun from 1947 to 1949 and later left for Bombay in 1949 in pursuit of employment. There, he had trouble finding work, and for three days, he was without money for food. At last, he made up his mind to pack his bags and received an employment letter from Sydenham College of Commerce offering him a part-time teaching position at a salary of just Rs. 75. His appetite growing, he took up the offer. Later on, Elphinstone College hired it full-time with a lectureship. However, he lost the job soon. In addition, he worked as a teacher for a period in Delhi, Jalandhar, and a Shimla school. Then, he quit his work once more, went back to Jalandhar, and enrolled in D. A. V. College. He eventually quit his work in 1957 to devote himself full-time to writing. In 1962 and 1963, he served as the temporary editor of the Hindi literary journal Sarika.

Mohan Rakesh did not have a pleasant marriage. For the majority of his life, he was stuck in unhappy marriages, where he experienced isolation, doubt, and struggle. He formed multiple relationships at the same time, some of them temporary and some of them more committed. However, he discovered his love in his third marriage in 1963 when he wed Anita Aulakh who was twenty-one years old at the time of marriage. *Satrein Aur Satrein*, her autobiographical work, was initially published in 2002 after being serialized in the Hindi magazine *Sarika*.

Mohan Rakesh began his literary career penning short stories before moving on to novels and ultimately plays. In addition, he is recognized for having authored travelogues, biographies, and essays. Additionally, Rakesh developed the practice of writing a diary, recording facts of his life from 1948 to 1968. These diaries were ultimately published in 1985 under the title *Mohan Rakesh ki Diary*. His notable works include *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (1958), *Lehron Ke Rajhans* (1968) *Adhe Adhure* (1969), *Pairon Tale Ki Zameen* (1973), *Ande Ke Chilke, Anya Ekanki Tatha Beej Natak* (1973) *Raat Beetne Tak, Tatha Anya Dhwani Natak* (1974). In addition to that he also wrote *Andhere Band Kamare* (1961), *Na Aane Wala Kal* (1968) and *Antaraal* (1972). According to Pratibha Agrawal, "Everything that Rakesh wrote was done in the context of his times and his environment. He believed that an honest writer recreates in his work what he has experienced and lived through, giving voice to what he has felt and known" (From *Half Way House : A Translation of Adhe Adhure* by Bindu Batra). Mohan Rakesh won the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his

contributions to theater and literature. He was also awarded with the Jawarharlal Nehru Fellowship in July 1971 to conduct research on "The Dramatic Word." But he was unable to finish it, and on January 3, 1972, at the age of 46, he passed away. His literary works have been studied, adapted, and performed even after his brief life. His contributions to contemporary Hindi theater and literature have secured him a permanent position in cultural history of India.

10.3 NEW STORY MOVEMENT AND THE RISE OF MIDDLE CLASS

Between 1954 and 1963, there was a new wave in post-independence Hindi short fiction that saw the emergence of recognized writers such as Mohan Rakesh, Bhisham Sahni, Nirmal Verma, Rajendra Yadav, Kamleshwar, and Amarkant. These authors considered that, in the context of New Story (Nayi Kahani) , emotion and thought were equally significant as art could not be separated from the material world. In Hindi short fiction, the main themes have become middle class family disintegration, values being lost, uncertainty, sorrow, loneliness, and anxiety. It was believed that Hindi literature was undergoing literary modernism, with the writers' sensibilities shifting as a result of the altered social and cultural settings. To be precise, this movement marked a departure from traditional storytelling and explored contemporary and psychological themes. Pratibha Agrawal explains it further that "there was a difference in language and expression as well – more natural, easier, the language of everyday use." Mohan Rakesh was associated with the Nai Kahani literary movement. In his opinion the New Short Story movement did not begin as a movement. He said that with the shift of emphasis to interpreting the reality around them, many of them realised that they had a deal in common. Yet, most of those who were part of Nai Kahani genre, had retained their individuality. In fact, "the writers of the new story were intimately connected to their environment, even though their voice was different, and individual was at the centre of their concern, i.e. they themselves were at the centre. From this point of view Rakesh himself has, perhaps the greatest presence in his stories" (Agrawal 94).

After Independence, there was a new wave of writing, mostly by middle class, city-based writers, of which Rakesh was a significant part. Thus, one sees this middle-class milieu and the issues this class faces inside the confines of the city in the writings of the last 35 to 40 years, including plays, novels, stories, and poems. The middle-class, modern man is completely consumed with his personal issues. "Personal happiness and sorrow, the forging of one's identity as well as a personality, the establishment of new values, the new parameters of the man-woman relationship, the desire for personal freedom which, when too powerful, takes the shape of license, the apprehension of loneliness - the many question that modern man has to constantly face have also been the predominant concern of Hindi literature of the last forty years." (*Halfway House* 93) This can serve as a suitable summary of the above argument. It should be noted that writers from the 1950s and beyond were in fact plagued by concerns like "middle-class surroundings," "personal happiness," "man-woman relationship," "identity," "loneliness," etc.

10.4 MOHAN RAKESH : AS A WRITER

Mohan Rakesh was raised during the freedom movement and was a natural rebel. He personally witnessed how millions of people united under a single banner during the Quit India movement in a nonviolent manner. He also witnessed the brutal face of imperialism during World War II. His writings were influenced by that environment. He was firmly anchored in his time, his surroundings, and its issues; he was living them and using his writing to give voice to the realities he experienced. He believed that "the real commitment of a writer is not to any particular philosophy but to himself, his times and the life of his times" (*Baklam-khud,* 112). He was a gifted writer and dramatist. He was an expert storyteller with remarkable command over the Hindi language. He wrote on the dreams and ambitions of the majority of urban middle class people. The anguish of India's division is

conveyed quite strongly in some of his stories. After the story writing, Rakesh found success in the field of drama.

It is interesting to know that Rakesh first began writing in Sanskrit, using the language exclusively for prose and poetry. He later realized, though, that not everyone could read and understand Sanskrit, and so he commenced using Hindi to express himself. Hindi is a language that is widely spoken in India, so he thought that people would be curious to hear about his experiences. How he was rooted deeply in his time and society is appropriately summarized by by Pratibha Agrawal that "the truth of Rakesh was the truth also of his age, the truth of the writer, the truth of the life around him, the truth of the new consciousness, conflict, disintegration and fragmentation that could be seen in the relationship between man and woman, which he highlighted repeatedly in his writings" (Pratibha Agrawal 97). Rakesh has accurately captured the culture he lives in and the realities he has encountered in his writings, presenting them in a variety of ways. A significant portion of his life was spent trapped in unhappy relationships. He established a number of relationships at the same time, some of them short-lived and others enduring. It is evident that he assimilated real-life events and feelings into his novels and stories when we compare the pages of his diary with his works of fiction. It is rare to witness the expansive canvas that results from developing a range of people, situations, and emotions as well as the creativity that can produce characters who are distinctive from oneself (Agrawal 96).

10.4.1 As a Short Story Writer

Mohan Rakesh was a master storyteller with excellent command over the Hindi language. He began writing short stories when he was twenty years old. Twelve of the 66 stories Rakesh penned between 1944 and 1972 were published while he was still alive. He wrote on the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of metropolitan middle class individuals. Most of his novels center on the theme of a man and woman relationship, and it is rare to find love, happiness, wholeness, or surrender in these relationships. Most of the time, there is a great deal of animosity, alienation, suffocation, and mutual tension. Taking a different path from the earlier short stories written Mohan Rakesh wrote stories that dealt with "personal problems, frustrations, the various forms and levels of the man-woman relationship, the deep fissures that inevitably resulted, the collaps of traditional values and their replacement with individualism and an interest in portraying sexual relations with openness" (Pratibha Agrawal 94). It has been noted that Rakesh's characters strive for wholeness, happiness, and enjoyment, but they frequently fall short and end up being only partially whole in both themselves and other people. Stories like "Doraha," "Dhundhlaa deep," "Aparichit," "Aadmi aur deevar," "Marusthal, Lakshyheen", and "Insaan ke khandahar" all deal with man-woman relationships that are full of conflict, resentment, estrangement, and suffocation. Discussing about the subject of his stories Mohan Rakesh himself revealed :

Most of my stories are about people living through the torture of relationships in their loneliness, where I have tried to depict through the individual his environment. This loneliness is not the loneliness of the socially isolated individual but the loneliness that comes from living within society and it leads not to any kind of cynicism but to the need to live through it. The attempt is not to see the individual and society as mutually opposed and mutually exclusive, distinct from and separated from each other but rather to see them as related in such a fashion that the individual reflects the dilemmas of society and society reflects the torture of the individual (qtd. in Pratibha Agrawal 95).

10.4.2 As a Novelist

In the world of fiction Rakesh wrote three novels. His novels are *Andhere Band Kamare* (*Closed Dark Rooms*) and *Na Aane Wala Kal* (The Tomorrow That Never Comes) and *Antaraal* (Interval).

These novels share a similar theme to his earlier works. It mostly concentrates on the man-woman relationship. His works received a lot of praise in the Hindi novel community because of how well he portrayed the man-woman relationship.

Mohan Rakesh's groundbreaking novel *Andhere Band Kamre* (Closed Dark Rooms), published in 1961, is a work of genius. It is well known for its existential themes and depth of psychology. The story, which is set in an asylum for mentally ill people, delves into the inner lives of its characters, probing their aspirations, anxieties, and struggles against the backdrop of both personal traumas and societal norms. Raghuvir, a poet whose failing mental state has forced him into an asylum, is the main character of the novel. Raghuvir's journey serves as a lens through which the readers observe the intricacies of human consciousness and the thin boundary between sanity and madness. Raghuvir engages in interactions with a variety of people while living in the asylum, including staff members, visitors, and other prisoners. Every character, combating their own personal demons and seeking purpose in the middle of their chaotic existence, embodies a distinct aspect of the human condition. The novel explores issues of alienation, identity, and the quest for self-understanding via Raghuvir's reflections and conversations. It questions conventional notions of normalcy and asks readers to think about where the lines separating illusion from reality should be drawn. The title of the novel, *Andhere Band Kamre*, alludes to the locked, shadowy spaces inside the individuals' minds that contain their most intense desires and fears. It relates to the potential for emancipation and enlightenment while also symbolizing the imprisonment and loneliness felt by those battling mental health problems. *Andhere Band Kamre* continues to be an effective study of the human condition, providing significant insights into the nature of consciousness and the search for meaning in an uncertain world with its evocative language, complex symbolism, and thought-provoking narrative.

Mohan Rakesh's provocative 1968 novel *Na Aanewala Kal*, ("The Tomorrow that Never Comes") explores the intricacies of interpersonal relationships and the fleeting nature of time. It explores the lives of its characters as they struggle with their unknown future, uncertain past, and present. Deepak, a prominent writer in his forties, is the main character of the novel. He returns to his hometown after a long absence. His presence brings back memories of his early years, especially those of him and his childhood friend Sudha. Reconnecting with Sudha, who is now married and has a daughter, Deepak remembers their previous shared dreams and desires. The novel delves into themes of regret, nostalgia, and the inevitable nature of change as the story progresses. While Sudha struggles to strike a balance between her own ambitions and her family's needs, Deepak faces the harsh realities of adulthood and the compromises he has made along the way. The story is a poignant reflection on time fleeting and the transient nature of relationships through its reflective narrative and deep characterization. It emphasizes how crucial it is to live in present times and accept uncertainties of the future, even though the past continues to affect how we live. Because of its evocative language and nuanced portrayal of human emotions, *Na Aane Wala Kal* emerged as a timeless investigation of the human condition that invites readers to consider their decisions and chosen pathways.

Written in 1972, *Antaraal* (The Interlude) is Mohan Rakesh's third novel. The novel explores the complexities of family dynamics and the conflicts that result when individual aspirations do not align with the expectations of society. It is set in post-independent India. The Sharma family, who get together to celebrate the patriarch's birthday, is the focus of "Antaraal"'s story. The exploration of the intricacies and disputes within the family is sparked by the reunion. The Sharma family members' personal struggles with desires, fears, and unfulfilled desires cause simmering tensions and dramatic upheavals. The central character, Arun, is a successful writer who returns to his childhood home after many years. His presence upsets the family's fragile equilibrium by exposing

long-suppressed grudges and unsolved problems. The bonds of affection that Arun has with his parents, siblings, and other family members shed light on the underlying dynamics of love, disappointment, and jealousy that have molded their lives. The novel delves into themes of identity, alienation, and the pursuit of meaning in a constantly evolving world, all of which are explored through its complex portrait of the Sharma family. Arun, in particular, struggles to balance the demands of society and family expectations with issues of authenticity and self-worth. *Antaraal* is a powerful and thought-provoking work because of his deft use of language and his insightful observation of human emotions. It remains a timeless exploration of the human condition, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of family dynamics and the enduring quest for self-discovery and reconciliation.

10.4.3 As a Dramatist

In Hindi drama Mohan Rakesh alone dominated the field. He believed that "An author's commitment is not to an ideology but to the *Times* he lives in, and to *Life* around him." Rakesh was determined to follow this commitment and his entire ouvre proved it. He wrote a total of four plays. His plays demonstrate an in-depth understanding of societal intricacies, the human psyche, and post-independence India's changing cultural milieu. His plays are highly regarded for its exploration of modern themes, inventive structure, and diverse subject content.

His debut play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (*One Day in Aashadh*) (1958), played a major role in reviving Hindi theatre in the 1960s. It has been performed and studied extensively, and is regarded as a classic work of Hindi literature. *One Day in Ashadh*, which was initially produced in 1960 by the Hindi theater group Anamika in Kolkata under the direction of Shyamanand Jalan, and later by Ebrahim Alkazi at the National School of Drama, Delhi in 1962, marked Mohan Rakesh's emergence as the first modern Hindi playwright.

The three-act drama *One Day in Ashadh* is based on the lives of Mallika and Kalidas. Young and ambitious poet Kalidas falls in love with Mallika, a stunning and gifted dancer. But a lot of obstacles surround their relationship, including worries on both sides and societal norms. The story takes place in ancient India, as the characters struggle with their aspirations, passions, and the pursuit of artistic greatness. Mallika turns to her art for comfort throughout the emotional upheaval of her relationships, while Kalidas struggles with his creative block and seeks out Mallika's dancing for inspiration. As the narrative progresses, miscommunications and disputes occur, putting the characters' relationships to the test. Ultimately, the play explores themes of love, longing, passion for the arts, and the fleeting nature of human relationships. It provides an in-depth examination of the human condition, encapsulating the essence of life's transient moments and demonstrating the enduring ability of art to transcend temporal and contextual constraints.

The play's title is derived from Kalidasa's Sanskrit play, *Meghaduta*. The drama is actually a result of Mohan Rakesh's emotions and experiences after reading Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. The dramatist once told, "When I read *Meghdoot*, I would feel that the story was less about a dispossessed yaksh than about a poet who is alienated from his own soul that he has poured his guilt-realization into his opus". The title alludes to a single day in the Hindu month of Aashadh (June–July) that marks important turning points in the lives of the characters. The play is praised for its profound exploration of the intricacies of relationships and artistic endeavors, as well as its moving depiction of human emotions.

The greatest play by Mohan Rakesh is *Aadhe Adhure* (Halfway House), a significant milestone in the history of modern Indian theatre, and one of the best dramatic productions in Hindi. Appreciating the greatness of the play, N. Choudhary wrote, *"The crisis of identity and breakdown of communication in human relations and resultant tragic effect of boredom and despair constitute*

the theme of Rakesh's play, Aadhe Adhure, which is by far is best play, devastatingly exposing the fragmented personalities and broken images in a disintegrated society" (N. Choudhury). Rakesh has placed man in a modern setting to address contemporary issues in this drama. It explores themes of alienation, moral confusion, and societal constraints while illustrating the intricacies and problems inside a middle-class family.

Savitri, the central character of the play, is disillusioned with her relationships and life in general. The characters struggle with their desires, disappointments, and ethical dilemmas throughout the play, emphasizing the omnipresent sense of incompleteness and discontent in their lives. In fact, the play begins with tension and ends with tension. One can feel suffocation and frustration as no character can get out of the painful situation. *Aadhe Adhure* depicts the fractured nature of human relationships and the existential sorrow that permeates modern existence while offering a biting critique of societal norms and customs. Because of its perceptive portrayal of the human condition, it continues to be a potent and timeless work that audience find compelling. Without overstating things, Rakesh's rise to prominence as a pan-Indian writer has been mostly attributed to the play.

Lahron Ke Rajhans (*The Swans of the Waves*), is a contemporary retelling of Kalidasa's timeless Sanskrit play *Shakuntala*. Rakesh reworks the characters and story of "Shakuntala's" to explore modern themes and problems. The play was originally created as a short story and later transformed into a radio play for All India Radio Jalandhar, which was broadcast under the title *Sundri*. It was based on an old Buddhist legend about the renunciation of the Buddha and its consequences on his close family. The play centers on Shakuntala, a powerful and independent woman who serves as the main character. She lives in a wilderness, far from civilization, with her son, Bharat. When Shakuntala meets the prince Dushyant in the forest, her life takes a different turn. They secretly marry after falling in love, but their joy is short-lived when Dushyant is summoned back to his kingdom. The story follows Shakuntala as she struggles with raising a child and meeting expectations of society. She finds it difficult to fit in with a society that frequently disregards her needs and aspirations. In the meantime, Dushyant struggles with his dual feelings for Shakuntala and his duties as a monarch.

Lahron Ke Rajhans delves into themes of love, duty, and the clash between tradition and modernity. It provides a nuanced portrayal of the complexities of human relationships and the quest for personal fulfillment in a changing world. "What stands out in this play is the loneliness of the individual, internal conflict, the pain of not being able to communicate" (Pratibha Agrawal 98). Through its adaptation of a timeless classic, Mohan Rakesh creates a compelling narrative that appeals to audiences of all ages.

Another play *Pairon Tale Ki Zameen* (*The Ground below the Feet*) primarily deals with the theme of existentialism. It was written keeping in mind the disruption, apathy and suffocation of modern life. The play is set at a tourist club in Kashmir, where the characters happen to meet one day by coincidence, rather than concentrating on the home front. The characters are cut off from the outside world when an ominous flood starts to erode the bridge that connects the club to the city. Rakesh has skillfully illustrated and analyzed the altered psychological probability of unexpected death. After a while, the water begins to recede and the sound of ringing phones reassures everyone that they are safe, bringing everyone back to normal (Pratibha Agrawal 99).

10.5 KEY FEATURES IN THE PLAYS OF MOHAN RAKESH

Honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1968 Mohan Rakesh is widely regarded as one of the most significant modern dramatists in Hindi literature. Rakesh will always be revered for his outstanding contributions to Hindi theatre, including his highly successful plays. He continues to

serve an oasis of inspiration for excellence in creativity and artistic endeavor today. His innovative storytelling, character analysis that deviates from conventional theatrical norms, and character exploration are hallmarks of his contribution to Indian theatre. Among the best writers in Hindi, his plays were both profound and painful commentary on the subtleties of the human condition, as well as amusing, sarcastic explorations of human faults.

Social Critique : Many of Rakesh's plays serve as a medium for social critique. He questioned the status quo and prompted the audience to consider prevailing cultural and societal issues by challenging traditional norms and customs. As a dramatist, Mohan Rakesh demonstrated versatility by tackling a variety of subjects and genres. *Adhe Adhure* is a potent domestic drama that questions social norms, in contrast to *One Day in Ashadh*, which is a romantic drama with philosophical overtones.

Psychological Realism : Mohan Rakesh is credited to have introduced psychological realism to Hindi drama. His characters are nuanced and multifaceted, and he explores their inner thoughts and feelings. This psychological depth gives his plays a degree of realism, making them more approachable and relevant to the human condition. The dramatist displayed excellent psychological insight into his characters' minds. His examination of human emotions, conflicts, and motivations revealed a comprehensive understanding of psychology, which enhanced the psychological depth of his plays.

Fusion of Tradition and Modernity : Mohan Rakesh masterfully integrated aspects of traditional Indian storytelling with modern theatrical techniques. This blend of tradition and modernity gave his plays a distinct taste, making them accessible to an array of audiences while challenging the limits of conventional theatre. Rakesh disrupted the traditional theatrical traditions that dominated Hindi drama at the time. He experimented with story structures, characterizations, and dialogue, departing from the more formulaic approaches of previous playwrights.

Contemporary Themes : Rakesh's plays addressed contemporary issues and concerns surrounding modern Indian society. He investigated the intricacies of relationships, existential difficulties, cultural standards, and the conflict between tradition and modernity. His works are frequently distinguished by a profound concern with the human condition. He closely examined the shifting social fabric and difficulties of modern urban life, tackling issues such as existentialism, alienation, the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the complexities of human relationships. Rakesh's plays frequently explore existential themes. He delves into his characters' existential difficulties, which include questions about identity, purpose, and the meaning of existence. This existential grounding connects his work to larger tendencies in modern literature and philosophy.

Depth in Characterization : Rakesh pays meticulous attention to character development in his plays. Characters in his works are multidimensional, with complicated motivations and feelings. The variety of characterization adds layers to the dramatic tensions and has a tremendous impact on the viewers. Rakesh emphasizes character development in his plays. His characters go through emotional and psychological transformations, and their internal problems and challenges play an important role in the plot's development. This sensitive approach to character representation distinguishes him as a modern dramatist.

Language, Symbolism and Metaphor : Mohan Rakesh's plays demonstrate a mastery of language and a subtle use of dialogue. He successfully blends poetic elements with colloquial language, resulting in a distinct and amazing linguistic style. This blend of literary and everyday language enhances to the richness of his plays. He also uses symbolism and metaphor to communicate deeper meaning in his plays. Elements such as shifting seasons, mythological symbolism, and recurring patterns give layers of interpretation while also contributing to his work's aesthetic appeal.

10.6 SUMMING UP

As a modern dramatist, Mohan Rakesh is distinguished by his inventive storytelling methods, pioneering spirit, and in-depth examination of the human psyche and modern society. His plays have had a significant influence on Hindi theater, especially *One Day in Ashadh*. His inventive methods and deep subject matter have influenced writers of later generations and enriched Indian dramatic writing. Written in distinct ways, his influence continues to impact the present state of Hindi theater.

10.7 QUESTIONS

1. How did the rise of middle class affect the writings of 1950s Hindi writers, particularly Mohan Rakesh?
2. Discuss the key features found in the plays of Mohan Rakesh.
3. Comment on Mohan Rakesh's association with the 'New Story' movement in Hindi literature.
4. Estimate the contribution of Mohan Rakesh in the development of Hindi drama in Post independent India.

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UNIT-11 *ONE DAY IN ASHADH* : TITLE, THEME AND CHARACTERIZATION

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Title of the Play

11.3 Characters

11.4 Synopsis

11.5 Major Themes in the Play

- 11.5.1 Love
- 11.5.2 Conflicts between Arts and Politics
- 11.5.3 Loneliness and Isolation
- 11.5.4 Philosophical Reflections
- 11.5.5 Time and Destiny
- 11.5.6 The Search for Identity and Self- discovery

11.6 Art of Characterization

- 11.6.1 Kalidas
- 11.6.2 Mallika
- 11.6.3 Vilom
- 11.6.4 Priyangumanjri
- 11.6.5 Ambika

11.7 Summing Up

11.8 Questions

11.9 Suggested Readings

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, the learners will be able to :

- acquaint with the synopsis of Mohan Rakesh's play, *One Day in Ashadh*
- understand the appropriateness of the title of the play
- explore and understand the major themes in the play
- observe and analyse the art of characterization in the play
- evaluate the play as a classic work of art in Hindi theatre

11.1 INTRODUCTION

One Day in Ashadh (*Ashadh Ka Ek Din*) is a three act Hindi play written by Mohan Rakesh. Despite being the playwright's debut, it is widely regarded as a classic piece of Hindi literature and has had a tremendous impact on Indian theater. The play revolves around the life of renowned Sanskrit poet Kalidas and his passion for the beautiful and talented courtesan Mallika. The narrative takes place in Gupta-era ancient India. Love, passion, art, and the inevitable

passage of time are among the themes it addresses. It is recognized for its poetic language, nuanced philosophical undertones, and its portrayal of the complexities of human relationships.

Originally, the play focused on Mallika's sacrifice and her plutonic love for Kalidas rather than Kalidas and his love for her. The entire play depicts how Mallika and Kalidas's love story ultimately comes to an unhappy end and how their lives fall apart. At the start of the play, Mallika and Kalidas were residing in a little village deep in the jungle. We get the impression that Mallika is a child of nature because of her strong affinity for and fascination to the rain. The drama has received recognition for both its innovative narrative structure and its seamless blending of conventional and modern themes.

The play, which debuted in 1958, was honored with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for best play in 1959. Under the direction of Shyamanand Jalan, the theater company Anamika, situated in Kolkata, performed the play for the first time in 1960. It has since been adapted into a number of media, such as theater plays and a 1971 film adaption directed by Mani Kaul that won Filmfare Critics Award for Best Movie for the year. The play is originally written in Hindi titled as "Ashadh Ka Ek Din." Aparna and Vinay Dharwadker collaborated on the English translation, which is titled as *One Day in the Season of Rain*. *One Day in Ashadha* is another translation by Sarah K. Eusley. In the field of Hindi theater, the play is still studied and performed, and it has had a lasting impact on Indian literature.

11.2 TITLE OF THE PLAY

The play *One Day in Ashadh* takes its title from the second stanza of Kalidas's play *Meghdutam*, which translates to "A Day in the Month of Ashad." This makes the title highly significant and symbolic. Ashadh, which falls between June and July on the Hindu calendar, is the first month of India's rainy season. Given that India is predominately an agricultural nation, Ashadh has additional meanings. Ashad conjures up images of a sulky sun, a dry landscape and a dreary world of nature. The play is the result of Mohan Rakesh's emotions and experiences after reading *Meghadutam* by Kalidasa. The playwright himself told that "When I read Meghdoot, I would feel that the story was less about a dispossessed yaksh than about a poet who is alienated from his own soul that he has poured his guilt-realization into his opus" (www.revolvy.com, "Ashadh ka Ek Din").

The title of the play seems to suggest that living without loved ones turns life into an unending journey filled with agony, separation, yearning, and unfathomable grief. However, the dramatist does not tell the tale of a single day. Instead, he narrates the story of three distinct days that are set in three distinct realms of time that are separated by an unbreakable wall of time. It is easy for the viewer to understand that a lot has changed in just these three days. In fact, the play suggests the fleeting nature of time exploring how time affects relationships and individuals, highlighting the inevitability of change and the impermanence of moments. May be he is trying to convey the idea that once a moment passes, it can never come back. Once lost, love is impossible to find again.

The play originally shows Mallika's plutonic love and sacrifice for Kalidas rather than Kalidas and his love for her. The entire drama depicts how Mallika and Kalidas' love story eventually comes to an unhappy end and how their lives fall apart. At the start of the play, Mallika and Kalidas were residing in a little village deep in the jungle. We also get the impression that Mallika is a child of nature because of her strong affinity for and fascination to the rain.

11.3 CHARACTERS

Kalidas : He is a protagonist of the play. He loves Mallika who becomes his poetic muse.

Mallika : Female protagonist in the play and is in love with Kalidas

Vilom : Self-proclaimed friend of Kalidasa and later he marries Mallika

Ambika : She is the mother of Mallika

Matul : He is the maternal uncle of Kalidas

Priyangumanjri : The Gupta princess whom Kalidas marries

Dantul : He is a gentle man from the royal family

Rangini-Sangin : Scholars from Ujjaini who visit Mallika's home

Anuswar-Anusanik : State officials

Nikshep : A villager

11.4 SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

There are three acts in the play. The scene stays the same, but some of the household's belongings disappear and the Swastika paintings gradually disappear.

Act I

In the first act, Kalidas is in a romantic relationship with Mallika and lives a quiet life in a village in the Himalayas. On a rainy day, Mallika and Kalidas are outside enjoying the weather and the outdoors. Ambika, Mallika's mother, disapproves of her daughter going about with Kalidasa. Upon returning home, Mallika discovers her mother irritated. Although Kalidasa has vowed not to get married, Mallika still adores him. At this point, Kalidas has finished writing Ritusambar, his first lengthy poem. After receiving acknowledgement from the Ujjaini court, a state representative arrives and declares that Kalidas will get an honor of court-poet from Ujjaini King Chandragupta. But Kalidas is reluctant to accept the offer of poet-laureateship as the mere thought of parting with his village, mountains and his beloved muse, Mallika brings him pangs of despair. Kalidas' maternal uncle Matul encourages him to receive the state's honor. Matul becomes upset and furious because Kalidas refuses to travel to Ujjaini in order to accept the King's honor. However, Mallika convinces Kalidas in every possible way to travel to Ujjaini and accept the honor despite her sadness. She is ready to face loneliness and isolation. She says, "I know that when you go I will feel empty inside and perhaps I will feel lonesome. Even then I am not deceiving myself. From my heart I say that you must go."

He departs for Ujjaini in a confused state of mind, torn between his yearning for grandeur and his current happy life filled with love. Because Kalidasa has expressed no interest in marrying her before departing for the city, Ambika, Mallika's mother, is concerned for her daughter. Vilom, a villager who identifies himself as Kalidas' friend, has feelings for Mallika. Mallika does not particularly like Vilom, yet he still periodically visits under the pretext of seeing Ambika. He disapproves of Mallika's meeting with Kalidas. Before Kalidas departs for Ujjaini, Vilom wants to know what Kalidas has in mind for her. Mallika waits for Kalidas while he departs for Ujjaini without making any promises to return.

Act II

After a few years, we see Mallika in the same house, occupied with household chores. She now performs all of the domestic responsibilities that her mother formerly performed. Mallika's mother is ill and she takes care of her mother. Meanwhile, Kalidas has become a well-known poet and is married to a Gupta princess, Priyangumanjari. When Mallika learns about Kalidas' marriage with a princess she feels hurt never loses hope. Later on, two Ujjaini women scholars, Rangini and Sangini, pay Mallika a visit at her home. They are working on Kalidas' life and have come to her house to conduct field work. Mallika, on the other hand, is perplexed by their peculiar attitude and queries whereas they return feeling discontent.

Kalidas is en route to Kashmir with his spouse via his village. He is now the ruler of Kashmir and has got a new name, Matragupta. Kalidas, passes through his village but avoids meeting Mallika. However, Priyangumanjari meets Mallika and says, "I want to look at you and your house. During the days when Megadutam was being written he was often reminded of this place" (*One Day in Ashadh*). She seems to be aware of her husband's extramarital affair with Mallika, and she makes an effort to win her husband over by looking after his ex-girlfriend. Mallika refuses Priyangumanjari's degrading promise to aid her by marrying her to Anuswar-Anusanik, one of the royal attendants, and making her a royal companion. Vilom enters after the princess has left, confronts Mallika, and asks why Kalidas has not yet visited her home. Vilom is asked to go by Mallika. Ambika comforts the crying Mallika. Meanwhile, Mallika has no other source of income, so she probably uses the money she makes from selling her body to purchase all of Kalidas' books from passersby.

Act III

Once more, it is the same rainy day in Ashadh when Matul, Kalidas' maternal uncle, visits Mallika's house. These days, Matul uses crutches to help him walk. Matul slipped on the floor and broke his leg while meeting Kalidas when he was staying at the palace. Kalidas visits Mallika's house on this same wet day. He has given up the governorship of Kashmir that he had been awarded, as well as his life at court. Kalidas believes Mallika is still waiting for him to return after they converse. To start a new life with Mallika, Kalidas returns but she is now married to Vilom.

Vilom knocks at the door and seeing Kalidas shows him his rightful place and refers Kalidas as guest as he is the owner of the house now. He asks Mallika to look after the visitors. After some time of conversation between Kalidas and Mallika, a child's cry is heard from inside the room, so Mallika goes for help. It is discovered by Kalidas that Mallika is the mother of Vilom's child. After realizing this, Kalidas abruptly departs from the house. Although Mallika was tempted to follow in his footsteps yet she decides to stay behind for the sake of her child.

11.5 MAJOR THEMES IN THE PLAY

Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh* explores various themes that delve into the complexities of human relationships, the nature of art, and the passage of time. Here are some prominent themes in the play :

11.5.1 Love

The play revolves around the central theme of love, particularly the complex relationship between Kalidas and Mallika. It delves into the emotional intricacies, conflicts, and sacrifices involved in romantic relationships. The play explores the dynamics between its central characters shedding light on various facets of love, passion, and societal expectations. The relationship between Mallika and Kalidas is "delightful, lovable and emotionally very deep" (Agrawal 99). Devoted to love Mallika does not give a damn about her mother's criticism or the unwanted gossip. In her ideal world, love is the most important emotion for her to feel. She says to her mother, "I know that people are talking. Mother, I also know of your pain, yet for me there is no feeling of guilt. I have chosen a feeling which lives in my heart. For me this feeling is the most important one. In fact, I am in love with my own feeling which is pure, tender" (*One Day in Ashadh*). However, the course of true love never runs smooth as it faces challenges due to societal norms, personal insecurities, and the demands of their respective roles. These challenges are well evident when Mallika talks about "choosing feeling with feeling" and sends Kalidas in the hope of his advancement as well is ready to embrace him when he returns. However, Kalidas "cannot accept her bitter reality" rather he "leaves but with pain and longing" (Pratibha Agrawal 99). The drama actually depicts the personal cost that

Mallika and Kalidas bear as a result of his choice to pursue glory. Though his popularity and influence keep growing, Kalidas's creativity starts to dissipate as he abandons Mallika and relocates to Ujjaini. Priyangumanjari, his wife, tries in vain to recreate his home environment, but "she is no substitute for Mallika." This is what happens when social expectations and individual preferences clash. Even though he is passionately in love with Mallika, Kalidas has trouble reconciling his commitment to his work with the obligations placed on him by society, such as his marriage to Priyangmanjury. Kalidas confesses to Mallika that "the man she had before her was not the Kalidasa she had known" at their last meeting at the end of the play. He reveals to her that "Whatever I have written has been gathered from this life. The landscape of Kumarasambhav is this Himalaya, and you are the ascetic Uma. The Yaksha's torment in *Meghaduta* is my torment and you are the Yakshini crushed by longing. In *Abhijnanashakumtalam,* it was you whom I saw in the form of Shakuntala. Whenever I tried to write, I reiterated the history of your and my life" (*One Day in Ashadh* 176). Thus, the characters experience a range of emotions, from the ecstasy of love to the agony of separation and unfulfilled desires. They are subjected to societal judgments and expectations, influencing their decisions and the course of their relationship.

11.5.2 Conflict between Art and Politics

Through Kalidas persona, the drama depicts the internal struggle between politics and art. As an idealist, he responds, "I am not to be sold for royal coins," upon hearing about the royal proposal. In an attempt to save a young man, he even confronts Dantul, an armed soldier, empty handed. Before he has had a taste of power and glory, Kalidas is not initially driven by a desire for them. Though he does not actively seek power, Kalidas also does not actively oppose it. He agrees with Mallika's advice and sets out to become a court poet. Whatever literary works he creates after arriving in Ujjain are still reflections of his time spent living in the countryside with Mallika, his muse. He is unable to embrace the life of the palace, though. Mallika and the rain were key elements in the play's portrayal of this conflict between politics and art. When he travels to Ujjaini, the poet's relationship with his inspiration and muse becomes severed. It did not rain when he was away at Ujjaini either. It is only when Mallika is around to bind Kalidas to art and liberate him from it that he appears to be in touch with and attuned to himself. She connects him to his creative side and serves as his muse.

But what was keeping him from traveling to Ujjaini was not his love for Mallika or art. His fear sprang from his avarice for power that lurked lurking in the depths of his psyche. When he held positions with authority and influence in Ujjaini, he was never the same Kalidas. He confessed that "Administrative duties conflicted with my work" (*One Day in Ashadh* 237). He progressively became less of the person he once was. When he married the princess and assumed political power, it was a significant turning point in his life that caused him to break away from everything he regarded as magnificent and great. Kalidas became Matragupta as a result. He was unable to keep both the conflicting sides—Kalidasa and Matragupta—alive in one person. He could not devote time to his creativity. "I was struck by how far away from greatness I have moved….I was no longer the same person who had insight into what was great and glorious" (*One Day in Ashadh* 237). Therefore, he decides to leave his kingdom and the name and returns to the greatness of art and also felt "free from my love of power and authority" (*One Day in Ashadh* 235).

11.5.3 Loneliness and Isolation

The play's characters go through times of loneliness and isolation even if they are in relationships. The characters' emotional and psychological isolation highlights the difficulties in finding true connection in a society that enforces rigid norms. In the play, Kalidas is hesitant to accept the poet laureate post because he feels depressed at the idea of leaving his native city, the mountains, and his loving muse, Mallika. However, Mallika is ready to face loneliness and isolation and convinces him in every possible way to avail this opportunity and achieve this high position in the court : "I know that when you go I will feel empty inside and perhaps I will feel lonesome. Even then I am not deceiving myself. From my heart I say that you must go." (*One Day in Ashadh* 147). Later in the story, Mallika is forced to become a prostitute by her loneliness and helplessness as Kalidas was too

late to return to her. She says to him, “It has been said in Ujjaini that you spend most of your time with prostitutes….but have you seen this type of a prostitute? Would you be able to recognize me now?” (*One Day in Ashadh* 217). The play ends with this confrontation and witnessing the bitter reality of her life, Kalidas again leaves her alone.

11.5.4 Philosophical Reflections

The play explores philosophical ideas about love, life, and the human condition in addition to touching on the surface of personal relationships. The nature of relationships and the transient nature of human experiences are brought up for discussion by the audience. The plot, which takes place over multiple time periods, illustrates how relationships change throughout time. Time becomes an important component, influencing character dynamics and emphasizing the transience of relationships. The man-woman connections' emotional complexity gives the characters more nuance and connects with the audience's own emotions and observations.

11.5.5 Time and Destiny

The play, spanning different time periods, showcases Kalidas's evolution over the years. The audience witnesses his growth, both as an artist and as a person, highlighting the transformative power of time and experience. In addition, fate is ruthless with no way of comprehending emotions. Mallika's unselfish love for Kalidas and Kalidas’ love for Mallika are brutally destroyed. While Mallika was taking the baby out of the room, Kalidas took the blank book that Mallika had given him so he could write a magnificent epic and vanished into the dark of the night. Mallika hurried after Kalidas while holding the baby in her lap and called his name multiple times. She looked at the baby and stopped just as she was about to step outside the threshold into the dark, stormy night. The first rain of Ashadh has continued, and there is thunder and lightning in the sky. It completes a circle that started with Mallika and Ambika and is now Mallika and the child. “Within few seconds the longings, desires, expectations, hopes were all shattered. Everything seems to be wasted, the illusion cleared and only left fragments” (S.Z. Abbas 03). Though the play closes on a depressing tone, it portrays the reality that we cannot always receive what we want—rather, we always end up with what is meant to be.

11.5.6 The Search for Identity and Self-discovery

The search for identity and self-discovery is a recurring theme, especially as characters confront their own desires, limitations, and existential dilemmas. Kalidas undergoes a profound search for identity and meaning in his life. The play explores his journey from a young, ambitious poet to a mature and introspective individual grappling with the complexities of love, art, and societal norms. As a celebrated poet he grapples with the challenges and responsibilities that come with his creative pursuits. He finds himself entangled between life, love, and artistic expression. *One Day in Ashadh* may also have been called the story of Mallika, who emerges as the real personification of passion and selfless love, since the play’s focus is on her throughout. She has challenges maintaining a balance between her real world and her emotional and imaginative worlds. Kalidas is the center of her universe. She believes that there is nothing in this world more sublime than her love and devotions for him : “I did not remain in your life, but you have always been a part of my life. I have never let you go away from me. You kept on writing and I have always thought that my life too has some meaning” (*One Day in Ashadh* 192). Thus these characters’ grappling with the meaning and purpose of life consolidates existential undertones in the play. The play also addresses other issues, such as the conflict between nature and culture, unrequited love, and the relationship between men and women. *One Day in Ashadh* is a thought-provoking review of the human condition, and these themes take together to add to its depth and richness.

11.6 ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Mohan Rakesh's portrayal of his characters is almost unmatched in its acuteness, sensibility, and minuteness. He has shown great skill in some aspects of character portrayal. There are handful of key characters in *One Day in Ashadh*, and each one is crucial to the way the story progresses. Among the major characters are :

11.6.1 Kalidas

He is a renowned Sanskrit poet and the protagonist of the play. The play's exploration of his artistic and emotional journey is a significant aspect. Being the focal point in the play, Kalidas's decisions and actions have an impact on other characters' lives as well, particularly that of his muse Mallika. However, lack of ability to make the appropriate decision at the right time his perpetual uncertainty, conflict, radical behavior, and opportunistic nature seem to turn him into an anti-hero. Despite his intense and abiding love for Mallika, he was hesitant to accept her and preferred to marry someone else. He is reluctant to travel to the Ujjaini, and after leaving, he never came back. He was so overcome with shame that he was unable to face Mallika when he and his wife visited the villages. He does come back to her in the play's conclusion, but only to reclaim the lost creativity that symbolizes his character's inhumane treatment and selfishness.

Through an array of events, the playwright has brought attention to the character's sense, passion, emotion, and tenderness. As an idealist, Kalidas responds, "I am not to be sold for royal coins," upon hearing about the royal proposal. To save a young man, he even goes up against Dantul, an armed soldier, empty-handed. Before he has had a taste of power and glory, Kalidas is not initially driven by a desire for them. He has a very idealistic and romantic personality. His deep and passionate love for Mallika becomes a motivating factor that molds his artistic and emotional development. But there is a tragic side to his life's path, especially when it comes to his unfulfilled love for Mallika and the sacrifices he makes in the name of his work. Aparna Bhargava Dharasadhker called him an escapist as "each act ends with an act of abandonment on the part of Kalidasa , when he leaves for Ujjaini alone, when he deliberately avoids meeting with Mallika during his subsequent visit to the village, when he leaves her at home abruptly" (Wikipedia). This tragic aspect gives the individual and the story as a whole more emotional weight. His multifaceted persona embodies the difficulties of love, the intricacies of the artist's existence, and the more general existential queries that form the play's central theme.

The conflict between artistic endeavors and the responsibilities of everyday life is personified in Kalidas's character. He undergoes a profound search for identity and meaning in his life. The play explores his journey from a young, ambitious poet to a mature and introspective individual grappling with the complexities of love, art, and societal norms. He struggles with both internal and external issues despite his artistic genius. He faces the challenge of balancing his love for Mallika with societal expectations, including his marriage to Priyangumanjri. This internal conflict adds complexity to his character and drives the narrative forward. His commitment to his art sometimes comes at the expense of personal relationships, and the play explores the tension between the poetic ideal and the practical realities of existence.

Thus, Kalidas can be seen as a symbolic representation of the poet in society. He engages in philosophical reflections on life, love, and art. His struggles and triumphs mirror the challenges faced by artists in navigating their creative pursuits within the constraints of societal norms. His character serves as a vehicle for exploring profound existential questions, adding depth and intellectual richness to the play.

11.6.2 Mallika

It would not have been unjust to refer to *One Day in Ashadh* as the story of Mallika since she is the focus of the play throughout and she becomes the epitome of passion and selfless love. She has faced challenges in striking a balance between her real world and her emotional and imaginative worlds. Kalidas is the center of her existence. She is steadfast in her love despite Vilom and her mother's warnings not to waste her life on Kalidas. Because she does not want to stand in the way of Kalidas' achievement, she never presses him to marry her and even persuades him to travel to Ujjaini. When she finds out that Kalidas is married to a princess, she is offended, yet she never gives up. She uses the money from selling her body to purchase all of his books from passersby because she does not have any other source of income. Even though Kalidas stays away from her, she still thinks of him as an integral part of her spirit. She believes that there is nothing more sublime in this world than her love and devotions for him. She says to Kalidas, "I did not remain in your life, but you have always been a part of my life. I have never let you go away from me. You kept on writing and I have always thought that my life too has some meaning" (*One Day in Ashadh* 192).

Mallika is romantically involved with Kalidas, the celebrated Sanskrit poet. She emerges as an embodiment of true love who though being devastated to heart bids him farewell. She says to Kalidas, "Believe me your going away will not mean separation. The winds, the clouds and the deer, they all go with you. I am not very far away from you. And whenever I would want to feel close to you I will go to the mountain top and there lose myself among the clouds" (*One Day in Ashadh* 81). Love has become an integral part of her being, akin to a true meditation. Her ability to endure all of the anguish and suffering she encountered stems from her love for Kalidas. She gives Kalidas her idealistic and unselfish love, but all she receives in return is rejection, insults, deceit, and a life filled with pain and contempt. She had to endure a life of struggle and destitution as a terrible price for her devotion. She had to become a prostitute in order to support herself. She sees life as a never-ending cycle of suffering, longing, and waiting. She labels her illegitimate daughter as the "child of apathy." This is the way life has rewarded her for her selfless love for Kalidas. She says : "Nobody has been able to arouse the feeling that I had for you, but there are numberless images of other men….Do you know I have earned an adjective by losing my name. I have lost my identity and now I am just an adjective" (*One Day in Ashadh* 193). Mallika thus loses all of her identity, pride, dignity, and self-respect. Mohan Rakesh has well depicted the anguish of idealistic people in this world of harsh reality and utterly awful realism through her fate.

Mallika's character also challenges traditional gender roles. As a courtesan, she exercises a certain degree of agency and independence, although constrained by societal norms. Her persona brings to light the challenges that women encounter in expressing their identities and ambitions in a patriarchal culture. Mallika, who has fallen in love, does not give a damn about her mother's criticism or the unsavory tales. She lives in her utopia where love is the prime feeling : "I know that people are talking. Mother, I also know of your pain, yet for me there is no feeling of guilt. I have chosen a feeling which lives in my heart. For me this feeling is the most important one. In fact, I am in love with my own feeling which is pure, tender" (*One Day in Ashadh* 58). Mallika appears as an idealistic, independent woman with a strong will and little regard for what other people think of her : "What do they say? What right do they have to say anything? Mallika"s life is her own concern. If she wants to spoil it, then what right do has anyone to criticize her?" (*One Day in Ashadh* 59).

Mallika is renowned for her grace and charm and is a gifted and stunning courtesan. Her role in the play is essential to how the story develops. She recognizes and comprehends the realm of poetry and literature because she is an artist herself. Her profession adds another level of complexity to her persona since it represents the expectations placed on women in her field and the challenges they encounter. Even though she works as a courtesan, she has a free spirit. She is not just a passive figure;

rather, she actively explores her feelings, her desires, and challenges that her connection with Kalidas presents. She is able to locate his poetry and is anxious for him to return : “I thought that you would return, the day would be dark, filled with clouds, like the time before, and I would soak myself in the rain, they say look, I have read everything you have written” (*One Day in Ashadh* 142).

Mallika’s character has been presented by the dramatist as an embodiment of elegance and beauty. Her presence gives the play a more artistic quality, and her interactions with Kalidas advance the exploration of emotional and creative subjects. Her persona is reminiscent of the legend Shakuntala, a graceful and beautiful woman who wins the admiration of a great poet. This intertextual allusion connects the modern tale to classical literary traditions while giving Mallika’s character and the story more depth. Her persona also conveys the complexity of emotions and tensions that come with romantic relationships.

Mallika’s character, then, makes a substantial contribution to the play's thematic exploration of love, art, and social expectations. Mohan Rakesh's characterization of her gives the story greater depth and represents our intricate knowledge of relationships between people. Being a courtesan to a well-known poet, she is subject to criticism and scrutiny from the community. This gives the play a layer of social commentary and emphasizes what challenges faced by those who do not follow the standard. The play lets the audience see how Mallika's personality evolves throughout the course of several time periods.

11.6.3 Vilom

Vilom perfectly embodies Kalidas' opposite traits. Identifying himself as Kalidas' opponent in poetry and love, he labels Kalidas a self-declared friend. He is a failure at love as much as at poetry. From a broader perspective, it may be said that both Kalidas and Vilom experienced failure in their lives, albeit in different ways. Kalidas had everything in his life, but he was unable to make the right decisions about what to accept or reject when it was time. He may be successful as a poet, but he was unsuccessful in life. His soul was always in the countryside and in nature, while he lived in a royal mansion. He loved one woman and married another. Something has gone wrong in the life of Kalidas. Vilom, on the other hand, lacked Kalidas' extraordinary talent for producing exquisite works of art, even though he lived surrounded by nature. Thus, he is not a successful poet. In his personal life, he is in love with Mallika, who is in love with Kalidas—yet another failed relationship. His love for Mallika is sincere, even though Mallika does not love him.

Vilom's approach is usually realistic and practical, but Kalidas' is instinctive and emotive. Kalidas struggles with indecision all the time and is reluctant to make decisions. Vilom, on the other hand, is extremely confident in making decisions promptly. Like Kalidas, Vilom is a poet, although he was unable to become well-known. He refers to Kalidas as a successful Vilom and Vilom as a failed Kalidas since he loves Mallika but she loves Kalidas. Vilom's persona highlights the weaknesses in Kalidas' persona.

11.6.4 Priyangumanjri

It has been said about Priyangumanjri that she is a loving and committed wife who is deeply worried about her husband's physical and mental health. In order to ensure that Kalidas does not miss his village, she intends to bring the plants, fawns, the interior of the houses, animals, and maybe some people with her to Kashmir. She was unable to see that Mallika's absence from Kalidas' life is the cause of his profound sense of estrangement. She visits Mallika at home after realizing that her husband is avoiding meetings with her due to guilt. Priangumanjri says to Mallika, “I want to look at you and your house. During the days when *Megadutam* was being written he was often reminded of this place” (*One Day in Ashadh* 194). She seems to be aware of her husband's extramarital affair with Mallika, and she makes an effort to win her husband over by looking after his ex-girlfriend. She

offers her house available for reconstruction, intends for her to marry one of her attendants, and invites her to Kashmir as her chambermaid. She is still unable to replace Mallika, though, since she is unable to comprehend the intensity of Kalidas' affections for her.

In addition, Priyangumanjri represents state authoritarianism. She knows quite well that Kalidas harbored feelings of love for Mallika. Her suggestion that Mallika marry one of her attendants and follow her about as a chambermaid yet seems to indicate that the state authority does not respect human feelings. It views love as something that can be purchased or traded.

11.6.5 Ambika

Ambika, as represented by Mohan Rakesh, is a typical Indian mother who is realistic and shows concern for her daughter Mallika. She dislikes her daughter going about with Kalidas and has a critical attitude about him. She believes Kalidas would never marry her and is not truly engaged in her daughter. In addition, she blames Kalidas for her daughter's slander and refers to him as a "self-centered person who has no love for anyone in the world besides himself" (*One Day in Ashadh* 138). Realistic in nature, she does everything in her power to instill in her daughter the idea that there are material wants in life. Living a life solely driven by emotions is not feasible : "His relationship with you is one in which you are an instrument of his self-love and pride…Tomorrow when your mother is dead and there would be no food in the house, how will you answer the question before you? Will this feeling be the answer to that question?" (*One Day in Ashadh* 137). Ambika also feels offended when Priyangumanjri, the queen, suggests that Mallika marry one of her attendants and travel to Kashmir with her as a chambermaid in addition to offering to have her house restored. She mocks her daughter because of this after the queen insulted her : "Today, he wants to pay you for your feelings. Why don't you accept it? The house will be repaired and you can live there as their chambermaid. What greater honor could you receive than this?" (*One Day in Ashadh* 196).

These characters engage in a variety of interactions, and the play's exploration of themes like love, art, time, and societal expectations revolves around their relationships. Mohan Rakesh skillfully intertwines their tales to produce *One Day in Ashadh*, an intricate and engrossing drama.

11.7 SUMMING UP

Thus, drawing from the legends of Kalidas, Mohan Rakesh has crafted a fascinating love tale in *One Day in Ashadh*. It is admirable how the author evoked an era from the past in the play. He has attempted to address a number of issues in it, such as the depth of human emotions and the complexities of relationships; the conflict between the pursuit of material well-being and idealistic adherence to values; the conflict between modernism and tradition; the conflict between art and power; and the conflict between love and success. The lead characters question the rigid norms that control their life as they deal with moral quandaries and problems brought on by societal expectations. Though the play ends with an unhappy note yet it presents a reality that we cannot get what we want but we get what is in our destiny.

11.8 QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the appropriateness of the title *One Day in Ashadh*. How successfully does it relate with the theme and situation of the play?
2. Discuss *One Day in Ashadh* as a tragic tale of love, loss, longing and sacrifice.
3. Discuss the theme of conflict between art and politics with particular reference to the character of Kalidas.

4. "Mallika emerges as the true embodiment of passion and selfless love." Write a character-sketch of Mallika in the light of this statement.

5. Do you agree that Vilom is a perfect anti-thesis of Kalidas' character? Discuss.

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UNIT-12 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Plot Structure

12.2.1 ActI : Setting and Foundation

12.2.2 ActII : The Passage of Time

12.2.3 ActIII : Reunion and Realization

12.3 Stage Direction

12.4 Setting of the Play

12.5 Language and Dialogue

12.6 Imagery, Metaphor and Symbolism

12.6.1 Imagery

12.6.2 Metaphor

12.6.3 Symbolism

12.7 Historical Context and Mythological Allusions

12.7.1 Historical Context

12.7.2 Mythological Allusions

12.8 Summing Up

12.9 Questions

12.10 Suggested Readings

12.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the plot structure of the play *One Day in Ashadh*
- To trace out the significance of language and dialogue used in the play.
- To analyse the art of stage direction in the play.
- To explore mythological allusions in the play.
- To identify Imagery, Metaphor and Symbolism employed in the play.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Hailed as the first modern play in the history of Hindi drama, Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh* is well appreciated to capture the timeless love story of ancient classical poet and playwright, Kalidas and his beloved, Mallika. It represented a significant shift from the traditional form of Hindi drama. The play, divided into three acts, is experimental in form, exploring various themes such as the complexities of human relationships, the depth of human emotions, the clash between idealistic adherence to values and the pursuit of material well-being, the clash between realism and idealism, tradition and modernity, art and power, love and success. It is appreciated for its formal aspects, such

as its structure, language, imagery, metaphor and mythological allusions. To attain the desired end of establishing a relation between tradition and modernity Mohan Rakesh's employed several theatrical techniques in this play that contribute to its impact on the stage.

12.2 PLOT STRUCTURE

One Day in Ashadh is considered a landmark in modern Indian drama for its treatment of complex human emotions and relationships. The play's three-act structure reflects the ups and downs of relationships, especially that of Kalidas and Mallika, as well as the emotional voids brought about by time, fame, and ambition. The drama explores human desires, disillusionment, and the challenges of going back in time in a poignant way. The playwright has created a sense of timelessness by using a non-linear structure. Its cyclical form, which ends in regret and estrangement after beginning with emotional fulfillment, makes it a profoundly philosophical and introspective play.

12.2.1 Act I : Setting the Foundation

The play opens in an idyllic village of the Himalayas, with Kalidas and his beloved Mallika at the center of the story. It is said of Kalidas that he is a thoughtful, sensitive man who has not yet found success as a poet. He is incredibly loved and supported emotionally by Mallika. She is a symbol of his simplicity and connection to nature. Their quiet village life is tempered by an underlying tension brought on by Kalidas's unfulfilled desires for recognition.

Kalidas's acceptance of an opportunity to leave the hamlet and assume a prominent role in the royal court of Ujjaini marks a significant turning point in the story. The possibility of achieving his poetic talent and the prospect of stardom tempt him. Even though it causes her inner pain, Mallika supports him in going since she recognizes the value of his goals.

12.2.2 Act II : The Passage of Time

A few years have passed since this act. In Ujjain, Kalidas has become an acclaimed poet whose renown has grown considerably. But there is now more distance between him and Mallika. Kalidas is no longer in close physical or emotional proximity. He wed the princess Priyangumanjari, a symbol of his separation from his simpler past and his bond with Mallika. Mallika's life in the the village has become more challenging. After being abandoned, she must deal with the difficult realities of life without Kalidas, which includes raising their joint kid. The act shows how Kalidas's fame and fortune have caused him to lose touch with his past and his roots, and it is filled with an obvious feeling of loss and disappointment.

12.2.3 Act III : Reunion and Realization

The final act focuses on Kalidas' return to his homeland. He returns, seeking peace and a sense of reunion, but discovers that much has changed. Mallika, who has been through years of sorrow, is no longer the same person who once stood by him with steadfast faith. The two characters engage in an intense emotional exchange.

Kalidas is overcome with remorse and a sense of failure—not because of his successes, but rather because he no longer has the same level of bonding with Mallika. But Mallika has accepted her fate and moved on from the past. There is some uncertainty about whether closure or reconciliation is ever really achievable because the act does not completely heal their emotional struggles.

One critic has observed that each act ends "with an act of abandonment on the part of Kalidasa : when he leaves for Ujjaini alone; when he deliberately avoids meeting with Mallika during the subsequent visit to the village; when he leaves her home abruptly." (Wikipedia) The play's narrative thus depicts the personal price that Mallika and Kalidas both pay for his choice to

pursue greatness. Even if Kalidas' power and fame are growing, his creativity starts to fade when he leaves Mallika and relocates to Ujjaini.

12.3 STAGE DIRECTION

In Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh*, the stage directions play a crucial role in conveying the emotional and symbolic undertones of the play. The directions not only guide the physical movements of the actors but also subtly influence the atmosphere and mood, creating a visual counterpart to the themes of love, ambition, and the passage of time. In keeping with the modernist style of the play, Rakesh uses minimalist stage directions. Simple, modest descriptions of the locations and physical events give directors and actors a lot of creative freedom. The characters' depth of emotion is highlighted by this minimalism, which also uses the physical space to further emphasize core concepts.

The play's opening scene is set in a small, rural Himalayan village, and the stage directions establish a sense of tranquility and simplicity. The setting is described in a few sparse but effective details—such as the small house and the natural surroundings—which evoke the emotional intimacy between Mallika and Kalidas. The rural setting represents depth and purity of emotion, and the play's directions guarantee that the village is presented as a tranquil, harmonious place in contrast to the intricate urban court later on. The play's varying emotions are also delicately conveyed by lighting design, as suggested by the stage directions. For instance, softer lighting might be used in the scenes between Kalidas and Mallika to reflect the warmth of their relationship, while harsher, colder lighting could be used in the later scenes to depict the emotional distance between the characters. Though the directions are not overly prescriptive, they leave room for lighting to play a symbolic role in conveying the emotional tones.

Rakesh often uses stage directions to emphasize the unspoken emotions of the characters, providing a physical manifestation of their internal conflicts and states of mind. These directions offer insights into the psychological and emotional journeys of the characters, especially in key moments of tension. There are times during the play when a character's silent gestures say more than their spoken words. For instance, Mallika's subtle gestures, like staring off into the distance or focusing distractedly on little activities, while she waits for Kalidas, reveal her mental struggle and mounting sense of abandonment. Without the need for words, these movements are potent markers of her inner mood. The physical spacing of the characters on stage also mirrors their emotional relationships. In the earlier acts, Kalidas and Mallika are often positioned close together, reflecting their emotional intimacy. The stage directions indicate a growing physical distance between the two characters as the play goes on and Kalidas departs for Ujjaini, signifying their growing emotional separation. This arrangement of space draws attention to the main theme of unfulfilled love and separation.

Nature plays a significant role in *One Day in Ashadh*, and the stage directions help bring the natural world to life on stage. Rakesh reflects the play's emotional terrain with symbolic natural elements like flowers, rain, and the transition of the seasons. Ashadh is the season during which the rains fall, and the stage directions specify how they should be shown to represent both emotional intensity and separation. The couple's emotional separation and the passing of time are evoked by the sound of rain falling, the shifting light, and the visual depiction of rain on stage. In addition to being a part of the actual environment, these natural elements also represent Mallika's emotional state and her bond with Kalidas. The flowers, for example, bloom during the time of their love but eventually wither symbolizing the fleeting nature of their relationship.

One of the challenges in *One Day in Ashadh* is the shift in setting from the rural village to the urban court of Ujjaini. The stage directions guide this transition in a way that highlights the contrast

between the two worlds and reinforces the play's themes. The stage is kept uncomplicated and natural in the village scenes, with few props and an emphasis on the beauty of the surrounding environment. Stage directions, however, need a more formal, ornate setting that captures the opulence of the royal court as the action moves to Ujjaini. The struggle between Kalidas' private, intimate relationship with Mallika and his more public, ambitious existence in the court is reflected in the disparity in the two settings. The stage directions also contribute to the change in atmosphere that occurs when Kalidas switches from the peaceful village to a bustling court. While the court is shown as a place of intellectual stimulation but emotional detachment, the rural landscape has a serene, timeless feel.

Silence is a key element in *One Day in Ashadh*, and the stage directions often call for moments of stillness that are as powerful as the spoken dialogues. These moments of silence create space for the audience to absorb the emotional weight of the scenes and the characters' internal struggles. Actors are frequently instructed to pause or hold their silence by the stage directions, particularly during intense situations that are emotional. For instance, the uneasy silence that accompanies Mallika and Kalidas' first meeting when they are reunited in the third act symbolizes the emotional distance that has developed between them over time. These poignant pauses let the audience join in on the wordless sorrow and regret shared by the two protagonists. Rakesh also used silence to encourage introspection and thought. In particular, Mallika is frequently seen in times of silent reflection, which reflects her sense of inner turmoil and impatience. The more vivacious scenes of Ujjaini, where characters are enmeshed in the world of activity and ambition, stand in stark contrast to this peace.

Thus, Mohan Rakesh's stage directions in *One Day in Ashadh* are subtle yet powerful, guiding the visual and emotional flow of the play while leaving space for creative interpretation. Through the use of minimalism, symbolic natural elements, and carefully placed silences, the stage directions help bring the inner lives of the characters to the forefront. They produce a dynamic interplay between the physical and emotional worlds and draw attention to the psychological and emotional struggles at the core of the play. Rakesh's stage directions, which allow for flexibility, guarantee that the play stays topical and adaptable to many artistic interpretations, making *One Day in Ashadh* a significant and enduring piece of modern Indian theatre.

12.4 SETTING OF THE PLAY

Setting plays a crucial role in almost every play, aiding in the comprehension and creation of the atmosphere the writer intended. The settings are often created by the authors in tandem with the play. This play's setting is primarily described in the play's text. Understanding the play's setting is crucial to comprehending the two individuals' relationship and feelings. In Ashadh, a single day is an extended duration. Although it is set in antiquity, it might just as easily be in any other period. All around us are living characters such as Kalidas, Mallika, Priyangumanjari, Vilom, and others. Changing time to growing distance, each and every thing is described in detail including the paintings on the walls and other household articles. The play juxtaposes different time periods, allowing the audience to witness the evolution of relationships and characters over time. This technique enhances the exploration of the themes of love, art, and the passage of time. According to Pratibha Agrawal, Rakesh was "fully aware of the concept of the unities of time and place and he would try and maintain those as far as possible. He always kept the theatrical aspect in mind and would, therefore, arrange the scene and the stage business in such a way that it could be enacted naturally. On one or two occasions, however, he has also inserted inappropriate episodes. For instance, it is highly unrealistic to have a fawn on stage (in Asadh Ka Ek Din) and trying to do so always leads to much confusion" (Agrawal 101).

12.5 LANGUAGE AND DIALOGUES

The language and dialogue in Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh* are central to the play's emotional intensity, its exploration of character psychology, and its modernist approach to Indian drama. The play is recognized for its poetic and proficient vocabulary. Rakesh creates beautiful and evocative language by drawing on the poetic traditions of Hindi and Sanskrit. Just like his other plays Mohan Rakesh has used very "polished language and snappy dialogues" (Pratibha Agrawal 101). As it has a historical background, therefore, the language is "Sanskritized which helps to create the right atmosphere. Despite being Sanskritized, however, the language is not obscurantist. Barring a few, most words can be understood by the common people because the context makes them accessible. Rakesh would weigh each word before he used it and therefore there is no excess, no need for cutting or pruning. Because of constant revision, there is no repetition to be found in his work. The language used is just enough to explain a situation or convey an emotion" (Agrawal 101). Rakesh's choice of language is poetic yet approachable, combining a lyrical aspect that mirrors the characters' depth of emotion with the ease of spoken Hindi. Although the language is rich in metaphor and meaning, it is usually easy to comprehend and natural, enabling the audience to relate to the characters on a personal level.

One of the hallmarks of Mohan Rakesh's writing is the psychological complexity of his characters, which is reflected in their dialogue. The play's diction departs from earlier Indian dramatic works' highly stylized, elaborate speech. Rakesh, on the other hand, uses a more naturalistic technique, emphasizing the characters' inner reality. In contrast to the conventional melodramatic or mythological plays of the past, this change highlights the complexity of modern human relationships. The language often conveys not just what the characters are saying on the surface but also their deeper emotional and psychological struggles. Characters in the play frequently engage in monologues and soliloquies, allowing the audience to gain insight into their inner thoughts and emotions. This technique helps to reveal the complexities of the characters' minds and provides a more intimate connection between the characters and the audience. For instance, in one of her soliloquies Mallika says : "Even if I did not remain in your life, you always remained in mine. I never let you wander from my side. You continued to create and I believed that I too am meaningful, that my life is also productive." (*One Day in Ashadh* 192) This makes it possible for the audience to comprehend Mallika's intense devotion to Kalidas. In addition, the last act has a lengthy exchange between the protagonists, either in the form of monologues or conversations between two characters. Mallika's long monologue is quite powerful on its own. Though it slows down the action, this is an obvious illustration of the issues that have been bothering her.

Pratibha Agrawal stated that though "the dialogues of Kalidas before the arrival of Vyom are in the shape of an exchange, in spirit they are monologic. Even when he is talking to Mallika he is lost within himself" (Agrawal 102). In fact, Kalidas' dialogue frequently reflects his divided nature—his love for Mallika and his desire for simplicity clash with his ambition and his yearning for fame. His words typically reflect the conflict between his emotional needs and his intellectual pursuits. For example, there is an undercurrent of uncertainty and remorse even while he talks about his ambitions, particularly in later scenes when he understands the consequences of his decisions. Yet as the story moves, Mallika's language changes. Her words are initially full of emotional warmth and hope. She uses kind, caring words to express her love for Kalidas. But as time goes on and she is abandoned, her voice becomes more subdued, a reflection of her mental suffering and the willpower she needs to deal with being deserted. Her words often carry an undercurrent of sorrow, but also resilience, as she accepts the reality of her situation.

Rakesh uses symbolic language to express larger themes such as the passage of time, the conflict between ambition and love, and the emotional distance between people. Throughout the

play, nature imagery is frequently used in the dialogue to reflect the emotional states of the characters. The imagery of the monsoon rains, flowers, and mountains serves as a metaphor for the internal worlds of Kalidas and Mallika. For example, the arrival of the rains in Ashadh is often discussed with a sense of longing and melancholy, symbolizing both the renewal of life and the separation of the lovers. The dialogue also touches on the passing of time and how it affects relationships. Conversations between Kalidas and Mallika in the first act are brimming with aspirations for the future. Their dialogue by the third act is weighed down by a sense of loss and the years that have flown by. Rakesh highlights the inevitable shifts in relationships across time by using language to illustrate how time alters emotions and perspectives.

One of the most interesting aspects of the dialogue in *One Day in Ashadh* is the juxtaposition between the formal, intellectual language of Kalidas' life in Ujjaini and the informal, heartfelt language of his life with Mallika in the village. Kalidas' language grows more formal as he travels from the the village to Ujjaini, indicating his growing detachment from his previous life. His use of formal language in court is a reflection of his stature as a renowned poet, but it also expresses his emotional distance from the honesty and simplicity of his previous association with Mallika. But throughout the play, Mallika's speech stays informal and straightforward in terms of feeling. Her words show that she is grounded in her own experiences and sentiments, even as she becomes emotionally disconnected from Kalidas. This contrast between the formal language of Ujjaini and the informal language of the village highlights the different worlds that Kalidas inhabits and the emotional distance that grows between him and Mallika.

The language and dialogue in *One Day in Ashadh* are crucial to the play's emotional and intellectual depth. Mohan Rakesh blends simplicity with psychological complexity, using poetic language, nature imagery, and symbolic dialogue to explore the inner lives of his characters. The contrast between formal and informal language reflects the growing emotional distance between Kalidas and Mallika, while the economy of dialogue leaves much to the audience's interpretation. Through its modernist approach to language, the play captures the existential dilemmas of love, ambition, and the passage of time.

12.6 IMAGERY, METAPHOR AND SYMBOLISM

Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh* uses rich imagery, metaphors, and symbolism to enhance the emotional and thematic depth of the play. These literary devices serve to reflect the internal states of the characters, emphasize the contrast between nature and human ambition, and explore the passage of time.

12.6.1 Imagery

Throughout the play, nature imagery plays a central role in conveying the emotional landscape of the characters, especially Mallika and Kalidas. The idyllic Himalayan village where Mallika and Kalidas live in the beginning symbolizes simplicity, purity, and emotional fulfillment. The natural setting is in harmony with Kalidas' poetic sensibilities and Mallika's devotion. It portrays an untainted milieu removed from the ambitions and materialism of the outer world.

The title itself is significant as "Ashadh" refers to the monsoon season. The play's opening scene, which depicts Kalidas and Mallika's passionate relationship, is symbolized by the rains as an abundance of life and intense emotion. But as the play progresses, the same season starts to symbolize loss and separation—especially after Mallika is left behind and Kalidas leaves the village.

The blossoming of nature symbolizes the growing of the love between Mallika and Kalidas. But as Kalidas gets farther away, the splendor of the natural world serves as a moving reminder of what

Mallika has lost. Her country life, which had formerly been happy and simple and full of love, becomes harsh and lonely, reflecting her emotional state.

12.6.2 Metaphor

Kalidas' poetry serves as a metaphor for his soul and inner life. His talent to produce magnificent artwork symbolizes his inner being, which yearns for expression. The metaphor he uses to describe an epic written by Mallika's tears is the most potent one. Kalidas says to her,

You made these papers by your own hands so that I will create my greatest epic on these… There are water drops at many places which is not rain drops undoubtedly. Apparently you have written so much with your eyes on these blank papers. And not only with eyes, these have become dirty with perspiration at many places, dry flower petals have left their mark at many places. Your nails has pared them at many places, your teeth and bitten. Apart from this color of summer's sun, paper dust of winter and dampness of this home…..how come these papers are blank now Mallika? An epic has been written on these. (*One Day in Ashadh* 43)

But as he gets greater recognition, his poetry also starts reflecting the gap between his personal and professional lives. Kalidas abandons the innocence of his early inspirations, which originated from his emotional bond with Mallika and his surroundings, in order to gain fame and royal favor. The human quest of ambition, achievement, and intellectual fulfillment at the expense of emotional connections is also symbolized by his leaving the village. In addition to embodying the monetary benefits of ambition, his ascent to prominence in Ujjaini causes him to become emotionally estranged from Mallika, his place of origin, and his former self.

Time is an important metaphor in the play, representing the inevitability of change and the impossibility of returning to the past. The three-act structure of the play, which spans several years, is a symbolic journey through time, showing how ambition, success, and fame can alter human relationships. The theme that everything changes with time and that emotional connections are difficult to reestablish is emphasized by both Mallika's growing sense of abandonment and Kalidas' gradual distance from his former self. Likewise the village and Mallika essentially remain the same, signifying the unchanging, timeless quality of simple, intimate love. On the other hand, Kalidas' rise into an acclaimed poet displays the changes resulting from success and ambition. The way that time both creates and destroys, as seen in the way that it expands Kalidas's renown and obliterates his personal relationships, is highlighted by this contrast.

12.6.3 Symbolism

The play incorporates symbolic elements, such as the changing seasons, and the characters to convey deeper meanings. Symbolism is often used to represent the passage of time, the cyclical nature of life, and the emotional states of the characters. This adds layers of meaning to the narrative and allows for a more nuanced exploration of themes.

The season of Ashadh, which brings the monsoon rains, serves as a key symbol throughout the play. The rains are first associated with fertility, deep emotions, and the development of love between Kalidas and Mallika. As the story moves rain also becomes a symbol of loss, alienation, and unmet desires. From joy and affluence to sadness and alienation, it reflects the shift in their relationship. In Indian culture, rain is frequently associated with rebirth and vitality. It also bears the burden of separation and longing, too. The rains, which once brought Mallika and Kalidas together, now act as a constant reminder of their emotional separation.

Mohan Rakesh created such characters in the play that they are interpreted as having symbolic significance. The plays heroine, Mallika, symbolizes emotional depth, devotion, and the world of personal relationships. Her name, which means "jasmine," is symbolic of purity and beauty.

However, as the play progresses, she also represents the pain of unfulfilled love and the harsh realities of life that follow the departure of Kalidas. She embodies the sacrifices made for love and the silent endurance of suffering. In contrast to her Priyangumanjari, Kalidas's royal wife, symbolizes worldly success, power, and the material rewards that Kalidas gains through his association with the royal court. Her presence signifies the dichotomy between love and ambition, as she stands for the life Kalidas chooses over Mallika. On the other hand, Kalidas is symbolic of the artist torn between two worlds—one of personal fulfillment and emotional depth (represented by Mallika and the village) and the other of intellectual and artistic ambition (represented by Ujjayini and the royal court). His persona stands in for the struggle that all people face between the desire for fame and the loss of close relationships. Even the child born to Mallika after Kalidas departs from the village symbolizes both hope and the burden of the past. The child reflects Mallika and Kalidas' unwavering bond, but it also serves as a reminder of how unfulfilled their relationship is. The powerful imagery of a crying baby shows that they can never unite :

Kalidas : Life is still left. We can start over.

The baby starts crying.

Kalidasa : Mallika!

Mallika looks at him.

Kalidasa : Who is crying?

Mallika : This is my present. (*One Day in Ashadh* 258)

It is all said in this one sentence. Now that the baby has arrived, their union has no chance left. The child's presence draws attention to the emotional obligations Kalidas left behind in his quest for stardom.

Meaning thereby, Mohan Rakesh masterfully uses imagery, metaphor, and symbolism to explore the conflict between emotional fulfillment and the pursuit of ambition. Nature imagery reflects the characters' inner worlds, while metaphors of fame, time, and poetry illuminate the tensions between personal and professional lives. Symbolism, particularly through characters and natural elements, deepens the play's exploration of love, loss, and the passage of time, making it a timeless meditation on human desires and their consequences.

12.7 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND MYTHOLOGICAL ALLUSION

Mohan Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadh* is a modern Hindi play set against a historical and mythological backdrop, making extensive use of both to deepen its exploration of human relationships and ambitions. In order to depict the timeless themes of love, ambition, and time passing, the play quietly combines parts of Indian mythology and takes inspiration from the life of the renowned classical poet Kalidas.

12.7.1 Historical Context

While *One Day in Ashadh* is not a strictly historical play, it is set in a semi-historical period, alluding to the life of Kalidas, who lived around the 4th or 5th century CE during the Gupta dynasty in India. The Gupta period is often considered a golden age of Indian culture, art, and literature, and Kalidas was one of its most celebrated figures. Renowned Sanskrit poet and dramatist Kalidas is historically recognized for his compositions Shakuntalam, Meghadutam, and Raghuvamsam. In the play, Kalidas is first portrayed by Mohan Rakesh as a young, relatively unknown poet who is torn between his longing for creative recognition and his close, intimate relationship with Mallika. The drama tells the story of his early life in the country and his subsequent ascent to fame after moving

to the Ujjaini royal court (modern-day Ujjain). Historically, Kalidas' life is shrouded in mystery, and Rakesh uses this to create a dramatic tension between Kalidas the man and Kalidas the legend.

The historical context of Ujjaini, which was one of the great cities of ancient India, is also significant. During the Gupta dynasty, it was a center of art and culture, and Rakesh uses this location to depict Kalidas' rise to popularity. The play depicts the actual historical practice of poets and artists seeking for support in royal courts, where they can become famous yet often at the expense of their personal affairs. Like many other ancient civilizations, the Gupta period depended on royal patronage to ensure the survival and recognition of artists. Rakesh draws attention to the historical fact that a large number of artists, like Kalidas, were lured to courts in search of patronage. However, the play also critiques this system, as it shows the emotional and personal sacrifices Kalidas makes when he leaves his village and his love, Mallika, in pursuit of fame.

12.7.2 Mythological Allusions

Mohan Rakesh uses mythological allusions to give a timeless, universal quality to the play's themes, often reflecting the inner conflicts and emotional states of the characters. Indian mythology, especially the epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, has a strong effect on Kalidas' poetry and plays. Kalidas is shown as a poet who has an intense bond to nature and finds inspiration in legendary themes in One Day in Ashadh. But this bond erodes as he ascends to the royal court and becomes widely recognized, signifying his disconnection from his upbringing and emotional life. Although his works often dealt with mythological components, which reverberate in the narrative, the play does not specifically mention his mythological associations.

In some ways, Mallika can be seen as an allusion to Kalidas' famous character, Shakuntala, from his play *Abhijnanasakuntalam*. Mallika, like Shakuntala, is a simple, naturally loving woman. Shakuntala experiences hardships when her lover, King Dushyanta, is away from her. While the conclusion in *One Day in Ashadh* is significantly more tragic and ambiguous, Mallika's abandonment by Kalidas when he departs for Ujjaini is comparable to Shakuntala's abandonment. The play's contemplation on the anguish of separation and the emotional cost of ambition is reinforced by this allusion.

The rain in the season of *Ashadh* (the monsoon month) carries mythological significance as well. In Indian mythology and classical literature, the rainy season often symbolizes longing, separation, and the hope for renewal. This is particularly evident in *Meghadutam*, a work by Kalidas, where the *megha*, or rain-bearing cloud, serves as a messenger between two lovers who have parted ways. The title of the play makes reference to this custom, using the Ashadh season to represent the emotional turmoil that exists between Kalidas and Mallika. The arrival of the rains symbolizes the bittersweet nature of love and ambition since they bring with them the fertility of nature and the sadness of separation.

The play also carries mythological allusions to the eternal conflict between duty (dharma) and desire (*kama*), a theme that recurs in Indian epics like the *Mahabharata*. Kalidas, as a poet and an artist, faces the dilemma of fulfilling his duties to his art (which demands ambition and fame) and to his love (which demands emotional sacrifice and constancy). The mythological theme of a hero split between two worlds—one representing the spiritual, emotional life (Mallika and the village), and the other representing worldly success and material gain (the royal court and Priyangumanjari)—is also echoed in Kalidas' journey from the village to the royal court. In many mythological stories, such as the tale of "Nala and Damayanti," this conflict between worldly desires and personal duty is central, and Rakesh's play taps into this tradition to portray Kalidas' internal conflict.

Thus One Day in Ashadh seamlessly blends historical context with mythological allusion to create a timeless narrative about the tension between ambition and personal fulfillment. In addition to that the play also critiques the historical patterns of cultural and artistic patronage. Rakesh reflects on the condition of artists who, even in modern times, are caught between their love for pure art and the pressures of external recognition. The allusions to Kalidas' life and career in the play allow Rakesh to comment on how the pursuit of art and ambition often alienates individuals from the very emotions that inspire their creativity in the first place.

12.8 SUMMING UP

Overall, *One Day in Ashadh* is a complex and multi-layered play that has been the subject of a great deal of critical and analytical attention. Loosely based on the life of the classical Sanskrit poet Kalidas the play is divided into three acts, structured around the passage of time and the emotional journeys of the characters. The play has received accolades for its nuanced language, subtle portrayals of intricate individuals, innovative use of theatrical devices, and exploration of key themes like ambition, love, and individuality. The play continues to be relevant today, and is a valuable addition to the canon of Hindi literature. Overall, the theatrical techniques used in the play contribute to its artistic and intellectual richness, making it a significant work in the realm of Hindi theatre.

12.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the plot structure of the play *One Day in Ashadh*.
2. Comment on the use of language and dialogue in Mohan Rakesh's play *One Day in Ashadh*.
3. Critically analyse Mohan Rakesh's art of stage direction in the context of *One Day in Ashadh*.
4. What do you understand by Imagery and Symbolism? Elaborate the symbolic representations in *One Day in Ashadh*.
5. How far Mohan Rakesh is successful in incorporating mythological allusions in *One Day in Ashadh*? Justify your answer with suitable examples.

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BLOCK-V

INTRODUCTION

Block V has offered the works of four authors : Mahasweta Devi, Nirmal Verma, Haribhajan Singh, and Raghuvir Sahay. It has explored the representative works of these authors originally published in their native languages. It has a comprehensive study of Mahasweta Devi's powerful story "Salt", originally published in Bangla, Nirmal Verma's popular story "Birds", originally published in Hindi, Haribhajan Singh's long poem *Tree and the Sage*, originally published in Punjabi, and Raghuvir Sahay's well-known poem "The Stare" originally published in Hindi.

UNIT-13 MAHASWETA DEVI : "SALT" (NOON IN BANGLA)

Structure

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Mahasweta Devi : Life and Works

13.3 The Story *Salt*

13.3.1 Glossary

13.3.2 Themes

13.3.3 Characterisation

13.3.4 Title

13.3.5 Narrative Technique

13.4 Summing Up

13.5 Questions

13.6 Suggested Readings

13.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will read about Mahasweta Devi's literary achievements and her popularity as a writer of fiction. You will also study her story, "Salt'. Originally it has been written in Bangla with the title Noon. Her writings are peculiarly devoid of sentimentality. She does not tug at her reader's emotions and is rather straightforward with her approach to talking about the lived experiences of the marginalized. Her language is simple but ironic to the complexity of the issues she talks about.

At the end of your study of this unit, you will be able to :

- Discuss Mahasweta Devi's life in detail
- Make critical analysis about the story *Salt*
- Realize Mahasweta Devi's contribution to literature and society

13.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 13 of Block V based on Short Story and Poetry, we shall discuss about the famous story by Mahasweta Devi, "Salt". First, we shall go through the life and literary career of Mahasweta Devi. Mahasweta Devi is one of those leading writers who have an unflinching commitment for the underdog. The major part of her creative writing is characterized by an unwavering dedication and ardour for the underdog. Her stories give voice to tribal – Santhals, Lodhas, Shabars and Mundas and the junction of folk and the modern, the mainstream and the margin, colonialism and post-colonialism. Her stories are deeply rooted in her own experiences with the people about whom she writes.

Read about Mahasweta Devi as an Indian writer for the deprived class in unit 13.2. Then you should read about her works and contribution to Indian Literature in Unit 13.2. In Unit 13.3 you will go through the story "Salt" in detail. After you have read about her life, achievements and the story write down the answers to the exercises. Your answers should then be checked with the answers given by us at the end of the unit.

13.2 MAHASWETA DEVI : LIFE AND WORKS

Mahasweta Devi (1926 - 2016) was an Indian writer and activist who wrote in Bengali. Some of her other notable works include Hajar Churashir Maa, Rudali, and Aranyer Adhikar. She was social activist who worked for the rights and empowerment of the tribal people (Lodha and Shabar) of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states of India. She was honoured with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award, Janpith Award and Ramon Magsaysay Award along with India's civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan.

Mahasweta Devi was born in Brahmin family on 14 January 1926 in Decca, British India which is now Dhaka (Bangladesh). She was surrounded by a culturally rich environment right from the moment of her birth. She was born to Manish Ghatak and Dharitri Devi. Her father was a poet and novelist of the Kallol movement and her mother was a writer and social worker. Both her parents were social activists working for the uplift of the poor and downtrodden.

She picked up her education at various places. She first attended Eden Montessori School in Dhaka but later shifted to West Bengal. There she studied in Medinipur Mission Girls High School. She has also attended Shantiniketan and Beltala Girls' School. She joined Vishva Bharati University to complete her B.A. in English and then went to earn an M. A. in English from Calcutta University in 1962. She got married two times. On 27 February 1947, she married Bijon Bhattacharya, a playwright and also an active member of the Communist Party of India. She worked as a school teacher and then as a clerk for some time but lost her job. It was around this time that she began to turn her energies towards writing. She has a son with Bijon named Nabarun Bhattacharya, who became a novelist and a political critic as well. Her marriage with Bijon broke up in 1962 then she married with Asit Gupta, but the relationship ended in 1976. She did various jobs in her lifetime, the first being in a post office, but she was fired from there due to her communist ideology. She even wrote letters for illiterate people. She worked as an English lecturer from 1964-84 at Bijoygarh Jyotish Roy College.

Being born into a family of strong literary traditions, writing came easily to her. She wrote for 'Sachitra Bharat', a Bengali weekly, under the pen name of Sumitra Devi. Her early writings were light fiction with not much serious twist to it. Her first major work *Jhansir Rani* (The Queen of Jhansi in 1956, launched her as a writer to be reckoned with. She wrote over 100 novels and over 20 collections of short stories. Mostly her works were written in Bengali. Her popular works are *Hajar Churashir Ma* (Mother of 1084), *Kavi Bandyoghoti Gayiner Jivan a Mrityu* (The Life and Death of Poet Bandyoghoti Gayin). She was awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award for her work *Aranyer Adhikar* (*Rights to the Forest*).

Her specialisation lay in the studies of Adivasi, Dalit and Marginalized citizens with a focus on their women. She has embodied their struggles and sacrifices in her works like *Chotti Mundi Ebong Tar Tir*. Her writings are peculiarly devoid of sentimentality. She does not tug at her readers' emotions and is rather straightforward with her approach to talking about the lived experiences of the marginalised. Her language is simple but ironic to the complexity of the issues she talks about. She was awarded Padma Shri for her work as an activist working with the tribal groups. Her three collections of short stories are Imaginary Maps (1995), Old Woman (1997) and The Breast Stories (1997) translated by Post colonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

She suffered a heart attack on 23 July 2016 and took her last breath on 28 July 2016.

13.3 THE STORY "SALT"

The story "Salt", is translated in English by Sarmishta Dutta Gupta and was published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Story, Salt is set in Jhujhar, a tribal village along the Palamau reserve forest in

year following the emergency and the defeat of the Congress in the subsequent elections. It represents the plight of the tribals, deprived of the arable forest land by the Hindu traders who came there after the Kole Revolt 1831. When the story begins the entire village is shackled into forced labour without wages by the landlord Uttamchand. The tribals live off the forest unaware of their right to a share of the crops on the land they till, until a new minister takes power after the election in 1977. The "organized youth", with Purti Munda, challenge Uttamchand and decree that the tribals must receive half the share of the crops. By way of revenge, Uttamchand decides to deprive the tribals of salt, a basic cheap commodity. The people of Jhujhar come for their weekly market to Palani or Muru. All the grocery shops of these two markets belonged to Uttamchand. He said "Let them have a taste of saltless gruel. Such ingratitude after being fed by me for so long!"

In turn he asked all the local shopkeepers from selling salt. "I'll kill them by salt. Without salt the tribals would eventually die out." Purti, the local hero, located a salt lick, in the reserve, where a herd of elephants came and licked on the salt. He started to steal from the salt lick. Little did he know that the herd leader, Ekoya, now a rogue elephant, with a really bad reputation of walking into a village and ravaging the entire village, without a soul knowing about it, was keeping an eye on him. Since. the elephant as described in the story moves quietly without even stepping a dry leaf, he decided to give him a form of a cloth, who floats around and keeps an eye on all. The character Ekoya represents resistance, autonomy, and a critique of the contemporary power structure.

It is difficult for tribal people to gain the facilities and privileges, taken for granted in the mainstream society. "Salt", the second story of "Bitter Soil", is one of Devi's best stories. Salt symbolizes the earth, whose, basic life-giving properties are denied to some. The entire forest was owned by Uttamchand, who forced the tribal of the village into wage less labour. When the villagers refuse to do so, Uttamchand makes it sure that salt, which is one of the basic commodities is not available to them in the whole village. The story shows how the tribal have faced injustice and are still facing it but the difference lies in the fact that they are raising their voice against it.

The story revolves around Kanta, a Kol woman whose life serves as a potent lens through which the author examines the underlying hardships of the oppressed Kol tribe. Inside the rustic surroundings, the story of Kanta develops gradually and is closely related to the strenuous process of making salt. Mahasweta Devi skilfully negotiates the terrible realities of exploitation, destitution, and the never-ending struggle for survival that define this tribe's way of life.

"Salt", a poignant short story crafted by Mahasweta Devi, intricately explores the tribulations faced by the marginalized Kol tribe in a secluded Indian village. Central to the narrative is Kanta, a Kol woman whose life is intimately entwined with the demanding task of salt production. Set against the rural backdrop of India, the Kol people engage in salt-making, labouring in the salt pans under challenging conditions. Despite their ceaseless efforts, the community falls victim to exploitation at the hands of powerful landlords who not only control the means of production but also manipulate economic conditions to perpetuate the cycle of poverty for the Kol tribe. Kanta, the central character, personifies resilience and resistance as she confronts the systemic injustices imposed by the landlords. These authoritative and exploitative figures subject the Kol community to economic subjugation, denying them basic rights. Kanta's personal struggle extends to symbolize the broader battle of her community against a system designed to keep them oppressed.

The narrative takes a poignant turn when Kanta's husband, Gisu, falls ill due to the harsh working conditions. This pivotal moment prompts Kanta to challenge the landlords and the oppressive system, transforming her quest for justice into a direct confrontation with those in power who seek to suppress any form of dissent.

13.3.1 Glossary

Kamaldaha : a famous lake in the Palamau region

Koel : a river in Jharkhand

Kole Revolt : during the Kole Birodh, the Larka Hos raised their voices against the British. Other groups joined the protest. The rebellion was suppressed and pacified by Wilkinson's Law, now prevailing in the Kolhan area of Jharkhand.

Maroa : a kind of gruel

Palamau Fort : a sixteenth century fort built by the Adivasi king Medini Ray. Palamau is in the Daltonganj district of Jharkhand

Tari : a very cheap country liquor

13.3.2 Themes

Salt is a story by Mahasweta Devi that explores the anguish of a commodity being consumed by people regardless of their status. The story is set in the 1960s in the tribal village of Jhujhar, which is located in the Palamau Reserve Forest. The story suggests that violence is the only way out. In this story Mahasweta Devi focuses on these main themes which are monster of tribal people. They are exploitation and oppression; resilience and defiance; injustice and inequality; symbolism of salt : struggle for justice; empowerment and solidarity; impact of environmental exploitation.

Exploitation and Oppression : At the narrative's core lies the pervasive theme of exploitation and oppression. The Kol tribe, engaged in salt production, faces economic exploitation at the hands of influential landlords who wield control over the means of production. The story unravels the stark realities of a system perpetuating poverty and depriving marginalized communities of basic rights.

Resilience and Defiance : The central character, Kanta, epitomizes the theme of resilience and defiance. Despite confronting adversity, she stands up against the oppressive system and confronts formidable landlords. Kanta's unyielding determination becomes emblematic of strength, inspiring her community to resist and advocate for justice.

Injustice and Inequality : The narrative lays bare the prevalent injustice and inequality faced by the Kol tribe. Economic disparities, unequal power dynamics, and the systematic denial of fundamental rights illuminate broader societal issues that the marginalized community contends with, underscoring the imperative for social reform.

Symbolism in Salt : Throughout the story, salt assumes a potent metaphorical role. While vital for sustenance, it symbolizes the bitterness of exploitation. The salt pans, initially conceived as a source of livelihood, morph into a battleground where the Kol people fiercely fight for their dignity and rights. The dual nature of salt encapsulates the paradoxical relationship between life-sustaining resources and their exploitation.

Struggle for Justice : At the narrative's heart lies Kanta's quest for justice for her husband and community. The story emphasizes the significance of standing against injustice and underscores the collective struggle needed to effect positive change.

Empowerment and Solidarity : As Kanta challenges the oppressive system, themes of empowerment and solidarity come to the forefront. The narrative accentuates the strength derived from unity and collective action, suggesting that positive change is achievable through a shared commitment to justice.

Impact of Environmental Exploitation : The salt pans and their exploitation indirectly highlight the environmental consequences of human activities. The narrative subtly addresses the repercussions of exploiting natural resources without sustainable practices, contributing to a broader ecological theme.

"Salt", by Mahasweta Devi stands as a potent story that explores the terrible reality that the oppressed Kol tribe must endure, utilizing Kanta as a symbol of resiliency and rebellion against a system of oppression. With the backdrop of salt production, the narrative deftly examines themes of oppression, exploitation, and the pursuit of justice. The story illustrates the contradictory relationship between resources necessary for life and their potential for exploitation using the metaphor of salt. Kanta's story serves as an example of the resilient spirit of the oppressed and motivates everyone to fight together for justice and empowerment. Beyond personal challenges, Mahasweta Devi's provocative story offers a deep commentary on larger social themes such as environmental degradation, economic inequity, and the transforming power of solidarity.

13.3.3 Characterization

"Salt" is a story about the exploitation of the working class and the marginalized by the mainstream people. The story highlights the unjust power structures that exploit the labour of the salt workers.

Purti, in many ways the central figure in the narrative, belongs to the tribal community, but remains a loner, all the same. In his ingenious and tenacious efforts to circumvent the scarcity of salt, he demonstrates the human will to survive.

Uttamchand is projected as a "villain", but to blame him solely for the problems of the tribals would be to misread the text. The rhetoric of the text, in fact, places the blame on the system that empowers Uttamchand to exploit and to torment the tribals.

The youth committee is well-meaning and altruistic, but its members lack commitment and true understanding of the situation at the grassroots level.

The headman exemplifies practical common sense. He has an intuition of the message the story is meant to convey, but lacks the words to articulate it : "This has not been fair at all". He could toss only these few words at the babus present there and left the place with his villagers. (113-14)

Ekoya, though an animal, is almost a character in the story, invested with human traits. He seems more human than the inhuman Uttamchand.

13.3.4 Title

The title of the story is apt and completely appropriate. All the events happen because of the salt. Mahasweta Devi adeptly employs Kanta's story to illuminate broader issues such as land exploitation, economic inequality, and the dehumanizing impact of systemic oppression. Kanta becomes a symbol of strength and defiance, inspiring her community to rise against their oppressors. The theme of salt serves as a powerful metaphor in the narrative. While essential for sustenance, salt becomes a source of bitterness and exploitation for the Kol community. The salt pans, meant to be a source of livelihood, transform into a battleground where the Kol people fight for their dignity and rights. The story underscores the paradox of a resource that is both life-sustaining and oppressive, reflecting the intricate relationship between the marginalized and the powerful.

13.3.5 Narrative Technique

Though the story is about simple folk, the narrative is not simple. The elements of satire, myth, history and science have been used to construct a scathing critique of social irresponsibility. The altruistic but shallow idealism of the youth commission representative is subjected to scathing satiric

scrutiny. The elephant Ekoya is mystified, identified with the ancient Palamau Fort in the depths of the forest, suggesting a primordial landscape that casts modern human history in a reductive light :

The scene was very symbolic. Palamau Fort in the backdrop, river, sands, sky, night, lonely elephant. Very peaceful and eternal. The only difference was that the thoughts crossing the elephant's mind weren't particularly conducive to flying white pigeons. (110)

Uttamchand's ancestry and his exploitation of the tribals is linked to the history of the region. There is an elemental quality to the representation of Ekoya. The wild elephant stands for the forces of nature, simultaneously strong and under threat from human "civilization", dependant on human largesse but capable of acting as an agent of violent, primitive retribution. The identification of Ekoya with Purti pitches the struggle for survival at a primordial, elemental level : the loner, in each case, is singled out for elimination, suggesting that in a normative structure, transgression comes at a price. The tribals have a close affinity to nature, but are apparently less important to human society than animals, as the rhetoric of wild life conservation would suggest.

The most salient formal characteristics of the story is its use of irony to comment on social discrimination. The gap between the real experience of the tribals and the way the situation is officially reported and handled highlights the vast distance that separates the empowered from the powerless :

They went to steal salt from the elephants' lick and died! The words of the inspector became an epitaph for the dead proving that the tribal of Jhujhar were not trustworthy at all. Herbivorous animals needed salt. What if men began to steal that too! This unnatural act of Purti and his kinsmen again emphasized the difficulty of preserving wildlife without human interference. (113)

That salt, such a humble thing, could become a matter of survival for an entire community, is incomprehensible to 'civilised' society : ignorance sanctions indifference and incredulity. The Ekoyas and Purtis of this world have no scope for survival in such a system.

The text is also notable for its sophisticated use of point of view. The omniscient narrator reports the thoughts and feelings of the human actors in the drama, but he also seems to understand animal psychology.

13.4 SUMMING UP

"Salt" by Mahasweta Devi stands as a potent story that explores the terrible reality that the oppressed Kol tribe must endure, utilizing Kanta as a symbol of resiliency and rebellion against a system of oppression. With the backdrop of salt production, the narrative deftly examines themes of oppression, exploitation, and the pursuit of justice. The story illustrates the contradictory relationship between resources necessary for life and their potential for exploitation using the metaphor of salt. Kanta's story serves as an example of the resilient spirit of the oppressed and motivates everyone to fight together for justice and empowerment. Beyond personal challenges, Mahasweta Devi's provocative story offers a deep commentary on larger social themes such as environmental degradation, economic inequity, and the transforming power of solidarity. "Salt" is a literary masterpiece, but it is also a call to action, imploring readers to confront and oppose oppressive regimes.

13.5 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the life and literary career of Mahasweta Devi.
2. Comment on Mahasweta Devi as a social activist.
3. Discuss the narrative technique of "Salt".

4. What is the major theme of the story “Salt”?
5. Is salt a metaphor? Discuss.
6. What is the significance of ‘salt’?
7. What are some reasons why salt is valued?
8. What is the significance of Ekoya in “Salt”?
9. Write a short note on the art of characterisation.

13.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Chakravarty, Radha. “Visionary Cartography : *Imaginary Maps* by Mahasweta Devi.” *Signifying the Self : Women and Literature*. Edited by Malashri Lal, Shormishtha Panja and Sumanyu Satpathy, Macmillan, 2004.
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- Mukherjee, Sujit. “Mahasweta’s Devi’s Writings : An Evaluation.” *The Book Review* xv. 3, 1991.
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UNIT-14 NIRMAL VERMA : "BIRDS" ("*PARINDE"* IN HINDI)

Structure

14.0 Objective

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Modern Hindi Short Story

14.3 Nirmal Verma : Life and Works

14.4 "Birds"

14.4.1 Themes

14.4.2 Critical Analysis

14.4.3 Characters

14.4.4 Setting, Locale and Affirmation of Life

14.5 Summing Up

14.6 Questions

14.7 Suggested Readings

14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will read Nirmal Verma's story "Birds", one of his most popular stories. The story is about people who are separated from each other due to their emotions and mental conflicts. The story is written in a psychological and realistic style and depicts love, sadness, and alienation. Modern storyteller Nirmal Verma is the pioneer of new stories. The stories of Premchand and Jainendra's next generation of Verma ji show the end of the scenes so closely that the reader immerses himself in mysterious thoughts and begins to dive into the story. In eco-oriented stories, they are paying less attention to growth. Minds are deeply peered into the state. It is only then that very little is found in the name of the object and the mental dialectic of the characters becomes more exposed.

At the end of your study of this Unit you will be able to :

- discuss Nirmal Verma's Life and works
- make critical analysis of the story "Birds"
- appreciate the psychological approach of the writer in the story "Birds"

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we shall study about Nirmal Verma's life sketch, his story "Birds" and the interpretation of this story. We shall place the author in the context of themes and issues, form and context, in the Hindi short story. Nirmal Verma is best known for his short stories and his best- known story, "Parinde" ("Birds"), (1959) is supposed to be the pioneer of the Nai Kahani Movement in Hindi literature. Nirmal Verma's other notable stories are Andhere Mein, Dedh Inch Upar, and Kavve Aur Kala Pani. Nirmal Verma has five novels in his name, eight short story collections, and nine essays and travelogues that were translated into several European languages such as English, Russian, German, Italian, and French.

We shall then introduce you to Nirmal Verma's life and works and then take up a detailed discussion on his short story "Birds".

First read the story. Read it again with the help of the themes given in 14.4.1 and critical analysis given in 14.4.2. You can also understand the story from various points of view. After you have read and understood the story you should write down the answers to the exercises. Your answers should then be checked with the answers given by us at the end of the unit.

14.2 MODERN HINDI SHORT STORY

The short story is one of the oldest types of literature and has existed in the form of legends, mythic tales, folk tales, fairy tales, tall tales, fables, and anecdotes in various ancient communities around the world. The modern short story developed in the early 19th century. The modern Hindi short story developed in Sarasvatī from 1900 to 1920, under Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi's direction. Dwivedi did not explicitly articulate his vision for short fiction; however, as editor of a journal that pioneered the modern genre in Hindi, he exerted great control over its development. Drawing inspiration from Shakespeare, Poe, and Verne to Shriharsh and Tagore, among other influences, short story writers in Hindi experimented with adventure-romance, science fiction, horror, and historical fiction but eventually settled on subject matter that was more mundane than spectacular, as per Dwivedi's agenda for language, literature, and nation.

The *Nayi Kahani* [New Story], a literary movement in Hindi literature, is associated chiefly with the names of Nirmal Verma (1929–2005), Rajendra Yadav (1929-2013), Mohan Rakesh (1925–1972), Kamleshwar (1932–2007), Mannu Bhandari (1931-2021) and Bhisham Sahni (1915–2003), among others. The period referred to is approximately from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, although the end date of the movement remains unclear and open-ended. New Story narratives dealt chiefly with problems between the sexes, especially with the emergence of the working-woman. The context was a newly independent, rapidly urbanizing and industrializing India. Independence had solved none of the problems of unemployment or underemployment, housing and petty corruption that plagued the growing—but still small and unprotected—middle class. The style of the prose mirrored a sense of this difficulty in the everyday negotiations of urban life and work. The movement in this sense defended its middle-classness against a certain hectoring from the Party Left that required them to write more on the problems of the peasantry and organized or unorganized labour. To validate middle-class difficulties, and especially ones related to gender and family, was itself no easy task. The critique from the Right was that the *nayi kahani* movement was impatiently disbelieving of the potentialities of tradition in moderating their sense of *anomie*.

Nirmal Verma is perhaps best known as a short-story writer—unlike in European languages, as the literary historian Rupert Snell points out in a review of one of Verma's collections, in Hindi the kahani rather than the novel, has been the dominant genre of prose fiction. Nayi Kahani writers, such as Mohan Rakesh, Rajendra Yadav, Kamleshwar and Bhisham Sahni, created a new Hindi literature of middle-class urban life, with a particular interest in the changing relations between men and women in independent, industrial India.

Throughout his career, and despite his political activism, Nirmal Verma stood apart from his contemporaries in the extent to which his books were concerned with individual psychology rather than politics or society. Days of Longing exemplifies another distinctive feature of Verma's work : his use of European settings. This can only partially be traced to work as a translator in Prague. Verma was not the only Hindi writer to have spent time in the Eastern Bloc or in the West. Among his peers, Bhisham Sahni was based in Moscow from 1956 to 1963, translating Russian literature into Hindi. Verma's translator, Krishna Baldev Vaid, himself a distinguished Hindi writer, moved

between India and the United States, doing a PhD on Henry James at Harvard and later teaching at Brandeis and SUNY Potsdam.

After the writers like Premchand and his counterparts like Bhagwati Charan Verma**,** and Phaneeswarnath Renu, the literary landscape changed drastically. Especially during and after the sixties and seventies, there were very few writers who would be remembered for their unprecedented contribution from the point of view of art to Hindi literature. The number only increased proportionally compared to quality. These are the main reasons for this, officialization of Hindi, the emergence of new promises and debates, the dominance of consumerism, etc.

14.3 NIRMAL VERMA : LIFE AND WORKS

Nirmal Verma has a leading place among storytellers who bring modern knowledge to Hindi stories. He has written less, but as much as he has written, he has been able to gain a lot of fame. Not only has he corrected the prevailing art of the story but he has also tried to penetrate the direct reality and get inside it. Among the great library of Hindi, there are only a few writers like Agyeya and Nirmal Verma who have considered deeply and extensively the contradictions between the culture of India and the West, based on their direct experience. In his works, he very easily mentions events related to the daily life of people. His language was intuitive and along with Hindi**,** he was also very knowledgeable about English**.**

Nirmal Verma was born on April 3, 1929, to an educated family in Shimla**.** His father was working in the Civil and Services Department of the British Government of India. He was the seventh child of eight siblings. Nirmal Verma was introduced to the field of literature by his mother and sister, who helped him to become an avid reader. At that time his greatest interest was in European literature. He has done M.A. in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi**.** Between 1959 and 1972, he had the opportunity to migrate to Europe**.** He stayed in Prague for 10 years, where he was invited by the Institute of Oriental Science to initiate a program of translation of modern Czech writers like Karel Capek, Milan Kundera, and Bohumil Harbal, to Hindi; he also learned the Czech language, and translated nine world classics to Hindi, before returning home, as the result of Prague Spring. He returned to India in 1968 after living in Prague for nearly ten years. His story 'Maya Darpan' was written in 1973 and won the Best Hindi Film Award.

Nirmal started teaching after completing his master's degree in Delhi, but his love for literature kept him writing for various literary magazines. His first short story was published in a student magazine in the early 1950s, which gained him some recognition. Then in 1959, he published his first collection of stories, "Parinde", which is considered to be the first signature of the "Nai Kahani" (New Story) movement in Hindi literature.

The unique and glorious route that Nirmal Verma visited was his first step. He was an activist from a very young age and a cardholder in the Communist Party of India. However, he resigned after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Nirmal Verma visited the whole of Europe during his ten years in Prague**.** It was a passion for learning and writing about the sociocultural situation in European countries, which started their travel needs.

During his stay in Prague, he travelled widely across Europe, and the result was seven travelogues, including *Cheeron Par Chandni* (1962), *Har Barish Mein* (1970) and *Dhund Se Uthti Dhun* and his first novel, based on his student days in Prague, titled, *Ve Din* (Those Days) (1964).

Nirmal Verma's writings after his return from Prague reflected his views on Indian traditions**,** which were modern. His active nature strengthened him against the emergency called by Indira Gandhi in 1975-1977 and also made him an advocate of the Tibetan independence movement. His subsequent writing reflected his concerted relooking of Indian traditions, which he found to be innately modern,

compared with extremely modernity reflected in the Western viewpoints and cultural milieu, which were being imposed on Indian ethos, all around, so much so that later his views were confused as Pro-Hindutva as well. A critical analysis of Verma's work was presented by Ram Prakash Dwivedi. His works also take full note of the emergence of the 'new' independent woman, which created sort of a revolution in the network of human relationships.

Nirmal Verma also served as chairman of the "Nirala" creative writing chair at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal from 1980-83. He was also the director of the Yashpal Creative Writing Chair in Shimla from 1988-90. But Verma's fiction is marked to an unmatched extent by his years in Europe. As Snell writes, "Verma shakes himself free of the culture-bound contexts of much contemporary Indian fiction and writes in a style accessible to a wider readership"—"wider" meaning, here, one beyond India. At a time when writers were often expected to have firm political commitments, many of Verma's contemporaries lamented his choice of subjects while admiring his talent. As Vaid wrote in an obituary—in the form of a letter—for Verma, published in Outlook magazine in 2005, "During those years you were often berated by your detractors for your 'foreignness' or 'un-Indianness' but even your adversaries conceded to you your artistic and intellectual rigour." He was among the select individuals who practiced literature and art and lived with his values all his life.

14.4 "BIRDS"

"Birds" by Nirmal Verma is a contemplative short story that explores the theme of existential angst and the profound search for meaning in an individual's life. The narrative unfolds through the perspective of an unnamed protagonist, who grapples with a sense of alienation and inner turmoil, prompting him to embark on a journey in search of solace and understanding. The story uses the symbol of a bird to represent the complexities of human life and the desire for freedom. It is written in a sensitive and deep style that takes the reader on an emotional journey. The story explores the themes of loneliness, mental conflicts, and the complexities of human relationships.

The story commences with the protagonist feeling disconnected from his surroundings, a sentiment that propels him to venture beyond his familiar environment. As he travels through different landscapes, both physical and metaphorical, he encounters a variety of characters and situations that serve as reflections of the complexities inherent in the human experience.

Central to the narrative is the motif of birds, symbolizing freedom, escape, and the yearning to transcend earthly limitations. This recurring theme intertwines with the protagonist's journey, adding layers of symbolism to the story. Throughout his travels, the protagonist engages with various characters, each representing different aspects of the human condition. These interactions become mirrors reflecting his own fears, struggles, and aspirations.

The title, "Birds", is symbolic of the flux of life. The awareness of this flux is central to Nirmal Verma's thinking. It has been woven into the fabric of the story from the beginning to end. A strong to and fro, back and forth motion is the dominant image formed from the very outset of the story. Latika is shown going to the girls' room. A ray of light flows from the half open door of Julie's room that she passes on her way. Sane words of advice from Dr. Mukherjee gives her the sense of stability she is ever in search of. And the image of birds' orderly motion across the sky is evoked by this pause coming to her. The full choreography of the birds' motion is, thus, reflected in the swings and transitions of Latika's moods. Latika has identified herself very closely and intently with the birds. This gives their flight a psychic quality and tension similar to her own. The main feature of this tension of hers is extreme insecurity. The ground under her feet seems shifting, never still.

The girls in the hostel are a giggly lot. They are quietly breaking the rules by holding a singing session after lights-out. They invite Latika to join them in their musical evening. 'Am I a killjoy', she wonders, as she evades the invitation from the girls. To assure herself that she is not a killjoy, she asks the girls, wouldn't any of them stay back during the holidays and join her in seeing the snow? When Julie is confronted by the letter to her from her boyfriend in the army, she reacts in the typical feminine way of simply sinking into silence. As the warden of the hostel Latika has to examine and pass all letters coming to or going from the girls. But a love letter – and, one from an officer of the same regiment to which Girish Negi belonged. The letter is a cruel reminder and mocking evidence of the things that she has lost forever, and which the girl wants to have. Her act of restoration is the climax of the story. Walking back to her room, dizzy with new line of thinking that has come up in her, she slips the letter under Julie's pillow as she lies sleeping. On the last day before winter vacation the girls go to the chapel. In the chapel, during the service, the girls are frankly bored. They push their chairs back noisily.

The idea of impermanence that has been worked into the fabric of the story. All the three major characters- Latika, Mukherjee and Hubert- are uprooted people. Mukherjee is a refugee from Burma. Latika seems to have been washed up to the town after some happenings in Delhi she vaguely hints. And Hubert seems to be a man of no nationality. He can be called non-Indian, even non-Asian, but nothing more specific than that. Latika also is uprooted. The idea of temporariness of things and the sense of dread can foster in the mind of characters. They have to live with it, cope with it, like learning the art of navigating a particular twist in a current of water. Mukherjee is the only one who has mastered this art and has developed from it a system of thought, a technique of living. 'Flow with the current', he tells Latika in various ways, time and again, 'Ride the current, go where it takes you. Don't look back'. Hubert, on the other hand, thinks that by heeding and acknowledging the natural emotions and intensities of the mind the dread can be foiled. The love of man and woman is one such emotion that can falsify the dread. Latika, of course, is not in the state of mind to go along with this. Hubert asks Latika to return to him the letter he'd written to her without knowing about her bereavement. 'Please consider it unwritten', he says in a hushed tone. But later he collapses under the weight of his own emotional pressures, and breaks out into drunken singing.

14.4.1 Themes

Existential Exploration : At the narrative's core lies a profound theme of existential exploration. The protagonist, nameless yet deeply introspective, embarks on a journey that transcends physical landscapes, delving into the metaphysical realm. This thematic element captures the universal human endeavour to grapple with questions of existence, purpose, and the relentless pursuit of meaning amidst the inherent uncertainties of life.

Symbolism of Birds : The motif of birds serves as a potent symbol throughout the narrative, embodying themes of freedom, escape, and the innate human yearning to transcend earthly limitations. The recurring presence of birds adds layers of symbolic meaning to the story, encouraging readers to interpret and internalize the symbolism within the context of the protagonist's journey and the broader human experience.

Philosophical Reflections on Life and Death : Birds engages in profound philosophical reflections on life and death. Through the protagonist's encounters and revelations, the narrative prompts contemplation on the transient nature of life, the inevitability of death, and the profound existential questions that accompany the human journey.

Introspection and Self-Discovery : The story unfolds as a transformative journey of introspection and self-discovery. Through encounters with diverse characters and a spectrum of experiences, the

protagonist undergoes a profound process of self-reflection. This theme underscores the transformative potential inherent in introspection and the ongoing quest for self-understanding.

Transcendence and Liberation : A recurring theme is the quest for transcendence and liberation from existential constraints. The protagonist's journey, encompassing both physical and metaphysical realms, reflects a deep yearning for freedom from the mundane and a search for a higher understanding of self and life.

Uncertainty and Resignation : The narrative weaves a thematic thread of uncertainty, acknowledging life's inherent unpredictability. The protagonist's journey and subsequent return to familiar surroundings evoke a sense of resignation, highlighting the acceptance of enduring mysteries and the acknowledgment of the unpredictable nature woven into the fabric of the human experience.

14.4.2 Critical Analysis

"Birds" by Nirmal Verma unfurls as a poignant short story exploring the deep issue of existential inquiry and the enduring search for meaning. This pensive story invites readers to join the anonymous protagonist on an introspective journey as they struggle with a deep sense of alienation and inner conflict. The protagonist's realization that he is no longer a part of his environment at the beginning of the story sends him on a spiritual and physical quest for comfort and insight.

As the journey unfolds, "Birds" delves into philosophical reflections on life, death, and the perpetual quest for meaning. The narrative captures the protagonist's internal struggles, moments of epiphany, and the evolving nature of his existential crisis. Nirmal Verma employs vivid imagery and symbolism to convey the profound exploration of identity and purpose.

The story's climax arrives as the protagonist confronts a decisive moment, leading to a realization about the impermanence of life and the inevitability of death. This revelation serves as a pivotal turning point, prompting introspection and acceptance of the uncertainties inherent in human existence.

In the resolution, the protagonist returns to his familiar surroundings, carrying the weight of his experiences and a newfound understanding of life's transience. The story concludes with a sense of resignation, leaving readers with a lingering awareness of the enduring mysteries that persist despite the protagonist's journey.

In "Birds", Nirmal Verma crafts a narrative that invites readers to reflect on the complexities of the human psyche and the universal quest for meaning. Through its symbolic elements and philosophical undertones, the story resonates, encouraging contemplation on personal journeys and the inherent mysteries that accompany the human experience.

14.4.3 Characters

"Nirmal Verma had a wonderful understanding of the civilisational roots of the country and was the modern voice of the genius of India. The characters of Nirmal's novels are disturbed people who are in search of identity and are victims of an inner unrest," Sahitya Akademi president Dr. Gopichand Narang has said.

Verma was essentially a cosmopolitan writer. His story, "Birds" ("Parinde"), 1959, called the first notable example of Nayi Kahani (New Story) by renowned Hindi critic, Namvar Singh, ushers in a cosmopolitan sensibility in Hindi literature. 'Parinde's' Mr. Hubert addresses its protagonist Latika in Elizabethan English, while 'Picture Postcard,' another short story, Gill points out, is set in "strictly Anglophone set-ups". Characters greet each other "with posh affection : 'How do you do?'

Latika is the central figure in story "Birds". It is the story of Latika. It is the story of the restoration of her broken personality. And to tell it Nirmal Verma utilizes the axiom that the human personality- broken or whole- needs the head and the heart both to stay balanced and in working order. The question thus is, who and where are the head and heart of the story. Hubert emerges as the heart and Mukherjee the head. Mukherjee is the crisis manager, the man level headed and in control of his faculties in the foreboding atmosphere that prevails in the small hill town.

For her, the past is made of images trapped in the deep freeze of the mind. They flash past her eyes during her spells of heightened awareness. Limp and drained of will during these bouts, she watches entranced these re-enactments of scenes from her brief spell of romance and courtship. She is a totally disoriented woman during these spells. She watches herself as though it is not herself. It is a state in which she is neither detached from herself, nor attached in the normal sense of the word. One could call it a sleepwalking state. It is distinct way of reacting to memory and experience. It is a typically feminine way, a woman's way. Its main feature is silence. Speech lies submerged somewhere in the depths of this silence. A hush stays round Latika always. When people ask her about going in vacations, she says, "Nothing' s decided yet. I love the snow." The sentence seems unrelated to the actual context in which she says it. The sheer intensity of this and other flashbacks that she is subject to makes her a psycho-physical being, speaking an inner language of muscular tensions, and an outer language of tongue and voice. Latika is sophisticated and highly individualized. Her grief is personal grief. Its roots lie more in existential tensions than in social demands.

Hubert is the life affirming character that pulls Latika out of her stand-still state, sets her in motion. Of course, Dr. Mukherjee too plays a role in unfreezing Latika. But he is more a father figure to her. His words of advice stir her cerebrally, on the level of reason.

14.4.4 Setting, Locale and Affirmation of Life

The physical features of the setting and locale have been fashioned by the author in such a way as to reflect the somber mood of Latika and the two men. Never does nature break into violent states, threatening life and human habitation. The tress particularly, have been portrayed as a discreet, yet emotionally sympathetic and solace giving presences, like benevolent spirits of nature. The streams too never burst their banks and roar in anger. This low key, intuitive action of the ecological presence in the story underscores and further contributes to its feminine feel and physic. The rays of light from either the sun, candles or torchlight is always filtered, either through the foliage of the trees, or soft and swaying due to the motion of the wind. It is never strident or glaring or direct.

Music comes in as another supportive element in the projection of mood in the story. It too is always on a soft, soothing, descending and fading note, like the murmur of the trees or the gurgling of the stream. The music has had a deep effect on Latika. Scenes of her first meeting with Girish Negi are swarming in her eyes. This drowsy sinking into the past and the soft cascade of the music, connect in Latika's mind with the birds that she sees these days through her window, winging down from the mountains and headed for distant lands. Like the notes of the music, and the birds winging away to unknown lands, she too is poised on the edge between the present and a blurred uncertain outline of the future.

The marked feature of "Birds" is the staunch affirmation of life against the forces of the anti-life it makes. The memory of Girish Negi, the man Latika had loved and would have married, getting faint in her mind. It can be totally gone some day. And the prospect frightens her. Her memories have become too necessary for her survival. If they go, how would she survive? Caught between the two fears Latika sways from her dominant mood of withdrawal to fits of wild outpourings of speech.

14.5 SUMMING UP

"Birds" by Nirmal Verma concludes with a deep sense of resignation, allowing readers to reflect on the eternal mysteries of the human condition. After setting out on a voyage of existential discovery, the anonymous protagonist of the story comes across a number of significant and life-changing events. The protagonist's reflective journey unites the overriding themes of alienation, inner struggle, and the search for purpose. The story is made more complex by the symbolism of birds, which stand for freedom and the yearning to transcend physical bounds. There is a tangible recognition of life's uncertainties as the protagonist returns to familiar surroundings, leading to a resigned acceptance of the deep mysteries that endure despite the voyage.

14.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the life and works of Nirmal Verma.
2. Write a brief introduction about Hindi short story.
3. Discuss the major theme of "Birds".
4. What are the other themes presented in the story "Birds"?
5. Critically evaluate the story "Birds".
6. Draw a character sketch of Latika.
7. Write about the psychological development of the story "Birds".
8. Write a brief note on the male characters of "Birds".
9. What is the significance of birds in this story?
10. What is the significance of the title "Birds"?
11. How does the motif of birds contribute to the story's symbolism?
12. What is the emotional struggle faced by the protagonist in "Birds"?

14.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Verma, Nirmal. *Parinde*. Rajkamal Prakashan, 2024.
- _____. *The Hill Station and Other Stories.* Writers Workshop, 1973.
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UNIT-15 HARIBHAJAN SINGH : *TREE AND THE SAGE* (*RUKH TE RISHI* : PUNJABI)

Structure

15.0 Objectives

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Haribhajan Singh

15.3 Haribhajan Singh and Modern Punjabi Poetry

15.4 *Tree and the Sage*

15.4.1 Notes

15.4.2 Interpretation

15.4.3 Poetic Devices

15.4.4 Form

15.5 Summing Up

15.6 Questions

15.7 Suggested Readings

15.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit on Haribhajan Singh, you will read one of his best- known poems, *Tree and the Sage*. The significance of this poem in terms of the creation of a new poetic value is distinct not only in the development of the Punjabi poetry but also that of the Indian poetry as well.

At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

- discuss Haribhajan Singh and Punjabi Poetry in detail
- understand the poem *Tree and the Sage*
- appreciate the poetic techniques used by Haribhajan Singh in this poem.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 15 we shall discuss about *Tree and the Sage* a poem by the popular Punjabi poet Haribhajan Singh. Harbhajan Singh, a distinguished figure in Punjabi literature for the last five decades was born on 18th August, 1920 in Lamding (Assam). Persistently, that forest away from home constituted the unconscious of his images, metaphors and symbols and the memories of the forest continued to lyrically haunt his poetic language.

You should read the poem. And then read it again with the help of the Interpretation given in 15.4.2. After you have followed the Interpretation read the note on Poetic Devices in 6.4.4. After you have read and understood the poem and critical comments, write down the answers to the exercises. Your answers should be checked by the suggested points of the units given at the end of the unit.

15.2 HARIBHAJAN SINGH : LIFE SKETCH

Harbhajan Singh (18 August 1920 – 21 October 2002) was a Punjabi poet, critic, cultural commentator, and translator. Along with Amrita Pritam, Harbhajan is credited with revolutionising

the Punjabi poetry writing style. He published 17 collections of poems, including Registan Vich Lakarhara, 19 works of literary history and translated 14 pieces of literature of others including those of Aristotle, Sophocles, Rabindranath Tagore and selections from the Rig Veda.

Harbhajan Singh published his first collection of poems *Lassan* (*The Marks of Violence on the Body*) in 1956 and with this very first poetic work brought him recognition as one of the major Punjabi poets after the Progressive movement, which had been dominated by Mohan Singh for a long time. Harbhajan Singh in This collection of poems was marked by two different modes of poetry : the lyrical mode and the free verse. His lyrics departed majorly both in style and structure from the traditional romantic and the folk lyrics. The poems also created a new poetic diction. The romantic idealism and the heroic view of man, which had marked the Progressive Punjabi poetry had receded. A line of break was created between the Modernist and Progressive modes. The Naxal and the Progressive Punjabi poets and critics opposed this new kind of poetic structure. An atmosphere of tension created Harbhajan Singh's independent existence and it was not long before that in his critical works he began to expound his poetics which was inspired by the formalist-structuralist semiotics and the developments in aesthetics.

His poetry with a distinct modernist idiom dominated the Punjabi literary scene after his Sahitya Akademi Award winning *Na Dhuppe Na Chhaven* (*Neither in the Sun Nor in the Shade*) made its mark in 1967. He rejected all manners of idealism that the Progressive movement professed and advocated. Even the idea of realism was transformed. Anti-heroic, existential persona, with a self-reflexive language, became the epicentre of his poetic expression. A new mode of poetic vitality thus emerged. This was in a way similar to something that had happened within the Anglo-American poetry with the appearance of T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* and the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. It was in continuity with the same poetic sensibility that his *Sarak De Safe Ute* (On the Page of the Street) made its mark in 1970. But now he also began to incorporate a re-interpretation of the mythological Sikh *Janamsakhis* (*Tales of Birth*) within the contemporary context.

We can see Harbhajan Singh's poetic genius at work in his long poems. In 1982, he published *Maththa Deeve Wala* (*The Forehead with the Lamp*) which was a distinctive experiment. Several voices appear side by side within this interior monologue. Several questions emerge simultaneously in progression. A line of thin narration and characters are indeed felt as a presence but we cannot distinguish between this design and the cognitive structure of the long poem.

The peak of the influence of Harbhajan Singhs criticism was up to 1990. The Delhi School of Criticism was associated with his critical paradigm. Post-structuralism, Semiotics, Neo-Marxian thought and Post- Modernism exposed the limitations of the Formalist-Structural literary theory. But we cannot deny the fact that Harbhajan Singh's contribution towards Punjabi criticism is very significant. He changed the critical path. Textual studies gained momentum. The next generation took inspiration from his critical idiom and contemporary Punjabi criticism has become more aware of the developments in literary theory and consciousness.

15.3 HARIBHAJAN SINGH AND MODERN PUNJABI POETRY

Modern period of Punjabi poetry began after 1950 and first fifty years were the transitional years, where modern idiom of Punjabi poetry was emerging. Many social, political and religious movements influenced the modern Punjabi poetry. Bhai Vir Singh came into prominence because of Singh Sabha movement. His religious and metaphysical poetry influenced other poets. Prof. Puran Singh was another major poet of the third decade of twentieth century. Deewan Singh 'Kalepani' opposed the rising fascism and imperialism. Dhani Ram Chatrik's writing was different because he wrote about the folk culture of Punjab.

The Progressive Movement came in the whole of Indian Literature in 1936. There were many reasons of this, the major being the fighting spirit of Indians against the British. The important poets were Prof. Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam. After independence the earlier poets continued writing but the themes being changed. Now the major theme became the partition of India and Pakistan. Some writers were Piara Singh Sehrai, Santokh Singh Dhir and Bawa Balwant.

The poems also created a new poetic diction. The romantic idealism and the heroic view of man, which had marked the Progressive Punjabi poetry had receded. A line of break was created between the Modernist and Progressive modes. The Naxal and the Progressive Punjabi poets and critics opposed this new kind of poetic structure. An atmosphere of tension created Harbhajan Singh's independent existence and it was not long before that in his critical works he began to expound his poetics which was inspired by the formalist-structuralist semiotics and the developments in aesthetics.

Harbhajan Singh published his long dramatic poem *Tar-Tupka* (*The Drop on the Wire*) in 1957. It was described as a poetic-drama by some critics. Even the progressive critics accepted this work because this long dramatic poem criticised the dangerous race of nuclear armament and lamented how the tension is killing all that is beautiful in life, and the inner compassion of man, and how man is being led into malice and a mechanical and cynical view of life where only the hatred prevails and how the futuristic visions are being smothered to death as a result. Imperialism and the hegemonic designs of the big powers are held responsible for the creation of this dehumanised and morbid atmosphere. The poetic genius of Harbhajan Singh made this long, dramatic poem into a uniquely powerful creation.

Harbhajan Singh established his lyrical excellence in *Adhraini* (*The High Night*) in 1962. For some time, under the influence of Modernism he had opposed lyricism but he continued to return to the lure of the lyrical. He wrote *Alph Dopehar* (*The High Noon*) (1972), poems on the Bangladesh pogrom, war and its liberation. He wrote these poems in an ironic mode of tragic despair but with an underlying lyrical consciousness. He returned yet again to the lyrical mode in *Tukian Jeebhan Wale* (*Men with Cleft-tongues* - 1977), poems on the Emergency, that enlivened the epoch of despair with the poetic mode of cutting irony. In 1989 he published two poetry collections, *Mawan Dheean* (*Mothers and Daughters*) and *Niksuk* (*Knick-knack*) and in 1984, *Alvidha Ton Pehlan* (Before the Final Parting), lyrical works all.

Harbhajan Singh long journey continues in his long poem *Registan Vich Lakarhara* (The Woodcutter in the Desert, 2000). Once again, this is a symbolic poem. The desert is Harbhajan Singh's symbolic wasteland of which he himself is the woodcutter who wants to preserve the trees, nature and the essential hope of humankind. Like Kabir and other saint-poets, the experience here is essentially mystic.

Harbhajan Singh's critical abilities came into evidence when he translated Aristotle's *Poetics* (Arastu Da Kavv Shastar, 1961) into Punjabi. In 1970, he translated Longinus *On the Sublime* (Longinus Da Udatt Siddhaant). He was already equipped with the Indian poetics which he now combined with the knowledge of the Greco-Roman classical traditions. This cognitive consciousness helped him to initiate a debate on literary aesthetics in a different way. Later, he was also influenced by Croce's concept of aesthetics.

When he published his first major critical work *Adhyan Te Adhyapan* (1970), it was a significant break in the history of Punjabi criticism, because till that time Marxian critical theory was dominating the scene of Punjabi literary studies. Harbhan Singh's combination of Indian and western poetics created a new kind of critical idiom and methodology of literary analysis. In the same vein, he came out with his second book of critical essays *Mul Te Mulankan* (1970).

He praised Ustad Reham Din, Lala Suraj Bhan, Dr Mohan Singh Diwana, and Dr Nagendra as his most preferred teachers throughout his education. The poets he most admired and rated highest were Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Arjan Dev, Shah Hussain, Waris Shah, Bulle Shah, Mir Taqi Mir, Lorca, Rabindranath Tagore, Noon Meem Rashid, and Puran Singh.

15.4 (TEXT) TREE AND THE SAGE

1

TREE AND THE SAGE (Punjabi) (Canto I Section 1-4)

I am a tree walking about within my house

I sleep and awaken too

I feel my own fragrance as well

Fruits also have I born

Though oblivious of their names am I

Illusion has it always been

That it is a very precious fruit

And the illusion is not yet shattered.

Like the tree have I strayed outdoors too

Yes, the people have freely sheltered in my shade

The immature stoned me at will

The lovers carved their signatures

Into the bark of my frame

Others used me as a cover

To meet their mundane needs.

The seasons have swept past me

Rains showered to give me bath

Winds played with my locks

Leaves too were torn apart

At times water oozed in saline drip

From my wounded shoots

I regret no seasons

Because over and over again

Have I resurged

Never did I know

When the fall hit me

And when I regained the green

Anew, afresh.

And now with my spring bloom
I wish to go somewhere else
“It has been too long a stay here
Now is the time to move on”

2

I am no *Kalpa brichh*
Though some wishes I did grant
I offered shade to the sun-shrivelled
The evergreen fruits have I been bearing
Whoever had the nerve
Picked them and went away.
The fragrance of those who drifted
Has been reaching me
Never have I called back the departed
His fragrance lingers still
His frame continued trickling.
Never did I need to dote
The world has no dearth of the sun- shrivelled
The fruit pickers made daily trips
He who earns his bread from the depths soil
Never knows want.
The soil may parch into fissures
But the rivers swell and swing within
The mother’s treasures never shrink
The sun and I would awaken together
The sparrows chirping within my head
The wisdom of sages from far and near
Reached me through their beaks.
The pages of scriptures fluttering in the air
Would perch on my leaves
The songs of the sparrows
Weaving into my tresses
Became my way of life.

3

The tree am I in the cycle of lives

Rooted in the earth but free from bondage

It is neither a miracle

Nor an achievement divine

Nor even a calculating benevolence.

Fruits make me bow

And then I carve to be

Sweet

And linger on a palate.

When a bird's beak

Pecks at my fruit

I feel a pleasant little itching

With a joy akin to the mother sucking her child

The language of fruits and flowers has been mine

The fragrance filtering through my tender shoots

Is my utterance.

The shade spreads quietly in the courtyard

Some sun-scorched fellow walks in for rest

That is my joy

Picking gently at the sun-prickles

From his body

Is my natural task.

4

Most beauteous in the world is thirst

Precious, indeed very precious

The blazing heat of high summer

Inducing thirst

Sharp like the edge of a sword

Prickles in the body

The crimson of deep desire

Flushing the forehead

The desire for shade of some distant tree

The vision breeds fascinating dreams

Of streams, waterfalls, and cascades

And awakens the thrill of descending undaunted

Without the rope and the chain

Into deep, very deep wells

Learning effortlessly

To pour down like monsoons.

Those alone are the real wells

Which are free yet

Of the pulley and bucket

The waters that sustain

Are the ones

Whose single sip

Even at the risk of losing life

Feels dear like a kindred soul.

Thirst is to plunge headlong

Without learning to swim

Without a barge and a pole

Into the roaring whirlpools

15.4.1 NOTES

Oblivious : not aware of what is happening around one.

Mundane needs : needs of this earthly world

Saline : impregnated with salt

Kalpa Birchh : a wish tree in paradise.

Dearth : scarcity

Tresses : a long lock of hair

Benevolence : well- meaning and kindly

15.4.2 Interpretation

In 1992, Harbhajan Singh published his famous long poem *Rukh Te Rishi* (*The Tree and the Sage*) which was honoured with the Saraswati Samman. *Rukh Te Rishi* is a long narrative poem, mainly philosophical and based on his experience. The structure of the poem is different from that of the other long poems in Punjabi. The narrative treatment is neither traditional nor linear. Though autobiographical details abound, they do not exist in a concrete way. The style is abstract with some signifiers and symbols constructing a paradigm. We discover layers of the unconscious. We cannot fully grasp the depths of this poem without a philosophical perspective and consciousness. This poem creates a post-modern text and in this way transcends his own previous modern texts.

In this meditative poem, the poet creates three signs : the *rukh* (the tree), man and the *rishi* (the sage, hermit or mendicant). The **t**ree (*rukh*) becomes the signifier of eternal nature. The sage (*rishi*) becomes the signifier of Truth. Man is passing through his existential agonies in search of this truth, a transcendental existence. Between the *rukh* and the *rishi*, man recovers a sense of his destiny and the relation between Nature and Culture.

The poet imagines himself to be a tree in his own home. He is receptive to its fragrance and fruit, even if he does not know any of its fruit by name. When he steps out of his own self, he moves like a tree and people sit without inhibition under its shade. Children throw stones, lovers engrave their names with knives on its bark. The tree has seen many seasons, but it does not regret any season. Even the leaves fall in autumn but it again gets it back in rainy season. This is the beauty of nature 'anew and afresh.'

The poet is equally aware of not being a *Kalp Birkh* (the desire-fulfilling tree), though he has helped fulfil some desires. The tree and the sun rise together. The birds bring with them the voices of the *rishis* (the sages). The tree speaks in the voice of flowers and fruit. The tree symbolizes various elements, including life growth and the passage of time. It serves as a metaphor for resilience, having weathered storms and seasons. The imagery of the tree, with its leaves that change colour and fall, highlights the inevitability of change and the cycles of life. This theme resonates with the sage's quest for understanding, suggesting that true wisdom encompasses acceptance of life's transience. The tree is rooted in the earth but free from bondage. This shows the connection between tradition and modernity.

He is such a tree which is free from bondage. This way is not calculating. As fruits become sweet and free, bow towards earth. He feels such a benevolence. When somebody tries to snatch the fruit, he feels as though some bird has pecked at the fruit or as a mother feels when her child suckles. He feels joy, he gives shade to the sun-scorched people. Again, the Tree becomes a signifier of the self or the speaking subject.

The poet celebrates the thirst or the desire, because of Desire or Thirst, the vision of streams, waterfalls, cascades and deep wells is possible. This thirst or desire makes the soul go beyond the roaring whirlpools. The style, the philosophic layers of this poem open wings through this kind of metaphoric language and aesthetic thematic expansion.

15.4.3 Poetic Device

Dr. J. S. Rahi has said about this poem : *Tree and the Sage* is a narrative woven round varied experiences of psychological and behavioral complexities. The experiences are episodic in nature, but fused into a cohesive whole by rhythm and intensity of meaning. The descriptive range of the

experience is extensive but dense. The use of allusions for creating symbolic structures is profound and encompassing." (Preface, *Tree and the Sage* 3)

The imagery in the poem is evocative and lush, painting a vivid picture of the natural world. The tree is often described in detail, with reference to its bark, leaves and branches. This sensory language not only brings the tree to life but also serves to enhance its symbolic significance. Each detail contributes to the overall theme of nature as a teacher and a repository of wisdom.

The tone of the poem is contemplative and serene, inviting readers to pause and reflect on the messages conveyed. The mood shifts subtly as the sage grapples with his thoughts and emotions, mirroring the internal struggles of many individuals in their pursuit of wisdom. This contemplative atmosphere encourages readers to engage with their own experiences and reflect on their relationship with nature.

While the overall tone is peaceful, there are moments of tension that arise from the sage's existential questions. These moments of conflict reflect the human condition- an ongoing struggle between the search for meaning and the acceptance of life's uncertainties. The poem navigates this duality gracefully, offering a nuanced portrayal of the complexities of existence.

15.4.4 Form

This long poem has six Cantos, one Aadika and Antika. The opening lines create the stylistic atmosphere and the desire which has created thematic motifs of this poem. Aesthetic expansion is distinctive in Haribhajan Singh's poetry : it creates a lyrical style. His depths are philosophic, but lyrical and his metaphors are original. Thoughts are dominant and the poet is making focus on swing of the ideas. Many opposite words are used together to highlight the change of moods. With the passing seasons the poet focuses on the fast moving time.

15.5 SUMMING UP

Tree and the sage by Haribahajan Singh, is a rich and multi-layered poem that invites readers to explore profound themes of wisdom, the search for knowledge and the interconnectedness of life. Through its vivid imagery and contemplative tone, the poem captures the essence of the human experience, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the natural world and the lessons it imparts. Ultimately, it serves as a reminder that wisdom can be found in the most unexpected places, urging us to listen to the silent teachings of nature and to reflect on our own journeys.

15.6 QUESTIONS

1. What kind of poet was Haribhajan Singh? Discuss his poetic growth.
2. Discuss the thematic and poetic style of the poem *Tree and the Sage.*
3. Discuss the symbols of *Tree and the Sage*.
4. Discuss the metaphors used in this poem.
5. Give the interpretation of 'Kalpa Birchh'.
6. Who is the speaker in *Tree and the Sage?* To whom is he speaking?
7. Write a brief note on imagery in *Tree and the Sage*.
8. Discuss about the philosophical note in the poem.

9. Write about the use of nature in the poem.

10. Comment on the title of the poem.

15.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT-16 RAGHUVIR SAHAY : "THE STARE" ("TAKTAKI" : HINDI)

Structure

16.0 Objectives

16.1 Introduction

16.2 Raghuvir Sahay

16.3 Raghuvir Sahay and Modern Hindi Poetry

16.4 (Text) "The Stare"

16.4.1 Notes

16.4.2 Interpretation

16.4.3 Poetic Devices

16.4.4 Form

16.5 Summing Up

16.6 Questions

16.7 Suggested Readings

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit on Raghuvir Sahay and his poem "The Stare", you will read one of his best-known poems, "The Stare". The poet has not only philosophized death but has created multi-semantic layers of meanings.

At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

- discuss Raghuvir Sahay and Hindi Poetry in detail.
- understand the poem "The Stare".
- appreciate the modern poetic techniques used by Raghuvir Sahay in this poem

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 16 we shall study about the famous modern Hindi poet Raghuvir Sahay and one of his well-known poems "The Stare". Raghuvir Sahay was born in 1929 in Lucknow. He did his M.A. in English literature and was among the most important figures on the contemporary literary scene in India. He was part of the idealistic generation that grew up fired by the Independence movement in India, and watched it unfold and later also watched those dreams of millions falling to pieces as many ills threatened the integrity and unity of the nation. His writings are an expression of wide concerns. Sahay belongs to a tradition of literature that looks forward rather than to the past for inspiration, for whom the golden age would come when the aspirations of all the millions of people.

You should read the poem. And then read it again with the help of the interpretation given in 16.4.2. After you have followed the Interpretation read the note on Poetic Devices in 16.4.4. After you have read and understood the poem and critical comments, write down the answers to the exercises. Your answers should be checked by the suggested points of the units given at the end of the unit.

16.2 RAGHUVIR SAHAY

Raghuvir Sahay was not only a famous poet of his time and age but also a notable journalist, short story writer, editor, translator and social commentator whose works and achievements capture his quintessential spirit and commitment to living life to its fullest. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in the year 1984 for his Hindi poetry collection, *Log Bhool Gaye Hain* (*People Have Forgotten* - 1982). His other noted works are *Atmahatya Ke Viruddh*, *Hanso Hanso Jaldi Hanso* and *Seedhiyon Par Dhoop Mein*. He was also the chief editor of the prominent weekly Hindi newsletter *Dinman*.

Born in 1929, Raghuvir Sahay grew up during the period when India was struggling to free herself from the reigns of the British Empire. The writers who inspired him in his formative years include Charles Dickens and other prominent Hindi writers like Munshi Premchand etc. His commitment to the society and his desire to bring about a change in the world around him instigated Sahay to pick up the pen as his weapon of choice.

Sahay completed his early education in Lahar and later moved to Gwalior for higher studies. He obtained a master's degree in Hindi literature from the prestigious Gwalior University. His academic pursuits laid the foundation for his literary journey, providing him with a profound understanding of Hindi literature and culture.

Raghuvir Sahay's literary career began in the 1950s when he started writing poems, essays, and literary critiques. He explored various themes in his works, including social issues, human emotions, and the essence of life. His poetry often reflected his deep connection with nature and his observations of human experiences.

Sahay's commitment to reality and his loyalty to the literary world made him choose journalism as his profession. From being the sub-editor in the news division of the All India Radio to being a special correspondent for 'Navabharat' times and finally, as the chief editor of the Hindi newsweekly called 'Dinman' for four decades, he made invaluable contribution to journalism. Believing in ideals and concepts such as 'poetry should be rooted in reality' and 'be fully alert to the social reality' (Dusra Saptak, 1996), his political journalism, literary criticism, philosophical short stories, essays and poems carry a common thread that uncovers the magic of a common man's everyday life. His vast and priceless contribution as a freedom writer, during 1972-90, continues to be appreciated till date.

Compassion and irony are the two words that describe Sahay's poems and their emotional spectrum overwhelms the readers. His verses are short but they encapsulate the oppression and the reality of the common man's world. The 'ugliness' of these hardships is not scented or shown to the reader through rose-tainted glasses, rather the desire to live and the faith in life as a whole, is the basic undercurrent flowing through all his works. His collection named 'Hanso Hanso Jaldi Hanso' (Laugh, Laugh, Laugh, Quickly) is a social mimicry and falls under the genre of satire. We see the progress of Sahay from his lyrical couplets on love and nature to chronicles on pain and sufferings in his later works. A simple everyday vocabulary and straightforward communicative tone are unique to all his poems - they help the common man understand the poet's ideas. The colloquial and easy to understand language is chiselled to a perfection that only expert craftsmen like Raghuvir Sahay could have accomplished.

With over ten books of poetries, essays, short stories, journalistic articles and translational pieces written over a span of less than twenty years by the man, the compliment of an 'epoch making poet' or 'yugantkari kavi' is certainly not a misplaced one. His important works are, Dusra Saptak (Collection of Poems), Siriyon Par Dhoop Mein (On The Sunlit Stairs), Atmahatya ke virudh

(Against Suicide), Kuch Pattiyan Kuch chitthiyan (Some Letters), Ek Samaye Tha (Once Upon A Time), Cycle Rickshaw, Aanewala Khatra (Upcoming Danger), Pool Ka Itihaas (History Of The Bridge), Mujhe Kuch Aur Karna Tha (I Ought To Do Much), Bache Raho (Survive) and Buddhijivi ka Vaktavya (Intellectual's Statement).

Raghuvir Sahay was an active campaigner of the Hindustani language - a Hindi-Urdu synthesis - that preserved the heritage of the country. His 1982 poetry collection Log Bhool Gaye Hain (People Have Forgotten), which won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in the year 1984, focussed on the importance of this language. During 1988-1990, he chaired a committee of the Press Council of India to analyse the role of the press in the context of Mr. Advani's rath yatra - this yatra was one of the first steps that led to the destruction of Babri Masjid and the ensuing anti-Muslim riots.

16.3 MODERN HINDI POETRY

Why are poets like Kabir, Tulsidas, Rahim, Ghalib or Faiz considered to be great? The answer to this question lies in our urge to repeatedly visit and revisit them on account of their relevance to our lives. In different everyday situations, lines from their poetry come to our mind without any effort on our part as they fit those situations so well, shed light on them and illuminate them to make us comprehend them better. At a time when the country is witnessing fundamental changes in its political, economic, social and cultural life and anti-democratic tendencies are bent upon creating a fear psychosis, Raghuvir Sahay is one of the few modern Hindi poets whose poetry continues to resonate in one's mind because of its ability to bring the irony of the situation and the helplessness of the ordinary citizen into sharp relief.

Besides being a front-ranking poet, Raghuvir Sahay was also the editor of news weekly Dinman which, for nearly two decades, remained the most prestigious and respected magazine in Hindi. Sachchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan, known to the literary world as "Agyeya", had conceptualised and launched the magazine in 1965, bringing together talents like Raghuvir Sahay, Manohar Shyam Joshi, Shrikant Verma and Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena on its staff.

Modern poetry in Hindi emerged after 1900, with Mahavirprasad Dwiwedi's promotion of poetry in Khari Boli Hindi (earlier, poetry had mainly been written in Braj Bhasha). There was an early spurt of nationalist poetry, but, partially under the influence of English Romantic poetry (Wordsworth and Shelley), a movement calling itself "Chhayavad" emerged in the 1920s. In Hindi in particular, the "New Poetry" (Nayi Kavita) Movement, is related with a small group of experimental writers adapting the western, free verse style to Hindi.
The New Poetry movement came out of a general flowering of Hindi poetry from the early 20th century, a style of poetry known as Chhayavad (Shadowism). Mahadevi Verma is one of the best-known writers in this style; another notable figure is Harivansh Rai Bachchan.
The Chhayavad poetry sounds a little too pretty ("precious," as they say in Creative Writing class). Though it is difficult to use the Hindi vocabulary and to be able to keep up with the language the Chhayavad poets tend to use. But it is important to know what came after, especially the New Poetry movement. The "New Poetry" style roughly resembles the modernism of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Hilda Doolittle in English literature. The language is stripped down and conversational, rather than lyrical. Some poets, like Kedarnath Singh, focus intently on conveying, with a kind of crystalline minimalism, pure images. Others are somewhat more conventional.

After the Chhayavad movement, the dominant stream in Hindi poetry seemed to split into two in the 1930s, with Progressives in one camp (Pragativad), and Experimentalists in the other (Prayogvad). Progressive Poetry was part of a major movement in Indian literature that began in the 1930s. This movement is usually called the Progressive Writers Movement, and it had major literary

communities in fiction, drama, as well as poetry; it also had offshoots in many different South Asian languages. As the name indicates, this was writing largely motivated by a desire to make a political intervention. A fair amount of the writing was anti-colonial, and much of it was oriented to social and economic reforms within Indian society.

Just after the Progressive trend in poetry began in the 1930s, a much smaller group of Hindi writers initiated a new, experimentalist style. Much of this writing avoided big political themes in favour of more abstract meditations. (Importantly, many of the writers in this movement overlapped with the Progressive Writers, and some were card-carrying political activists (i.e., communists). They simply didn't bring themes from the political world into their writing. Initially the movement was spearheaded by Agyeya (also sometimes spelled Ajneya in English; his real name was Sacchidananda Hirananda Vatsayan), beginning with an anthology called *Tar Saptak*, in 1943.

Many Hindi authors joined the Progressive Writers' Movement during its early stages to explore its potential, but some of them, like Agyeya, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Jainendra, Sumitranandan Pant, dissociated themselves from it very soon because their aesthetic principles and political ideologies were different. Progressivist and Modernist tendencies were increasingly being brought together in fiction, despite some major differences which often led to conflicts about the content and form of literary works.

Together with Mohan Rakesh, Bhisham Sahni, Kamleshwar, Amarkant and others, Raghuvir Sahay was the co-founder of the Nayi Kahani (New short story) Movement in Hindi literature. He pioneered this movement and was thereby responsible for the revival of Hindi literature. In view of the omnipresent influence of politics in human life, Thomas Mann had said that in our time the destiny of man is explained in political relations. Since no meaningful author can be free from human destiny, therefore he cannot be free from politics either. In Hindi literature, there was a debate going on for a long time whether literature should be given priority in life or politics. Premchand did not consider literature to be the truth behind politics, but considered it to be a guiding torch. No literature can be free from its surroundings and in this sense every creation is political. Nemichand Jain, while clarifying the relationship between poetry and politics, says that although the author does not directly create the political world, the world he creates is essentially related to human life, so he cannot be free from politics. According to him, "The poet may not create the political world directly, but the world he creates in poetry, if meaningful, is a world made by the experience of politics and its tools." Raghuvir Sahay also considers healthy politics to be necessary for creative work, but like Premchand, he also does not consider literature as a slave of politics. He believes that to the extent that politics is necessary for social change, literature is also necessary for the mind. Neither one can be called primary and the other secondary.

Raghuvir Sahay is not one of those writers who see literature or art in an autonomous world separated from life. Although, he does not consider the realistic depiction of the contemporary surroundings in literature to be very creative, but he does accept the close relationship between the surroundings and the composition. In Hindi literature, he was very concerned about the abundance of poems shouting revolution and slogans in the name of 'Janwadi Kavita'. He believed that such compositions simplify the crisis of contemporary society and escape from this crisis. But he never accepted the whole world of art himself. Like Muktibodh, Raghuvir Sahay was also an advocate of relative freedom of art. Art, though it has its own authority, cannot exist in this world alone, so it cannot be complete by itself. Reflecting on art and life, Muktibodh has written - 'Art has its own independent field, but this freedom of his is relative to life, only for the development of its life and prosperity, on the author's mood, and by the mood on the knowledge-sensory and sensory cognitive psychology, on the empirical psychology, in which the external world has been transformed. Raghuvir Sahay also believes that meaningful art cannot be seen in isolation from life. The art which

is cut off from life, becomes a mere object of performance, it becomes a medium to maintain the status quo in society. Such art cannot build the society and nation. Medieval poetry is an example of such a declining art, which is cut off from the then society and becomes a mere object of decoration.

16.4 (TEXT) THE STARE

Today's lesson : Common facts about death.
There are several, note!
Death does not come to all of us in the same manner
Nor do the dead become equal in death
For they were not so before.
The body is the residue of struggle
Incorporating in itself one battered eating bowl,
One soiled hair comb and the breakage within
The only element to escape is a cry
Which in essence, is an undetermined internal matter
Still under study.
In the end, we send it for printing.
Not the corpse but the cry-
In the very end it is turned out as a poem in a native language
Meant to be rendered into the world-wide English language.
What were the words on my lips when I died.
You seem to know them better than I.
You wrote : I had said 'Help'
may be I had said 'liberty'
now that I am dead I cannot remember.
When a living literate people pass through
A crisis of their own with the object of giving direction to the crisis,
In a tribe of half-dead illiterates
--you know how jocular the dead can be if they wish-
Yet I spare you the question :
What makes one hundred fat heads hang—
The load of wisdom?
The weight of reverence?
The burden of shame?
No, I would continue to stare
At the one hundred bald pates in silence.
The fixed stare of my dead machinegun.

16.4.1 Notes

Residue : what is left over, remainder

Reverence : religious respect

Pate : head

16.4.2 Interpretation

"The Stare" is a poem by Raghuvir Sahay, a prominent figure in modern Indian literature. The poem challenges the idea of Hindi supremacist's biases. The poet describes the social crisis that are ignored by the people alive. Context- here the dead man is only staring at the bald heads (living people), ex - incidents like torturing women for dowry is not unknown to anyone in this country, people watch the suffering of woman but they still choose to stay silent, this is a satire on how people become today. People nowadays see bad things happening but instead of raising voice they choose to remain silent because apparently, it's not a big deal until the same thing happens to them. The stare is like a dead and silent machine gun which cannot fire- here the poet says that the dead can see all the bad things happening but they certainly can't do anything about it, poet uses the word machine gun as a critique to the dead society. The dead is conscious about the crisis but the living heads are ignorant, bald and dead - as they behave like dead person, symbolic and metaphorical expression of poet. This satirical language makes the poem more ironic, deep, powerful and ideological.

In the first line 'common facts about death' death is the central signifier having multi-meanings. The poet does not philosophise death as it has been presented in Katha Upanishad by Nachiketa. The poet presents the fact that people are different before their death and also after the death. The dead body is remainder after their struggle of life. Poet consciously uses the words 'battered' eating bowl, 'soiled', hair comb, the struggler had a 'breakage' within', only we hear the 'cry' from within, but how this cry escapes, we cannot explain, still this is to be studied and analysed.

While dying what were the last words, it was said 'help'. The dying person may have said liberty. After the death the man is free from all bondage. He is separated from all the miseries which were responsible for his 'cry' when he was alive.

The literate people are passing through their own crisis, they think they are showing a direction to the half-dead illiterate persons, but this situation is very ironical, the dead man of this poem would not ask the question about the hanging heads who have load of wisdom and a religious respect they are silent about the crisis. This is the shameful situation. The dead man is only staring at their bald heads. Note the striking image of the stare of a dead man who can do little else that only stare. This stare is like a dead or silent machinegun, which cannot fire. The symbol of 'machinegun' satirizes the situation of that 'dead' society, unconscious about the crisis. The 'dead' is conscious about the crisis, but the living heads are 'bald' ignorant and 'dead'. This irony and satiric language make this poem powerful and ideological. The poet has not spoken in a direct rhetorical language. He has created 'symbolic language', and this symbolic language has made this poem more impressive.

16.4.3 Poetic Devices

The present poem is the product of modern times. In modern age life became more complex so the traditional techniques were not sufficient to explain this difficult situation. Various symbols have been used to explain the inferences of the poet. 'Cry' of the dead man is used as various metaphors. There is no exact translation of this word as Ernest Hemingway has written in *The Old Man and the Sea* that there is no translation of the word 'Ay'. Perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make,

involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood. ‘Bald heads’ are the symbols of the people who are knowingly silent at such times when they must protest. In this manner they support the wrong things in the society. Today when others are suffering from this problem, they keep quiet, but tomorrow they may be victim they completely forget. He uses the word ‘fat’ for such heads which hang around loaded with wisdom, reverence or shame.

The reality of death has been presented in a philosophic manner. It is not only physical. Many living people are like dead because their conscience is dead. They don’t raise their voices against any atrocity being done with any innocent. These may be literate and educated people. They are selfish.

His work is the story of the pain and defeat of the individual in the present society, where one always dies, another voter. Raghuvir Sahay's literature is an authentic document of the suffering and failure of people living a life 'one status below man' every day. This literature does not create a simplified relationship with our surroundings, but connects with it on a deeper level. In fact, the compositions of Raghuvir Sahay establish meaningful dialogue with their time and society and in this sense, they are meaningful political compositions. He believes that literature like 'politics' does not make propaganda its main objective, its main aim is the struggle for human equality and freedom. Raghuvier Sahay considers the investigation of truth and its constant expression as the main responsibility of the author, whereas the political person neither explores nor reveals the truth until its implications are fulfilled through it. Politics and literature treat the same 'truth' in different ways. Literature tells 'truth' as it sees it, whereas politics makes truth a medium of propaganda.

The entire creation work of Raghuvir Sahay is closely related to his time and society. The main concern of his creation is to depict the way common man has been deprived of rights and rendered helpless through political and cultural repression in independent India. Raghuvir Sahay continues to identify the ever-changing nature of Indian politics and society and makes his creation possible in the midst of these conditions.

Raghuvir Sahay also considers creation as the medium of sophistication of the individual, but he also considers creation as a concept breaking social inertia and status quo. According to him, there is no literature supporting the status quo or regression, it is a crime. ‘He believes that every creative person, whether he is an author or not, should be against inequality and exploitation. Therefore, a writer is compulsorily committed to certain social ideals; otherwise, he cannot be a writer. No one otherwise can write a single poem - such that I am happy to read it. On the contrary, if you believe that the person who wants to remove this inequality, he would be capable in all the types of writing’.

Raghuvir Sahay’s works also try to honestly express the achievements and colossal concerns of the twentieth century, especially in the context of Indian society and culture. The values and beliefs on which the Indian independence movement was fought, after independence, those beliefs have gone marginalized in India. Guarantee of equality and prosperity of every individual, eradication of exploitation and class discrimination, restoration of rights of common people through decentralization of democratic institutions, inclusion of backward social units like women and Dalits in the national mainstream – all these things today dismissed as impractical and idealistic. Democracy, which should have the participation of the people in governance, has now become a mere tool for gaining power. Raghuvir Sahay has been deeply troubled by the character decline of Indian democracy and has discussed various aspects of the democratic system in great detail in his writings. Raghuvir Sahay considers the source of the current crisis of the Indian nation and society in the flawed implementation of the democratic system. The truth of today’s Indian democracy is that the ‘Lok’ is nowhere involved except to vote every five years. Evaluating Indian democracy, Raghuvir Sahay writes – “In the 21st year of the Republic of India, today the debate is going on at

all levels about where we are going. The purpose of the debate is good, but the investigation at all levels remains in a circle because it is being used to throw political mud by putting the responsibility of problems at times on one person and otherwise on someone else and it is obvious that the bet in this game is the same. The hand will remain the one who has power and the one who has either manifest or veiled possession of the means of propaganda. He will never let this debate go to the extent of judgment because he cannot turn a blind eye to the reality of India. The reality of India is that this vast country is dependent on the blessings of the big power groups in the world and 20-25 percent of its citizens are literate and physically strong and they share all the political power among themselves."

16.4.4 Form

This poem was first published in 1972 in Dharmayug with the title Taktaki. Later it was published in 1978 in 'Hanso Hanso Jaldi Hanso' (Laugh, Laugh, Laugh, Quickly) with the title 'Aj Ka Path Hai' (today's Lesson). As this poem was written during the time of Prayogvad and Akavita movement, it was a shift from the traditional forms. Realism was the dominant theme of the time. It is a thought-provoking poem. There so no expectation of lyrical quality and musical element in such a pathetic atmosphere, where the existence of a common man is under question. The poet emphasises the painful survival of human being and the main focus is on the thought. The suitable form for this is the free verse. This is more applicable for the spontaneous expression of powerful feelings. This is the diction of the modern poetry. Many questions have been raised with the notes of interrogation marks in the end of the poem.

16.5 SUMMING UP

Just as Bertolt Brecht's creative consciousness was formed under the inevitability of opposing Nazism and Hitler's rule, Raghuvir Sahay's creative genius was formed in the context of identifying and opposing the anti-human politics of independent India. In this sense his works are closely related to politics. He has repeatedly mentioned in his writings the distorted politics of the country, the suppression of the creativity of the common man through it. Raghuvir Sahay's works are the works fighting for the equality and freedom of man, they are the compositions expressing the desire for social change by breaking the status quo. Raghuvir Sahay's poetry is revered for its profound insights, lyrical beauty, and exploration of universal themes such as human emotions, nature, and society. His works continue to be studied, appreciated, and celebrated by scholars, writers, and readers alike. Sahay's literary contributions have enriched Hindi literature and left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of India. His legacy serves as an inspiration for aspiring writers and poets, ensuring that his influence endures for generations to come.

16.6 QUESTIONS

1. What kind of poet is Raghuvir Sahay?
2. Which aspect of his poetry do you find significant?
3. Write about the theme of the poem "The Stare".
4. Why has the poet titled this poem "The Stare"?
5. Comment on the symbols used in the poem "The Stare".
6. Discuss the themes of the poem "The Stare".
7. What does 'Death' signify in this poem?
8. Write a brief note on the modern Hindi progressive poetry.

9. How can you connect the poem “The Stare” with the modern day politics?

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