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उत्तर प्रदेश राजर्षि टण्डन मुक्त विश्वविद्यालय

MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

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MAEN 10
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Block

1

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This challenging study course meant for the M A English student uses literary writers and works to understand how culture and literature reflect the reality of dominance. It also indicates issues of history and politics, areas that have gradually moved towards centre-stage in the last few decades. As far as we are concerned, literatures, cultures and languages happen in history bearing as they do the pressures of life emanating from clashing interests.

In this course, we shall confront a variety of ideas and principles. Most of them relate to intellectuals and social activists of the nineteenth century India and political visionaries as well as literary geniuses in the twentieth century. The ideas and positions in question took shape in the process of a struggle waged by Indians against what they considered unjust social impositions by a race of white-skinned foreigners. On their part, the British treated Indians as not just backward and uncivilised but humans of a different racial dispensation.

'English in India' is both a specialised course and a course of general interest. It relates well with our view of modern India. In the last two centuries, our society has been witness to a number of momentous changes. It has come a long way from an orthodox, tradition-ridden society to a highly developed and organised one. Its struggle with British imperialism was not merely inspiring and heroic but immensely meaningful. That struggle gave it the sense of being a nation with identity, one that would hold on its own in the face of political-ideological attacks from a cynical, money-oriented world.

The present course is meant to equip you with the knowledge of different strategies adopted by an imperialist power. Deeply prejudiced and self-serving, such a power targets some extremely vital areas of a nation's life. The targeting is particularly crucial in the realm of thought. The language of the colonial master can be an important instrument of moulding minds through distortion in priorities.

This course has been divided into eight blocks. Each block discusses a significant aspect of the phenomenon of English in our country's recent past.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The first block provides to you a historical overview of the happening, telling you of the way in which the expansion of English was closely linked with the historical necessities of a world power. However, the expansion received a great deal of resistance from India. This block also considers a number of arguments put forward by English and Indian thinkers/ planners with regard to the adoption of English in our country before and after Independence, besides raising a number of theoretical issues.

Unit One will examine the area of interaction between history and culture and will view language in the process of evolution from the point it was introduced in India to the time it has become a self- propelling, full-fledged entity.

Unit Two looks at the specific debates in the early nineteenth century on the education of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. There are three tracts that comprise this unit and encapsulate these debates, which will be discussed and their main arguments will be summarised. These debates will also be summarised in a larger historical context so that they do not appear to be products of certain intellectuals who discussed education as a purely academic matter. The discussion will also show that educational reforms instituted by the British government cannot be understood unless they are placed within the matrix of the larger socio-political forces.

Unit Three gives a critical account of the fierce debates that raged on the 'place of English in free India', its role in the evolution of the national movement and nationalist ideology, its importance in the field of science and technology and its role in shaping the different educational policies of the Indian governments in the post-independence era. These debates have been discussed because an understanding of these debates is necessary for charting out the process through which the cultural identity of the Indian nation was forged.

Unit Four will familiarise you with a period in which all of us have lived and grown-up watching the process of consolidation of a foreign language and strengthening of its grip on our minds and hearts. In this unit the issue of an alien language gradually becoming our own and interestingly playing the role of a unifier, or conversely coming in the way of evolution of the different Indian languages, will also be addressed.

UNIT 1 ENTRY OF ENGLISH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 The Process of A Language Unfolding Itself
1.3 Introducing Language From A Position of Power
1.4 Introduction of English in India: Phase One
1.5 Introduction of English in India: Phase Two
1.6 Introduction of English in India: Phase Three
1.7 Introduction of English in India: Phase Four
1.8 Let Us Sum Up
1.9 Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will take you into the extremely fascinating area of interaction between history and culture. Ordinarily, we study a trend, an author or a literary work in isolation from the time in which these emerge and are shaped. Here, on the other hand, you will view a language in the process of evolution from the point it was introduced into the life of a nation to the point when it became a self-propelling full-fledged entity. You will also be face to face with a number of important things that contributed to a linguistic phenomenon moving inexorably towards a socio-ideological and cultural event never to be taken apart from the 'soil' in which it was implanted. Let us look at what English means in India next.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

English in India is a truly broad field, encompassing in time more than two eventful centuries and in geographical space countries as far apart from each other as eastern and western sides of the globe. The happening of a European language (the policies and actions of an organised as well as evolving society hidden behind it) in the midst of an alien culture over a long period of time should be considered a phenomenon meriting close investigation and study. In our context, it would be particularly useful to go into the question of a powerful outsider seeking to wilfully subjugate a community caught in its own queer dialectic of existence. The outside force and the indigenous pattern of trends got so intertwined in the early nineteenth century that each seemed to be guided by the other in its pursuit of growth or survival. The next section will deal with what I call the "process of language unfolding itself."

1.2 THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE UNFOLDING ITSELF

The twentieth century India saw an entirely different kind of resistance by natives to the foreign rule, unlike what was witnessed in the nineteenth century. The former had honed their political skills to such an extent (they had imbibed the spirit of enlightenment and rationality of the west and tended to use new concepts of freedom, equality and individual dignity against their political masters) that the tussle between the two went far beyond the economic – it became more and more hegemonic. Our

purpose in this course is to connect the nineteenth century social struggle against the British with the twentieth century 'hegemonic' tussle, a tussle aimed at transforming attitudes and winning minds.

The territory that we mainly explore in this course is that of language. A language, even a totally alien language, is not a simple, one-sided item of use. Instead, a language is a whole system of knowledge-constructing activity in which participation of diverse elements is the key factor.

This takes us straight into the area of literature. As we notice, English began to be used increasingly by writers and thinkers in India. Such a phenomenon of use necessitated a deep understanding of western works and trends and mastery over a language to the level that one experiments and struggles within it to describe and put across one's intent. All this requires a fair degree of acquaintance with the cultural ethos of that language. Thus it is that those who face the question of coming to terms with an alien tongue read its authors and thinkers with exemplary seriousness and view the represented or referred reality from a different angle. This enables them to widen their mental horizon and equips them ideologically to evolve an appropriate stance. The criss-cross of such a path would be discernible when we see the process of English in India unfolding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

What do we make of the growth of English as a medium in the post-Independence India? This is the period in which a nationalist response to an 'alien' tongue was expected, when the newly-emerged nation could take deeper interest in the unveiling of new life-patterns in the native tongues. In the next section we shall examine what happens to a language when it is introduced from a powerful hegemonic position, like in the case of the introduction of the English language in India.

1.3 INTRODUCING LANGUAGE FROM A POSITION OF POWER

In the early phase of its active presence in India, English represented a position of power. I talk of 'active presence' to denote that English came to bear a stamp of authority in the eighteen thirties, the period in which the British could flaunt their influence and define on their authority the parameters suitable to India. **Macaulay**'s famous *Minute of 1835* is the case in point. This has been discussed to an extent in the following unit of this block and at length in one of the later units in this course. Here, I draw your attention to the tone adopted by **Macaulay** in the *Minute*. To quote:

> *I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.*

We are not supposed to take this statement literally but to understand the argument that **Macaulay** advances in the context of the nineteenth century India. There is a sort of rhetoric in the tone and **Macaulay** seems to understand the absurdity of not knowing and yet being able to "form a correct estimate." Add to this the fact that he is addressing the audience of his choice – the people who share not just his prejudice but, his position of power, the people with the job on hand to frame a new language policy for the colony. Here, the word 'orientalists' signifies scholars who

examine a specific phenomenon the results of which they make available to the larger community of scholars for further study and reference. Obviously, **Macaulay** is in no position to disagree with the orientalists on their findings, one of which is that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."

The second point I make with reference to this statement is that **Macaulay** has specifically commented here on "the oriental learning, and not regions of imagination where Indian creative talent has flowered." To him, "celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works" do not contain what he calls oriental learning. The European orientalists, particularly those in the nineteenth century, looked for knowledge and study – that field of investigation in which new findings lead on to the further knowledge of trends (as in science) in natural and social life.

Yet, what has come out most strongly in the statement of **Macaulay** is what **Edward Said** has called in his *The World, The Text And the Critic,* the rhetoric of belonging and administration. In **Said**'s words:

> *Macaulay's was an ethnocentric opinion with ascertainable results. He was speaking from a position of power where he could translate his opinions into the decision to make an entire subcontinent of natives submit to studying in a language not their own. This in fact is what happened. In turn this validated the culture to itself by providing a precedent, and a case, by which superiority and power are lodged both in a rhetoric of belonging, or being "at home", so to speak, and in a rhetoric of administration: the two become interchangeable (p12-13)*

To this extent, thus, what **Macaulay** says could be considered seriously, his colonialist bias not withstanding. From here onwards, let us divide our discussion about English in India into four parts. I do this to take you into the context in which English, once introduced, went from strength to strength, so to say, in our country. These four parts, historically speaking, are: 1) The first phase when a policy framework was created to bring in an alien language primarily to have a human work force, read middle class, made to order and spread the message of superior thinking and culture through it; 2) The second phase in which English started making a dent in our lives and largely affected our ideas and value systems; 3) The third phase marked by the dialectic of supporting and opposing the emerging scenario under the impact of a growing nationalistic psyche culminating in the final attainment of freedom from the British yoke in 1947; 4) The fourth phase of post-Independence India witnessing the peculiar process of resisting/ adopting English in thee wake of new trends emerging in the country. I refer to the social development accompanied by a crisis in polity and culture that unfolded in this period. Placed in the time-frame, these phases belong to the first half of the nineteenth century till 1857, from 1857 to roughly the eighteen eighties when nationalism struck roots organisationally, from the last decades of the nineteenth century to 1947 and the post-Independent period till the end of the century respectively. We shall examine in detail the introduction of English in the First Phase (1800-1857).

1 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE ONE (1800- 1857)

As I take up the first phase, I draw your attention to the fact that by the beginning of the nineteenth century Indian economy had become potentially if not actually subservient to British interests. This fact was visible when more and more administrative power started passing into the hands of the **East India Company** and its proxy to the British regime. The period also characterised the enfeeblement of Indian interests divided as they became in the absence of a unifying factor. On their side, the British basked in the glory of their resurgent economy back home and victory over **Napoleon** in the second decade of the nineteenth century. In India, thus,

the fight between an alien power and a politically weak and divided society was an unequal one.

I particularly point towards a strong Britain at the time. After registering her presence as a vibrant economy in the previous century, England had gained the status of a 'super power' around the period she became active in India as an administrator, reformer and benefactor. Those of us who are conversant with English literature would realise that this period is known in the literary history as the Romantic period, a period when poets such as **Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley** and **Keats** sent across a sharply a critical message against growing bourgeois interests. Romantics were true dreamers wedded to the cause of the simple village folk that were gradually sidelined by the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. To grasp the point, we have to separate the dream in Romanticism from everything else and transpose it over the situation existing in India in the same period. In their society the British were engaged in pulling themselves out of medievalism and transforming their thinking along modernist lines. Such was the zeal of dreamers in England.

However, away from home in the territory of a colony, the intellectually equipped functionaries of the English state had a different role to play. There is no wonder that a **Macaulay** would embark on the course of enlightenment and rational thought far away from his shores where around 1835, where an extremely bitter and scathing critique of the English society of the time began to be presented in English fiction. Students of English literature are thus, better placed to see the irony in the situation.

Coming back to what was happening in India under the increasing British control, we notice in the early nineteenth century India an attempt is being made on the part of policy-framers to perform what could be termed 'social engineering' of a sort. Under this, a whole group of the natives spread through the length and breadth of India would read, write and think English.

We have to recognise that the 'social engineering' of which I mention in the above paragraph did occur and there did gradually emerge a group in the country linked umbilically to the British. These were the natives who largely fought in India the battles of the British, telling the rest of the Indians about orthodoxy and obsolescence existing within them as well as the desirability of adopting a superior culture and value system. The sense of servility the British intended to cultivate among Indians became a fact as a consequence of the influence-wielding conduct of this middle class.

A demoralised society as India was at the time it watched abjectly the spectacle of western superiority presented through the behaviour of 'enlightened' English-speaking individuals. We also know that historically speaking, India had yet a long way to go towards modernity and that it was indeed stuck in orthodoxy. It can also be broadly accepted that the process of confrontation between the 'eastern' and 'western' ethos set in motion the extremely significant trend of liberal education and reform movements in our country. Through English, our elites and middle class individuals came face to face with a perspective radically different from their own. Let us look at the developments that were to take place in the introduction of English during the Second Phase (1857-1880).

1.5 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE TWO (1857- 1880)

The momentous happening with which the second phase of English in India is linked was the famous revolt of Indian soldiers against the British in 1857. It was termed 'mutiny' since the British considered it an illegal and unethical act. From the Indian

point of view, it was an expression of discontent and anger against a power in the presence of whom the country felt helpless. Without going into the causes of the revolt, we can relate this event to the antagonism developing between a strong force in occupation and a country ridden with insurmountable problems of poverty and backwardness. Be that as it may, the British from 1857 onwards chose a course different from the one they had adopted earlier. With the change in status according to which India was placed directly under the English monarch and thus becoming a colony, our society would be managed in the new context as a formation constituting subjects. The general perception of the English was also meanwhile altered vis-à-vis Indians.

Indians from now on would be treated with suspicion irrespective of whether they were from the middle classes, the urban poor, villagers or the landed gentry. The term 'mutiny' with its wide ideological ramifications covered all aspects of British behaviour. The question is whether the adoption of English by Indians in the mean time had given a wrong mutinous orientation to the Indian middle classes in this phase responded to issues such as individual freedom differently from the way they were supposed to do by their masters. The reformist acts undertaken by the regime earlier may also have unleashed trends in India that drew inspiration from the spirit to critique orthodoxy. With pioneers such as **Ram Mohan Roy** active in the realm of reform and change earlier in the century, various communities in India, forged ahead of others and threw up visionaries who would work with all their might to transform the environment at a latter day. Some of these communities took keen interest in education and aimed at ushering in the era of modernity.

This second phase was especially productive in the area of literature unlike the previous one that had inspired only thinkers and reformers. The reason is not far to seek. With increase in the knowledge of English, a large number of creative minds began to look at their counterparts in England as their role models and sought to emulate their example. You will have reference to them in the Blocks that follow. One interesting example is that of a novel written in English by **Bankim Chander Chatterjee**. His novel *Rajmohun's Wife* presented in one go a peculiar amalgam of the Indian folk tale and the English novel. Whereas the characters in the novel are typically Indian with shades of black and white, the descriptions of nature and the ornate style draws much from the contemporary English writing of the day. Add to this the fact that the narrative reveals a number of influences of the contemporary thought in England.

I suggest through this point the emergence of a phenomenon in which the Indian art forms had an interface with the European ones. The latter helped the Indian mind to wrestle free from the highly stylised and moralistic renderings of myths in the Indian writing. However, this phase unhappily caused the marginalisation of those Indian forms that struggled to represent new experiences, dichotomies and disharmonies in Indian life. It certainly took the middle class minds away from some of the best trends emerging in Indian language literatures. The *Urdu Ghazal* of the day, for instance, remained largely confined to the urban elites, not finding its way to the experimenting and innovating youths of the educated middle classes. Radicals would harness the same *ghazals* however, (as in the case of **Faiz**), at a later stage, to create political awareness among the freedom-loving Indians across the country.

Combine this literary trend in English taking shape in the hands of the Indians with some of the new activist reformers, some of them women, in society that chose to read in English and write in an Indian language. We see that a meaningful interaction did begin occurring as a consequence of the efforts of these reformers. Place it in the context of a new educational pattern crystallising in the field of education to realise that a number of visionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century took the courageous step of combining English with Indian languages in colleges and universities. Two institutions that were brought into being and subsequently flourished remarkably were known as the *Anglo-Arabic* and *Anglo-Vedic* institutions of learning. With a strong orientation in the so-called Muslim or Hindu thought, these

institutions rightly sought to adopt the rational approach of receiving knowledge from whichever quarter. They asserted that knowledge was not confined to the place where it initially emerged and that it was a part of the universal human heritage. The point of orientation I am making here is to indicate that language as a vehicle of expression and as the medium of communication can be used with advantage by any community and society, irrespective of the place where it was active initially.

As said above, English in India in this phase opened a window to western learning and made available to the emergent middle class a number of perspectives, many of them radical and modern. At the same time, it also put on the periphery those languages and dialects that had been forged by ordinary people struggling to evolve their own idioms and devices to articulate their specific experiences. It also clearly made hierarchies that put English on a pedestal and assigned inferior position to things Indian. The harm caused by English is perceivable at the sociological level where things occur subtly. English in this phase also worked to the detriment of Indian writing where the genuine emotions of the masses could be expressed in a forthright manner. With a minuscule minority in India capable of receiving information or knowledge through English, the appeal of this foreign tongue remained limited in our environment. The damage was particularly in the case of youths who felt drawn to English, little realising that the language chosen by them restricted not just the appeal of their writing but also the scope of the issues and themes they chose to represent in their writing. What happened or was to happen to English during the pre- Independence and pre- Partition days will be discussed in the next section.

1.6 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE THREE (1880 – 1947)

In my opinion, the third phase of the evolution in English in India (I mean by this the impact English had in Indian life and the way it was itself being shaped in its role by the happenings of the period) reflects a sharp sense of the events unfolding in India in recent history. This phase brought out the inefficacy of a foreign language, whatever the extent of patronage the language enjoyed. In the period, our society, decided to form itself as a meaningful entity by adopting a course at once challenging and desirable. Inspite of being diverse in scope and interests, our society came to recognise around this time what could be termed seeds of commonness. I refer to the **Indian National Movement** that began towards the end of the nineteenth century and culminated in the Independence of 1947. We see a peculiar relationship, clearly an antagonistic one, between the nationalist upsurge in India and English. This is also the question of the role a language or a number of languages play in what can be broadly called social life.

At this point, we have to remind ourselves again that India was a British colony bearing the bitter implication of being second to a metropolitan centre. It was supposed to serve at the cost of its resources, culture, identity and dignity the interests of a foreign power. Please consider that of the four I have cited, three – culture, identity and dignity – particularly are the concerns of the middle class. **Macaulay**'s dream of creating a middle class in India that would fight English battles and act as buffer between the administration and the common masses took, it appears, a reverse turn in the nationalist phase in our society. One noticed a split between the English knowing middle classes meant to emulate the behaviour and values of the master segment and thus working to the detriment of their own society. This happened but the reverse also raised its head deep within their psyche.

The examples of **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Jawaharlal Nehru** are particularly educative in that they symbolise the needs of the time. Both stood for the effort of the enlightened sections aimed at creating nationalist consciousness. The enlightened sections in India chose in the case of the split the issue of dignity in preference to the modernity of the kind the British represented as colonisers. Also bear in mind, as indicated above, that what I call enlightened sections in India had a modernity and rationality as well as a moral daring that would be the envy of the thinkers and practitioners of the eighteenth century European enlightenment.

Both **Gandhiji** and **Nehru** spoke and wrote English better than most Indians. However, they sent a different message across to people within the **Congress** as well as outside. They stressed that the language of the **National Movement** was to be an Indian language, a language that ordinary Indians could understand and speak. What about the efficacy of an Indian language at the time? Most of the Indian languages in the nineteenth century had a vocabulary rooted in the medieval life and ethos. Few of them had what we call a grammar of their own, that which recognised their structures and identified rules determining them. Yet, we have the great example of **Bankim Chandra** deciding to write in Bengali soon after he had written *Rajmohun's Wife* in English. In English, **Bankim** was quite proficient. If he continued in that language, there is no reason why he should not have used with good effect the cadences of speech in English. Equally well, he would have been fluent and spontaneous in descriptive prose. But the language of his fiction had to be Bengali for the reason cited above.

Premchand's example in this series comes next, a truly radical example since unlike most other Indian writers of the time he shuffled between many native languages and dialects to finally settle down to writing in Hindi. His Hindi drew from the spoken word and was yet formal. There is no denying that **Premchand**'s linguistic resources with respect to Persian and Urdu were enormous. His English also matched well with that of his contemporaries, most of who felt more at ease in it than in their mother tongue. **Premchand**'s mother tongue was *Avadhi*, a dialect that had a greater claim on acceptability in North India than any other spoken language in the region, with the sole exception of Braj. What I imply is that India in this phase of the national movement needed a language through which the message of freedom, resistance to imperialism, identity and self-respect could be put across effectively. The kind of Hindi that evolved over the first few decades of the twentieth century fitted this requirement in spite of the fact that languages such as Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, etc. were richer in vocabulary and cultural content. The important thing in the discussion is that English did not figure anywhere in the scheme, even as it remained the language of higher discourse at the national level.

A mass movement required a language capable of being understood and absorbed by the masses and Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati or Marathi were the ones meant to play the role of carrying the nationalist argument to the ordinary people. Is that the reason why Indian writing in this period flourished as never before in different Indian languages? If there is any renaissance of Indian writing in our history, it belongs to this phase of the **National Movement**. Compare this writing in the Indian languages with that by **Sri Aurobindo, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao** or **R K Narayan** in English around the same period and we notice that the substance of Indian life, its down-to-earth appeal emblematise in the fiction of **Tagore, Premchand, Sharat Chandra, Nanak Singh, Sadat Hasan Manto,** and many Gujarati or Marathi writers of that age at a qualitatively different level. Combine this with the sweep and wide appeal of giants in poetry such as **Iqbal, Subramaniam Bharati, Faiz** and **Nirala** and the picture gets complete. This stage marks the hey-day of India's languages and literatures that push the language of our colonial masters clearly to the margins. English as it stands today fifty-seven years after Independence will be analysed in the next section.

1.7 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE FOUR (1947-2004)

The fourth stage, that of the post-Independent India, is highly problematic, with the process of efflorescence in Indian languages and literatures getting reversed with the passage of time. The progress and growth of Indian languages and literatures slowed down considerably in this period. Writing in Indian languages became increasingly distanced from the broader concerns of society as time passed. In inverse proportion to this, English has been able to gain unprecedented popularity. This stage has also been witness to a great surge forward of English as a language not just of communication but also of creative endeavour. As a medium of instruction at the present time, it has more or less totally replaced Indian languages at the college and university levels.

In the media, too, the influence of English has increased by the day. Elitism and English are inseparable. There is a mushrooming of institutes teaching spoken and written English not just in metropolitan centers but even small towns. Privately managed, these institutes are money-spinners. From the language of the colonial masters ever since its beginning in the nineteenth century, English has been adopted by the Indian ruling class as their language. Power and prestige are associated with it. We notice that a smartly dressed English-speaking individual is the role model of every youth in our country. It is indeed interesting to watch a popular Hindi film actor talking in English while being interviewed in a Hindi programme on the T V and seeking to impress the viewer by his accent and command over the language of prestige.

In the same manner, Indian writing in English has increased in appeal and influence. Study and research in English attract better talent than in Indian languages. What could be the reason for this? It is difficult for us to make an objective assessment of this phenomenon since things are rather close to us in time. At best, we can raise some pertinent questions. We shall take this up at length in Unit 4 of this Block.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

This overview has sought to emphasise the circumstances in which English was introduced in India by our colonial masters way back in the nineteenth century. The expansion and growth of English was not easy or smooth. After crossing the initial hurdles, it was able to attract a large number of Indians and was instrumental in inspiring a whole group to adopt it. Thus emerged in the nineteenth century an Indian middle class swearing by English manners. English in India passed through a number of phases till it became established as a part of Indian life in the post-Independence period. Its importance has increased considerably in the closing years of the twentieth century.

1.9 QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the circumstances in which English was introduced in nineteenth century India.

2. Discuss the reasons behind the marginalisation of English during the Indian National Movement.

3. Would it be correct to say that finally English has changed from a language of the colonial masters to a language of the privileged in India today? Give reasons in support of your answer.

4. Do you agree that English is associated with the value system of imperialism in the twentieth century? Support your answer with examples.

UNIT 2 MACAULAY, RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY AND CHARLES E TREVELYAN

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
  2.1.1 The Introduction of English Studies in India
2.2 The New Face Of Imperialism
  2.2.1 New Developments In Indian Society
2.3 Raja Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* to Lord Amherst
2.4 Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education*
  2.4.1 The Postcolonial Critique Of Macaulay's *Minute*
2.5 The Orientalists and the New Education Policy
  2.5.1 The Political Pragmatism of Macaulay's *Minute*
2.6 C E Trevelyan – *On the Education of the People of India*
2.7 Let Us Sum Up
2.8 Questions
2.9 Glossary

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to give an outline of the specific debates in the early nineteenth century on the education of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. The three tracts that comprise this unit and encapsulate these debates have been discussed and their main arguments have been summarised. Another objective is to situate these debates in a larger historical context so that they do not appear to be products of certain intellectuals who discussed education as a purely academic matter. The historical context is one of imperialist domination and economic exploitation of India's resources by the **British East India Company**. At the same time the early nineteenth century was a witness to the growth of the social reform movements in India with the rise of some of the most dedicated crusaders against social maladies. The discussion of the three tracts, it is hoped, will show that the educational reforms instituted by the British government cannot be understood unless they are placed within the matrix of the larger socio-political forces.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

English Studies was introduced in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. The year 1835 can be taken as the official date of introduction in India, the date when the Teaching of English at all levels (primary, secondary and higher) was officially sanctioned by the British colonial government. However, the process for the education of Indians through the language of the colonisers was set into motion much before 1835. This process can be broadly classified into two parts. The first comprises a set of arguments and opinions advocating the study of English literature and European sciences through the medium of English. The second is the establishment of schools and colleges for the study of English as well as the setting up of institutional bodies for the formulation of educational policies on behalf of the colonial government. In this Unit we shall restrict our focus to the first half of the process.

2.1.1 The Introduction of English Studies in India

Macaulay, Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Charles E. Trevelyan

It can be said that the new educational policy of **1835** officially announced in the **Governor General's Resolution** that:

> *The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and sciences among the natives of India* [and that] *all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would best be employed in English education alone*

- This statement did not reflect a sudden shift in the educational policy of the colonial government.

Rather it was an outcome of a long debate/conflict between advocates of English education and those who favoured the study of classical Indian languages – Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. **Macaulay**'s *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) and **Trevelyan**'s *On the Education of the People of India* (1838) incorporate all these debates along with a passionate plea for the introduction of English studies. However, it must be noted that as early as 1792 **Charles Grant,** an employee of the **East India Company** recommended the dissemination of European literature and sciences through the medium of English among the people of India. The reasons given by **Grant** for this extraordinary importance attached to the study of English literature are significant. They form the backbone of all later arguments demanding an official approval of English studies.

In his treatise *Observations on the State of Society among the Asian Subjects of Great Britain* **Grant** paints a grim picture of Indian society steeped in superstition, idolatry and immorality. These evils of Indian society he believed could only be removed by a system of western education that according to **Grant** possessed all the advantages of a superior civilisation. However, in **Grant**'s opinion, English education would be highly beneficial to the colonialists. **Grant** was certain that the natives by acquiring western knowledge and gaining a command over the language of their rulers would be brought nearer to them. This reduction of distance between the natives and their governors would ensure the formers loyalty. **Grant** also postulates that it would be easier to trade with anglicised Indians and ensure their cooperation in the realm of commerce. Thus the original aim of the colonists – the extension of British commerce would be fulfilled.

It can be easily seen that **Grant**'s educational scheme is not simply limited to the enlightenment of natives. It may be said that for **Grant,** educational instruction was also a strategy for political and economic consolidation of the British imperial power. Moreover, the question of the enlightenment of Indians also seems to be based on the assumption that native culture and civilisation is intrinsically inferior with no redeeming features. Aren't both these assumptions debatable and problematic? The solution offered by **Grant** is the imposition of an alien but superior culture. **Grant**'s view is uncomfortably close to the formulation of the Christian missionaries in India who thought that the inherent barbarism of Hindustan could only be successfully countered by Christianising the whole country. In the next section we shall examine what we may call the new phase of imperialism.

2.2 THE NEW FACE OF IMPERIALISM

While **Grant** was thinking of anglicising the native, the British educational policy was running on completely different principles. Before the Anglicist viewpoint on education was realised in actual practice, the colonial system of education was guided primarily by pragmatic considerations. The encouragement of ancient and medieval Indian learning by the British was based on the policy of neutrality regarding

religious-cultural matters. The fear of rousing the religious sensitivities of the Indians precluded any attempt at conversion or indoctrination. In other words, the policy on non-interference in education was conditioned by the imperatives of socio political control over the newly conquered territories. It will then be worthwhile to ask - what were the reasons for this crucial policy shift? What made the colonial masters think that the old policy of placating the native's cultural prejudices was outdated? Can we assume that the framers and supporters of the new educational policy of 1838 redefined British imperial domination?

A study of the various minutes and tracts of those who wanted to introduce English in India reveals that they differed from the old policy makers on the issue of controlling the socio-cultural life of their Indian subjects. They did not see imperialism as a purely political practice with minimum interference in the socio-cultural affairs of the colony. Imperialism was now constructed as a transcendent force sweeping the entire globe with a great burden of 'civilising' the natives. In other words **Macaulay, Trevelyan** and other anglicists represent imperialism as a benevolent political enterprise zealously working towards the improvement of less developed communities. The assumption, of course, is that these communities cannot improve on their own due to the innate depravity/ inferiority of their socio-cultural practices. Let us examine the new developments that were to take place in Indian society as a result of this grand assumption.

2.2.1 New Developments In Indian Society

From the previous discussion, we arrived at the conclusion that the assumption of the intellectual and moral leadership of the Indian people by the new batch of colonists represents a new phase of British imperialism. What was earlier seen as a politically dangerous and unpragmatic move (i.e. the introduction of English) now became a preferable course to follow. The representatives of the old educational policy like **H H Wilson** and **H T Prinsep** saw, (in this confidence of the new educationists), the inexperience of "individuals with manifestly strong prejudices," individuals who "knew nothing of the people and the country." However the confidence of a **Macaulay** or a **Trevelyan** was not merely the product of a new imperial mindset but had a solid basis in the socio-cultural developments in Indian society. These developments asserted themselves strongly in the Bengal Presidency where a new class of Bengali intellectuals had arisen. This class was extremely vocal in their support of English education. Many institutions for the spread of education through the medium of English were established by learned Bengali Hindus with the financial and moral support of the missionaries and sympathetic officials of the **East India Company**.

The intellectual ferment in middle class Hindu community of Bengal signalled the slow but sure growth of the social reform movement in India. This movement was a revolution in ideas with its trenchant criticism of the decadent and corrupt aspects of the Indian social system. These Bengali intellectuals fully supported the imperial diatribe against *Sattee*, *Child Marriage* and *Thuggery*. These intellectuals saw the colonial regime's critique of the inhuman social customs, as a much needed support to their own agenda. The *Letter* of **Raja Rammohun Roy**, the great Bengali social reformer addressed to the British **Governor-General Lord Amherst** reveals to us a process in which the indigenous impetus of reform oblivious of the new imperial agenda strengthened the arguments of the imperial ideologues and ultimately contributed to the implementation of their educational plans. In the next section we shall take a closer look at **Raja Ram Mohun Roy's** *Letter* **to Lord Amherst**.

2.3 RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY'S *LETTER* TO LORD AMHERST

The *Letter* is the most significant indigenous contribution to the debate of education in the early nineteenth century. **Rammohun Roy** wrote this *Letter* in order to protest against the ruling regime's decision to open a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. It has been already pointed out that before the new educational policy was implemented, the government of India supported instruction in the classical Indian languages. It funded institutions involved in the spread of Hindu and Mohammedan learning and gave financial assistance to Sanskrit and Arabic scholars in order to encourage them to achieve distinction in their respective fields. The government also provided grants for the printing of ancient Sanskrit and Arabic texts in the original and in translation. The **Governor Generals** in the formative years of British rule were committed to the spread and encouragement of native learning. Both **Warren Hastings** and **Lord Minto** were instrumental in the establishment of many institutions where oriental literature was taught. By 1823 (the date of the *Letter*) this official policy of the government faced repeated assaults from a number of quarters. The attack primarily came from the missionaries, the Anglicists of the **East India Company** and the 'enlightened' Bengali elite. In spite of all these pressures, the colonial regime had decided to continue the policy of **Hastings** and **Minto**. The proposal for the establishment of a Sanskrit College at Calcutta was a part of this decision.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* locates a contradiction between the modern, scientific spirit of European civilisation and its educational policy in India. The proposal to establish the new Sanskrit College comes as a shock to **Roy** since, in his view, it does not conform to the liberal image of the British. It is clear from a careful perusal of the letter that **Ram Mohun Roy** expects the colonial power to be true to its liberal image and find ways and means to promote western sciences and arts for the benefit of its Indian subjects. **Ram Mohun Roy** finds the indigenous system of instruction outdated because it is medieval. It teaches systems which have no rational and scientific basis and are of little use in the modern world. **Roy** finds abstract metaphysical questions distasteful. These questions were central to the native educational system. Speculations like "in what manner is the soul absorbed into the Deity" or *Vedantic* belief that "visible things have no existence" would not, in **Roy**'s view lead to the improvement of Indian society. Progress and modernisation was only possible if people were taught the modern sciences and literatures of the West.

Roy was also opposed to the teaching of Sanskrit grammar that embodied only tiresome subtleties. For **Roy**, Sanskrit was a language that due to its intrinsic difficulties acts as a barrier to the diffusion of useful knowledge. The students spend the best years of their lives learning to speak and write correct Sanskrit. **Roy** was against a mechanical kind of language teaching that treated language as an end in itself and not a means for conveying something useful. However, it is noteworthy that **Roy** makes no specific mention of the medium of instruction. Although he critiques the Sanskrit language for being an "impervious veil," it is the useless, metaphysical learning concealed under this veil that is the chief object of his attack.

The critique of the *Vedantic* beliefs does not necessarily mean that **Roy**'s arguments like those of the colonialists embody a wholesale condemnation of Indian cultural practices and the assertion of the essential superiority of European socio-cultural structures. Although the comparison in **Roy**'s *Letter* definitely puts Europe ahead of the Orient, this modernity of Europe does not constitute its essence but has been achieved after a long conflict with the medieval world- view. According to **Ram Mohun Roy**, Europeans have emerged from the medievalism of the scholastic philosophers by replacing scholasticism with the scientific spirit of **Baconian philosophy**. By analysing the march of European civilisation from the rational religiosity of the Middle Ages to the world of modern science, **Roy** was able to give a historical dimension to the pitiful ignorance of the Indian people. Within **Roy**'s

analytic framework, the superstitious and essentially religious character of the native's world defines a historical epoch akin to the pre-Renaissance world of the schoolmen in Europe. **Roy**'s historicisation of the social-cultural practices of the Indian masses subverts the idea of their inherent inferiority. It also ushers in the possibility of change as an intensive educational programme consisting of modern sciences and arts that could root out the decadent medieval ideas that in his view, hampered progress.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* is one of the most significant documents of Indian educational history. Its significance lies not only in its basic assumption of the superiority of the western system of instruction and of western sciences and literature but also in the fact that it strengthened the Anglicists' contention that a change in the educational field was desired by the natives themselves. Anglicists like **Macaulay** used **Ram Mohun Roy**'s criticism of the absence of useful knowledge in the Sanskrit system of education to denigrate native culture and top suit their own imperialistic agendas. It is therefore, pertinent that we examine **Macaulay's** *Minute on Indian Education* next.

2.4 MACAULAY'S *MINUTE ON INDIAN EDUCATION*

T B Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education of 1835* is regarded by many as the most significant document in the history of Indian education. In fact its importance has been over-emphasised to an extent that it is sometimes held to be solely responsible for the introduction of English in British India.

It would be unfair to other workers in the field (e.g., **C E Trevelyan**) if we hold this view. However, the *Minute* can be seen as a watershed that not only governed the educational policy of the British administration after 1835 but also reflected a crucial change in the strategy of control and subjugation of the native population. On the face of it, the issue of control and repression appears to be wholly external to **Macaulay's** famous discussion on the benefits of giving English education to the natives of India. The discussion confronts us with 'facts' that are totally contrary to the idea of suppression of any potential dissatisfaction among the Indian masses. One of the most important 'facts' is that the Indians themselves prefer English education to native learning. **Macaulay**, the crusader for the "vast intellectual wealth" of Europe attacks the Orientalists, accusing them of bribing the Indian student to learn languages and literatures that in **Macaulay**'s interpretive framework represent irrationality and barbarism. Thus he asserts, "the people should be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed."

But the most important 'fact' of **Macaulay** is the incontrovertible superiority of English literature language and sciences to Oriental learning. This conviction of **Macaulay** propels him to the swift conclusion that all the literatures of the East are not worth "a single shelf of a good European library." **Macaulay** finds the vernaculars so poor in their vocabulary that no useful instruction can be given in these languages. Thus the rejection of indigenous literatures and languages and their replacement by English is the only course available to the 'enlightened' colonial educationists. The *Minute* also encapsulates the concept of the White man's burden, the messianic responsibility of enlightened Europe to inculcate modern values among the less civilised communities. **Macaulay** predicts that this process of acculturation will make the natives forget their inferior cultural past and facilitate cultural assimilation. The new native who will emerge after receiving English education will be "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." This cultural intolerance and the consequent plea for cultural subsumation are transmitted in the guise of imperial generosity. The assumption that the great wealth of the European intellectual heritage being offered to Indians is implicit in the

historical parallel that **Macaulay** draws between Renaissance England and nineteenth century India. He argues that the Englishmen of Renaissance England embraced the ancient Greek and Latin learning rejecting their medieval Anglo-Saxon culture. This analogy facilitates **Macaulay**'s conclusion that "what Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of **More** and **Ascham**, our tongue is to the people of India."

Thus **Macaulay** in the *Minute* presents an image of an imperial policy devoted to the welfare of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. Firmly convinced of the civilising mission of the Empire's servants, he charges the Orientalists with not only a dereliction of their imperial duties but of erecting barriers in the way of progress and modernisation of Indian society. Let us now examine **Macaulay**'s *Minute* critically in the light of postcolonial theory.

2.4.1 The Postcolonial Critique Of Macaulay's *Minute*

Macaulay was severely criticised by the English Orientalists for his rhetorical condemnation of Indian culture. **H H Wilson** and **W H Macnaughten**, two committed Orientalists of **Macaulay**'s time were outraged at the negation of an entire cultural heritage as worthless by an individual who had spent only a few years in India and consequently in **Wilson**'s view knew nothing of the country and the people. This outrage forms the basis of most postcolonial critiques of the hegemonic mode of imperial thinking. This kind of critique contains reflections on the arrogance of imperial ideological practices, the complete want of regard / ignorance of an entirely different culture, a refusal to understand cultural distinctiveness etc. **B Rajan**'s view of **Macaulay**'s *Minute* is one of the best instances of this kind of cultural critique. According to **Rajan**:

> *Understanding the subjected culture or even laying down the basis for a dialogue with it is not the primary objective . . . The Anglicist view based on imperial assumptions of superiority that in its nature cannot be dialogic, is less concerned with world understanding than with remaking the world in the western image.*

It may be noted that the critique concentrates only on the discursive practices of imperial power. It does not focus upon the material benefits that this discourse confers upon the imperialists. The English Orientalists negated the idea of any practical utility of the new educational scheme. The question that confronts us now is, whether the new policy of devaluing native literatures and languages had any practical use or did it, as the Orientalists contended, endanger British interest in India? We shall discuss the attitude of the Orientalists towards the New Educational Policy in the next section.

2.5 THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY

It has been already pointed out that the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic learning by the Company officials was in consonance with the colonial policy of religious neutrality. The colonised people were seen by the rulers as highly sensitive where their scriptural learning was concerned. The new policy based on an explicit assertion of cultural superiority was seen by the Orientalists as not only a falsification of the true state of Indian learning but also a political move. Most critiques of the Orientalist disagreement with the new policy are based on the assumption that the Orientalists were concerned less with politics than with an academic interest in eastern learning. For instance, Kalyani Chatterjee in the book *English Education in India* sees the Orientalist emphasis on learning the classical Indian languages as "cosmopolitanism and intellectual curiosity of eighteenth century enlightenment." Thus it becomes necessary for **Chatterjee** to

assert the Orientalist "enthusiasm for the Oriental languages and literatures transcended the *merely pragmatic need* for acculturating the British administrators in the Indian milieu (italics... the unit writers).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to clarify the Orientalist position vis-à-vis Indian education and its difference from the **Macaulay-Bentinck** group that was responsible for the promulgation of the new education policy of 1835. As we have already seen the oppositional relation between the two camps has led to an identification of imperial hegemonic thinking of the Anglicists and a liberal understanding of Indian culture with the Orientalists. **Percival Spear** has summarised this opinion succinctly when he says that the Anglicists argued that Indian civilisation had no value and had to be replaced by Western civilisation while the Orientalists were of the opinion that Indian civilisation was ripe for enrichment by Western knowledge. However, on a closer scrutiny, it can be seen that the Orientalists did not attack the fundamental assumption behind the Anglicist position – "the notion the unquestionable superiority of European literature and science." In fact they un-hesitantly referred to "the direction to true science and good taste in literature which the superior lights of Europe ought to enable us bestow." **John Tytler**, an Orientalist and a translator of books into Arabic pointed out that "Eastern sciences bear scarcely more proportion to those of Europe, than the first lisping of an infant to the ratiocinations of man." It is easy to see the hierarchical nature of the discourse in which the child is to be taught/dominated by the man.

Therefore it cannot be said that the Orientalists had no links with a discourse designed to serve hegemonic ends. The disagreement with the Anglicists primarily lay in how these ends were to be achieved. The Orientalists favoured an alliance with the upper caste Indians that actually constituted the Indian ruling class. This alliance obviously excluded any attempt at direct indoctrination in Christianity or a criticism of native learning on the grounds of a want of a scientific attitude. The Orientalists felt that since European science and the natives held literature in low esteem, it was indeed not desirable that it was imposed upon them. **H H Wilson**, the great Oriental scholar pointed out that "a mere English scholar is not respected for his learning by the natives, they have no notion of English as learning but they have a high respect for a man who knows Sanskrit or who knows Arabic." In **Wilson**'s view such prejudices would be difficult to eradicate in the near future and therefore "any attempt to enforce an acknowledgement of the superiority of intellectual produce amongst the natives of the West can only create dissatisfaction."

Thus it is not surprising that **Macaulay**'s *Minute* not only struck the Orientalists as a product of a man not acquainted with ground realities but as a set of pronouncements fraught with grave political consequences. Was the *Minute* politically pragmatic is the question that arises now. Let us examine its validity in the next section.

2.5.1 The Political Pragmatism of Macaulay's *Minute*

When **Macaulay** in the *Minute* harps on the native clamour for English education, he is responding to charge of being unpragmatic. The imperial hauteur apart, the reasons given in the *Minute* for teaching English literature and language are not solely dependent on the argument of their innate superiority to native learning. Thus the 'intrinsic value' of English literature is only one of the arguments for the imposition of English on the natives. Since the importance of this argument has been overemphasised by postcolonial criticism, it appears to constitute the entire thrust of **Macaulay**'s educational programme. **Macaulay**, in fact, works hard in the *Minute* to convey the impression that the Orientalist fear of the native backlash at the prospect of English education is illogical. He points out the dissatisfaction of the jobless ex-students of the Sanskrit College who wasted the best years of their lives in learning what according to **Macaulay** gave them neither bread nor respect. In **Macaulay**'s view the great enthusiasm of the learned natives for English instruction proves that hostility by the Indians towards the new policy only exist in the realm of imagination. He even brought out the details of the relative popularity of native and English texts.

There was no great demand for Arabic and Sanskrit books, which the *Committee of Public Instruction* had printed at so great a cost while the *Calcutta School Book Society* was selling a large number of English books at a profit. For **Macaulay**, as **John Clive** points out, 'the state of the market was the decisive test."

The *Minute* implies that the old policy of the appeasement of the natives and of yielding to their religious prejudices is of no further use and needs to be replaced by a new programme of instruction in English, which responds to the indigenous demand for improvement through the teaching of sciences, and the literatures of Europe. Thus **Macaulay**'s *Minute* does not see English education as an imposition. As **Clive** points out "**Macaulay** was familiar with the feelings of liberal Hindus on the subject of education." It is also clear that **Macaulay** interpreted the Indian social scene as a site, which contained seeds of social transformation. No longer were the religious figureheads held as representatives of communities whose significance could not be ignored. The social reformers who battled against decadent social systems and values were fully supported in their work by **Bentinck** and **Macaulay**. The new tide of reform helped **Macaulay** to project his scheme as practical and worthy of implementation. He could also accuse his opponents of not conforming to the ostensible project of imperialism – the intellectual and moral improvement of the colonised peoples.

The *Minute* thus builds up an assurance that British imperial interests will not be harmed by the new educational scheme. Certain portions of **Macaulay**'s tract implies that the new framework of education will only increase the efficiency of colonial administration and help in the growth of trade. As **Macaulay** points out, English "is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government and is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East." However the fact that the Indian class speaks English or that English is to become eventually, a language of trade does not confirm the political and commercial dominance of the British in India. What is needed is a class of Indians thoroughly bred in the literature and arts of the colonisers. It is quite clear that **Macaulay**'s education system is designed to produce a native who faithfully imitates the habits, customs and values of his/ her master. It is also evident that an anglicised native intellectual taught to revere and identify him/her self with the coloniser's culture will not be sufficiently critical of the exploitative nature of the colonial regime. Thus any potential subversion will be kept in check.

Thus **Macaulay**'s scheme of anglicisation was not politically unpragmatic but was specifically structured to meet the needs of British imperialism. Its results were visible in the next fifty years. It succeeded in creating a class of Indians who were well versed in the art of speaking and writing English, Indians who would eventually be absorbed into the lower rungs of British administration. The anglicised elite was alienated from the rural masses of India. The reason lay not only in an education in a foreign language but also in the fact that it occupied positions of power in the civil administration and thus became a part of the exploitative colonial structure. However English education also acquainted the Indian intelligentsia with the liberal thought of the West that greatly contributed to the development of the anti-colonial movements later. Having analysed **Macaulay**'s *Minute* in detail let us now turn our attention to **C E Trevelyan** and study the implications of his work *On The Education Of The People Of India*.

2.6 C E TREVELYAN – *ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA*

Charles E Trevelyan was one of the foremost crusaders for the establishment of English studies in India. Like his brother-in-law **T B Macaulay**, he had a firm conviction that education in India had to be built upon new foundations. He saw India and her inhabitants in an advanced state of moral and intellectual decay. This

depressing imperial view of the colony was counterpoised by his optimism that teaching of English literature and language could successfully rejuvenate the people of India and lead them away from the path of false beliefs, false religions and immoral behaviour.

Trevelyan's condemnation of indian religions and their corrupting effect on the native psyche were comparable to the missionary view of native religions and the resulting attempts at conversion. In his letters to **Governor-General William Bentink**, **Trevelyan** unravels a scheme of spreading English literature language and religion in India. His vision is, however, not limited to India alone. India according to **Trevelyan** is merely a stepping - stone to the anglicisation of the entire Asian continent. In his famous treatise *On the Education of the People of India* **Trevelyan** interprets education as a tool with which the conversion of the Indian people could be achieved. Conversion obviously involves a rejection of native religions and cultures by the natives/Indians themselves. Like the missionaries, **Trevelyan** is unable to see any redeeming feature in the native cultures. These cultures, in his view, have to be replaced by the advanced culture of the West represented by the English colonisers. The missionaries considered the non idolatrous variant of Christianity as one of the primary factors responsible for the greatness of the western civilisation. Therefore, they insisted on the teaching of the Bible. **Trevelyan**, on the other hand, agreed with the dominant official opinion about the delicate sensitivities of Indians where religion was involved. Thus he does not view direct proselytisation as congenial to British rule in India. **Trevelyan** was of the opinion that English literature could act as a mediator between English culture and the natives. He concludes that the best possible way to convert Indians is to teach them this literature.

Trevelyan hardly makes a distinction between English culture and Christianity. The two are treated as inseparable. **Trevelyan** shares the religious zeal of the missionaries to propagate this Christian culture of the Englishmen in India. However, he differs from them by rejecting the direct indoctrination of Indians. English literature, in his view, can take the place of the Bible. It can be easily seen that **Trevelyan**'s views on the subject of education were a combination of evangelist fervour and political pragmatism. His genuine hatred of indigenous Indian learning which was just "an ocean of words" with no "influx of ideas," made him a strong advocate of English education. His urge to awaken Indian society from its intellectual and moral stupor brought him into contact with the opinions of Bengali social reformers who also demanded a system of western education. The awareness of this indigenous demand strengthened **Trevelyan**'s conviction. His cause was popular and radical while his opponents' (the Orientalists) schemes were anti-popular and conservative.

But the reasons for **Trevelyan**'s rejection of Hindu and Mohammedan learning went beyond a simple cultural prejudice. The reasons were profoundly political and were central to the issue of domination and subjugation of the native people. As **Trevelyan** himself pointed out:

> *The spirit of English literature cannot but be favourable to the English connection. Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. . . . Educated in the same way, interested in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus. . . .*

In other words, English education will erase the consciousness of foreign domination as it will produce natives who will be cut off from indigenous knowledge and totally identify themselves with the English colonisers. **Trevelyan** notes in his *Education* that Hindu and Muslim literature will maintain the awareness of the Englishman's foreign origins and will relegate him to the status of an outsider. Hindu scriptures teach that the English are "unclean beasts" while the literature of the Muslims

constructs them as infidels in the land of the faithful. Thus in the interests of British imperialism, it was imperative that such literatures were rejected and replaced by the literature of the colonists. Cultural subsumation will preclude any resistance or rebellion on the part of the Indian subjects of the British Empire.

Here a question might be raised in relation to the process through which cultural assimilation of the native takes place. **Trevelyan** visualised the process as a kind of displacement whereby the actual Englishman/woman is removed from the mental framework of the colonised subject by English literature that then becomes the only basis for an understanding of the coloniser and his/her culture. **Trevelyan** rightly recognises the advantages of the process. As the native converses with the best minds of England through English literature, s/he comes to form a much higher opinion of the English than by a normal daily interaction with actual English people. Does **Trevelyan** mean to say that the real face of the British Empire does not invite/deserve homage on the part of the colonised subject? What is however certain is the fact of conquest and domination and its removal from the sphere of reflection and criticism through the agency of English literature. **Trevelyan**, like **Macaulay** uses analogies from history to justify his thesis. But while **Macaulay** concentrates on the culture's potential of spreading civilisation in an alien land, **Trevelyan** notes in glee that the people of subjugated nations never revolted against their conquerors as they were taught to identify themselves with the invaders. This was achieved by a dissemination of the conqueror's culture. Speaking of the Romans he points out that:

> *Acquisitions made by superiority in war, were consolidated by superiority in the arts of peace; and the remembrance of the original violence was lost in that of the benefits which resulted from it. The provincials of Italy, Spain, Africa and Gaul having no ambitions except to imitate the Romans and to share their privileges with them, remained to the last faithful subjects of the empire.*

Historical examples prove that imperialism has triumphed not by mere repression but by a destruction of the memory of the repression by projecting itself as the benefactor of the subjected people. As **Trevelyan** correctly notes, the benefits that accrue from such a relationship not only include the transference of a superior culture from the metropolis to the colony but also a certain sharing of power and privileges.

In the Indian context, this sharing would mean the absorption of the natives into the British administrative structure. **Trevelyan** agreed with **J S Mill** who advocated the appointment of Indians to the civil government posts "in proportion as the Native [became] trustworthy and qualified for high office." Thus while anglicisation, for **Trevelyan** ensures a cultural hegemony, it is also made a precondition for the opening up of employment opportunities. English education will produce natives "with enlightened views and integrity which distinguish European officers." These natives it was believed would make efficient administrators. It is not difficult to find reasons for this imperial generosity. As **Trevelyan** points out, it was the new policy of **Lord William Bentink** that made government jobs available to the anglicised Indian. He tells us that the old policy of excluding Indians from the British civil administration was a product of the **Cornwallis** era. **Trevelyan** agrees with the assumptions on which **Cornwallis** based his policy. The assumption was of course, the vast superiority of the Europeans in administrative skills. **Cornwallis'** policy was shelved because "the public revenue did not admit of the employment of a sufficient number" of European officers. And **William Bentinck** who was in the words of **John Clive** "sent to economize" solved this problem by employing natives to transact public business.

However, it cannot be said that **Trevelyan**'s support for **Bentinck-Macaulay** anglicisation policy was completely determined by a desire to ensure that the oppressive nature of British Empire was kept well hidden. He genuinely believed that India was in a need for social-cultural resurgence. He contended that this renaissance could be brought about by English education alone. He was also

cultivation of Persian and Sanskrit learning which, in his view, could never enrich the vernaculars. By enrichment, **Trevelyan** meant the flow of modern ideas into the native Indian languages. These ideas would, in his opinion, lead to the growth of a rich indigenous vernacular literature. Since English literature and European sciences will be the source of inspiration for the literature in these diverse Indian languages there will develop, in **Trevelyan**'s words "a common standard of taste, a common nomenclature." In other words, English will function as a uniting factor for all these literatures. This union will ultimately facilitate the emergence of a national literature. What **Trevelyan** had in mind was an image of a nation broken up into different linguistic groups and correspondingly, different cultures with English serving as a nodal language that unites these linguistic entities. The result will be "a united and enlightened nation."

Trevelyan believed that the growth of a national literature of India conformed to his disparaging view of native, or local cultural forms. The diversity among languages in India is seen by him not as an instance of a rich cultural plurality but as "one of the greatest existing obstacles to improvement in India." **Trevelyan**'s *Education* encapsulates an entire gamut of arguments to justify the introduction of English studies in India. It encompasses several ideological terrains ranging from strong missionary fervour for the upliftment of the poor, benighted Asiatics to the plain **Machiavellian** desire to consolidate and strengthen British imperial interests. The tract reveals a highly self-conscious voice in complete harmony with the imperial ideology. Yet it is able to provide us with some glimpses of the real motives that lay behind the institutionalisation of English Studies in India.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The views of **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan** played a decisive role in the growth of the opinion that political intervention in the realm of Indian culture was not inimical to British imperialism. The promotion of English literature and English language was seen as a measure intended to consolidate the gains made through conquest and suppression. A new interpretation of the causes of the disaffection and rebellion among the natives was also responsible for the growth of this opinion. Earlier the native was seen as volatile and murderous where his/her religion was concerned. Thus any attempt at cultural assimilation was seen as one that invited a negative response from the semi-barbaric Indian. This Indian, it was suspected, could sow seeds of revolt among other natives.

This traditional view of the native was contradicted by social reformers like **Ram Mohun Roy** who supported the introduction of liberal rational ideas of the West in India. Now the source of subversion was no longer a hostile Indian whose religious sensibility was hurt but a cultural gap between the Indians and their rulers. Native culture is interpreted as an agent that increases this gap. For **Macaulay** and his brother-in-law, **Trevelyan,** the function of English education was to close this gap by promoting a devaluation and eventual rejection of native cultures by the natives themselves and teaching them to imitate/respect the cultural values of Britain.

Although the socio-political control of the Indian masses was the aim of the new educational plan, it was masked by the ostensible project of the intellectual and moral regeneration of the colonised subject. This project also gave birth to the now familiar dichotomy of the backward Indian society and culture and the liberal civilisation of the West with English as its vehicle. This dichotomy exercised a tremendous sway over the mind of many Indians in the post-Independence era. English education is widely regarded as a symbol of power and prestige, of civilised attitudes and cultural superiority in contemporary India. In the next unit this continuing hegemony of

English studies as well as certain political strategies that were evolved by the political class in the post-1947 era to counteract it will be examined.

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the education policy in colonial India prior to the establishment of English Studies.
2. What is the contribution of the social reform movement in India to the institutionalisation of English Studies?
3. Examine Ram Mohun Roy's critique of Sanskrit learning keeping in mind his role as a social reformer.
4. What, in Ram Mohun's view is the role of English Studies in India?
5. Discuss the comparison that Ram Mohun makes between medieval scholasticism of Europe and the system of Sanskrit learning in India.
6. What are the arguments used by T B Macaulay in his *Minute on Indian Education* to advocate the introduction of English in India?
7. "Macaulay's plea for cultural assimilation of the natives is actually a new strategy of socio-political control." Examine the *Minute* in the light of the statement.
8. Critically analyse Macaulay's attack on the Orientalist position on Indian Education.
9. What were the similarities and differences between the views of C E Trevelyan and the missionaries on the question of Indian education?
10. What reasons does Trevelyan give for his rejection of indigenous Indian learning?

2.9 GLOSSARY

Anglicists: The group of company officials who pleaded for the teaching of European literature and sciences through the medium of English.

Baconian: From Francis Bacon (1561-1626) the great English humanist and philosopher. Bacon was the first philosopher who based his understanding of the world on rational, and scientific principles.

Enlightenment: An intellectual movement which developed in Western Europe in the 17th century and reached its zenith in the eighteenth. The movement expressed a trust in man's reason as adequate to solve all problems. It was against all forms of superstition, prejudice and irrational belief in tradition and authority.

Hegemony: 'hegemony' denotes a process in which domination is achieved through consent not force, i.e. by making the people agree with the ideas of their rulers.

Idolatory: The worship of idols or images.

Imperialism: The political and economic domination of one country by another.

Machiavellian: From Machiavelli (1469-1527) the great Italian political thinker of the Renaissance period. Machiavelli developed the idea of politics as a game of power that remains uninfluenced by an "absolute moral law. The term 'Machiavellian' is nowadays used in a pejorative sense denoting the cynical manipulation of people in order to stay in power.

Metropolis: The home country of the colonisers.

Native: The original inhabitants of a country as opposed to the colonists who left their own land and lived in the land of the 'natives.'

Orientalists: The group of company officials who were in favour of teaching classical Indian languages such as Sanskrit Arabic and Persian to the Indians.

Scholasticism: The philosophy of the schoolman of medieval Europe. The speculations of the philosophers of the medieval era excluded man's earthly existence from their scope. Instead they discussed God, heave and hell.

UNIT 3 A VIEW OF POST INDEPENDENCE DEBATES

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 English and Interpretations of the Nationalist Movement
3.3 The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-1949)
3.3.1 The Kothari Commission (1964- 1966)
3.4 The Regionalisation Scheme and its Critique
3.4.1 Major Universities
3.5 Rising Social Disparities and the New Educational Policy
3.6 The Rise of New Social Forces
3.6.1 The Ramamurti Commission
3.7 New Developments on the Educational Scene
3.8 Let Us Sum Up
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this Unit is to give a critical account of the fierce debates that raged on the 'place of English in free India', its role in the evolution of the national movement and nationalist ideology, its importance in the field of science and technology and its role in shaping the different educational policies of the Indian governments in the post-Independence era. An understanding of these debates is necessary for charting out the process through which the cultural identity of the Indian nation was forged. The secondary objective of this unit would be to discern the political imperatives for the definition of a national culture and its role in controlling waves of dissidence and rebellion emanating from within the nation-state.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we examined the close relationship that existed between the policy of educating the Indians in the literature and language of the colonisers and the political-ideological imperatives of British imperialism. The great nationalists of the pre-Independence period had understood the crucial role of English in the hegemonisation of the native mind. The political independence of India from British rule raised hopes of a possible decolonisation in cultural and educational fields through the formulation of new policies by the Indian government. One of the simplest strategies to subvert the dominance of English was its replacement by a modern Indian language. However, those who interpreted English as a vehicle of imperial domination and hoped that it would be abolished by the Indian State soon found that their opinion did not exercise a universal sway over the Indian intelligentsia and the policy makers of Independent India. Let us examine the debates on the role played by English Studies before we proceed, any further. The debates on the role played by English studies in India can be classified into two parts. The first contains a set of assessments of the original reasons for the introduction of English by the British in India and the impact of English education on the social and cultural identity of the different sections of Indian society. The other set of debates concentrated upon the place and relevance of English in an Independent India. It is evident that the interpretations of the role of English in colonial India in relation to the interests of the imperial regime and the subject people would result in an

incorporation/rejection of English in the post-Independence era. For, as Swati Joshi points out:

> *English cannot be viewed like any other foreign language. The teaching of English has a long history; a history of political and economic subjugation of the Indian masses; a history of marginalisation of native forms of culture (**Joshi**, p. 1 Rethinking English).*

English being a legacy of colonial rule, it is obvious that its continuance in a India where political decolonisation has been accomplished will come under intense critical scrutiny.

Both the official and unofficial perspectives on English studies in contemporary India have chosen not to ignore linkages between English and the colonial aim to establish a socio-cultural hegemonic structure that was intended to perpetuate colonial rule. In such a case, it is surprising that there has been no consensus on the rejection of English even in recent times. How is it that English was retained in India despite the attempts of several Education Commissions' to replace it with some Indian language? Is it that the preservation (and expansion) of English was not based on an alternative view of the history of the colonial period but on the socio-economic conditions of an independent nation? These are some questions that will be dealt with in subsequent sections of this unit. In the next section let us examine the relevance of English in Independent India.

3.2 ENGLISH AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Though the intelligentsia of free India could not ignore the imperialist goals of **Bentinck, Macaulay** and **Trevelyan** – the chief architects of English education in India, it questioned the extent of their fulfilment. The educationists and political thinkers emphasised the importance of the period between **1835** (the official date of the introduction of English) and **1947** (the year of independence). It is well known that this period was a witness to the gradual growth of the discontent of the Indian people that eventually culminated in a nationalist struggle against exploitative foreign rule. The major argument of the post-1947 era in favour of English posits an organic link between the study of English by Indians and the growth of a nationalist consciousness. This argument has virtually determined all discussions on the place of English in independent India. The relevance of English is not discussed in relation to the socio-economic configurations of the new nation-state, but is endorsed or rejected in accordance with the differing interpretations of the contribution of English to the Indian anti-colonial struggle.

In support of the view that the introduction of English in India was deeply ironical as it ultimately helped in rooting out the British from Indian soil, various testimonies ranging from the utterances of British colonial administrators like **Lord Curzon** to the views of an ardent nationalist like **Lala Lajpat Rai** are invoked. **Curzon** disappointed and angry with the experiment of English education felt that it gave birth to dissidence and rebellion in the ranks of anglicised Indians:

> *There exists a powerful school of opinion which does not hide its conviction that the experiment was a mistake and that its result has been disaster. . . . It has given birth to a tone of kind and to type of character that is ill-regulated, averse from discipline, discontented and in some cases actually disloyal.*

Curzon's comment on the deleterious impact of anglicisation of the natives on the stability of the British Empire makes a strong case for the contention that the study of English made the native more self-aware and conscious of his/ her victimised status. **Lajpat Rai** also associates English education with modern, progressive ideals that are to be adopted if India is to forge ahead towards a brighter future. English for **Lajpat Rai** does not necessarily entail a process of acculturation but is merely a vehicle of modernity:

> *We do not want to be English or German or American or Japanese: true, we want to be Indians, but modern up to date progressive Indians; proud of our past and aspiring to a greater and a nobler future.*

Lajpat Rai sees modernity as an essential component of Indian nationhood, a modernity that is not in conflict with the past. Rather the past is seen as a cultural heritage in which Indians can take pride. Thus while **Lajpat Rai** avoids the antagonistic relation between the Indian past and the rational, progressive values of the West so central to the imperial discourse, he has no doubt that English education instituted by the colonists would have a positive impact. The pronouncements of **Curzon** and **Lajpat Rai** were used to legitimise a discourse that harps upon English as a doorway to modern, rational thought. The supporters of English in India after 1947 decided that the door be kept open so that India does not relapse into a pre-modern phase of civilisation (read barbarism). This discourse leaves its indelible mark on the report of the **Radhakrishnan Commission On Higher Education (1948-49).** Let us examine the **Radhakrishnan Commission** next.

3.3 THE RADHAKRISHNAN COMMISSION (1948-49)

Let us discuss the merits/ demerits of the **Radhakrishnan Commission** in this section. The makers of the Indian Constitution reposed all their faith in the ideals of the modern world. **The Radhakrishnan Commission Report** displays a similar faith in its definition of the role of the universities in society. According to the **Commission** Universities are "homes of intellectual adventure"(source) and the aim of education is to promote ideals of justice, liberty and fraternity and produce citizens who would work for a just, egalitarian social order. The Report discourages "a fatal obsession of the perfection of the past" and emphasises that the modern scholar should undertake a critical study of the past. To the question as to whether these modern values are products of indigenous structures of thought or are imposed from without, the Report is probably more in agreement with the latter proposition. Thus it advocates that English be retained so as to "keep ourselves in touch with the living stream of ever-growing knowledge." If the position of English is unassailable in the context of the modern world, why does the **Commission** recommend the dethronement of English as the medium of instruction and its replacement by an Indian language? To answer this question it is necessary to focus upon the **Commission**'s critique of revivalism and its definition of Indian culture.

The **Commission** rightly focuses upon the dangers of revivalist tendencies in society and culture by rejecting an unequivocal glorification of Indian past. It asks the scholars and intellectuals to undertake a rational assessment of the negative features of Indian history with the help of all the apparatuses of modern thought. Thus, it avoids the reductive dichotomy – indigenous versus foreign which forms the parameters of revivalist ideologies. Therefore it cannot be said that the recommendation of replacing English by an Indian language reflects revivalist concepts at work in the framing of educational policy. If the **Commission** refuses to circumscribe Indian culture within an essentialist paradigm, it does so due to its awareness of the wide diversity of cultures within India. It is obvious that the **Commission** cannot avoid the political implications of cultural and linguistic

plurality. Thus while it does not view Indian culture as a monolith, it asserts that India has evolved a common culture.

> *After centuries of stress and conflict India has gradually evolved a common civilisation, a collective consciousness which embraces wide varieties of temperament, tradition, ways of thought and belief. Our people belong to different provinces speak their own languages, preserve their own habits and customs. . . . Despite all these, there is a fundamental unity which binds the people together as members of one society with the same cultural loyalties.* (source)

Though it is not clear what it is that unites people who speak different languages and follow different faiths, it is evident the **Commission**'s aim is to seek a legitimisation of the formation of the nation. The implicit assertion is that the unity of India is not a fictional construct arbitrarily imposed from outside but already exists in the cultural fabric of the country.

Here it might be asked – what is the place of English in Indian culture? Can we regard English as un-Indian? Since the **Commission** recognises the dynamism of Indian culture, English would not be foreign in its view. Again as the **Commission** visualises Indian civilisation as a peaceful co-existence of many cultures, English, the harbinger of a modern worldview would be easily absorbed by it. This co-existence was not possible in the colonial era when English edged out other languages and correspondingly the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India's past. This marginalisation led to a feeling among educated Indians that they were "without roots." The **Commission** seeks to restore the balance by encouraging the study and development of regional languages. While the **Commission** envisaged the continuance of English in order to remain in contact with modern developments in the field of knowledge, it did not visualise English as a language which was essential for the unity of the nation. Also it did not feel that any other language could be used to define the cultural identity of a nation composed of diverse linguistic groups and cultures. In fact it preferred to define the Indian nation as a federation and therefore advocated the development of a federal language through the assimilation of words from various sources.

The **Commission** did not comment upon the use of this federal language and whether it would be used as a medium of instruction all over the nation to ensure the **Nehruvian** "unity in diversity." Rather it seemed to be confused on this question as it sought to replace English with an Indian language. However the need for a federal language implicitly communicated the fact that no Indian language could become the medium of instruction all over India. The principle of federalism is questioned if a language of one particular region is imposed on all other regions. It is probable that the **Commission** had Hindi on its mind as a suitable replacement for English. The basic aim of the **Commission** it appears was to remove English from its privileged position as the medium of education. The encouragement of indigenous languages and cultural practices as well as the overriding imperative of the nation's unity and integrity was the main ideological planks on which its recommendations were based.

The **Commission**'s opposition to English was probably inspired by the widespread recognition and a comprehensive critique of imperial ideologies. The critique appeared in its most forceful form in the utterances of **Mahatma Gandhi**. **Gandhi** not only saw English as a barrier in the way of Indian cultural development but also interpreted the widespread use of English in civil institutions as a sign of cultural enslavement of the Indian people:

> *Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium, that, when I become a Barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue. . . . Is it not a sign of slavery? (source)*

For **Gandhi**, the project of decolonisation entailed a freedom from the coloniser's language. The political freedom, in **Gandhi**'s view, has to be accompanied by a linguistic freedom of the colonised people.

Though the **Radhakrishnan Commission** was guided in its language policy by this anti-colonial sentiment, it could not dislodge English from its dominant position. This was partly due to its silence on the issue of India's national language as well as its inability to equate the federal language it sought to develop with the national language. As a result, English continued to be used as the dominant medium of education in the country. The next commission came into existence in 1964. The recommendations of which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 The Kothari Commission (1964-66)

The **Radhakrishnan Commission**'s views on the language question rested on a firm assertion of India's federalism, the centralising imperatives of the Indian State brought to the fore, the question of the national language. As Hindi was made the official language of the Union, it became easier to project it as a possible national language of India. However, this proposal was unacceptable to the Southern States that were prepared to give Hindi no more respect than was given to any regional language. When **Nehru** disclosed his plans for the replacement of English by Hindi, the South interpreted the move as an infringement on the rights of the (southern) states to develop and enrich their own languages. The dominant opinion was that if Hindi were accepted as the national lingua franca:

> *Indian languages would have no greater provenance and no higher prestige than they enjoyed during the last decade of British rule. (source)*

The controversy over the issue of national language gave an impetus to the then dormant linguistic nationalism in many states with violent demonstrations and militant activism. These developments in Indian polity gave rise to fears that the nation and its philosophy of federalism stood endangered. Many political analysts were of the view that a serious political exercise needed to be carried out to silence these harsh notes of dissent. In 1964, the government of India appointed an Education Commission under the Chairmanship of **Dr D S Kothari**. It cannot be said that the **Kothari Commission** was appointed to carry out a specific task of quelling the political-social tensions brewing within the nation. Yet the modified three-language formula evolved by the Commission was designed to satisfy the various divergent perspectives on the question of language. As the **Commission** itself pointed out, in fashioning the formula "the impelling considerations were more political and social than educational." (source) The three language formula consisted of:

> *The mother tongue or the regional language*
> *The official language of the Union (i.e. Hindi) or the associate official language of the Union (English)*
> *A modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (1) and (2).*

It can be easily seen that the options given by the **Education Commission** allow ample space for the inclusion of English and the rejection of Hindi in states where the anti-Hindi movements held sway. The choice between a modern Indian language and a foreign language also gave the states a free hand in not including any other regional language than their own (i.e. the mother tongue). In the next section we shall attempt a critique of the regionalisation scheme.

3.4 THE REGIONALISATION SCHEME AND ITS CRITIQUE

The **Commission** also recommended "the development of all modern Indian languages for use in education as well as in administration. . . ." But the most important recommendation of the **Commission** was the regionalisation of the medium of education in the Universities. This proposal drew a lot of protest from scholars, educationists and academics. The protest was primarily directed at what was seen as an attempt to create eradicable barriers in the way of national unity. Attempts were made to remind the Indian State that the political union of the country had a relatively short history and India in the past never achieved a perfect unity due to the multiplicity of languages and cultures. It was feared by scholars like **A A Karve** that if the **Commission**'s plan of regionalisation was implemented:

> *All hope of India's making rapid progress as a modern country and sinking its regional and linguistic differences in the interest of national unity would be shattered. (source)*

If national unity is to be kept at the top of any educational agenda what will be the solution to the language problem in India? **Karve** like many educationists of the day does not pay any attention to the idea of a federal language evolved by the **Radhakrishnan Commission**. English, in **Karve**'s opinion is best suited to occupy the hallowed place of the medium of instruction as it has been not only used "as the language of instruction during the last one hundred years", but "has also served us as a means of communication between scholars from different parts of India and between them and the intellectuals of the outside world." (source)

The responses to the **Kothari Commission**'s regionalisation scheme clearly show that the dominant groups in university and administrative circles were upset by what they understood as a threat to the long reign of English as the language of higher education. They advocated the preservation of the *status quo* in the name of national and international integration. It is also evident that they perceived the question of integration in a very narrow sense, namely the freedom of communication between scholars and academics in the national and international arena. It is also significant that a tirade against regionalisation implicitly rejected the **Nehruvian** position on Indian cultural identity. **Nehru**'s concept of a common cultural base in India despite its varied manifestations was replaced by the revitalisation of the old colonial idea that English contribute to a large extent, to the evolution of the Indian nation and a common national culture. Thus the argument runs that if regional languages replaced English, India would suffer a political and cultural disintegration.

But were the proposals of the **Kothari Commission** principally directed against the study of English in India? On a careful scrutiny of the **Commission**'s report a number of evidences emerge which prove that the **Commission** was not unduly biased against English. As previously shown, the **Commission**'s three-language scheme was structured in such a way that many states could introduce English instead of Indian languages like Hindi. Also while the **Commission** advocated the establishment of "centres of advanced study" (source) for the development of all modern Indian languages, it also stressed that the Universities and Colleges be provided with "adequate facilities" for the study of English. The **Commission** emphasised that the continuance of English was highly desirable because not only did it occupy a significant place on the Indian education scene as a library language but, it could be used for developing the Indian languages.

The concept of the development of Indian languages through English was not new. In fact it can be traced to the debates in the early nineteenth century when English

studies was introduced in India. The major issue over which the British educational administrators fought was the enrichment of the Indian vernaculars. While the Orientalists considered Sanskrit and Arabic as essential for the growth of the vernaculars, the Anglicists were of the view that English was best suited for such a use as it provided access to the vast developments in science, technology and social sciences unheard of in the eastern world. It is evident that the **Commission** more or less agreed with the views of **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan**. But the enrichment project also recognised a hierarchy among languages. It amounted to an admission on the part of the **Commission** that the modern Indian languages, when compared to English, were deficient in certain respects. It questioned the legitimacy of the **Commission**'s own project of regionalisation of the medium of higher education. It also strengthened the arguments that questioned the suitability of Indian regional languages for the purposes of higher education. Thus **A A Karve** writes:

> *If a language is to serve efficiently as medium of instruction in college and universities, it must satisfy certain basic requirements. First it must be capable of expressing modern thought which . . . includes pure and applied science, technology, the humanities and social sciences. An adequate terminology must be available in that language and it must be capable of development so that new ideas and new words can readily be added to it. (source)*

As none of the Indian languages fulfils these requirements, **Karve** concludes that regionalisation cannot be effected without causing great harm to academic excellence in the Indian universities.

It is true that the **Commission**'s programme of regionalisation was to be carried out in a phased manner over a period of ten years. Did the **Commission** think that the regional languages would be ready to bear the academic burden of higher education in ten years? In other words, there was a certain amount of tentativeness and lack of conviction in the **Commission**'s intention to switch over from English to the regional languages. This shall be duly examined in the next section.

3.4.1 Major Universities

The **Commission**'s proposal to establish five or six 'major' universities in the country also reveals that it felt doubtful about the fate of higher education after the change of medium from English to regional languages. The ostensible purpose of these super Universities was to raise the general academic standard of the country so as to prevent the exodus of students to foreign countries (for training), and to restore to India, the centre of gravity of academic life. However, it is noteworthy that the so-called major universities would have English as the medium of education. The reason given by the **Commission** for choosing English was that the teachers and students would be drawn on an all-India basis. Did the **Commission** feel that other universities with Indian languages as the medium would fail to reach the required academic excellence that would make India one with the West in terms of academic standards? Whatever be the reason, an implementation of the proposal would have resulted in a hierarchy between the universities imparting education in English and others that carried their academic work in Indian languages.

It is also a well known fact that the annual migration of Indian students to foreign countries is due to all pervasive conception of the Indian middle class that academic standards of the West far exceed those of India. This view may be correct but this does not mean that it is arrived at through a process of a rational comparative exercise. In fact the perspective that dominates the mind of an average middle class Indian scholar is that there is no need to compare the academic productions of the West and those of India, so infinitely superior are the former to the latter. Prejudices that date back to the colonial regime in India and play an important part in the formulation of such a view. The dominant prejudice produced by the system of

English education was the superiority of the literature and language of the colonial masters.

British ideologues instilled into the native mind that English was an agent of rationality and modern sensibility. The average middle class Indian student well versed in English in post-independence, India was inclined to enrol him / herself in the 'original' centres of English learning (i.e. **Oxford** and **Cambridge**) than to languish in 'sub-standard' institutes of higher education in India. The association of English with civilisational and cultural progress was never seriously questioned even after Independence. The bureaucracy and universities of Independent India have shown a marked preference for students who have received education in Western countries thus replicating the pre-independence period when the England-returned elite manned the higher echelons of administration and educational institutions. The **Commission** failed to see all these factors responsible for the so-called brain drain. Though it did not take suitable measures to counter the bias for English education, it certainly strengthened the dominant notion of the superiority of English by recommending the establishment of major universities.

It is also certain that these universities would not have posed a significant challenge to **Oxford** or **Harvard**, given the attitude of the Indian elite towards 'foreign' education. Furthermore the domination of these foreign-returned Indians over Indian bureaucracy and academic institutions would not be questioned as long as the notorious notion of the superiority of western educational practices exists. As **A R Kamat** points out:

> *Only a determined policy of encouraging Indian scholarship coupled with the creation of more and better facilities for advanced research in the country and a careful selection and strict control of research students sent abroad for training could eventually break this unhealthy grip of the foreign returned elite on the academic life of the country. (source)*

Kamat's association of English with Indian elitism marks a significant departure from the traditional views on Indian education. The usual interpretation of English education as a familiarisation tool with modern forms of thought and progressive attitudes is replaced by a view that the continuance of English in India perpetuated the political-social hegemony of the Indian ruling class. Thus the ruling elite of India betrayed any hope of an indigenous cultural revolution. As **Kamat** observes the arbiters of India's destiny soon found out that:

> *Their interests were better served not by removing this stranglehold [of English] but by continuing it with minor modifications so that their own offspring (often mediocre and no good) could also join the select group of 'foreign trained.' (source)*

Thus, it is not surprising that the proposal to educate Indians through indigenous languages met with a lot of resistance and criticism. Higher education through regional languages meant an opening of avenues for the Indian youth from the backward areas of Indian states that wanted to pursue higher studies. In other words it meant establishing a contact with the Indian masses that did not speak English and encouraging them to come up to the level of the English trained elite. However the **Commission** saw to it that the interests of the ruling class were protected. The major universities had English as the medium of education. The implicit suggestion being that they were required to study in the non-major universities. These universities would have been seriously impoverished due to the **Commission's** plans to collect the "critical mass" of the best amongst teachers and students. Thus the non-English student would have been doubly victimised – by the falling standards of the regional universities in which s/ he studied and indirectly by the super universities responsible for the decline of academic life in his/her university.

It would not be far fetched to conclude that the **Kothari Commission**'s recommendations were not designed to produce a cultural revolution. Rather, they protected the power and privileges of the English speaking few who were already deeply entrenched in the administrative and academic institutions of post-Independence India.

3.5 RISING SOCIAL DISPARITIES AND THE NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The **Kothari Commission** was conscious of the link between higher education and rising unemployment. It discovered that the universities produced a great number of graduates, many of who were unable to find employment in the job market. Yet it could not frame a policy to help the educated unemployed youth. Its measures to counter unemployment were negative in nature. It sought the implementation of the selective admission system so that overproduction of graduates could be prevented. Thus the 1970s saw an increase in urban and rural unemployment. The social disparities gave rise to an intense dissatisfaction of the Indian masses with the political establishment. As the vast majority of the population toiled for its daily bread education became the first casualty. The decline of education in the backward and rural areas of India reflected disillusionment with the educational system, which did not equip the people with any source of livelihood. **The National Policy on Education (NPE)** of 1986 reflected a growing realisation on the part of the ruling establishment that educational goals had to be redefined. The **NPE** did not worry about the decline of academic standards. Rather it stressed:

> *The need for the removal of disparities and emphasised the steps to be taken to equalise educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far – women, scheduled castes and tribes. (source)*

However, the **NPE**'s quest for social justice remained incomplete as it maintained a status quo on the question of English in India. On the subject of languages it observed that:

> *The Educational policy of 1968 had examined the question of the development of languages in great detail; its essential provision can hardly be improved upon and are as relevant as today. (source)*

Thus the dominance of English was not questioned by the **NPE**. The development of regional languages was seen as a purely cultural activity and was therefore linked to an understanding of the diverse socio-cultural systems of the people. Since the respect for English in the Indian civil society was never questioned by the **NPE** it was not surprising that the English speaking class continued to exercise its dominance over Indian administrative and academic institutions. If the top jobs were 'reserved' for this class, one can ask that what was the purpose behind the spread of education among the lower strata of Indian society which could never seriously think of upward social mobility? It is significant that **NPE** never asks such uncomfortable questions which empty its scheme of "equal access to education to all" of any meaning whatsoever. Let us now take a look at the rise of new social forces that came into being as a result of these commissions.

3.6 THE RISE OF NEW SOCIAL FORCES

As unemployment and poverty rose in India due to the impoverishment of the agricultural sector and indiscriminate industrialisation of the country, the consciousness that the political class has failed in its promises grew stronger. The

diverse political groups that had come up in the meantime and posed a significant challenge to India's main political party – the **Congress**, who exploited this consciousness. The social and economic disempowerment of people was the chief strength of such groups which otherwise held sectarian views about Indian society. These groups to further their own political agendas used the anguish of the oppressed masses. The decade of the nineties saw an increased incidence of caste and communal violence that threatened to tear the secular fabric of the country to shreds. The **United Front** government that came to power in the early 1990s realised these threats and sought to counter them. In 1990 it appointed the **Ramamurti Commission** to review the 1986 educational policy and to bring about educational reforms so as to check the growing menace of casteism and communalism in Indian society.

3.6.1 The Ramamurti Commission

The **Ramamurti Commission** rightly focussed upon the evils of casteism, communalism and obscurantism that had also in its view infested educational establishments. It understood that the reason for the growth of such forces lay on the socio-economic oppression of the Indian masses. Thus, in the **Commission**'s scheme of education, villages were assigned a primary role. The reason given was that the majority of the Indian population lived in villages. Villages are "where our producers live, voters live, the poor and illiterate live." (source) It was clear that the **Commission**'s educational framework had no place or use for English. However the **Commission** neglected the sphere of higher education and therefore, the controversial subject of languages. Rather, it insisted upon the universalisation of primary education and vocationalisation and decentralisation of education in general. Decentralisation meant an implicit opposition to the idea of all India institutes that were meant to produce the anglicised elites of India. The **Ramamurti Commission** did not indulge in any debates on cultural unity or diversity of India as these debates were usually used to oppose the process of educational decentralisation. Its aim was to educate the masses directly so as to generate a consciousness of social justice and equality in them.

Thus the **Commission** implicitly critiqued the **Macaulayan** idea of educating a privileged few. It rejected the fake pessimism of the ruling class (borrowed from **Macaulay**) expressed in the view that it was impossible to educate the vast population of an equally vast country such as India. Several developments have taken place thereafter that needs to be looked at. This will be done in the next section.

3.7 NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EDUCATIONAL SCENE

As the **United Front** government did not remain long in power, the next government shelved the recommendations of the **Ramamurti Commission**. The **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)** government in 1998 appointed a group of experts to give suggestions on educational practice. The group's recommendations are particularly disturbing in the context of multilingual and multicultural identity of Indian society. The experts demanded "the curriculum from the primary to the highest education should be indianised, nationalised and spiritualised." (source) This indigenisation would be accomplished by establishing Sanskrit Universities in four zones of the country, making Sanskrit a compulsory subject from Class III to X and by teaching a course on Indian philosophy in the higher education programme.

Can we conclude that these recommendations constitute an attack on the supremacy of English in India by insisting on the teaching of Sanskrit and nationalisation of the

curriculum? Or is it that the project of nationalisation defines the cultural identity of India within such restrictive parameters that it marginalises other indigenous cultures? The emphasis on the teaching of Sanskrit recalls the new familiar debates among the British officials in the early nineteenth century on the relative claims of classical Indian languages (Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) and English. The oppositional relationship between English and the classical languages of India developed by the British colonialists was directly linked to the binary system of colonial discourse in which the modernity of the West became real only in relation to the pre-modern civilisations of the East. Both the British Orientalists and Anglicists had a consensus on this view of Indian culture whose roots, in their view lay in the ancient Sanskrit texts like the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. For these groups, the introduction of English in India was a violation of Indian cultural identity, an imposition of modern structures of thought on an ancient (read static) civilisation.

The programme of Indianisation clearly reflects a colonial mindset which dehistoricised Indian culture and defined it in opposition to the modern/materialistic culture of the West. Not only did it reject values of rationality, scientific attitude and secularism as the ideological baggage of modernity but also excluded the contribution of other religious and ethnic communities to the growth of Indian culture. It is interesting to speculate on the impact of this intolerant form of thought on English education. It is significant that the **BJP** government has not till now proposed any radical measures to curtail the dominance of English in the academic sphere. In fact in recent years there has been a growth of educational centres (both public and private) that intend to give Indians a good working knowledge of English. More than ever, English is now associated with social power and prestige. The growth and consolidation of English studies in the 1990s is not a mysterious phenomenon. The opening up of Indian economy to foreign investors in 1991 resulted in a drastic increase of the share of foreign capital in Indian industrial and commercial establishments. The English trained executive and salesman, more than ever before, was in great demand to carry out the commercial transactions of the multinational corporations. The Indian middle class, on expected lines, showed great eagerness to grab the opportunity with English as its passport to social and economic advancement.

Although the Indian elite has used English to reap material and social benefits, it has not used English to critique conservative and decadent social and institutional structures. It has rejected the legacy of the anglicised elite of the nineteenth century represented by figures such as **Raja Rammohun Roy** and **H L V Derozio**. It uses colonialist paradigms to define Indian culture. The writers and intellectuals of this class write in English but are obsessed with ideas of Indianness, Indian mode of life, Indian customs, Indian cuisine, the spirituality of ancient India, etc. The concept of Indianness not only homogenises the highly plural nature of the Indian cultural fabric but also ignores the deep divisions and fissures in Indian society. Most of the contemporary Indian writing in English is thus doomed to a dull and tedious celebration of Indianness. It does so at an immense cost – the exclusion of the concerns of the Indian masses.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, **Nehru**'s hope of building an educational system on new foundations after independence has been belied. English which was used by the colonial masters in the nineteenth century to build up a class of indigenous elites has not only continued but has become synonymous with education itself in the post-independence period of Indian history. The Indian elite, which played a progressive role in the nationalist struggle against British imperialism, lost its contact with the masses in the decades that followed Indian independence. The national system of education with the dissemination of political, social and cultural awareness among the Indian people

as its goal could not be carried through English. Any attempt to bring the fruits of modern science and arts to the doorsteps of the people entailed the use of the people's own languages.

However, such a goal was not congenial to the interests of the Indian ruling class. It was a well calculated strategy of this class to keep the masses in ignorance by using English which not only insulated them from the concerns of the people but also gave them social power and prestige. At the same time the ruling elite justified the use of English in the name of progress, modernity and national unity and integrity. It raised the bogey of linguistic nationalism, which, in its view threatened to split the nations into small linguistic entities. Both the attempt to evolve a federal language, which would transcend linguistic boundaries and the proposition that English be used as the national language, were based on the theoretical premise that a single language unites people while several languages divide them.

The proposal to regionalise the medium of instruction reflects the ruling class's dream to reach out to the people that it was unable to realise due to its own political and social compulsions. As a result regionalisation has not been effected in actual practice. Even in places where it has taken place, the academic standards are allowed to decline through insufficient funding and callous neglect. On the other hand institutions with English as its bulwark are seen to prosper and continue to produce anglicised natives who generally display no trace of an enlightened social consciousness. It will not be an exaggeration when we say that the growth of English Studies in India after 1947 parallels the rise of an exploitative social system and a marked increase in social disparities.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the attempts made by the several Education Commissions to displace English as the medium of instruction by Indian languages in the post-independence era.

2. Discuss the three-language formula recommended by the Kothari Commission of 1964-66. Do you think the formula was an attempt at a compromise between different political views on the subject of education?

3. "English played a highly significant role in the definition of Indian culture". Examine the statement in the light of the various debates on the relationship between English and Indian culture.

4. Do you think that the dominance of English in the educational sphere after 1947 reflects a betrayal of the promises made to the Indian people at the time of independence? Give a reasoned answer.

UNIT 4 SETTLING DOWN OF ENGLISH AS STUDIES AND MEDIUM

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 India in the Nineteen Fifties
4.3 English as the Medium of Instruction
4.4 The Settling Down of English in India
4.5 Institutionalisation of English in India
4.6 For English or Resisting It?
4.7 Conflict Between Indian Literatures and English
  4.7.1 Literary Writing in Indian Languages
  4.7.2 Indian English Writing
4.8 Let Us Sum Up
4.9 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The present unit will familiarise you with a period in which all of us have lived and grown up watching the process of consolidation of a foreign language and strengthening of its grip on our minds and hearts. I use 'minds and hearts' to denote the emotive aspect of our response to a language that has its centre elsewhere. We shall also investigate in this unit the issue of an alien language gradually becoming our own and interestingly playing the role of a unifier, or conversely coming in the way of evolution of the different Indian languages contend as they do with a strong adversary. Should we be realistic or merely reactive will be the question we address finally in this unit.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the final part of Unit 1 in this Block, we took up the complex question of interaction between a language inherited by us from our colonial masters and those other languages with us that have their source in our own long history of existence. Was the interaction smooth and spontaneous, or did it have a contentious, a highly controversial dimension to it? In this unit, we carry the discussion from this point to areas in our life that are sociological, cultural and ideological.

The last sixty years or so of our recent history faced a number of ups and downs and met with challenges not just difficult but daunting and obstructive. And yet, the juggernaut of English has gone on. What do we make of this phenomenon? Do we take the extreme approach of throwing out English from our life and aggressively nurture our own tongues or recognise the reality of many languages including English and a variety of cultures and ethnicities in our midst? Secondly, and still more importantly, what positive role do we assign, if at all, to this language that connects us with the world outside and within India with other regions?

Keeping the debate around English 'connecting' regions, communities and ethnic groups, we have to realise the usefulness of a language to the enrichment of which we may ourselves have contributed in good measure. At the same time, studying the vast literature available in English may itself enable us to have a comparative view of our own literatures. Knowledge of English thus may become a tool with which we assess our own creative and intellectual worth. Add to this the aspect of the medium that

English is, a means through which we access newest developments in science, technology and other branches of knowledge. In the next few sections we shall consider these and related areas to gain an understanding of a few important aspects of our socio-cultural surroundings.

4.2 INDIA IN THE NINETEEN FIFTIES

Let us look at the political scene in India in the nineteen fifties, the decade that followed Independence. Two things particularly lurked at that time in the minds of most Indians. The first was the happening of Partition, both on the western and the eastern sides of the country. No well-meaning serious individual could overlook the occurrence and go on one's safe and smooth way, gifted as it would have been by one's economic background. The second was Independence itself, a result of close to hundred years of effort and struggle by countless Indians. The free India required what could be called nation building, an act positive in nature and designed to meet the basic requirements of all and inspired by the humanist urge to plan things 'idealistically'. Unlike other species, human beings have the capability to rise above themselves and think of goals bigger than the individual ones. The values and principles standing at the back of the **Indian National Movement** testified clearly to this capability of human beings, more so in the case of those who fought relentlessly against the mightiest power in the world in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. To see this is to know that a newly emerged nation had its future secure in the progressive and humanistic modern perspective.

There was, however, a problem with this vision, pulled in the two different directions of pain and despair (for the reason of Partition) on one side and the potentiality of humanist endeavour supportive of Nationalist values on the other. The problem related to the presence of the privileged in our midst. The lobbies active all along the **National Movement** were those of the industrialists and the urban rich. These expressed themselves in what was called moderate politics, the politics of compromise, bargain and circumspection. A section of the **Congress Party** called it realism, a pragmatic approach that shunned both 'extremes' – supporting the British and going all out against them. There was also evidence at many points of time during the **National Movement** of the privileged amongst us showing preference for a 'superior' language and culture. In our context, the relevant thing is the inseparability in the minds of the economically privileged between language and culture. There could be seen a tacit understanding among the rich sections in our society that English minus the Britishers could be a safe bet and therefore adopted to suit what could be considered 'national' interests. The argument then was that English should be allowed to stay till Indian languages developed to take on the job of carrying the society, culture and knowledge forward. In the next section let us examine how this was to be achieved.

4.3 ENGLISH AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

The argument of letting English stay and be used to promote national interests may have set in motion the process of increasing utilisation by the power that be, of English in the school curricula. The pride of place was granted to English with particular respect to the medium in which education was to be imparted. Consensus was created through powerful pleading and argument that English was a more effective vehicle of expression and communication and had a vocabulary rich enough to serve such diverse areas as science, technology, commerce, economics, law, administration and culture. The strong and privileged presence of the English press

having direct links with policy makers sealed the fate of the Indian languages as not good enough for the job of nation building.

A bit of sociology would help here to place in perspective the rise of English in post-Independence India. The rich and upper middle classes in the country had a penchant for feeling different from the ordinary masses, they wished to look a group apart from the rest of society, a group meant to administer, manage and rule the society from above. Knowledge and use of English gave them immense power. The presence of a person equipped with the capability of using English fluently left the ordinary onlookers tongue-tied, as it were. The message was getting across to the majority that higher echelons of administration, judiciary, police force and army had a different plumage and that they were in the society to shape the destiny of the nation unquestioned. English came as the key-component of the machinery to do the job. Exclusive schools imparting education in English away from the humdrum of cities were already in existence at the time of Independence. These catered to the progeny of the landed gentry, families of *nawabs* and princelings in British India.

The group that such English-medium institutions groomed in pre-Independent India became well knit through the working of an elitist discourse in the education these institutions provided to their students. The specialised knowledge gained by the students of these schools stood them in good stead when it came to competing for top jobs. After Independence, such a system of division in society along class lines caught the fancy of those with money and political-social influence. Could the **Congress Party**, a formation brought into being and nurtured by simplicity-loving **Gandhi** and **Nehru** resist fancying themselves as rulers wielding influence to look distinctly superior to all else? Soon, the fascination for such exclusive existence became a national dream with the larger middle classes planning careers of sons and daughters on the strength of what they considered 'healthy competition' and merit. The idealism of the **National Movement** working for the uplift of **Harijans**, women and other underprivileged sections turned in the post-Independence period into a self-serving individualism. The dreamers of the new phase would sacrifice comforts only for their own children. As suggested, at the centre of this entire process was English, the medium of instruction in schools and colleges and other places of higher learning as well as one used in daily discourse in the family and the market place.

Freedom of a country is basically about democracy that enables groups and individuals to interpret rights or duties in their own terms. Considering this, it was but normal that English would occupy centre-stage if the society wished it to happen. To the settling down of English in India, another factor also contributed in good measure. This related to the approach of confrontation that the aggressive supporters of Hindi and other Indian languages adopted. This shall be analysed in the next section of the unit.

4.4 THE SETTLING DOWN OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

With Independent India launching big schemes of expansion in productivity and education, powerful lobbies became active to claim a share in the cake, cornering high jobs and positions of authority. Particularly the right wing supporters of Hindi set much store by Sanskrit and made Hindi highly stylised, purged as it assiduously was of all colloquialisms, spoken phrases and idioms. School and college curricula insisted on keeping Hindi free from Urdu words and expressions alternatives to which were coined from Sanskrit roots. A language understood in most regions of north India and promoted through aggressive national jargon elsewhere would soon be treated with suspicion for harbouring hegemonic ambitions. The non-Hindi speaking regions/ states sensed the danger in the planned 'popularisation' of Hindi across the country in the first crucial decade of India's Independence. This compounded the language scene so much in the fifties and sixties that many non-

Hindi regions opted for their own languages as medium in schools and English as the link language at the national level. For this, I blame the lobbies only a little. Much bigger forces than lobbies were at work. Lobbies operated in an overall atmosphere of a socially privileged upper crust (highly alert and circumspect) cutting across states and regions. This group was seen using a number of subtle strategic ways for retaining and perpetuating English.

The next thing that comes to mind in this context is the factor of ideology and culture coming from the west. The dictates from the western academic and cultural centres targeted the places of higher learning in India, the power points framing and implementing policies with the help of large resources at their command. The nationalistic paradigm of active intervention, struggle and purpose-oriented work was attacked in particular. It was argued that the point of useful social endeavour accountable to society did not meet the requirements of human freedom -- that value, in fact, lay in the private domain of the individual. Words such as change, resistance, justice, equality and social good were anathema to the modernist thought that came from the west in the post - World War II period. The capitalist west had decided to block all thought of equality and justice with phrases such as human predicament, anguish, ennui, loneliness and the meaningless or absurd in life. The Indian writing of the fifties and sixties faced this ideological-cultural onslaught and imbibed in the process a good deal of the mystery-oriented modernist paradigm. Since the terms of reference of the study of literature and culture were changing fast in the post-Independence India, the syllabi of English literature all across universities and colleges in India at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels selected great modernist-religious texts, with **Yeats, Eliot,** and **Lawrence** being projected as the great masters of writing.

Graduates from universities joining journalism took pride in using expressions such as 'I have measured out my life in coffee spoons,' little realising that the country in which they lived was an ex-colony and a backward third world country with most people not having access to clean drinking water. 'Coffee spoons' indicated coffee houses and shops in metropolitan centres and middle class journalists in India working for prestigious English dailies related better to that character in the **Eliot** poem who cynically moved around ridiculing love and talked of history in a condemnatory tone. Yes, English had finally succeeded in consolidating itself at the level of society, ideology, culture and literature. The following section will examine how English came to be institutionalised in India during the post -Independence period.

4.5 INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

English in India became gradually institutionalised, working through courses that were taught in schools and colleges. English also became the basis on which a person's merit and worth would be assessed in an examination or interview and following which jobs would be assigned to the successful candidates. At another level, bureaucracy, judiciary and other services would conduct their work in English as they went into the ramifications of implementing policies, studying individual cases and pronouncing judgments. Soon, English would make its way into the warp and woof of a nation's life.

So far, we have viewed the phenomenon of English in its broader aspect. However, we should not forget that the Indian democratic regime went about the task of institutionalising education in a systematic manner and studied the efficacies and utilities of the languages in operation with extreme care. A number of commissions were set up at regular intervals to ponder over the issue of the medium to be adopted in institutions of learning. The question of assessing merit for appointing suitable

persons in government jobs, the very manner of conducting examinations and on top of it, the framing of syllabi for various courses and teaching programmes at different levels were discussed threadbare. Add to this the fact that in each successive commission, the changing scenario of the country was taken into account so that misjudgements done earlier could be rectified. Particularly, the issue of a national language in which the regime would do its business and communicate to the various states its policies and programmes attracted attention of the elite and common masses alike. The adoption of one or the other language became a matter of heated debate all over the country.

Eventually, the pressure of selecting one language in preference to another for specific aims became too much to bear for the nation. At many a time, the tussle for supporting and opposing Hindi in *Devnagari* script as a national language was extremely hard. A formula evolved by one commission was put to nought by the subsequent commission with ongoing debates about the whole issue in the national press, political circles and social platforms. Even today, the situation is not clear regarding the link language, or the language of instruction in educational institutions, public and private, as the uncertainties of life created by the ever-shrinking job market grow. In all this, one thing, however, is certain – English in India has become stronger than ever before riding on the crest of the capitalist market, globalised economy and a unipolar world strongly operating from its western centre.

Though English occupies a relatively strong position among the languages spoken, read and written in India, it has had a long and difficult journey since the time it was introduced. The 'vernacular' press has offered sharp criticism of the policies governing the use of English in administrative, judicial and other fields. It has articulated forcefully the views of those who stand to lose immensely in the battle of survival in the job market. Thus, even today, fifty- seven years after independence there are many who resist English as the language of the colonial masters. Let us examine the implications of these debates next.

4.6 FOR ENGLISH OR RESISTING IT?

As is clear, the journey of English in India from the time of Independence to this day has not been a smooth one. At every point of change in influence, it has faced obstacles from regions, ethnic centres and native languages. There are political formations in all corners of India either resisting English or playing an aspect of it against what they call the hegemonising character of Hindi. Resistance is there in all Indian languages to English expressions that find their way into them through colloquial use. Indian languages do not know at this stage what to make of the onslaught on them from linguistic mannerisms in English. Whereas English can conveniently embrace and adopt as many 'Indianisms' as there are in the social environment, see the ever-expanding size of English dictionaries, Indian languages find the exercise of accepting words and expressions from English truly threatening.

4.7 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIAN LITERATURES AND ENGLISH

Two more issues remain to be considered in this discussion: literary writing in Indian languages and the relevance of English to the overall conditions of life in India. These are related and ever appear in a state of conflict with each other. The conflict is not simple or merely ideological. Instead, it is 'real.' Let us see how it is so by beginning with literary writing in Indian languages first.

4.7.1 Literary Writing in Indian Languages

Even though literatures in Indian languages bear the initial stamp of modernist writing in the early years of Independence coming from the west, they have shown evidence of freeing themselves from that influence gradually. They still look towards their roots in the **Indian National Movement** and draw inspiration from the works written in that phase. The examples of **Tagore, Premchand, Bharati, Nazrul Islam, Faiz** and **Manto** get more frequently cited today than ever before. Being closer to life at the grassroots, Indian languages remain capable of grasping inequality, poverty and gender injustice better than English. They catch the rhythm of existence, the rise and fall of speech, the dust and stink of narrow streets with an immediacy not possible in a foreign tongue, however indigenised it may have become through use by a section of people.

In attitude also, the writers of Indian languages have a greater sense of commitment and concern for the masses whose life they choose to depict. Thinking and expressing in a language spoken by a whole community imbues the writer with the dignity of an involved person, a participant. The participatory nature of the enterprise keeps the writer focused upon not just the plight of the person depicted but the conditions in which a particular situation emerged. This suggests that the role of language, like perhaps the role of form, in literary writing is crucial. It is to keep the genius of the creative individual in touch with those ups and downs of life in specific epochs that an ethos is witness to. Languages see as well as participate in the making of that ethos. This is borne out by the way in which a **Mahashweta Devi**, a **Muktibodh** or **Sri Sri** registers the complex trends of existence in an Indian language.

4.7.2 Indian English Writing

As far as the literary writing in English by an Indian writer goes, one notices a great deal of versatility there. This is accomplished by a skill and an acumen difficult to achieve ordinarily. Large international publishing houses sponsor these writers and project them as representative voices of great merit. The contemporary Indian writer in English makes a great splash one day, drawing attention to him/ her for the artistic feat achieved. The appeal of this writer is assessed commercially with mention of the number of copies sold of a particular work. The 'signing amount' of the work in question is also big news with publicity of the work arranged proportionate to the money changing hands on the big occasion. Thus, literary writing in English, particularly with reference to India, has become more of a commodified entity meant to be packaged for the market and sold across the counter all over the globe to rake in huge profits. Artistic value of such a commodity, which also happens to be a literary work, is a mere by-product. Interestingly, this by-product, too, is also made to add value to the primary commodity through the organised effort of the publicity industry that newspapers, magazines, journals, prize-giving organisations and academic centres of high learning in the western world have finally become. English in India is part of a tricky world, a globalised atmosphere run on the hard logic of commercialism.

For a third world country such as ours, the phenomenon of the rise and growth of English in India is indeed educative. It offers a great many insights into the likely shifts and changes one notices in historical epochs. It also makes clear to us the role played by power centres in the creations of paradigms, canons and perspectives, many of which we have been witness to in our eventful history of the last hundred and fifty years. Today, we have a burgeoning middle class fed on the ideas of merit, efficacy and skill that English is capable of imparting in the modern world.

But this is not the only thing English symbolises. Providing a window to a large number of literatures in the world, English also has its own wealth of knowledge and learning. We come across through English the renaissance values of freedom, secular

thought, humanist principles of dignity and identity as well as the social urge to intervene in history. What inspired our great nationalist writing in the era of the freedom struggle were English writers such as **Shakespeare** and **Milton**, both of whom relentlessly attacked in their writing the irrational and inhuman in society. **Shakespeare** is a truly modern mind capable of going fearlessly into the forbidden areas of morality and sanctity and showing what they are worth in social and human terms. His depiction of political power play in drama after drama is unmistakable, where he shows the human being in the meanest of individuals and conversely stark immoral traits in seemingly angelic figures. Such works of **Shakespeare** dealt a mortal blow at the feudalist vision of a harmonious world as well as the crass commercialism of the 'new man' in the seventeenth century. **Milton**'s attitude towards kingship was equally inspiring as he (**Milton**) sided clearly with the forces of republicanism. Equally importantly, Romantics and the nineteenth century radicals have a good deal to tell us about the undesirability of accepting capitalism. Nearer our period in the twentieth century, a section of writing in English in the west is seriously engaged with the issues of gender injustice, racial inequality and the oppressiveness of present day imperialism. These are available to us through the same English that struck deep roots in our soil and came to play a complex role in our society and culture. Our task is to have an adequate grasp of the worth English has and the role it can play in our life towards achieving equality, justice and dignity for all.

4.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit has asserted that the phenomenon of settling down and consolidation of English in our country is to be studied with care and interest. As we ponder over this question, we realise that a number of problems and conflicts emerging in our history of the recent period can be understood better with reference to the introduction and growth of English in our society. The introduction of English in India unfolded a dialectic that went far beyond the expectations and intentions of the British regime. In the post-Independence period, English got enmeshed in the social processes of a different kind, when it earned substantial support, strangely indeed, from a middle class associated previously with the **Indian National Movement**. The settling down of English in our midst should not be a cause for concern since it could still be our link with the Renaissance vision of humanism and the values and principles of Enlightenment in Europe.

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly comment on the changed attitude of the Indian middle class towards English in the nineteen fifties.
2. Explain the process in which English gained support and consolidation in post-Independent India.
3. Contemporary Indian writing in English is driven more by commercialist interests than humanist concerns. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
4. Define the role English can play towards achievement of equality and justice in today's India.

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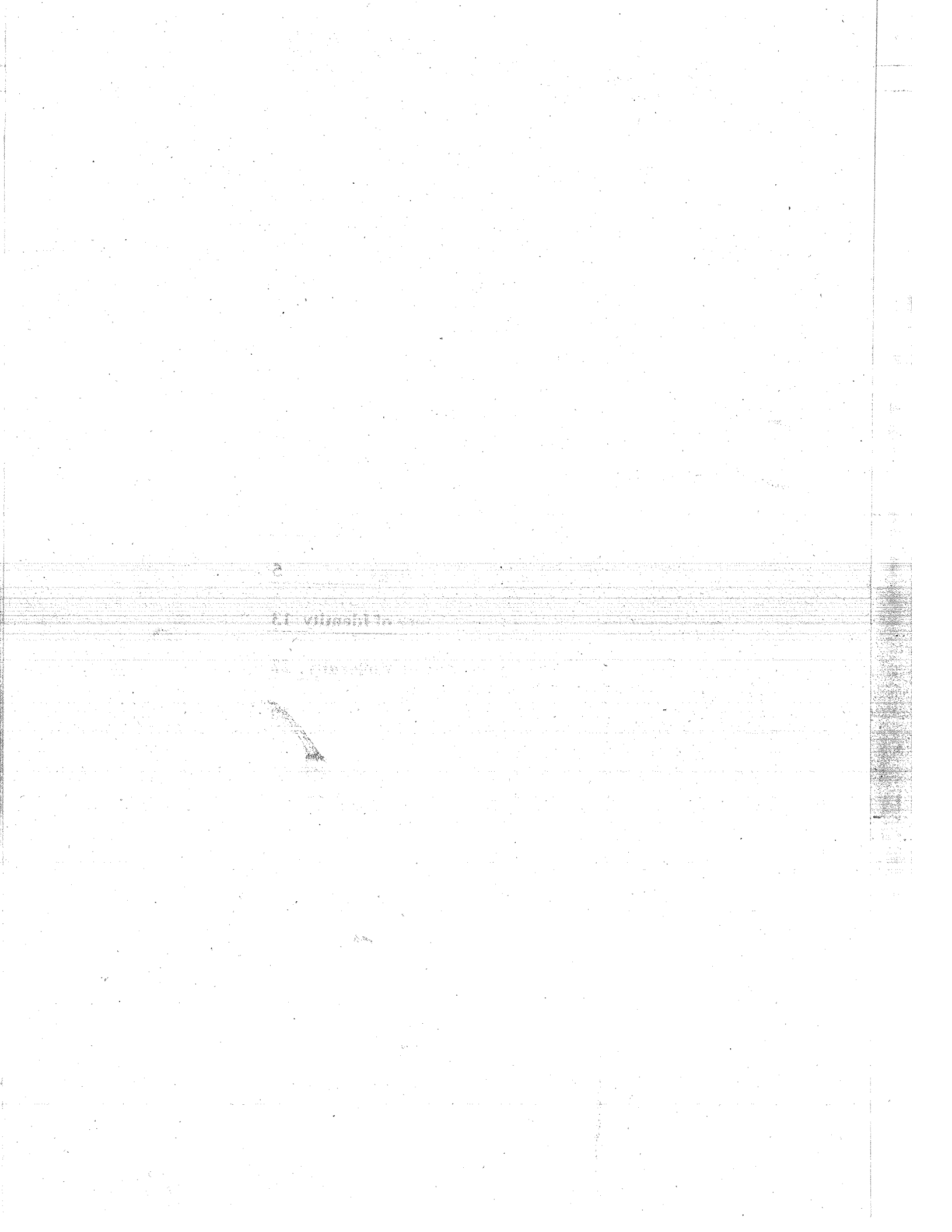
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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

Block

2

BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN ENGLISH WRITING

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this Block, the second in a line of eight blocks, designed to help us study the postgraduate course in English Studies In India, we shall extend some of the issues discussed in Block 1 which had focused upon the institutionalisation of English Studies in India. In the **First Unit** of Block 2, therefore, we shall go over some of the nineteenth century British debates about the advantages or disadvantages of institutionalising English Studies in India and certain significant Indian interventions in these debates. In the **Second** and **Third Units**, we shall study the contribution of two English - educated Indian intellectuals of the nineteenth century, both associated with Calcutta's *Hindu College* (later to be re-christened Presidency College). They added value to the enterprise of the colonised 'native' endeavouring to engage with the language and the culture of the 'alien' coloniser. Thus **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** and **Michael Madhusudan Dutt**, the two intellectuals concerned, will be read as eminent examples of early Indian writers in English. In the **Fourth Unit** of Block 2, we shall look at the writings of **Toru Dutt**, a young Indian woman educated in Western institutions, who by all accounts was the first notable woman writer in English from India.

This Block will traverse ground roughly between the 1800s and the 1880s, exploring at first the context that gave rise to the earliest Indian English writings as well as the lives and works of some of the writers who initiated this tradition – **Rammohun Roy, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt** and **Toru Dutt**, the last-named doubtlessly the pioneering woman figure in the world of Indian English writings.

The formative period of Indian English literature saw this literature largely confined, for historical reasons, to the province of Bengal and only a few other pockets of the Indian subcontinent. The Bengali hegemony on Indian English literary production would be broken only by the late nineteenth century when accomplished prose writers in the English language such as, for instance, **Behramji M Malabari** (1853-1912) and **Govardhanram M Tripathi** (1855-1907) ironically started to deploy this coloniser's language to project an Indian nationalist consciousness.

UNIT 1 THE CONTEXT OF THE EARLIEST INDIAN ENGLISH WRITINGS

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 The Earliest Indian English Writings
1.3 Roy: Pre- Eminent Promoter of Indian English Letters
1.4 Roy's Influence on Aspiring Indian English Writers
1.5 Let Us Sum Up
1.6 Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to familiarise the student with the context of the earliest Indian English writings. We shall begin by looking at the circumstances that enabled the rise of Indian English Literature and the nature of this literature during its formative years. We shall also take a brief look at the circumstances that enabled the rise of Indian English Literature, as a large network of educative and cultural activity. A significant portion of the Unit will focus upon **Rammohun Roy** as a pre-eminent promoter of Indian English letters in the era of early introduction and plan formation. The influence of **Rammohun Roy** on aspiring Indian English writers of the nineteenth century will also be explained and investigated.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In their book, *The Politics of Indians' English,* **N Krishnaswamy** and **Archana S Burde** have divided the history of English in India into five phases, each phase starting with what, according to them, was a landmark event in the colonial encounter between India and England. Obviously, in this encounter, the British interests were an active and a decisive factor. **Krishnaswamy** and **Burde** chart the events associated with the British policy and the years in which they took place thus:

1600 - the year the **East India Company** was started
1813 - the year the **East India Company's Charter** (for trade and commerce in the Indian subcontinent) was renewed
1857 - The Mutiny year – this was also the year when the first three universities were set up at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras
1904 - the year the Indian Universities Act was passed, which gave the British government a tighter control over higher education in India
1947 - the year India became politically independent

It was in the phase between 1813 and 1857 that some of the most important developments took form vis-a vis the rise of Indian English writing. In 1813, while renewing the **Charter** permitting the **East India Company** to carry on with its trading and commercial activities in the Indian subcontinent, the British Government and the British Parliament attempted to make the **Company** more accountable to British interests than earlier. The **East India Company** had hitherto functioned within narrower limits of trade, not concerning itself with political issues and social ideas. Its activities, then, would be made to assume larger, though less tangible parameters. Already, as per the Pitts India Act of 1784, the Company was answerable in minor as well as major matters to the British Parliament and the British

Government. This was in spite of the fact that the Parliament or Government did not directly control the administration of 'Indian Affairs'. Thus the Charter renewal was accompanied by 'advice' that the **Company** make itself more responsible and responsive towards the 'welfare' of the natives of those territories from which it operated. From 1813, therefore, the Company was given the specific charge of 'educating' the natives, appealing to them at a different level.

As the **Company**'s 'India Affairs' expanded beyond Bengal and the Deccan, its original locations in India, into other Indian states such as Baroda, Hyderabad, Poona, Oudh and Travancore, the **Company** also engaged in its educational enterprises by setting up or helping to set up colleges in Calcutta, Poona, Delhi and Agra. Apart from the *Hindu College* in Calcutta, which came up due to the individual initiative of certain educated Bengali gentlefolk, aided and abetted by English officials, all the others were the outcome of the patronage of the **East India Company**. All these colleges were colleges for oriental learning. Education in English language and English literature and about the West as a whole was provided only at the *Hindu College*, Calcutta.

The **Company**'s education policy took on a definite 'Anglicist' direction, however, when its administrative apparatus – namely the **Governor - General in Council** – adopted, in 1835, for the provinces under its preview, **Thomas Babington Macaulay**'s *Minute on Education* recommending that Britain officially support English education in India and withdraw support to Arabic and Sanskrit education. **Macaulay** argued that "English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit and Arabic;" that "the natives are desirous to be taught English;" and that "it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars."

By 1837, the missionaries had begun to provide a significant part of the facilities for teaching English. Not very long thereafter, English became the language of administration and judiciary in India even as the vernaculars continued to be used in several instances. Almost simultaneously subordinate level positions in the judicial and administrative institutions were thrown open to Indians by a government resolution. In 1853, the year when the **Company**'s **Charter** was renewed once more, under the pressure of government personnel to manage the widening domain of its "India activities", the **Company** decided to open up its highest Civil Service appointments to Indians by allowing them to appear for a competitive examination set up for this purpose.

As a follow up of the **Wood**'s **Despatch** of **1854**, the first formalised and formulated education policy statement of the **East India Company** three universities were established in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras respectively.

English education engendered two kinds of writing in English by Indians in addition to the already available genre of bureaucratic writing. These were journalistic communication and freelance compositions. The English print-media was used for publishing both the latter kinds of writing. These were the earliest specimens of Indian English writing. They brought out the need, on the part of the British, to communicate things directly and usefully to the Indian populace. In the next section we shall examine some of the earliest Indian English writings.

1.2 THE EARLIEST INDIAN ENGLISH WRITINGS

In this Block we will not only discuss the beginnings of Indian English Writing in India but will also be dealing with three of the earliest Indian English Writers/ poets. Hence, a look into the origins of Indian English poetry in India would not be misplaced. **Makarand Paranjape** has talked about the "two related pre-conditions that had to be met" before "Indians could write poetry in English". These two pre-

conditions are, what he has called the "Indianization of the English language" and the, "Anglicization of the Indians", *(Introduction, p.1, Indian Poetry in English, Makarand Paranjape (ed), 1993, Macmillan India).*

The first pre-condition was met with the landing of **Vasco da Gama** in Kerala in 1498. Trade routes came to be established between Portugal and India and a number of Indian words found their way into English usage. Closely on the heels of the Portuguese followed the English, the Dutch and the French traders who not only opened up trade routes but also colonised several settlements in India particularly after the historic **Battle of Plassey** in 1775 between the British and the Indians. However, as we are all aware the English were the ones who not only established trading links with India but also came to rule India for more than a hundred and fifty years. This happened particularly after the **British East India Company** was set up in Bengal. Moreover, many Englishmen in India began writing poems on the Indian subject matter. The second pre-condition came to be fulfilled when England came to be a major colonial power in the eighteenth century not only in India but also all over the world. This necessitated a colonial practice that covered various aspects of life including literary writing.

Indian poetry in English: The earliest Indian English poetry came to be written in Bengal as Bengal was where the British first established a foothold. The literary activity surrounding the writing of Indian English poetry too came to be centralised in Bengal particularly in Calcutta, because of which it became a totally urban phenomenon. Not only was it a phenomenon of the city but it was also confined to just a few established Bengali families. From there on it was to spread to Madras and Bombay. Even more than a hundred and fifty years later it has not lost the peculiar characteristic of being an urban phenomenon. Since in those days one needed to belong to a certain section of society in order to be English-educated, Indian English writers were largely upper class and caste people as will be seen in the units that follow. This influenced their choice of themes and subjects as well.

When the earliest Indian English writers began writing poems in English, there were many Englishmen and women in India who were also writing about Indian themes and about Indian subject matters. In those days poetic writings by either English men and women or by Indian writers writing in English were not distinguished from each other: these poems were clubbed under the broad banner of Anglo-Indian Writers. However, with the passage of time and India's independence from foreign rule, Anglo Indian Literature as literature written by the English in India came to a gradual end. From then onwards, various terms came to be employed to describe the literary activity called writing poetry by Indian writers in English. Terms like, "Indo-English", and "Indian Literature in English" came into popular usage. These are merely descriptive in nature and avoid as they do any attempt at definition. We have adopted the term Indian English writing since Indian English is now a global phenomenon. However, it needs to be pointed out that even today Indian English writing including poetry, short story, novel, drama is still largely an elite and urban phenomena. It should also be pointed out that Indian writing in English also faces serious charges, one of them being that most of what is written under the broad umbrella of Indian English writing has nothing "Indian" about it. It appears that Indian English writing whatever, its faults will continue to survive through the ages. In the words of **Makarand Paranjape**:

> *[It is] Best to see Indian poetry in English as a phenomenon as valuable for what it symbolizes as for its own achievements. It embodies the legacy of colonialism, the secret shame of our past made blatant. Likewise, it chronicles, albeit indirectly, our struggle against colonialism and oppression. (p.6)*

Coming back to our narrative, according to **M K Naik**, the author of the authoritative *A History of Indian English Literature,* the pioneering published works in English by Indians appeared in the early nineteenth century, "more than two decades prior to

Macaulay's *Minute of 1835*". Clearly, **Naik**'s search for the origins of Indian English writing did not take him as far back as 1794, the year which witnessed the publication of *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* by **Dean Mahomet** (1739-1851), a Patna - born recruit of the **East India Company**'s Bengal Army who had converted to Christianity and emigrated to Ireland after finishing with his services to the **Company**. His book, written in the epistolary mode, narrates to an imaginary friend the experiences of travelling with the colonial army. **Naik**'s genealogy of Indian writings in English starts with a somewhat later work entitled *Accounts of the Jains* by **Cavelly Venkata Boriah** included in *Asiatic Researches or Translations of the Society Instituted in Bengal for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Art, Sciences and Literature of Asia, Vol IX (London, 1809).*

However, we have to push back the history of Indian Writing in English to the middle of the eighteenth century.

Boriah (1776-1803), an assistant to **Colonel Colin Mackenzie** (1753-1821) – the first Surveyor-General of India and well known in South Indian history for the collection, *Mackenzie Manuscripts* – was described by **Mackenzie** as a "youth of the quickest genius and disposition." A master of a number of languages including Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani and English, he studied mathematics, geography and astrology; wrote poetry in Telegu, discovered ancient coins and deciphered ancient seals. His *Account of the Jains* has been described in the essay itself as "collected from a priest of this sect at Mudgeri" and "translated by **C Boria**." This essay of twenty-eight pages is therefore not an original essay, though it is of historical importance as possibly the first extended effort at writing in English by an Indian located in India.

Raja Rammohun Roy's tract on *A Defence of Hindu Theism* (1857) may be regarded as the earliest enterprise at original Indian English writing. The scion of an aristocratic Bengali household, **Rammohun Roy** (1772-1833) was born in a village named Radhanagr in the Hooghly district of Bengal on the 22nd of May 1772, to orthodox and conservative Bengali Brahmin parents. There is not much chronicled information about his early life. What is known however is that he did his elementary education in the village school in Bengali (which was his mother tongue). When he was twelve years old he left home and joined a Muslim school in Patna to study Persian and Arabic. This enabled him to read the *Koran* as well as the Sufi saints in the original. Through the medium of these two languages he then taught himself the principles of Islamic religion and culture. From this vantage - point of an alternative to Hinduism, he began to critique Hindu orthodoxies. At the age of sixteen his anti-Hindu posturing incensed his father to such an extent that the latter expelled him from home. **Rammohun Roy** used this opportunity to travel far and wide. He went to northern India and spent three years in Tibet in his quest for knowledge of Buddhism. From there, he travelled to Benaras to study Sanskrit, all the while acquiring knowledge of several religions, and especially of Hinduism whose texts he read in detail at Benaras. Reconciliation with his father brought him back to Calcutta and to employment with the **East India Company** in 1803. His employment with the **Company** sent him on a posting to Rangpur in 1809 where he met Marwari Jains and learned about Jainism from them and studied the Jain texts. His initiation into Western ways of life sharpened not only his critical attitude towards Hindu practices, but also prompted him to justify Hindu precepts, that, were, often misrepresented by the Hindu priesthood.

Rammohun Roy is largely remembered as the man who fought to abolish *Sati* (a Hindu social practice of a wife's immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre in order for him to get salvation) and as the founder of the *Brahmo Samaj*. However, he has contributed much more than that. As mentioned earlier, **Rammohun Roy** had studied many religions and his perception and understanding of the different religions of the world helped him to draw comparisons between them and the Vedantic philosophy of Hinduism. Because of his deep understanding of religions and an open

mind, he could sieve through the good points of the various religions. **Rammohun Roy** resigned from the **East India Company** and came back to Calcutta in 1815. He was dissatisfied with the system of education prevalent in India and the method of teaching English. He formed an association with the help of both Hindu and English scholars. He even started a school where he introduced several "modern" subjects like Science, Mathematics, Political Science and English.

Like other nationalists of his age, he was also against the British rule in India. Still over time he began to realise that India could actually benefit in terms of education and by exposure to Christianity. **Rammohun Roy** also founded the *Atmiya Samaj* in 1815. This *Sabha* was to publish a weekly called the *Bangal Gazette* under the editorship of **Roy**. He also published a Persian newspaper called *Miratul- Akhbar* and a Bengali weekly called *Sambad Kaumudi.* He laid great stress on the development of Bengali. His *Gaudiya Vyakaran* (a work in Bengali) is highly rated among his prose writings. Since his target audience in these writings was primarily British and secondarily Indian, **Rammohun Roy** was constrained to write in English, a language available to both sets of readers. This also served to keep him away from both sets of readers.

Raja Rammohun Roy went to England in November 1831 as the Ambassador of the Mughal Emperor **Akbar Shah II**. In 1832 he visited Paris but returned to England the same year. In 1833 he went to stay in Bristol where he fell ill with meningitis and died on 27th September 1833. He was buried in the grounds of Beech House. However, ten years later his friend **Dwarakanti Tagore** had him reinterred at Aron's Vale. These biographical details help us to understand the changing attitudes of **Rammohun Roy** in the course of his intellectual career. They also throw light on the dynamic modern spirit he represented. Let us now discuss **Raja Rammohun Roy** as a pre-eminent promoter of early Indian English Writing.

1.3 ROY: PRE-EMINENT PROMOTER OF INDIAN ENGLISH LETTERS

As **Sisir Kumar Das** has remarked, in *A History of Indian Literature, Volume VIII*, **Rammohun Roy** was the first important bilingual Indian writer to write in English in the nineteenth century. Between 1817 and 1820, apart from writing *Defence of Hindu Theism*, **Rammohun Roy** translated an abridged version of the *Vedas*, the *Kena*, the *Isa*, the *Numdaka* and the *Katha Upanishads* into English as well as into Bengali. Similarly, he used Bengali as well as English in his campaign against idol worship and *Satipratha* and the ill treatment of widows in Hindu society, as well as his criticism of the Christian missionaries. In fact, he also translated his major writings in Bengali into English. It was imperative for him to use English extensively for his writings because his writings represented a continuous conversation with both the intelligentsia of Britain and the intelligentsia of non-Bengali communities of India.

Except in his translations, **Rammohun**'s English prose is powerfully polemical. As **Bruce Carlisle Robertson** has noted in his article, *"The English Writings of Raja Rammohun Roy"*, included in *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature* in *English* edited by **Arvind Krishna Mehrotra**, the evolution of **Rammohun Roy** as a writer in English reflects not merely his growing confidence in the causes that he espoused, but also his deepened facility in the fluency of his use of the language. **Rammohun Roy** was especially at home with English writing by the last decade of his life during which he authored some of his most significant pamphlets including two *"Petitions against Press Regulations"* (1823) drafted by him and signed along with him by his supporters. It should be noted that **Rammohun Roy**'s 1823 *Letter* to the Imperial masters pleaded for western scientific values, and not merely for English as the medium of instruction. **Rammohun Roy** advocated western education and social change and was a promoter for the translation of the Hindu *Shastras* into the vernacular (Bengali) as well as the promoter of Bengali Journalism. He made great

efforts at translating English scientific and literary texts into Bengali as well. Such diversity enabled him to have a comprehensive view of the developments in India.

Coming to the question of *Press Regulations*, we observe an important fact of **Rammohun Roy**'s activism. The passing of a Government ordinance in the same year suppressing the freedom of the press occasioned petitions about press regulations. In the first petition, addressed to the **Governor-General, Rammohun Roy** argues:

> *Every Good Ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverences the Eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore he will be anxious to afford to every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained liberty of publication is the only effectual means that can be employed.*

See the terminology in this passage couching the criticism made by **Roy** of the intolerant attitude of the rulers. There would obviously be a gap between "the External Governor of the World" and the "Good Ruler." **Roy** deftly assumes the role of interpreting who a "Good Ruler" is. The presentation of "the unrestrained liberty of the publication" is the only answer to the question posed.

When the petition was rejected and the *Press Regulation Act* was passed, **Rammohun Roy** addressed another petition, this one to the King-in-Council. In this petition, he counsels his addressee:

> *If your Majesty's faithful subjects could conceive for a moment that the British nation, actuated solely by interested policy, considered India merely as a valuable property and nothing but the best means of securing its possession and turning it to advantage, even then it would be of importance to ascertain whether this property be well taken care of by their servants... therefore the existence of a free Press is equally necessary for the sake of the Governors and the governed.*

The subtext of this question is indeed very sharp. Words before "even then" signify the callous intentions of the British rulers.

Meanwhile, his attempts at reforming native society by weeding out some of the corrupt customs of Hindu society went on unabated. As a step in this direction, he founded the *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828, which was the earliest endeavour of its kind in the nineteenth century, to revitalise Hinduism. He probably prepared the "*Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj*" (1829) with the help of lawyers. In the following year he sailed for Britain as the ambassador of the Mughal Emperor who conferred on him the title of Raja. Here he published his "*Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India*", a document remarkable for its indictment of the drain of wealth from India under the rule of the British and the British complicity in the structures of local economic exploitation.

During the last year of his life, **Rammohun Roy** wrote a short autobiographical sketch at the request of his friends. This short sketch is of interest as the pioneering exercise in Indian English writings in a genre that flourished and flowered in many, many directions during the following century. It has become a basis of self-expression of a person at once colonised and free enough to think differently.

Raja Rammohun Roy was essentially a humanist and a religious reformer. He had entered the services of the **East India Company** where he rose to great heights but he left the **Company** in order to serve the people. He was well versed in the Sanskrit texts of the Hindus, as well as the texts of Islam and had also been influenced by the

liberal thinkers of the Western world. He decided therefore, that he needed to reform Hinduism and what he perceived as the evils of Hindu society. With this in mind, he formed the *Brahmo Samaj* at Calcutta in 1828. He propagated the abolition of *Sati*, and advocated widow re-marriage. Some ardent admirers of **Roy** also credit him with being the first Indian feminist, as he examines what may be called the "encroachment of modernity on the ancient rights of females", in his book *Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females* (1822). In one respect, **Roy**'s views on women in India would be of particular significance. Being a reformer and a social activist, **Roy** would place the plight of the Indian woman into the overall change that he envisaged in the contemporary society. It was not for him thus to theorise about the women question but to create a climate in which women could breathe freely.

His contributions were largely in the field of social reform as he set about reforming various aspects of Hindu Law, led several protests against restrictions on the Press by the imperial government. He even tried and mobilised the Government against the then oppressive land laws and asked for the association of Indians in the Government. He was also a most vociferous and vocal advocate for the introduction of a western system of education in India. We are however more concerned with his last position as an advocate of the western system of education, as it was largely due to his lobbying that English Studies gained a foothold in India. Moreover, the purpose of talking about **Raja Rammohun Roy** here in the first unit of this block is not only to study his contributions but also to draw attention to the fact that he was capable of influencing the next wave of Indian English writers in particular and Indian English writing in general.

1.4 ROY'S INFLUENCE ON ASPIRING INDIAN ENGLISH WRITERS

By the year of **Raja Rammohun Roy**'s death, a group of students educated at *Hindu College, Calcutta*, had emerged on the scene of Indian English writing. Known as the *Young Bengal* group, these students started an English magazine *Pantheon,* in the pages of which they discussed controversial and contentious social issues such as superstitions in Hindu society, the status of women and class disparities in India. In the context of the nineteenth century, this went far beyond what could be termed "reform". The youth of the day wished that their country could come as close to modern attitudes as possible. This would pave the way for a vibrant resurgent India in the days to come. Indeed, the *Indian National Movement* owed a great deal to the efforts of figures such as **Raja Rammohun Roy, Derozio** and **Kashiprasad Ghosh** (1809-1873). Some of them appreciated the potential of English as a language for creative expression as well. The common mentor of this radical group of students was, more often than not, the highly charismatic English teacher of *Hindu College*, **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** (1809-1831). **Derozio**, a Calcutta Eurasian of Portuguese - Indian ancestry, wrote in English since that was the only language he knew, but the issues that he wrote about were far removed from the concerns of English literature of the contemporary era. He too, like **Rammohun Roy,** took up social themes in his writings, but his favoured mode of self-expression was verse rather than prose. Thus **Derozio** innovated a new model of English poetry through his Indian English writings, as did his peer **Kashiprasad Ghosh** (1809-1873) and some of his pupils of *Hindu College* after him. Though largely derivative from British models in terms of stylistics, these texts represented thematics that were undeniably Indian. **Sisir Kumar Das** has summed up the fundamental problematic raised by the emergence of these early Indian English writers:

> *Why did they write in English at all? Was it a curious exercise by the young men with the language of the new rulers of the country, or was it a serious attempt towards a search for a new medium suitable for a new literary perception?*

1.5 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has looked at some of the circumstances – social, political, cultural – that led to the emergence of Indian English writings on the literary scene of the subcontinent of India during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. The writings of some key contributors to this movement are examined – especially the writings of **Raja Rammohun Roy** and some enthusiasts of the *Young Bengal* group of *Hindu College*, Calcutta, whom his writings inspired.

1.6 QUESTIONS

a) Discuss some of the circumstances that led to the emergence of English writings by Indians.

b) Comment on the importance of the English writings of Raja Rammohun Roy in the history of Indian English writings coming out of the subcontinent of India.

c) What was the nature of the influence of Raja Rammohun Roy's English writings on the English writings of other Indians (who wrote in English) in the early nineteenth century.

UNIT 2 HENRY LOUIS VIVIAN DEROZIO AND THE EARLY VOICES OF IDENTITY

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 *Hindu College, Calcutta*: The Propagation of English Studies in India
2.3 A Personal-Intellectual Biography of Henry Derozio
2.4 Derozio and His Nationalistic Fervour
2.5 Derozio and the *Young Bengal* Movement
2.6 Henry Derozio's Literary Output
2.7 The Literary Legacy of Henry Derozio
2.8 Let Us Sum Up
2.9 Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to focus on the life and works of **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio,** undoubtedly the most renowned among the early Indian English authors after **Raja Rammohun Roy**. The unit will also look at the role played by *Hindu College*, Calcutta, towards the propagation of English Studies in India, will provide a personal –intellectual biography of **Henry Derozio,** analyse his contributions to the spirit of nationalism, examine his role in the creation of the *Young Bengal* Group and will study his literary contributions in the field of Indian English Writings.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The story of **Derozio** is, in a sense, inseparable from the story of *Hindu College, Calcutta*, where he served as a teacher of English and one that had a profound impact upon his life as it had upon the lives of many other early Indian English authors. The Unit will unravel the personal-intellectual biography of **Derozio** as well as his literary output. The literary legacy of **Derozio** will also be discussed. Let us look at some of the contributions of ***Hindu College,*** *Calcutta,* towards the propagation of English Studies in India.

2.2 *HINDU COLLEGE, CALCUTTA*: THE PROPAGATION OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

In the early nineteenth century, the **East India Company**, pushed into action in areas other than trade by the British Government and the British Parliament, started to involve itself in the educational advancement of Indians. The **Company** set up or helped to set up colleges in several cities of India including Calcutta, Poona, Delhi and Agra. As suggested the policy framework came from the British Government. All the colleges, more or less, were centres of oriental learning. Only the *Hindu College, Calcutta*, definitively and deliberately disseminated knowledge of the occident. The *Hindu College*, which later became *Presidency College*, was founded not so much because the **Company** desired its establishment, *per se*. In fact, the pressure was put on the **Company** officials by a group of Bengali gentlemen who wished their children should have the benefits of a Western education. **Rammohun Roy** was a

party to the talks held in 1816 that led to the setting up of the college, but his role ended there since the other Bengali gentlemen, all Hindus, who were with him in the project, disapproved of what was deemed to be his anti-Hindu sentiments and his pro-Muslim and pro-Christian stance. For this reason, perhaps **Rammohun Roy** never made it to the membership of the committee that was constituted to manage the college. The Hindu gentry at the helm of affairs in *Hindu College* in its formative years thus tried to bring Western philosophy and technology and, specifically, the language and literature of the English people to their offspring. Equally clearly, they were frightened by the prospect of their 'contamination' from cultures alien to their own. The aims of *Hindu College*, as laid down in its charter, convey a sense of the uneasy balance of the East and the West that its founders sought to maintain in their conception of the College. This opened a whole possibility of mutual interaction as well as antagonism.

By May 1827 the building that was to house *Hindu College* was completed. In 1828 there were 400 boys on the rolls of *Hindu College*, out of whom 100 were scholarship students with a supply of free books. The **School Book Society** and the **Committee of Public Instruction** paid for a further 5000 books that were imported from England. Right from its inception, the curriculum of *Hindu College*, especially in the senior section was weighed in favour of Western Studies. By 1841, instruction in both Sanskrit and Persian was suspended, and Bengali was the only Indian language that continued to be taught in *Hindu College* side by side with English. The logic behind this fusion between an Indian language and an alien one was that both were modern languages and catered better to the needs of the people than was the case with respect to the classical languages.

Such was the rapid progress in Western scholarship there, that *Hindu College* emerged as a showpiece of education as per the Western system, and as a justification for greater emphasis on the study of English culture. The quick development of *Hindu College* provided a pretext for further British intervention in Indian education. The parameters of 'reform' were however, different. 'Reform' was not meant to modernise or secularise Indian thoughts but merely to present the English model formulation by the Indians. Educational standards were frequently raised through the appointment of 'approved' faculty in institutions of education – faculty with a Western outlook, if not Westerners themselves. It was felt that such faculty would help to carry forward the task most effectively of reforming society in India in the image of British society. One of the earliest Indian faculty members of *Hindu College*, appointed to teach English Language and English Literature, was **Henry Louis Derozio**. Born in Calcutta of Eurasian parents, his family and community made him easily susceptible to Western influences. His speech, habits, dress, manners, reading and thinking were closely modelled on those of the colonial rulers. **Derozio**'s position as a teacher in a college that catered to the most elite section of Bengali society empowered him in a way that might not have been possible if he had not occupied that hegemonic position. His authority extended beyond the classroom into the movement known as the movement of the *Young Bengal* group, spearheaded by himself and some of his students, but it also percolated down in a more diffuse sense, because many of those he taught at *Hindu College* later held public positions as academics and activists. **Derozio** set into motion a process in which the youth from the families of the upper rung moved towards a new identity and role.

Ironically, it was **Derozio**'s pedagogic popularity that proved to be his undoing. His English lectures were instrumental in indoctrinating many, upper-crust Bengali youth with the ideas that the British would like to instil in Indians and which orthodox Indians would regard as British heterodoxy. His dismissal from the faculty of *Hindu College* illustrated, as **Manju Dalmia** has analysed in her essay *"Derozio: English Teacher:"*

> *The anomalies that surfaced when opposed purposes were at work; while Indians accepted western learning for material, practical purposes of their own, the British viewed it as a means of establishing their cultural, political hegemony.*

At the other end of this phenomenon, we see the fears and apprehensions of the orthodox sections in India. Let us now take a look at the personal-intellectual biography of **Henry Derozio** in the next section.

2.3 A PERSONAL INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF HENRY LOUIS VIVIAN DEROZIO

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born in April 1809, in Calcutta, of Eurasian parentage. At the age of six years he enrolled at Dharamtola Academy, run by **David Drummond**. At fourteen he finished school and joined **Messrs. J. Scott and Company**, the employers of his father, to earn his livelihood as a clerk. At sixteen he left for his aunt's indigo plantation in Bhagalpur. Here he spent the next three years and wrote much of his poetry, including a romantic epic "*The Fakeer of Jungheera*". He sent his poems to the *India Gazette* under the pen name of *Juvenis*, and, with the encouragement of the editor, **John Grant**, decided to collect his poems. At eighteen he came back to Calcutta and was appointed assistant editor of the *India Gazette* by **Grant** who also helped to publish his poems in a single volume.

His repute as a writer in English spread to such an extent that within a few years he was selected to teach English Language and English Literature at ***Hindu College***. His stay at the college was eventful but brief for he was dismissed from its service within three years of joining it. After his dismissal he returned to journalism, but not for long as he suffered an attack of cholera and died in December 1831. **David Drummond**, the principal of his school, and an avowed rationalist, left indelible impression on **Derozio**'s personality. The emphasis on rational inquiry later became one of the cornerstones of **Derozio**'s lessons. **Derozio** also inherited from Drummond an admiration for radical ideas and the liberal arts. **Derozio** was influenced by a number of people and various events that had a major impact upon him. **Drummond** influenced **Derozio** greatly as the young **Derozio** studied at **Drummond**'s school from the tender age of six years to his teenage years. He was highly influenced by the moral philosophies of **David Hume**. **Derozio** was well schooled in the classics and the western intellectual tradition.

By 1828, the year **Derozio** was appointed to *Hindu College*, English Studies including English Language, English Literature and History, had shown a steady rise of prestige. The texts for this composite course included **Shakespeare**'s *Plays*, **Milton**'s *Paradise Lost*, **Dryden**'s version of the *Aeneid*, **Pope**'s version of *Homer's Epics*, **Gay**'s *Fables* and **Goldsmiths**' *History of Greece, Rome and England.* By positioning the histories of England, Rome and Greece together, and combining their study with the study of literature from England, the syllabus gave England an elevated status in the chronicle of Western civilisation. **Derozio**, who himself had been educated in the tradition of rationalist thought of Western Enlightenment, proved enormously effective in handing down his ideological apparatus to his students. Numerous testimonials exist to his reach as a teacher, including a glowing one from **Baboo Hurro Mohun Chatterji**, a clerk in *Hindu College*, which has been cited by **Thomas Edwards**, the nineteenth century biographer of **Derozio** writes:

> *They (the pupils) loved him most tenderly; and were ever ready to be guided by his counsels and imitate him in all their daily actions of life.*

In fact **Derozio** acquired such an ascendancy over the minds of his pupils that they would not move even in their private concerns without his counsel and advice. On the other hand he taught the evil effects of idol worship and superstition, and so far formed their moral conceptions and feelings as to make them critical of the antiquated ideas and aspirations of his age. This worked at both the social and the ideological levels. The former related the behaviour and practice of youth, who would critique all that, that was obsolete and irrational. The latter would inspire them

to investigate their assumptions and notions. In fact, things happening at the ideological level would translate sooner or later into a new and radical way of representing feelings in literary writing.

Derozio's interaction with the student body took shape not only in the college premises but outside of the college as well. One forum for these exchanges was the *Academic Association*, a debating club begun by **Derozio** and over which **Derozio** himself presided. The *Academic Association* inevitably attracted the attention of **Company** officials who now and then attended its meetings. These meetings were held regularly and covered a wide range of subjects of intellectual interest. Critical attitudes to traditional customs in every sphere of existence proliferated, as the so-called *Young Bengal Group*, who constituted the core of the *Academic Association*, applied to tradition the interrogative perspectives of Western thinkers. During his very short lifetime **Derozio** produced several important works of poetry and was on his way to becoming one of the major literary legends of India. He shaped through his practice the new aesthetics of India that would inspire future generations of writers to struggle for dynamic idiom. Let us examine **Derozio**'s nationalistic favour next.

2.4 DEROZIO AND HIS NATIONALISTIC FERVOUR

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio as mentioned earlier may be regarded as one of the earliest Indian English poets, whose commitment to India was commendable. Being of Eurasian parentage at a time when his own community would have repudiated his mixed origins, he chose to give something to India that he describes as his native land – In his sonnet *To India – My Native Land* he talks about the glorious past of India before colonisation, how India was revered and "worshipped as a deity", but he also laments the fact that – "that glory" and that "reverence" is now no more. He takes it upon himself to restore India's "fallen" state and all he desires from his chosen land what he calls his native land is – "one kind wish from thee!" – the wish to be seen, to be accepted, and recognised as an Indian poet and not a Eurasian. He laments the fact that India is under foreign rule and feels the need for India to awaken; in another poem – *The Harp of India*:

> *But if thy notes divine*
> *May be by mortal wakened once again*
> *Harp of my country, let me strike the strain*
> *(The Harp Of India)*

This burning nationalistic fervour, this zeal was unusual for a person of Eurasian origins. **M K Naik** considers **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio**'s poems to:

> *Leave an unmistakeable authenticity of patriotic utterance which stamps* Derozio *as an Indian English poet who is truly a son of the soil.*
> *(M K Naik, A History, p. 23)*

2.5 DEROZIO AND THE *YOUNG BENGAL MOVEMENT*

In the earlier section on **Derozio**'s personal- intellectual biography the *Young Bengal Movement* was introduced. This section will deal with this movement in some detail. **Derozio** was one of the earliest activists to wage a war against the traditional orthodox society of India in general and of Bengal in particular. Though **Derozio** died young, his brilliant but short literary career is:

Honourably associated with the literature and the moral, social and political improvement of his countrymen.

(Calcutta Gazette: Editorial, 9 January 1832, Quoted in Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, *A Memorial Volume, edited by Mary Ann Dasgupta, p. 8).*

Derozio had the charisma and enigma to influence a group of very talented yet also highly volatile young students. While radicalism and the questioning of various orthodox Hindu rituals, had already set in during **Raja Rammohun Roy**'s time, **Derozio** was to take it a step further. He set the trend for ultra – radicalism aggressively. His influence over his students was such that he was considered to be more of an event or a phenomenon than a mere mortal in the history of the renaissance in Bengal. His group of followers - the *Young Bengal* were able to shake the very foundations of orthodox Bengali society during the first half of the nineteenth century. He appeared on the literary scene before his time. The Bengal of his time was not ready for change of any sort. They were too shackled with the binds of orthodoxy and tradition and they reacted sharply against **Derozio** and his followers. While **Derozio** stood for liberty, and for free- thinking, the orthodox Bengali society of his times was deeply against this zealous revolutionary and they did everything they could to destroy his hold over his students, thereby dismissing him from service at the *Hindu College, Calcutta.*

2.6 HENRY DEROZIO'S LITERARY OUTPUT

Derozio himself was an extremely well-read person, having read a vast array of literary and extra-literary texts from the Greek and Roman classics to more modern texts such as *The Rights of Man* by **Thomas Paine** and the works of the **Romantic** and the **Victorian** poets. His readings filtered down to his writings that were by no means prolific, given his all too brief span of life. Apart from his array of journalistic writings before and after his stint at *Hindu College*, during which he contributed extensively to *The India Gazette, The Calcutta Literary Gazette, The Indian Magazine, The Calcutta Magazine, The Bengal Journal, The Enquirer* and *The Hesperus*, **Derozio** wrote poetry, and it is the poems which are the foundation of his literary reputation. **Derozio** published two volumes of poetry: *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and other Poems* (1828). The shorter poems are written under the shadow of the Romantic-Victorian poets of England in subject, imagery and diction. These poems include *"Sonnet: To the Moon," "The Golden Vase" and "Sonnet: Death, My Best Friend"* which reveals him as an individual as not daunted by death or by fate.

I vainly call on thee for fate the more
Her bolts hurls down, as she has ever hurled.
And in my war with her I've felt, and feel
Grief's path cut to my heart by miseries steel.
But man's eternal energies can make
An atmosphere around him, and so take
Good out of evil, like the yellow bee,
That sucks from flowers malignant a sweet treasure,
O tyrant fate! thus shall I vanquish thee,
For out of suffering shall I gather pleasure.

Instead of being a direct statement, this quote brings out the problematic nature of the situation chosen for representation. The conflict is Romantic in the sense that suffering and pleasure are imagined as two inseparable parts of a unified emotion. **Derozio** stood for the spirit of freedom and liberty. Born during the era of **colonial Raj**, he loved independence and this love for independence is one characteristic of him and his works as is evident from his *Ode to Independence:*

Look on that lamp which seems to guide
Like a spirit O'er the stream,
Casting upon the darkened tide
Its own mysterious beam.
My heart, – and shall that little lamp,
My glorious image be;
Shall the night so murk, the stream so damp
Be lit and cheered by thee?

It is interesting to see in these lines that "the darkened tide" is more of a challenge than a threatening object. The stress is clearly on "lit" and "cheered" than on "murk" or "damp". **Derozio** was such a personality that he may be said to have initiated the meeting of minds of the East and the West. Critics have credited him with having,

"sown the seeds of the first western style movement on Indian soil."
(Tarasankar Banerjee, 1985, p. 279)

The long poem, "*The Fakeer of Jungheera.*" shows a specific Byronic affinity. Its narrative encompasses the tragic life on Nuleeni, a high caste Hindu widow rescued from the funeral pyre by a young bandit - chief, who falls in love with her and whose love she reciprocates. Just when Nuleeni is about to be consumed by the flames on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, she is carried away by Fakir, her former lover and the chief of the outlaws, and she has a brief new lease of life. Nuleeni's absorption in her lover is revealed in these lines-

And I would keep thee like a thought
Which memory in her temple keeps,
When every sorrow sinks to nought,
And all the past of misery sleeps.
O thus should thy bright image dear
Above my heart's warm altar sit...

But Nuleeni's father is furious, and a raid against the Fakir's stronghold follows, and he dies fighting. Her relatives, however, are determined to 'save' her from this fate that they deem to be worse than death. In the ensuing battle, the lover is killed, but not long after is joined in death by the heart-broken Nuleeni. Nuleeni rushes through the filed and clasps the body

As is she dreamed
Of him in her embrace.. but they who thought
That life was tempting her breast, and sought
Some answer from her heart to hush the doubt,
Found that its eloquence had all burnt out.

Nuleeni has found her peace in blissful death in the arms of her dead lover. In this fast moving, ideologically daring tale, divided into two cantos, **Derozio** skilfully employs different metres to suit the mutations of mood within the narrative. He uses the iambic four-foot couplet for straightforward narration, but adopts a slower tempo for the descriptive passages and the anapaestic metre for the spirited account of the battle between Nuleeni's lover and the relatives of Nuleeni, while the choruses of the chanting priests and women round Nuleni's funeral pyre are in trochaic and dactylic measures.

The other popular narrative poem of **Derozio** is *The Enchantress of the Cave.* Cast in the same dramatic mould that characterises some portions of *The Fakeer of Jungheera*, it is set in the eve of a decisive battle to be fought between the Muslims and the Hindus for the mastery of India. Nazim, the Muslim general, seeks the enchantress of the cave to learn "whether all is well" with his wife Jumeeli whom he has left behind. He finds that the youth who had accompanied him to battle has deserted him and he proceeds alone to the cave. In the cave he discovers Jumeeli, his

wife, who had accompanied him to battle disguised in male attire, now in the female guise of the enchantress. This is the sum and substance of *The Song of the Enchantress*. Appended to the narrative are notes A to F which show an amount of out-of-the-way reading and an acquaintance with several literatures, which exhibits the wide range of **Derozio**'s scholarship. **Derozio**'s poetic productions all but ceased once he left *Hindu College*. For the remainder of his life, he almost single-handedly edited and managed the *East Indian*, the first newspaper that was the recognised organ of Eurasians in India, which advocated their claims as well as the claims of what was considered to be liberal issues in society. The highest tribute to this newspaper was paid by **John Grant**, himself a veteran journalist, when he said that "whatever differences of opinion existed among his (**Derozio**'s) contemporaries as to the mode of conducting it, there could be none whatever as to the talents, the perfect honesty, and the unfettered views of the editor."

A noteworthy trait of **Derozio**'s writing is its nationalistic fervour. Not only in his journalism, but also in his poetry – poems such as "*To India - My Native Land*", "*The Harp of India*" and "*To the Pupils of Hindu College*" are excellent examples – there is strong assertion of patriotism which stamps **Derozio** as an Indian English poet whose Indianness supersedes his Englishness.

The Harp of India

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
Thy music once was sweet -- who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
Like ruined monument on desert plain:
O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
Those hands are cold -- but if thy notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

His poetry introduces images and ideas emanating out of his sense of national belonging, e.g. 'Highest Himalaya' (*Poetry*); 'Ganga's Roll' (*Song of the Indian Girl*); 'Chandra's beams' (*The Eclipse*), 'Sweet Sitar' (*Song of the Hindoostani Minstrel*) etc., making him the first Indian English poet to do so. An illustration from the *Song of the Hindoostani Minstrel:*

The Surmah tinge the black eye's fringe
"Twill sparkle like a star;
With roses dress each ravens tress,
My only loved Dildar!...

In Busrah there is many a rose
Which many a maid may seek,
But who shall find a flower which blows
Like that upon thy cheek?...

Like birds from land to land we'll range,
And with our sweet sitar,
Our hearts the same, though worlds may change,
We'll love, and love, Dildar!

We notice in these lines an amalgam of the Indian and European. Nature exists not in its objective state but has got linked with the native tradition of projecting a mood, at once individual and stylised.

2.7 THE LITERARY LEGACY OF HENRY DEROZIO

Nothing proves **Derozio**'s influence over his students at *Hindu College, Calcutta*, so convincingly than the fact that he had to be dismissed from the service of *Hindu College* barely three years after he joined its service, allegedly because he motivated his students to be "hostile to Hinduism and to the established customs of the country." Some conservative Bengali gentlefolk brought the charges against **Derozio**, but his prosecution under these charges must equally have gladdened the conscientious British officialdom. For **Derozio** preached a secular nationalism and preached it so passionately that he won innumerable converts to his cause. His converts included upcoming young men such as **Krishna Mohun Bannerjee, Mahesh Chandra Ghose, Ram Gopal Ghose, Gobin Chunder Bysack, Amrita Lall Mitra and Duckinarunjun Mukherjee.** Many of them took to intellectual pursuits and produced literary writings inspired by their mentor. But unfortunately, not many of these writings have survived, although most of the young men in question had tremendous influence in their own chosen sphere of activities. **Derozio**'s inspiration came from the English Romantic poets who castigated the orthodox, restrictive nature of the neo classicists. **Derozio** applied the radical English thoughts to the existing views in India. In the individual case of **Derozio**, the secular notions of behaviour posed a threat to what was considered the native Indian ethos.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has focused upon the life and works of **Henry Derozio**, undoubtedly the most renowned among the early Indian English authors after **Raja Rammohun Roy**. **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** may be considered one of the first Indian English poets. His father was of mixed Portuguese and Indian descent, and his mother was English. Born and educated in Calcutta and belonging to such an ancestry, he was compelled to choose a community to which he could be associated with, to which he could closely relate. His was an unusual dilemma. He was neither full Portuguese, nor English, nor Anglo or even Indian for that matters. At one level, identity mattered a great deal to him. The institution expected him to adhere to a specific point of view, call it 'Indian' if you like. Being of Eurasian stock he was obviously critical of various Hindu customs and mores but at the same time he was also a Lecturer at the *Calcutta Hindu College*. He was however, dismissed on the grounds of having corrupted and negatively influenced Hindu youth. As mentioned earlier he was a teacher not because of any ulterior motive but because he was genuinely interested in the intellectual well being of his students and he also wanted to be able to identify with them as an Indian.

His debating club the *Academic Association* provided a forum for discussing various socio-political issues, the position of women in society and traditional and orthodox Hindu customs. His poems carry a number of influences and are full of the fervour of patriotism and nationalism. A casteist, orthodox India of the time would not adopt something as new and interpretive as patriotism. The word required a lot of self- questioning. He made use of Indian imagery, Indian themes, Indian myths and everything Indian in an effort to create a sense of identity both for himself and for his artistic and creative impulses.

His two volumes of poetry are *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Romance And Other Poems* (1828). They are replete with details typically Indian, in geographical as well as historical sense. Though heavily influenced by the English Romantic poets and writing during the great wave of Romanticism, despite not having produced a vast or huge body of work, he gave, "expression to a distinct Indian personality," (*C P Verghese, op. cit., p.7., quoted by GJV Prasad, P. 17*). He may be considered to have as **Prasad** says:

> *The dilemma of the early Indian English poets- of having to prove their understanding and mastery of the English language and tradition, while at the same time maintaining and expressing their Indianness.*
>
> (Prasad, p. 17)

Derozio's story is intricately interlinked with the story of *Hindu College* in which he worked as an English teacher for three years and through which he came to the limelight as an academic and as an activist, as did many other Indian English authors of that era. The Unit has also sought to explore the literary output as well as the literary legacy of **Derozio**, from which a large number of writers and social activists derived benefit.

2.9 QUESTIONS

a) Discuss the role of Hindu College in bringing Henry Derozio into the limelight of the intellectual world of early nineteenth century Calcutta.
b) Give a brief account of the character of Henry Derozio's literary output
c) Comment on the literary legacy of Henry Derozio.

UNIT 3 MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT AND THE EVOLUTION OF MODERNITY

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Hindu College and Michael Madhusudan Dutt
3.3 A Personal-Intellectual Biography of Michael Madhusudan Dutt
3.4 Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Literary Output in English
3.5 Michael Madhududan Dutt and Early Nationalism
3.6 Why Michael Madhusan Dutt Stopped Writing in English
3.7 Let Us Sum Up
3.8 Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to understand another person associated with *Hindu College, Calcutta*, **Madhusudan Dutt**, a student who had to leave the institution prematurely because, as a result of the lessons he learnt there, he converted to Christianity from Hinduism. An account of his life and the new name he acquired under his new religion will be provided. The unit will also give details of his literary output in English, the language in which he began to write as an author. An analysis of why he subsequently switched to writing in Bengali, his native tongue, will also follow the discussion of his writings.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Michael Madhusudan Dutt is often rated as one of the greatest poets between **Bharatchandra Ray** and **Rabindranath Tagore**. He was responsible for innovating different forms and types that eventually altered the course of Bengali literature while enriching it tremendously. His contribution to the literary writings in Bengali has been the blank verse, the sonnet form, the first modern comedy and tragedy and the first epic. He is also regarded as the pioneer of westernised poetry and the new drama. His contributions as may have been noticed were largely in the field of Bengali literature. He was born **Madhusudan Dutt** in 1824 and educated at *Calcutta's Hindu College* and Bishop's College. He is said to have converted to Christianity in order to avail himself of free education at Bishop's College, (**Prasad**, p.18, 1999). These points of information help us to grasp the various shifts witnessed in his writing. They are also of use to specifically underline the important interventions **Madhusudan Dutt** made in the society of his time.

3.2 THE *HINDU COLLEGE* AND MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

Unlike **Derozio**, who was on the faculty of *Hindu College*, **Dutt** (then **Madhusudan**) was in the institution as a student. He arrived at the college two years after **Derozio** departed from it, but came to imbibe many of the same ideas that **Derozio** had tried to take to his students. An avowed Anglican, he wrote exclusively in English in his early writing years. The chief inspiration for his early writing was drawn from **Captain David Lester Richardson**, one of the luminaries of the teaching staff of *Hindu College* in those days. **Richardson** was a poet, and some of his works were

published, including in journals as reputed as the *Athenaeum*. Besides he was an extremely gifted professor whose pedagogy had been praised by no less a man than **Macaulay**. With the encouragement of **Captain Richardson, Madhusudan** came into contact with several literary journals of India – all of them journals in English, of course – *The Bengal Spectator, Literary Gleaner, Calcutta Literary Gazette, Literary Blossom, Comet*, and was happy to see himself published in some of these. His poetic expression, then, was imitative of English models, and therefore largely inconsequential in terms of literary merit. A representative poem of his *Hindu College, Calcutta* period, goes thus:

(SONNET) (Written at the Hindu College)

Oh ! how my heart exulteth while I see
Those future flow'rs, to deck my country's brow,
Thus kindly nurtured in this nursery! –
Perchance, unmark'd some here are budding now,
Whose temples shall with laurel-wreaths be crown'd,
Twined by the Sisters Nine: Whose angel - tongues
Shall charm the world with their enchanting songs.
And time shall waft the echo of each sound
To distant ages; – Some, perchance, here are,
Who, with a Newton's glance, shall nobly trace
The course mysterious of each wandering star;
And like a God, unveil the hidden face
Of many a planet to man's wondering eye,
And give their names to immortality;

It is not difficult to sight the shadow of **Derozio** on the sonnet, especially if one compares this sonnet to **Derozio**'s sonnet on a similar topic:

(SONNET) (To the Pupils of Hindu College)

Expanding like the petals of young flowers
I watch the gentle opening of your minds
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
Your intellectual energies and powers
That stretch (like your birds in soft summer hours)
Their wings to try their strength. O! how the winds
Of circumstance, and freshening April showers
Of early knowledge, and unnumbered kinds
Of new perceptions shed their influence ;
And how you worship truth's omnipotence!
What joyance rains upon me, when I see
Fame in the mirror of futurity ,
Weaving the chapters you have yet to gain,
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.

Incidentally, **Derozio** was the first and **Dutt** the second Indian English writer to write in the sonnet form so much a favourite with the poets of England. One can notice the absence of dichotomy and conflict in **Dutt**'s sonnet that merely asserts the obvious. The descriptive nature of **Dutt**'s sonnet also points towards his facile perception in this phase of his poetic career.

3.3 A PERSONAL - INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

Madhusudan Dutt was born on January 25, 1824, in the village of Sagardanri in Bengal to **Rajnarain** and **Jehnavi**, an educated couple, that ran a prosperous household. When the couple's other sons, both younger than **Madhusudan**, died, the family moved over to Calcutta, the location of **Madhusudan's** first formal schooling.

Madhusudan attended a Grammar School at Lall Bazar in which, along with other disciplines, he was taught Latin and Hebrew. After five years in this Grammar School, **Madhusudan** joined the *Hindu College, Calcutta*, in 1937. At *Hindu College*, **Madhusudan** breathed in the air of rebellion that permeated its climate in the early nineteenth century. This had something to do with the fight against orthodoxy. The deep admiration for things European – language, literature, culture, society and religion – that is evident in **Madhusudan**'s early writings, was rooted in the contrast that the *Hindu College* pupils perceived between Europe and their own country. The contrast was, however significant since it symbolised the fight of the new with the old. **C H Cameron**, a member of the **Governor - General's Council**, records this sense of antithesis even in an essay that earned **Madhusudan** a Gold Medal awarded. His aversion to things Indian, at least to things Hindu, drove him to convert in 1840 from Hinduism to Christianity, something that diluted the spirit of the struggle he had so far waged. Perhaps, the answer did not lie in Christianity but in the modern, enlightened point of view.

The conversion resulted in a rupture between him and his family for a while, and his college, forever. Undeterred, he (now **Michael Madhusudan**) enrolled for studies at Bishop's College, which he attended till 1847. Around this period there happened a decline in his parent's fortunes. Realising that he would not be able to receive much support from them, **Michael Madhusudan** decided to tap his own potential at sustaining himself by moving, with some Tamilian friends, to Madras. Soon after settling down in Madras, **Michael Madhusudan** married **Rebecca McTavish**, an inmate of the Orphan Asylum to which he was attached as a tutor. They had four children and had a reasonably happy married life. In Madras, as in Calcutta, **Michael Madhusudan** wrote without remission, but most of his writings were still moulded upon foreign models. Some of his writings appeared in *The Madras Circulator* under the pseudonym of **Timothy Penpoem**.

If his shorter poems were written in Calcutta, in Madras **Michael Madhusudan** attempted his longer poems such as *Visions of the Past* and *The Captive Ladie*. One can go into the question of the choice of the long poem. Initially, as we have seen, **Dutt** gave vent to simple feelings and emotions. His sonnets were responses to some ordinary situations of life unexpectedly presented. This made them sketchy and impressionistic. In the case of the long poems to which he shifted later, we see an urge on the part of the poet to relate disparate feelings and ideas to one another. This was the phase of taking account of the poet's earlier changes and deviations in attitude. Dutt also wished perhaps to offer a rationale of why he moved away from a fight for rationality to an effort to reconcile with the given circumstances. At the same time he composed a few prose- pieces.

Needless to say, all these poems were written in English, as were the few prose-pieces that he wrote. Among these prose-pieces, the most eminent was an essay entitled "*The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu*", initially delivered as a talk and by-and-by brought out as a book. While in Madras, **Michael Madhusudan** lost his parents and received word from his friends that his family inheritance was about to be appropriated by his cousins. These events made him hasten back to Calcutta in 1856, leaving his wife **Rebecca** and four children behind in Madras.

Though his first marriage was never annulled legally, he married a second time, within a year of returning to his native city. **Michael Madhusudan** had three children by his second marriage. In the course of litigation to obtain his ancestral properties, he visited his ancestral village of Sagardanri. His homecoming, apart from being a material necessity, reflected a cultural nostalgia as well. There was now in him a growing inclination to write in Bengali and Bengali only. We shall briefly discuss this change of language later in the unit. Between 1859 and 1862, **Michael Madhusudan** produced at least ten works in Bengali including *Sharmishta* (A Play) - 1859: *Ekei Ki Baley Sabhyata* (A Play) - 1860; *Buro Shaliker Ghare Rown* (A Play) - 1860: *Padmavati* (A Play) -1860 *Tillotama Sambhava Kavya* (Poems) - 1860;

Meghanad Badh Kavya, Part One (Poems) - 1861; *Brajangana Kavya* (Poems) - 1861; *Krishna Kumari* (A Play) - 1861; *Veerangana Kavya* (Poems) - 1862. In 1862, **Michael Madhusudan** set sail for England, thereby fulfilling a life - long dream. Reaching London to set about training to be a barrister and despite being dogged by financial hardships, he managed to qualify as Barrister - at Law in four years. Surviving under straitened circumstances, he however did not cease to write while in England or, briefly, in France. He wrote a number of sonnets, among which one, entitled "*Banga Bhasa*", tells of a dream in which his muse advises him to give up his 'beggar's garment" and recover the 'mass of jewels in your mother's lap." The "mass of jewels" is a clear reference to the Bengali language. In most of his writings abroad, there is an unmistakable pining for his national heritage: his language, his literature, and culture. Even his sonnets written on the European masters, during this phase of **Michael Madhusudan**'s career, are couched in the Bengali idiom.

Michael Madhusudan was back in Calcutta again in 1867, trying to establish himself in the Bar. After facing some difficulties in this regard, he did manage to register as a barrister. However, his earnings were less than modest and he always spent more than his earnings. His confirmed alcoholism too came in the way of an effective practice. Thus, he was forced to abandon his profession and take up the post of Examiner of the Privy Council Records in the High Court of Calcutta. In 1872, he returned to a legal practice but along with that he also continued with his writings in Bengali. His writings of this period included an adaptation of **Homer**'s *Illiad* and sundry songs. He also penned two plays – *Maya Kanon* (completed) and *Bish-na-Dhanurgun* (left incomplete) –in response to a request from the Bengal Theatre Group. By the end of that year **Michael Madhusudan** found himself virtually penniless – the result of an extravagant lifestyle and numerous illnesses. In early 1873, he was taken severely sick with consumption, a malady that affected his wife as well. Their end came finally, within three days of each other, in June 1873.

3.4 MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT'S LITERARY OUTPUT IN ENGLISH

Madhusudan began to write in English during his days at *Hindu College, Calcutta*. Some of his *Hindu College* period poems were published in contemporary English periodicals of renown which he himself used to enjoy reading. **Madhusudan**'s poems in English encapsulate a wide variety. There are short epigrams, lyrics of a romantic flavour, sonnets, of which at least one is in blank verse, and a longer poem on *King Porus* divided into six stanzas of about twenty lines each. Unfortunately, *King Porus* remained an unfinished verse-tale written after the manner of **Byron** and **Scott**. In spite of **Madhusudan**'s ostensible Europeanisation, the theme of *King Porus* reveals his unmistakeable Indianness:

> *The noble hearts that bled*
> *For freedom – with the heroic glow*
> *In patriot bosoms nourished*
> *– Hearts, eagle – like that recked not death*
> *But, shrank before foul Thraldom's breath.*

Another fragment in English, *Visions of the Past*, composed soon after he settled down in Madras, is a brilliant expression of the visual imagination. Consider the following lines:

> *I look'd - the sun had veil'd his dazzling brow –*
> *As when he saw upon thee, Calvarie;*
> *The Pilgrim from His Father's bosom – He –*
> *His God – with blood stain'd brow and crown of thorns*
> *Die on the accursed tree - yea - die to save -*
> *And dying pray for those who shed His blood.*

If this representation of the scene of **Christ**'s crucifixion highlights **Madhusudan**'s Christian identity, **Madhusudan**'s Bengali identity is highlighted by another passage in the same poem that celebrates the landscape of Bengal.

> *– As when, Bengala; on thy sultry plains*
> *Beneath the pillar'd and high arched shade*
> *Of some proud Banyan - slumberous haunt and cool –*
> *Echo in mimic accents 'mong the flocks,*
> *Couch'd there in noon-tide rest and soft respose.*
> *Repeats the defeaning and deep thunder'd roar*
> *Of him – the royal wanderer of the woods;*

The Captain Ladie, **Michael Madhusudan**'s most sustained poem in English, consists of an "Introduction" of eleven five-lined stanzas plus the first canto running to 615 rhyming iambic tetrameter lines plus the second canto ending with 572 lines; at the top of the first Canto two lines from **Byron**'s *Giaour* have been quoted and at the top of the second canto four lines from **Moore**'s *Lalla Rookh*. The *"Introduction"* is addressed to his wife **Rebecca** (without mentioning her) and contains some lines with an autobiographical significance. The narrative of *The Captain Ladie* that was written once again in the romantic mode is styled after several English poems of that species. The poet's point of view is self - consciously European. There is an Europeanisation of Indian names, including names taken from mythological and historical frameworks of India. The basic story of *The Captain Ladie* revolves around the life of the Rajput monarch, **Prithviraj Chauhan**, and his abduction of the daughter of the King of Kannauj, the battle waged by the Rajputs against Muslim invaders, and finally the defeat and death by suicide of the royal Rajput couple.

Dutt liberally confuses history and mythology, but his prosody is consistent, and his octa syllables move with almost as much vigour as that of his models – viz **Moore** and **Byron**. Besides *The Captain Ladie*, **Michael Madhusudan** also wrote *Razia, the Empress of Ind*, a verse-drama, which was published in *The Eurasian*, a Madras journal, in seven consecutive instalments. Some years later, after his return to Calcutta, **Michael Madhusudan** attempted a Bengali rendering of the verse-drama hoping that it would be staged; however, it failed to catch on with the intelligentsia of Calcutta. The *Anglo-Saxon* and the *Hindu* was by far the most eminent among the prose-pieces authored by **Michael Madhusudan** while he was in Madras. This essay, rhetorical in the extreme, and enmeshed with references to European cultural texts, expounds upon the merits of the Anglo - Saxon culture in comparison to Hindu culture.

> *What wonder then that the Hindu should*
> *be what he is ? The furious waves of*
> *fanaticism, of oppression, have swept over*
> *his hapless soul for a thousand years !*
> *From the day that the blood-thirsty*
> *wolf of Ghiznee bounded across the*
> *stupendous rocky barriers of the west*
> *desolating her homes, flinging to the*
> *dust her idol - gods from their glorious*
> *temples, leading her sons and daughters*
> *captive, ill-fated Hindustan has been*
> *the prey of the invader, the sport of*
> *the ambitious and the rapacious*
> *Zenobia - chained, not to the chariot*
> *Of a single conqueror but to those of a*
> *hundred, to grace their triumphs !*

It is the mission of the Anglo-Saxon, therefore, asserts **Michael Madhusudan** in this essay, to "renovate, to regenerate, or – in one word, to Christianise the Hindu."

Michael Madhusudan Dutt like **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** was highly influenced by the **Romantic** poets. **Dutt** drew his inspiration from **Byron,** as is obvious from the manner in which he tries to "evoke Mahmud Ghazni's vision of the contemplated slaughter of the besieged Hindus of Old Delhi" *(K R Srinivasa Iyengar, Jalandhar, 1962)*

3.5 MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT AND EARLY NATIONALISM

The India into which these early Indian English poets were born was a country that had lost its former glory, like we saw in the previous unit. A country that was reeling under the yoke of imperialism and the colonial **Raj,** a country where poets and writers could do nothing but look towards the past and to glorify the past of a free India. Both freedom and glory had become relics of the past and the country was now a mere weak colony. These early poets took it upon themselves to try and restore the image of a glorious India in whatever way they could and what better way than to express their feelings and emotions in poetry. For this they looked for inspiration in the past of India, at the ancient myths and legends. The reason they turned to these sources was to try and awaken the India that had come to be from the slumber she had fallen into under the colonial **Raj**. **Michael Madhusudan Dutt's** poem – *King Porus – A Legend of Old* is an excellent example of such an attempt made by a poet. In this poem **Dutt** talks about how King Porus chose to battle the Greek invasion lead by Alexander the Great Macedon. How the brave Porus and his soldiers fought against the invaders along the banks of the river Hydaspes in pouring rain as the Greeks crossed the river in the stealth of the night and attacked Porus and his kingdom in 326 BC. Undoubtedly King Porus was defeated in that battle but when brought before Alexander the Great as a prisoner of war, he demands that he be treated like a king. In the poem Alexander is duly impressed by the bravery and personality of the fallen King and treats him with great dignity deserving such honour. But the point **Dutt** is trying to make in the poem is that when India could have Kings like Porus who fought for their freedom, how can India sit still under the colonial **Raj**? He is trying to tell his readers that India was once a country that treasured her freedom and her men could die fighting for liberty once upon a time. He concludes by talking about her fall in the hands of the British:

The crown that once did deck they brow
It's trampled down – and thou sunk low:
Thy pearl, thy diamond and thy mine
Of glittering gold is no more thine.
Alas! – each conquering tyrant's lust
Has robb'd thee of thy very dust!
Thou standest like a lofty tree
Shorn of fruits – blossoms – leaves and all
Of every gale the sport to be,
Despised and scorned e'en in thy fall!

On the one hand *King Porus – A Legend of Old* might be looked upon as the story of a legendary king's fight to save his kingdom but on the other hand *King Porus* could symbolise the modern Indian who can awaken and lead India to her former glory, King Porus' kingdom signifying India. The invasion by the Macedonians on King Porus' kingdom is to be read as an attack on India's liberty as **Dutt** is very careful in drawing the parallels very early at the outset of the poem:

Loudly the midnight tempest sang,
Ah! It was thy dirge, fair liberty,

And when King Porus and his army fight to save their kingdom, the poet once agains links this fight with what could be India's fight for freedom:

'Before the Macedonians driven,
fell India's hardy sons, –
Proud mountain oaks by thunders riven, –
That for their country's freedom bled –
And made on gore their glorious bed!

The references **Dutt** makes time and again are to India as a nation and not to King Porus' kingdom alone. As mentioned earlier King Porus lost the war but when brought before the great Alexander he is very clear about what he wants, even though defeated and in disgrace:

King Porus was no slave,
He stooped not – bent not there his knee, –
But stood, as stands an oak,
In Himalayan majesty.

King Porus wins his adversary's admiration for his courage in not only war but defeat as well. The real motive behind **Dutt**'s writing this poem becomes evident if it has not already in the concluding lines of the poem when he asks:

But where, oh ! where is Porus now?
And where the Noble hearts that bled
For freedom – with the heroic glow
In patriot bosoms nourished –
– Hearts, eagle-like that recked not death,
But shrank before foul Thraldom's Breath?

Having examined his patriotic fervour we shall in the next section, explore the reasons why **Michael Madhusudan Dutt** stopped writing in English and turned to writing in Bengali, his mother tongue.

3.6 WHY MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT STOPPED WRITING IN ENGLISH

Why then did such Anglocentric an intellectual abruptly cease to write in English altogether and almost exclusively begin to write in Bengali, once he came back to Calcutta from Madras? An alteration of heart and mind at least on the language issue on **Michael Madhusudan**'s part is evident even in some of his correspondence of the Madras years. In response to a suggestion made by the educationist **J E D Bethune** that he exercise his literary talents more in the Bengali language than in the English language, **Michael Madhusudan** wrote back to their common friend **Gour Dass Bysack**, to whom the suggestion had been made,

.... Here is my routine; 6 to 8
Hebrew, 8 to 12 school, 12 to 2
Greek, 2 to 5 Telegu and Sanskrit,
5 to 7 Latin, 7 to 10 English ....
Am I not preparing for the great
object of embelleshing the tongue
of my fathers ? .....

He is supposed to have been told by **Drinkwater Bethune** that he would be doing India a great duty and would also receive fame should he:

Employ the taste and talents which he had cultivated by the study of English in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems in his own language,

(*Quoted in M K Naik, A History, p. 25, quoted in Prasad, Continuities p.20*)

Whatever be the cause, the end result was that he began to write in Bengali and his Bengali epic, *Meghavadh Kavya* (1861) is said to be one of the greatest works in Bengali literature. Moreover, it had become obvious to him that as a writer of English he would only be able to reach a limited number of readers. The unlimited readership that he wanted to address would be available to him only if he wrote in Bengali. Thus too, he was clear in himself that the Bengali that he would write would be a Bengali accessible to the masses of Bengal and not a Bengali "forged for us by a servile admiration for everything Sanskrit." This however, explains only a part of the issue that is bigger and more complex than that Bengali language gave him access to a larger readership. There was a big clash between English and Bengali at the level of culture. **Madhusudan Dutt** lived and breathed in India. This made him a part of the native folklore and mythology. There were many voices struggling to be heard within him. These voices made sense more or less in proportions to the values **Dutt** adhered to and accepted. In the middle of this creative struggle, one could see the question of identity at work. Was **Dutt** a Hindu or a Christian? Was he a Christian from India or a part of trans- national Christianity? In the Nineteenth century, an individual's psyche remained confined to national boundaries. In fact, the transformation from a community identity to a national identity was quite a gigantic task. Living in Indian among Indians of various strata may have pulled **Dutt** out of his restricted English identity. Turning to the Bengali language also may have proved useful in sorting out the Christian identity of a distant country.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has focused upon the life and works of **Michael Madhusudan Dutt** an alumni of *Hindu College, Calcutta*, who was so influenced by the instruction he imbibed in that institution that he forsook his religion and, for a while, even his family, and took up the vocation of an Indian writer in English. Some of his English productions are negotiated in this Unit. This Unit further speculates upon the reasons for **Michael Madhusudan**'s abandonment of a career of writing in English in favour of a career of writing in Bengali. His long poems – *Visions of the Past* may be considered to be an assertion of his faith in Christianity, (**Prasad**, *Continuities, p. 22*), while his *The Captive Ladie* is an effort at turning to India and everything Indian. Finally, he was to make his commitment to his own culture by writing only in Bengali, his mother tongue. In all his poems he choose to redefine myths in order to create an idea of masculinity that he saw as lost to India and Indians under the colonial **Raj**.

3.8 QUESTIONS

a) Discuss the role of Hindu College in the fashioning of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's personal-intellectual biography.

b) Give a brief account of the character of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's literary output in English.

c) Why did Michael Madhusudan Dutt stop writing in English and start writing in Bengali midway through his career as a writer?

UNIT 4 TORU DUTT: ASSERTIONS OF INDIAN LIFE

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 The Dutt Family Album
4.3 The Life Of Toru Dutt
4.4 Toru Dutt's literary Career
4.5 Toru Dutt as the Earliest Indian English Woman Writer
4.6 Let Us Sum Up
4.7 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall attempt a reading of the life and works of one of the earliest Indian English women writers - **Toru Dutt**. She was born into the **Dutt** family of Calcutta, famous even then for their literary accomplishments. The unit will also offer a comment on her literary importance amongst other Indian English Women Writers.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The **Rambagan Dutt family** were converts from Hinduism to Christianity. **Toru Dutt**'s father **Govin Chunder Dutt** was a good poet and a linguist who had published *The Dutt Family Album* (1870), *The Loyal Hours* (1876) and *Cherry Stones* (1881) along with his brother **Greece Chunder**, while her mother **Kshetramoni** had translated *The Blood of Christ* from English to Bengali. Apart from her parents, even her uncles were prolific writers. Mention of their contributions will be made in the next section of this unit.

4.2 THE DUTT FAMILY ALBUM

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, a Bengali family by the name of **Dutt**, residents of Rambagan, Calcutta, came into literary prominence by virtue of their published writings in English. The **Dutts** were an extremely well - connected family within the top echelons of Calcutta society. **Nilmoni Dutt, Toru Dutt**'s great-grandfather, had belonged to a tiny group of English educated Indians in the eighteenth century, even as the **East India Company** consolidated its hold over Bengal. Along with **Raja Rammohum Roy** and others, **Nilmoni Dutt** befriended certain Christian missionaries from England who had arrived recently in India. One of these Christian missionaries was **Father Carey** who subsequently founded the Serampore College, an institution next only in importance to the historic *Hindu College*.

The *Hindu College* influence impinged itself on the **Dutts** through the office held by **Rasomoy, Nilmoni**'s eldest son. **Rasomoy**'s eldest son, **Govin**, in turn, was a star pupil of *Hindu College*, who studied under the legendary **Professor David Lester Richardson**, a teacher too of **Michael Madhusudan Dutt** and a colleague of **Henry**

Louis Vivian Derozio. Under the tutelage of **Richardson, Govin Chunder Dutt** learnt to recite **Shakespeare** and to participate in theatrical performances at *Hindu College*.

Govin's younger brothers, **Hur Chunder Dutt** and **Greece Chunder Dutt,** were similarly brought into the ambit of English Studies. The fascination for English language and English literature which was a shared trait of all the **Dutt** brothers, each of whom attempted to write in English as well, partly stemmed from a cultural milieu in which Bengali was not perceived as a classic language and English was regarded as the only authentic medium of self-expression for educated Indians. Writing in the wake of the writings of **Raja Rammohum Roy, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** and **Michael Madhusudan Dutt,** the members of the **Dutt** family of **Rambagan,** Calcutta, felt that English was, by right, their most natural vehicle for expressing themselves.

Apart from the sons of **Rasomoy Dutt,** their cousins, **Shoshee Chunder Dutt** and **Ishaan Chunder Dutt** were avid writers in English. Of them all, **Shoshee Chunder** perhaps had the most impressive array of productions in prose and verse ranging from *Miscellaneous Verses* (1848) to *Bengaliana, A Dish of Rice and Curry and Other Indigestible Ingredients* (1892). One of his most significant productions was *A Vision of Sumeru,* in *A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems* (1878) the spirit of Jesus is shown to overcome the pantheon of Hindu gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and others. In another production, *Realities of Indian Life, or Stories Collected from the Criminal Reports of India, to Illustrate the Life, Manners, and Customs of its People,* the dominant perspective is again that of the western colonial gaze looking down upon the Eastern colonised subject; with an attitude of disdain mixed with disgust. The same attitude, more or less, may be discerned in the *Essay and Poems* (1872) published by his brother **Ishaan Chunder**.

In the writings of **Govin Chunder, Hur Chunder, Greece Chunder, Rasomoy**'s sons, there is likewise not only a complete dependence on English cultural models, notably the **Romantic** writers, in matters of form, but in matters of content also there is a debasing exhibition of servility towards the English political masters of India. The most extreme example of the **Dutts**' devoted Anglophile nature is of course the book brought out by *Greece Chunder* in celebration of the visits to India in 1869 and 1875 respectively of the **Prince of Wales** and the **Duke of Edinburgh,** *The Loyal Hours: Poems Welcoming the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh on their Advent to India in 1869 and 1875*. The patriotic passion of this panegyric is over-shadowed by the loud loyalism of a shorter text by **Greece Chunder,** *To Lord Canning, During the Mutiny:*

Though a thousand pens condemned thee,
mine still should write thy praise ;
Though a thousand tongues reviled thee
Mine still should paeans raise;
For factious clamours heeding not,
That only call for blood,
True to thy duty and thy race,
Lord Canning, thou hast stood.
It is not for her trampled flag,
That England bares her sword;
It is not for just revenge
Upon a murderous horde;
It is to prove to blood-stained men,
Self-blinded of their sight,
That evil hath no chance with good
or darkness with the light.

Greece Chunder and his brother **Govin Chunder Dutt** published two volumes of poetry, *Cherry Stones* (1881) and *Cherry Blossoms* (1889). **Hur Chunder** also published *Fugitive Pieces* (1851) and *Lotus Leaves Or Poems Chiefly On Ancient Indian Subjects* (1871). The preoccupation with Ancient Indian history was a

common feature in the writings of the **Dutt** siblings and in keeping with much of the writing in Bengal in the nineteenth century as a whole. The eldest of the **Dutt** brothers, **Govin Chunder**, himself published only one volume of poetry, but played a crucial role in integrating these poems along with others written by his brothers and his nephew **Omesh Chunder Dutt** in the *Dutt Family Album* (1870).

The *Dutt Family Album* comprises an assortment of poetic genres — lyrics, sonnets, ballads, narrative poems and even translations of French and German poetry. The authorship of individual poems in the *Album* is not revealed and the *Album* is presented to readers as a corporate family venture, though without any obvious sequence or structure. The importance of the *Dutt Family Album* in the history of Indian English writings is, as **Theodore Dunn** remarked long ago, that it remains:

A memorial of a gifted family, and ... a testimony to the influence of those English teachers who were the first to encourage higher learning in the city of Calcutta.

Let us now examine **Toru Dutt**'s life in some detail.

4.3 THE LIFE OF TORU DUTT

Toru Dutt was the youngest of the three children born to **Govin Chunder Dutt** and **Kshetramoni** on March 4, 1856. As mentioned earlier they were converts to Christianity and the family were baptised in the Christ Church, Cornwallis Square, Calcutta, in 1862. The oldest among the three children was **Abju** (the son) followed by a daughter **Aru** and then the youngest was **Toru**. Private tutors taught the three children at home and the little **Dutt** girls even had an English Governess who taught **Aru** and **Toru** how to sing and to play the pianoforte. This small and happy family life was to be disrupted rather suddenly by the death of **Abju** (1851- 1865) at the tender age of fourteen years. Though broken -hearted and deeply grieved by the death of his first-born, **Govin Chunder Dutt** never lost faith in God. It was this same faith that was to sustain his wife and daughter **Toru**, when tragedy struck the **Dutt** household once again in later years. After the death of **Abju** the **Dutts'** spent four more years in Calcutta shuttling between their two houses in Ram Bagan and Baugmaree.

Finally, in 1869 **Govin Chunder Dutt** made up his mind to move away from the city that caused him and his family so much pain. Moreover being an enthusiastic admirer of the western way of life, of education and culture, he was determined to give his surviving children (**Aru** and **Toru**) the advantages of foreign travel and education. The family set sail for France in 1869. **Aru** and **Toru** were then mere children and the first Bengali girls to cross the seven seas and to sail abroad. They landed at Marseilles and set off for Nice where **Aru** and **Toru** attended school at a pensionate in which they studied French and were to become proficient in the language. Both the impressionable young girls were fascinated by the French way of life and by the intellectual currents of French enlightenment. From Nice, they went on to Paris, the cultural hub of France and then onto Boulougne in Italy before their final destination – England. But England never grew upon **Toru**'s heart in the way that France had done. She wrote in her journal dated 29 and 30th January 1871:

During the few days we remained in Paris, how beautiful it was! What streets! What a magnificent army! But now how fallen it is! It was the first amongst the cities and now what misery it contains!

Toru Dutt attributed the degeneration of France to its divorce from God:

Oh France, how art thou brought low! Mayest thou, after this humiliation, serve and worship God better than thou hast done in these days...

The reference was clearly to France's fate in the Franco-Prussian War. In 1871, the two girls attended the *Higher Lectures for Women* in Cambridge and Toru met and befriended **Mary Martin**, the daughter of a clergyman who was to remain her friend for life. In London, the stay of the **Dutt** family was facilitated by the presence of **Romesh Chunder**, their cousin, who was in London for his Indian Civil Service examination. **Toru** and **Aru** continued with the French lessons, but simultaneously developed many English social connections. These included prominent people such as **Sir George Macfarren, Sir Bartle Frere,** the **Governor of Bengal** from 1862 to 1867, and **Sir Edward Ryan, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court**, Calcutta, from 1837 to 1843. **Toru's** letters to her relatives back home revealed a busy and happy intellectual routine for the sisters, including Bible-reading, the reading of newspapers and the reading of English classics. But England was not France and failed to touch **Toru**'s heart.

After a brief visit to St. Learnord-on-Sea, the **Dutt** family sailed back to India in 1873. Letters written by **Toru Dutt** to **Mary** from aboard the ship and thereafter from Calcutta constitute a valuable source of information about her later life. They show a well-rounded personality on the one hand and an especial engagement with reading and writing on the other hand. The French poems which the sisters had composed while abroad were sought to be compiled by them and sent to be published in the "*Poets Corner*" of *Bengal Magazine* during the first few months after the Dutts returned home. The poems started appearing in that journal from the early part of 1874. Quite early in 1874, both **Aru** and **Toru** fell ill from phthisis. Then all at once, and leaving her family heart-broken, **Aru Dutt** died in 1874 at the age of twenty.

After **Aru**'s death, the family attempted to resume its normal routine, breaking the monotony of living now and then through visits to their Baugmaree Garden home. The sudden demise of **Aru Dutt** affected **Govin Chunder Dutt** rather deeply. This was the second time that another of his children had been snatched by the cruel hands of fate. He longed to return to England and the Lake District where his favourite poet **Wordsworth** had resided. Combined with the father's longing for a different place that could offer his bruised heart some solace, was the youngest daughter's deep love for France and the French way of life. After her European trip and because of her religion, her illustrious family, her love for France, **Toru Dutt** could never adapt to the Bengali way of life. The loss of her older siblings, the pain she could never really express found an outlet in a romantic melancholia and an obsession and pre-occupation with death. The fact that she was neither French nor English but Indian by birth led her to seek her roots consciously. In her quest she turned to the tales her mother and her nanny had told her as a child. Her interest in legends and myths gave birth to a fascination and learning of Sanskrit, a desire that was encouraged by her father. Meanwhile, she continued to publish her writings in the *Bengal Magazine*. The following year, in 1875, despite a renewal of her illness, **Toru** completed her *Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, poems chiefly translated. After the conclusion of this project, she resumed once more her Sanskrit studies, longing to read the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata** in the original. In 1876, after much trouble, a publisher was finally found for **Toru**'s first book, the *Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. **Mlle Clarisse Bader** now interested **Toru Dutt** in another French book, *La Femme dans L'Inde Antique,* a rendering of the lives of prominent Indian women. She petitioned the author for permission to translate all four volumes of the book, but her interest was obviously in the volume on the women of India. The permission was readily granted, but **Toru Dutt** found herself too unwell to commence her work.

Towards the end of her life, **Toru** who had always lived an ivory-tower existence amongst books and journals began to show a certain social awareness that was absent in her writings so far. In her correspondence, she sometimes made critical references to the Indian Christian communities' lack of moral standards as well as the Hindu Indian communities' moral rigidities. She was also stung to the quick by some reported instances of British arrogance towards Indians in the context of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India. Nevertheless, her social awareness such as it was never really reflected itself more than obliquely in her writings. **Toru Dutt** too died young

when she was only 21 years old on August 30, 1877. The next section will examine **Toru Dutt**'s literary works.

4.4 TORU DUTT'S LITERARY CAREER

The first anthology **Aru** and **Toru** worked on was a volume of translations from French into English called *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* which is without doubt the most well-known of **Toru Dutt**'s works. The Indian edition was a large octavo volume of 252 pages of which 40 consisted of notes showing **Toru**'s vast insight into French literature. Eight of the one hundred and sixty-five poems were by **Aru**, and the rest by **Toru Dutt**. The translations were from about seventy Parnasian poets, including **Du Bellay Du Bartas, Scarron, Mme. Viot, Pierre Corneille, De Parry, Le Compte de Gramont, De Florian, De Vigny, Chenier, Musset, Beranger, Sainte Beuve, Brizeux, Dupont, V de Laparde, Mine Ackermann, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Bandelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Mme Desloordes - Valmore** and many others.

Though she was chiefly concerned with the French Romantic poets, she did not confine herself to them. In her translations of **Victor Hugo** much of his variety and vigour of rhyme, metre and the splendour and sonority of diction is evident. These highlight his epic grandeur, his powerful descriptions, his lyrical skill, his humanitarian feeling and his deep patriotism. Many poems, particularly **Hugo**'s are patriotic, others deal with themes such as - doves and butterflies and swallows, homely joys and simply scenes, kindness and bravery, childhood and ideal manhood. The subjects dearest to her were pathetic ones – those that spoke of separation and loneliness, exile and captivity, illusion and dejection, loss and bereavement, declining seasons and untimely death. Her own life was an odd mixture of sunshine and sorrow, laughter and pathos, beauty and tragedy, success and regret. Besides being inspired by the French Romanticists, she was also guided by **Elizabeth Barette Browning, John Keats, Charlotte Bronte** and not least by **Jane Austen.**

The *Saptahiki Sambad Press* of Bhawanipore published the first edition of the book in 1876. There was neither a Preface nor an Introduction. The second edition was published by *Saptahiki Sambad Press* once more, in 1878, and included a memoir of **Toru** by her heart-broken father. This new edition contained thirty fresh translations and thus took the total number of poems to almost 200. The poems were regrouped and the book contained a frontispiece of **Toru** and **Aru Dutt**. Messrs Kegan Paul in London published a third edition in 1880. **Sir Roper Lethbridge** in the *Indian Magazine* and *Review* also published two of the translations in an anthology. He also wrote an article on *The Poetry of Toru Dutt.*

The first poem in *The Sheaf* is *The Sleep of the Condor* by **Leconte de Lisle**, while the concluding sonnet is *A Mon Pere* which is an original composition. Early reviews of **Toru Dutt**'s book were mostly favourable. The *Hindu Patriot* (Edited by Babu Kristo Dass Pal), the *Englishman* (Edited by J W Fursell) and the *Indian Charivari*, along with the *Indian Mirror* and the *Madras Standard* reviewed her *Sheaf* and the latter mistook **Toru Dutt** for a gentleman. **Toru Dutt** was "rather amused" and "perhaps a little flattered at this mistake". The *Friend of India* praised the work as a " a good omen for the future of women in India." The *Bengal Magazine* to which she had been a regular contributor under the pen name of **T D** hailed the advent of her book in lines of adulation. A majority of the reviewers appeared to be astonished at the accomplishments of the author, an Indian, in both the English and the French languages.

Before her death, **Toru Dutt** had published a few prose essays, including one on "Henry Derozio", in the *Bengal Magazine.* After her death, her father discovered among her papers a full-length novel written in French as well as other unpublished

material. The French novel, *Le Journal de Madmoiselle D' Arvers*, was published in 1879 in France with the help of **Mlle. Clarisse Bader**. The novel is an attempt on **Toru**'s part to depict scenes from French society of the mid-nineteenth century and it is interesting because of the close understanding of this society on the part of the author. The novel has been translated into English by **Prithiwindranath Mukhopadhyaya**, a Professor in the University of Paris.

The novel, which is in the form of extracts from the diary of a French Catholic girl covers the period of a year and a half from the time when Marguerite, the heroine, leaves her convent to her premature death. Marguerite is the only child of a retired general and his wife living in Brittany. The story begins on her fifteenth birthday at a party at Marguerite's parents' home during the course of which she meets a widowed countess and her two sons. Three days later, a young officer, Louis Lefevre, visits their home. Her parents want her to marry Lefevre, but Marguerite refuses, for she has fallen in love with Count Dunois, and his mother, the countess, approves of the match. But Dunois and Guston, the younger brother, both fall in love with the maid Jeanette, a village girl, whom Marguerite had previously sent to the countess. Dunois kills his brother in a fit of jealousy and is condemned to penal servitude. He commits suicide and the countess goes mad.

Later in the novel, Marguerite falls seriously ill and marries Louis to please her parents. A deep love for Louis develops and they live happily for a short while at Nice. Marguerite returns home to give birth to a baby and dies, leaving a son. The story is melodramatic, but free of sordid details. It is able to grip the attention of its readers with its catchy narrative and well-sketched characters. The reviews of the novel were therefore uniformly good. **Toru**'s second, and only English, novel, *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden*, was a fragment, again discovered by her father only after her death. The fragment was published in a serial form in the *Bengal Magazine* from January to April 1878. The plot of *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden* is tragic, as is *Le Journal*. Bianca Garcia is the only surviving child of a Spanish gentlewoman settled in an English village. The story starts with the death of Inez, Bianca's elder sister, and the funeral on a cold February day. Bianca is overcome with grief and Martha, her Scottish maid, persuades her to try and forget the loss. A year after Inez's death, her finance, Mr. Ingram, proposes marriage to Bianca. But Bianca has, in the meanwhile, fallen in love with another young man, Lord Moore, who, unfortunately for her, is called to do service in the Crimean war. Here the fragment concludes. It provides evidence of an imagination as melancholic as that which composed *Le Journal de Madmoiselle D' Arvers*.

The other work of repute by **Toru Dutt**, again published posthumously, was the *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench and Co. with an "Introductory Memoir" by **Edmund Gosse** brought out the first edition of these poems in London in 1882. One of these ballads and legends is about the Goddess *Uma*, two are about archetypes of Indian womanhood- *Sita* and *Savitri*, four narrate the experiences of youngsters, *Dhruv, Buttoo, Sindhu* and *Prahlad*, and the remainder are about male heroes *Lakshman* and *Bharat*. As this list indicates, **Toru Dutt** was the first Indian English writer to make extensive use of Indian, at least Hindu mythology, though there are scattered references to these in the works of her predecessors. Her treatment of Hindu mythology reveals an instinctive empathy with the situations and conditions of life which they represent, despite the fact that she herself was a second-generation Christian brought up in a semi-westernised domestic environment.

Her poetic talent is versatile, and the forms of poetry that she explores in this book ranges from the sonnet ("*Baugmaree*") to the narrative poem ("*Savitri*") to the drama ("*Lakshman*"). In the sonnet *Baugmaree*, her ecstasy over the power of nature's beauty and at the same time nature's tenderness, is beautifully expressed:

> *And o'er the quiet pods the seemuls lean,*
> *Red, – red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.*

Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
Looks their gaps, and the white lotus changes
Into a cup of silver. — *Savitri*

The first poem *Savitri* is the longest and one of the most beautiful legends in the **Mahabharata**. **Toru Dutt** uses the English Ballad tradition and the octo- syllabic quartets that are monotonous at times. *Savitri* tells the tale of "the highest standard of conjugal love today", while expounding the ideals of Indian womanhood and the essentials of Vedantic philosophy. It has remarkable descriptions of natural scenes and sights, of the marriage procession, of the hermitage and its surroundings. Her repetition of a word to fill up the requisite number of syllables in a line as in:

It was that fatal, fatal speech .
A gleam of faint, faint hope is born.
Pale, pale the stars above them burned and
The day long, long will not appear.

is definitely a deliberate imitation of **Keats**. *Lakshman* presents an insight into the strength of the bonds that bind the members of an Indian family. Lakshman remains faithful and loyal to the instructions of Rama and is not ruffled by the accusations of Sita:

Learn this, whatever comes may come,
But I shall not survive my love-
Of all my thoughts here is the sum!
Witness it Gods in heaven above. — *Lakshman*

Jogadhya Uma is taken from folklore. *The Royal Ascetic and the Hind* retells the story of the failure of the life of asceticism. The story of *The Royal Ascetic and the Hind* is that of the King Bharat who became an ascetic. It is said that the ascetic saved the life of a new- born hind from drowning. This little hind became his sole companion in life, and he grew to love the hind dearly. So fond of the hind was he that his emotional attachment and love for the hind began to hamper his life of detached asceticism. Toru's heart seems to be sympathising with the hermit King, who in direct disregard of the principles of his monastic order:

Watched and watched
His favourite through a blinding film of tears,
And could not think of the beyond at hand;
So keen he felt the parting. — *The Royal Ascetic and the Hind*

The *Legend of Dhruva* is from the *Vishnu Purana (Bk I, Ch.XI)*. It relates the story of a prince the son of a less favoured Queen, who scorned the material treasures of the world for the sake of spiritual greatness. It extols the Hindu doctrine of Karma. *Dhruva* leaves his father's house, never to return, and goes to the woods to live among the hermits, and fulfils his promise by finding " the highest heavens," where he still "shines a star" and where many see him at night:

By prayer and penance Dhruva gained at last
The highest heavens, and there he shines a star!
Nightly men see him in the firmament. — *Legend of Dhruva*

Bultoo (or *Ekalavya*) has for its hero a low caste hunter's son, who sacrifices his right thumb at his master's behest and is blest finally by his master Dronacharya:

Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea
And men shall ever link thy name
With Self- help, Truth and Modesty. — *Bultoo/Ekalavya*

Sindhu is the story of the ideal son dealing with the eternal theme of parental love. *Prahlad* is the story of King Heerun Kasyapu, who was a terror both of Gods and men. The last legend in the collection is *Sita*. It is a description of what was a frequent occurrence during her childhood days. The three of them see a dense, "dense forest, where no sunbeam pries" in the midst is a clearing around which

Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace
Tall trees; there, in a quiet lucid lake
The white swans glide; there whirring from the brake,
The peacock springs; there herds of wild deer race;
There patches gleam with yellow waving grain;
There, dwells in peace, the poet- anchorite. — *Sita*

Her *Ancient Ballads* contains "certain portrayals" which she creates by making use of dramatic speeches. *Savitri, Sita* and *Jogadhya Uma* are the ideal representatives of Indian womanhood and hence reveal the mysterious feminine nature:

> *What was the meaning – was it love?*
> *Love at first sight, as poets sing,*
> *Is there no fiction? Heaven above*
> *Is witness, that the hearts its king*
> *Finds often like a lightning flash...*

On the whole the anthology contains narratives charged with lyric effusions of joy and sorrow, anger and pathos, dejection and hope. Apart from her ballads, she is also known for her *Miscellaneous Poems*, which are chiefly autobiographical – *Near Hastings; The Lotus, Our Casuarina Tree, France 1870, The Tree of Life, On the Fly-Leaf of Euckmann Chatrian's Novel Entitled Madame Therese* and *Baugmaree*. The poem *Our Casuarina Tree* is an objective description of an actual physical tree that hold the charm of being associated with **Toru Dutt**'s childhood. The last verse of this poem has a rich, romantic fervour that unfolds the desire of the poetess for the immortality of verse:

> *Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the Skeleton:*
> *And Time the Shadow; and though weak the verse*
> *That would thy beauty fain, on fain rehearse*
> *May love defend thee from oblivion's curse.*

Her diction derives from a blend of the English Romantic manner and the English Victorian style of writing in poetry. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are many archaisms in her language that might make it difficult for the modern readers' appreciation. These archaisms of the English idiom not infrequently mar the authenticity of the Indian contents that the poems seek to represent. But the faults of **Toru**'s writing are merely such that she might have corrected them had she lived to write longer. **Toru Dutt**'s *Life and Letters* was published in **Harihat Das**' book. The letters show how deeply affectionate she was and "revealed a frankness, sensibility, and charming goodness and simplicity, which endeared her to me, and showed me the native qualities of the Hindu woman devoted and transformed by the Christian civilisation of Europe". What is most impressive about her work is, as **M K Naik** has observed:

> *Its virtually total freedom from imitation in an age when most writers were in their artistic swaddling clothes.*

4.5 TORU DUTT AS THE EARLIEST INDIAN ENGLISH WRITER

At first reading, it does not appear that the writings of **Toru Dutt** have anything like the glimmerings of a feminist consciousness. Thus mainstream assessments of her life and work negate any possibility of interpreting her as the earliest Indian English

writer whom readers might identify as articulating a woman's point of view. Thus **Padmini Sen Gupta, Toru Dutt's** biographer, has remarked, "Toru was interested, but not to a very great extent in the position and status of Indian Women. It is obvious that her short life, so absorbed in writing and scholarship, could spare little time for social reform and work". **Ananda Mohan Bose,** a brilliant Bengali of the times, whom she had met often at Cambridge, went to see her at Calcutta, when the **Dutts** still had hopes of revisiting Europe. **Toru Dutt** writes:

> *He (Mr. Bose) wanted me to visit his school for adult girls. The girls are not generally of orthodox Hindu parents, but rather of Brahmos or followers of Keshab Chunder Sen' religion. He was sorry to hear that probably we should be going to Europe, for he thought I would be of great help and use in the education of my country women.*

Toru Dutt herself was protected from the orthodox world's rules in the freedom that her community enjoyed, and it is possible she gave little thought to the problems which beset women, except to complain that in Europe she could be much freer. She could not mix much with Bengali society because the existing Subhas were only for men, and women in general were kept in the seclusion of their homes. However **Malashri Lal** has advanced another perspective proffering an alternative **Toru Dutt** in her book, "*The Law of the Threshold - Women Writers in Indian English Focusing exclusively upon the fragmentary fiction, Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden*". **Lal** argues that this novel was perhaps wilfully 'suppressed' by the otherwise enlightened father of **Toru** because he "probably detected an uncomfortable parallel between the story of *Bianca* and the real woman-writer, his daughter". **Lal**'s argument hinges upon a split that she perceived between the feminine subjectivity of Bianca, the young Spanish protagonist of **Toru Dutt**'s novel and the patriarchal constraints imposed upon her by her father, Alonzo Garcia. The father's hindrance of Bianca's choices in life and of her way of life in general, which results in her suffering from a nervous breakdown, is read by **Lal** as **Dutt**'s refraction of her own negotiations with her father, **Govin Chunder**, who was at once caring for his daughters yet careful to dictate the course that their life should take. **Lal** reads **Toru Dutt's** ill health and subsequent premature death as being symptomatic of the sense of claustrophobia that must have gripped her, as, she existed within the confines of her Calcutta residence unable to live the lives of the more 'liberated' women whom she read about.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has focused upon the life and works of **Toru Dutt,** an offspring of the celebrated **Dutt** family of Calcutta whose senior members had distinguished themselves through their literary accomplishments in English by the middle of the nineteenth century. The Unit examines some of these literary productions of the **Dutt** seniors before concentrating upon the junior member, **Toru Dutt**'s oeuvre. The Unit concludes by suggesting that **Toru Dutt** might be read as the earliest of the Indian English women writers. In **Toru Dutt** was a tripartite influence of (a) French Education, (b) Lectures at Cambridge, (c) the study of Sanskrit Literature. The assimilation between the occident and the orient nourished her poetic skills. **Toru Dutt** was a Hindu by birth and tradition, an English woman by education, French at heart, a poet in English, a prose writer in French, who at the age of eighteen made India acquainted with the poets of French in the rhyme of England, who blended in herself three souls and three traditions and who died at the age of twenty- one, in the full bloom of her talent and on the eve of the awakening of her genius. The *Saturday Review* was to write about **Toru Dutt** in August 1879:

> *There is every reason to believe that in intellectual power Toru Dutt was one of the most remarkable women that ever lived. Had George Eliot died at the*

age of 21, she would certainly not have left behind her any proof of application or originality superior to those bequeathed to us by Toru Dutt.

4.7 QUESTIONS

a) Discuss the significance of The Dutt Family Album within the canon of early Indian English writings.

b) Give a brief account of the character of Toru Dutt's literary output in English.

c) To what extent may Toru Dutt be designated as the earliest Indian English woman writer?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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Block

3

BEGINNINGS OF THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In the units that follow we will take up those areas for discussion, that will enhance our understanding of both **Bankimchandra** and his novel *Rajmohan's Wife*. The first question that has to be asked is: Why has this particular novel been prescribed for us? The answer falls into main parts:

- The centrality of Bankim to the map of novel writing in India which implies that he must be represented in any reading of Indian fiction
- The significance of Bankim writing his first novel in English and the implications that it had.

Accordingly, in the **First Unit** we will talk about the contexts that shaped Bankim. His importance lies not merely in his role as a novelist, but also as a political observer, thinker and nationalist. He shaped the Indian novel and contributed to nationalism in a way that makes him hard to ignore. It is not really possible to understand how the modern novel evolved in Bengal unless we have some sense of what kind of writing actually existed in the nineteenth century. So in this unit we will talk about the early writers of prose fiction who both preceded and were contemporaries of Bankim. We have also tried to place him in a context so that we see both his contribution as well as the problems with a lot of his political positions. In the **Second** and **Third Units**, we will undertake a detailed textual analysis along with questions of language and audience. In **Unit Two**, we will also try and look at why Bankim wrote his first novel in English and what kinds of influences are visible in his writing. The other point that has been discussed briefly is the reason why he stopped writing in English after *Rajmohan's Wife*.

Unit Two looks at the characterisation of Matangini as a submissive Hindu wife who is victimised by her husband, and then is transformed in one swoop into a gloriously rebellious figure. She is suddenly shown as defiant and passionate as well as 'unashamed'. This transformation raises important questions. For instance, why is she not shown as rebellious throughout? Is it because her submissiveness to Rajmohan's cruelty makes her more sympathetic to Bankim's reader? To what extent can we see it as an attempt on Bankim's part at appeasing the reader? **Unit Three** pursues the issues raised in the second unit further. It investigates the question as to how the imagined reader of Bankim could have possibly shaped the novel. Most early pieces of fiction are didactic or normative – they are trying to either directly teach the community how to live or imposing certain values as correct. In that sense, the depiction of marriage gets riddled with several contradictory pressures. There is a need to interrogate social institution as well as to conserve society in the way that seems to have existed all along. These are conflicting needs felt by the novelist and lead to the discontinuities and inconsistencies in character and plot. We will look at some of these inconsistencies and gaps. We will also talk a little about the use of melodrama as a rhetorical device.

In **Unit Four**, we will take up three other novels of Bankim. The three novels we have chosen deal with marriage, widows, temptation and desire. Two of them end tragically (*Bishabriksha* and *Krsnakanter Will)* while one (*Indira)* is a lighthearted novel. We will look at these other novels, in the hope of forming some kind of a perspective on Bankim. It is interesting to see the recurrent themes and underlying anxieties – it is equally interesting to see how Bankim resolves each story differently. The more one reads, the harder it becomes to come to a neat, clearly understandable conclusion. One might say for instance that Bankim demonstrates that the dissolution of marriage can only lead to suffering. But before we conclude that he has a modern attitude towards marriage, we have to confront the kind of suffering he depicts within marriage, suggesting a kind of value and depth in them and thereby making it hard to generalise. Yet the very recurrence of the idea of fragility of marriage is in itself a very significant feature of these narratives we will discuss.

UNIT 1 THE CONTEXTS OF BANKIM

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Bankim's Literary Context
1.3 Bankim's Life and Views
1.4 Bankim's Early Concerns
1.4.1 Bankim's Later Themes
1.5 Bankim's Age and Social Ethos
1.6 Bankim's Other Works
1.7 Let Us Sum Up
1.8 Questions
1.9 Glossary

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Over this unit and the next one, we will try to locate Bankim within his contexts. It must be understood here that no writer can write in a vacuum, that each writer is shaped by a whole range of factors: the age she/he wrote in, the class into which they were born, the literary and social issues that they were concerned about and the manner in which it shaped their work. We will begin by looking at Bankim's literary context and see his shaping as a writer –we will look at his early and later concerns, his age and the social ethos of the time. And then, in the second part we will see how Bankim changed, how and why he repudiated his early writings and how finally his political ideas became controversial and questionable.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Firstly, we will look at the time of the Bengal Renaissance –the rich and varied literature that emerged from Bengal and the early precursors to the novel as it finally emerged. It is important to see the literary history of the time because Bankim's works must be seen historically as the pioneering works that they were. His novels are the first accomplished realist narratives that we have. The concern with issues of middle class life, the centrality of women, the moral conflicts at the heart of his narratives are all features of his work that gave him the unique position he holds. Even though *Rajmohan's Wife is* not the most evolved of his novels, it is the first of a series of novels that Bankim wrote about the same kinds of issues. He went on to write *Durgeshnandini, Bishabhriksha , Krsnakanter Uil ,* and *Indira* all about the nature of human desire. In one of the later units, we will talk about his treatment of desire: about how desire in his novels is powerful and malevolent. Men are weak in the face of passion – as are women – yet his women characters remain strong and unforgettable even though embedded in a completely patriarchal mode.

This unit will also very briefly look at the literary career of Bankim – of how he stood out not just as a pioneer but also as a maverick political writer. He had a central significance because of his role as a nationalist - he articulated powerfully, the need to arouse the nation against British rule. But in doing so, he used the term Hindu synonymously with Indian. There is an unambiguous anti-Muslim vocabulary in his works. Even though it may have come from an animosity towards the ruling class that was dominantly Muslim, it fuelled communal hatred and showed his inclination to be

on the side of the backward looking Hindus who sought a revival of their somewhat imaginary lost glory. It is not surprising therefore that most writers have tried to either celebrate him as a nationalist or dismiss him as a Hindu revivalist or at least a traditionalist. Sometimes it is rather difficult to pigeonhole him and as students of Literature, we must desist from jumping to such conclusions. The fact that he moved away from his own, earlier, more radical position and moved to a more orthodox position does not mean we can overlook his earlier contribution to the history of ideas. We have therefore tried not to overlook one aspect in favour of another. In this unit however, we will only touch upon some of the views he held on a whole range of social issues.

1.2 BANKIM'S LITERARY CONTEXT

Let us begin with a brief history of Bengali Literature in the nineteenth century focusing on the prose writings and early fiction that were produced as a result of the encounter between the English and the Bengali people. This will hopefully help us in placing Bankim in his literary context and will show us just how central his role was in the literary map of Bengal. Early Bengali prose fiction was inspired by **Todd's** *Rajasthan* and was written in English in the form of historical stories. Most of these writers belonged to prominent families of Calcutta who were deeply influenced by English learning like, **Sashichandra Dutt** (who wrote the *Tales of Yore* (1848?). Even those who started writing historical fiction in Bengali like **Bhudev Mukherji** often took their subject matter from well- known works by English writers. In that sense perhaps it was **Peary Chand Mitra** (1814- 83) who really initiated the treatment of Bengali life and manners in his prose writings. Interestingly, his education was English even though he was extremely well read in Bengali. His literary activity was largely a consequence of his monthly 'penny' magazine for women. The popularity of cheap magazines that carried features of feminine interest such as episodic fiction is in itself an important factor that contributed to the shaping of the literary tastes and writings of the day. Experimenting with language that led to a more accessible style came from the desire to tap some of this new reading public.

In Peary Chandra Mitra's novels such as *Alaler Gharer Dulal,* published episodically between 1855- 1857, Bengal first witnessed a narrative dealing with the ways of the middle class gentry in the neighbouring towns on the Hooghly in the early nineteenth century. Though his work was didactic and flawed, Mitra created immortal characters and a lively style in his fictional works. **Kaliprasanna Simha** (1840-76) pioneered satirical sketches of Calcutta life that held up the new rich and their hypocrisies to ridicule. His sketches were hugely popular and led the market being flooded by a regular crop of such scandalous tales or *guptakatha* as they were called. This really was the context in which **Bankim Chandra Chatterji** (1838-94) wrote. He was educated at the Hooghly College and belonged to an orthodox family. The prose style was already standardised; what Chatterji did was to make it less monotonous by stripping it of its verbosity. His first published fictional work was *Rajmohan's Wife.* This was serialised in the *Indian Field* in 1864. *Durgesnandini* was published the following year and was his first Bengali romance. He wrote some more romances but later, he was no longer content to write romances, so he started a monthly called *Bangadarsan* in 1872. This magazine published a variety of genres with a view to educating the people and bringing about a cultural revival. Chatterji also tried his hand at historical fiction (*Rajsimha, 1881*) and at political fiction (*Anandamath, 1882*).

The idea for *Anandamath* came to Bankim from **Sanjiv Chandra Chatterji**'s novel called *Kanthamala* (*The Necklace,* 1877). Sanjiv Chandra Chatterji (1834-89) was the elder brother of Bankim and according to **Sukumar Sen** was a born raconteur or engaging storyteller. He edited Bankim's monthly during the later years from their ancestral village home at Kamthalpada. The first two issues of his own magazine

called *Bhramar* contained two stories by him. *Kanthamala* is a carelessly written novel but it has a chapter that delineates a model of philanthropic society and this chapter is what gave Bankim the idea for *Anandamath*. *Anandamath* (which is usually translated as *The Mission House of the Anandas*) is a political novel with a rather thin plot. It is based on the Sannyasi rebellion that took place in North Bengal in1773. Bankim made his characters altruistic patriots who were influenced by the *Gita*, who fought against odds with the British. In his depiction the actual historical facts are erased, and he gives the sannyasis justification by making the British responsible for the terrible famine in the previous year. Bankim as an administrative officer could not afford to allow such an estimate to triumph, so he attributed the failure of the Anandas to their own weaknesses. The novel by common consent is one of Bankim's weaker novels – but it is historically significant as it places its finger on the pulse of the people and records the growing restlessness with the British rule which was to gather momentum soon after and become a powerful nationalist sentiment.

Anandamath is best known for the song that appears in it, *Vande Mataram*. The song was to become popular in Bengal only later. It was really during the swadeshi movement that it became a slogan and slowly, its popularity spread through the entire nation during the freedom struggle. This perhaps provided the association of Bankim with Hindu nationalism. But this was only one aspect of the illustrious figure called Bankim. As **Sisir Kumar Das** says,

> When he died in 1894 at the age of 56 he had made Bengali prose a supple instrument of expression, built the structure of the Bengali novel on firm foundations and inspired the growth of the novel in many Indian languages. Whether his influence was totally beneficial or not can be debated, but his role in giving a new direction to Indian literature is not a matter of opinion – it is a historical fact". (Das, ix)

Bankim's novels were usually marked by unhappy endings. This seems to have made him somewhat less popular than he might have been – or so it is speculated. Whatever might be the truth of these observations what is well known is that another writer **Damodar Mukherji** (1853-1907) wrote his first novel *Mrnmayi* (1874) which was a rewriting of Bankim's rather well known and successful tragic story called *Kapalkundala* - in which he changed the end to make it happy. Bankim influenced, in one way or the other, the generations that succeeded him. For instance, the novels of **Nagendranath Gupta** (1861 –1940) such as *Parvatavasini* and *Lila* follow Bankim's pattern of romance with the dramatic element predominating. The daily life of lower middle class people with their mean and petty jealousies and their simple, uncomplicated joys and sufferings was first introduced to Bengali Literature by **Taraknath Ganguli** (1845-91), in his novel *Svarnalata* (1873). According to Sukumar Sen, this was the first domestic novel with realistic touches. The characters are what the common man identifies with and not aristocratic or historical figures. Here there is no evidence to be found of Bankim's influence in that, it has a different readership in mind. The upper class, aristocratic life and its moral dilemmas that Bankim so excelled at, are nowhere to be seen in this new kind of novel that Ganguli popularised. **Svarna Kumari Devi** (1855-1932), the elder sister of **Rabindranath Tagore**, is the most well known literary woman of the time. She wrote novels, short stories, poetry and drama. Her first novel *Dipnirvan* (1876) is a historical fiction about the life of **Prithviraj**. She also wrote about sisterly love – but her unique contribution was perhaps in her later novel *Snehalata* (1892) where the problems of the upper middle class society are first taken up. Svarna Kumari Devi also edited the monthly magazine *Bharati* which was started by her brothers in 1877.

1.3 BANKIM'S LIFE AND VIEWS

Born into an established family in Kanthalpura on 26 June 1838, Bankim had an upbringing that was largely representative of the provincial Bengali life of his time and class. His education began with a private tutor who came home to teach him with his brothers. In 1849, Bankim was sent to Hugli College where he studied for seven years. Here he read the essays of **Goldsmith** and **Addison**, the poems of **Pope** and the Romantics and the drama of **Shakespeare**. He however combined an interest in English with a love for Sanskrit that he undertook to study seriously. In this way he was different from his other two contemporaries – **Michael Madhusudan Datta** (1824-73) and **Iswarchandra Vidyasagar** (1820-91) who did not have Bankim's facility with the three languages – English, Bengali and Sanskrit. Bankim was from a very traditional family that still practiced child marriage and he was married to his bride at the age of 11. At the age of 15, he was a widower – not unlike Kundanandini in his novel *The Poison Tree* – except that he was a man, and could marry again without much ado- which he did. This time he had a say in his marriage and opted for an older women. He was not in favour of child marriages and looked for a more companionate notion of a partner than most in his community.

He started writing poetry quite early and a lot of it was composed when he worked for a journal called *Sambad Prabhakar* in 1853. The editor he worked under was called **Iswar Gupta**. Gupta was an interesting literary figure himself – condemned by the younger generation for his obscenity. It might be noted that the younger generation were Victorian in their prudishness – they distanced themselves from the frank, even ribald sexual humour in a lot of native writing, as they felt constrained by the 'propriety' and sexual ethos of the ruling Victorian class. Bankim himself inherited some of this anxiety to try and avoid erotic overtones. That is why in Bankim the eroticism is only a strong undercurrent – never explicitly stated and his humour is never bawdy. Bankim came to Calcutta in 1856 to study law at Presidency College. Calcutta stunned him with its difference – this was no provincial town – it was his first glimpse of a metropolis. As **Das** points out,

> Unlike the other big cities of India, Calcutta had no lineage with either the Hindu or Muslim past. It was a British made town, its houses built by British architects, its streets designed by British town planners. The people who controlled its social life belonged to the new class of landlords who flourished soon after the Permanent Settlement of 1793. (10)

Calcutta had also been witnessing a series of reformist influences and the Brahmo Samaj was an established influence. In his earlier phase, Bankim's writings were relatively more influenced by Western Enlightenment ideas and he remained affiliated to Rationalism. But **Tanika Sarkar** writes about how this phase ended and Bankim was never to return to these concerns,

> He made no secret of his rationalist affiliation and unambiguously proclaimed his lineage within Enlightenment universalism. ...Bankim gave up these positions, never to return to them, after his debate with Reverend Hastie. The themes of class, caste and gender abruptly disappear from his writing, their absence filled by reflections on all that constitutes authentic and fully historicized Hinduism, on the culpability of the Muslim in Indian history, on how the Hindu nation may be imagined and constructed. (Sarkar, 156)

For the most part, Bankim remained traditional and took little interest in the Brahmo Samaj. It is disappointing to see the lack of interest he took in progressive movements of his age. Vidyasagar had launched his movement advocating the remarriage of young widows. In later years Bankim criticised Vidyasagar and this is pertinent

particularly in the context of the theme of widow remarriage that he repeatedly took up in his fiction.

1.4 BANKIM'S EARLY CONCERNS

Sisir Kumar Das talks about how Bankim remained ambivalent to both reformist movements that were influential in his time: widow remarriage and the abolition of polygamy. The early Bankim wrote two powerful essays: 'Bangadesher Krishak' and 'Samya'. The former is a critique of the notion of progress. He saw modernisation and technology as only a partial means to achieve the end of progress – because the real producers i.e. the peasants who toiled were not the ones who benefited from the distribution of wealth. His arguments were influenced by **John Stuart Mill** (1806-73) and his theory of Utilitarianism. Sarkar quotes him saying, " We admit that the country as a whole has progressed but peasants do not share in that progress". ('Bangadeshar Krishak', *Vividha Prabandha, Bankim Rachnabali,* II, 289). His critique is centred here mainly on the Permanent Settlement that equipped the landlord with absolute power. In 'Samya' however, it is a broader canvas that covers Indian Society as a whole. He talks about the rampant nature of inequality in the country. He highlights caste divisions as India's special contribution to inequality. He writes about the extent of oppression of women and exposes the double standards inherent in the patriarchal fabric of society. In his essay, " Samya" Bankim writes, "If eternal widowhood is beneficial to the society, why don't you favour eternal widower hood as well". He notes that laws are beneficial to men because they are drafted by men. But he adds a cryptic clause saying though everybody ought to have the right to remarry, " a widow who was devoted to her former husband would never remarry. As Das sums it up, " his defense of widow remarriage is marred by his most unfair innuendos". (62) Notwithstanding the radical potential of these essays, the fact remains that Bankim in his later years distanced himself completely from what he wrote earlier in fact, he is believed to have rued the fact that he ever wrote them.

Similarly, Bankim concedes the reprehensibility of polygamy – but does not support the movement to abolish it, saying the reprehensible practice would die a natural death.

Bankim felt that the enactment of laws would not change social practice. He ridiculed **Rammohan Roy** and Vidyasagar's ways of constantly seeking support from the ancient texts – he maintained that the scriptures were not the supreme authorities they were being made to be.

1.4.1 Bankim's Later Themes

While Bankim remained traditional in most of his views, he also appreciated what he saw as progressive about western education. In the first issue of *Bangadarshan,* he tried to analyse why India was in such an ignominious position. He saw in the Hindus a lack of desire for freedom and an inability to stand together with other Hindus against the British. He felt it was the enervating climate and the philosophical systems, which combined to encourage inaction and valorised salvation. He saw nationalism as a contribution of western or specifically English education. Later in this block, we have discussed how in *Rajmohan's Wife,* the hero is a product of English education and the villains are completely provincial. Bankim also wrote against the nature of Brahmin domination in India that denied all other castes, particularly the untouchables (shudras) all fundamental human rights. Bankim raised the hackles of the orthodox population – even as he distanced himself from the more progressive figures like Vidyasagar and Rammohun Roy.

In his later writings, the " themes of class, caste and gender abruptly disappear ...their absence filled by reflections on all that constitutes authentic and fully

historicized Hinduism, on how the Hindu nation maybe imagined and constructed. For Bankim now the resolution of social and national malaise seemed to lie in imagining an apocalyptic war with Muslims through which Hindus would ingest their valour and prove their ability to make a nation". (Sarkar, 156) Bankim then, propagated the practice of devotion where eventually his overriding involvement with Hindu nationalism made him forsake all other liberal concerns he had articulated earlier. " In the process, Bankim's self-critical, radical sensibility was transformed to an authoritarian, totalitarian, and intolerant voice". (Sarkar, 156). The contribution of Bankim to Indian nationalism is a subject which requires a great deal of thought and which we are going to take up later. But for the moment let us simply say that he was representative of his age in that, he felt it was the duty of the intellectual to defend his race and culture in the face of the colonisers. The problem with Bankim's politics comes from the fact that he did not distinguish between Hindu and Indian nationalism.

But he was not representative of his age in that he remained distant from most movements of his time. He ignored the **Brahmo Samaj** that was a reformist Hindu movement - he maintained his differences with the **Arya Samaj**. Bankim had synthesised the *Gita* with European thinkers like **Auguste Comte** (1798-1857). Thus he was not propagating a traditional position and could not be ignored by the Brahmo Samaj. Equally, he made the orthodox Hindus uncomfortable by challenging their unshakeable faith in the Vedas. As Das says, his "approach to the Vedas was closer to the Western Indologist than the traditional Hindu ..." (198). The underlying truth was that Bankim's mind was not appropriated by any one single truth or philosophical vision; he distanced himself from both ancient Hindu beliefs and modern, western beliefs – but he also partially accepted some truths from each. Bankim made his last public appearance in March 1894 – after which his already fragile health began to fail him – in the April of the same year, he lost consciousness and died after suffering acutely for many days.

1.5 BANKIM'S AGE AND SOCIAL ETHOS

> The new system of education was intended to produce 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect'. (Macaulay as quoted by Das, 200)

The age in which Bankim lived and wrote was a transitional age – in many ways foreign rule expedited the transformation of Indian society from medieval to modern. The coming together of two cultures threw up several accepted beliefs for questioning. The whole traditional system of education had been gradually rehauled – by the time Bankim was born; English education was a well-established fact. The split between those who had benefited from it and those who had not was very pronounced (and is something which we will talk about in our discussion of *Rajmohan's Wife*). Bankim started his career as a deputy magistrate in 1858 – by which time, the quelled Rebellion of 1857 had made British Rule something of an accepted reality. There was an admiration for the ruling race which ran contrary to the discrimination the Indians felt. Bankim was a product of these two strongly opposed national sentiments. It was this English educated middle class which created a new literature in different Indian languages in the 19th century. Pearychand Mitra (*Alaler Gharer Dulal,* 1858), whom we mentioned earlier, was the director of a British Trading Company. The novel in India was a contribution of the middle class – but with the spread of vernacular education, the number of readers grew widely. While so far, only the elite sections of society could afford an education, slowly regional languages also became a medium of imparting education and the readership grew and expanded. Early Indian novels were unabashedly didactic. **Gauridatt's** Hindi work *Devarani Jethani ki Kahani* (1870) tries to prove the value of female education and raises questions such as widow remarriage. **Chandu Menon's**

Indulekha (1889) proves the usefulness of an English education. Bankim managed to write both social / didactic novels as well as romances and gave both types of novels a new lease of life.

Bankim's first novel (*Rajmohan's Wife*) is written in English and in many ways looks forward to a trend of English educated heroes with modern values as opposed to traditional heroes. The Bengali novel in coming years was to produce a spate of anglicised graduates from Calcutta University, wearing European clothes and eating food forbidden to Hindus as a gesture towards progressive English values. The lukewarm success of *Rajmohan's Wife* and perhaps Bankim's own sense of unease made him switch to Bengali as his medium for writing.

1.6 BANKIM'S OTHER WORKS

When Bankim switched to Bengali – he began writing historical romances. Das writes about the prevalence of romanticism in Bankim's works. His challenging of certain accepted conventions, his passion for beauty and his restless mind are all symptoms of romanticism – but he did not actually react against society in the way the European Romantics did. His desire for change remained strictly guarded by conventional notions of morality. There is at the heart of his novels an unresolved tension between passion and duty – which we will examine in the context of *Rajmohan's Wife* as well as a couple of his other stories. According to Das, most of Bankim's historical novels are set in the medieval period – these would include a lot of his major works, namely – *Mrinalini , Durgeshnandini ,Kapalkundala , Chandrasekhar, Debi Chaudharani and Ananda Math* . The past is deployed very consciously for a didactic purpose – to re-establish patriotism, self – sacrifice, chivalry – as well as to have more exotic settings with palaces and castles and intrigues and sacrifices.

His novels about contemporary life are mostly located in small villages. His chief characters belong to the propertied class – even though his canvas is wide – it includes domestic servants as well as landlords – lawyers as well as musicians. His descriptions of everyday life are detailed and fairly vivid which make him a precise chronicler of his times. Bankim wrote on social issues as well as religious and philosophical matters. He felt that the primary duty of literature was to create beauty that cleansed the mind. He felt that the chief function of literature was to purify the mind rather than present the readers with admirable role models. He said poets were not preachers – but in later works, he did not maintain this distance he talked about. After 1880, there is a distinct change of position that is evident from works like *Anandamath* where his political desire to raise consciousness overrides the earlier belief in maintaining an aesthetic distance. In *Anandamath*, Bankim is keen to infuse a sense of national pride and popularise a patriotism that was otherwise lacking. He tried to marry patriotism with religion – wherein arise the problems with Bankim. As has been mentioned earlier, Bankim equated nationalism with Hinduism that led to the Hindu right wing later appropriating his work for their own divisive purposes.

Tanika Sarkar in her incisive study on Bankim, sums up his position as being neither one of complete revivalism – nor one of complete westernisation. He rejected the latter option according to Sarkar because of a " specifically Bengali guilt about having accommodated and colluded with foreign rule", (140). She defines "Hindu revivalist- nationalist as a political formation in the last three decades of the century, a formation which defended unreformed Hindu custom as perfect and inviolable and portrayed this defence as struggle against colonial encroachments into Hindu domestic practices. This group was particularly influential during the agitation against the Age of Consent Bill in 1891", (140). It might be noted here that the Age of Consent Bill sought to implement the end of child marriages and Bankim's novels

which take up arranged marriages, child widows and male bigamy are engagements with the hotly debated issues of his times.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to locate Bankim in his period in order to be able to assess his role in the growth and development of Bengali Literature. We have seen how the novel itself was at a very early stage of development and his writings were wide and eclectic in ways that changed and influenced the history of the realist as well as the historical novel. But Bankim's role was not limited to that of a novelist. He wrote on politics and philosophy and religion. It is hard to sum up his political leanings – towards his later life for he grew closer to Hinduism and the traditional views that were a part of it.

1.8 QUESTIONS

1) What according to you is Bankim's unique contribution to the literary map?
2) Bankim is read by historians as largely a nationalist. What do you understand by nationalism?
3) What were Bankim's views on the reformist movements of his time?

1.9 GLOSSARY

August Comte: French philosopher and sociologist, founder of positivism. In is study of the progress of human mind he discerned three stages: the theological, the metaphysical and the positive. According to him, the highest stage in the advance of mankind was capitalism with its positivist world outlook.

Enlightenment: The set of ideas that emerged with capitalism, linked as they were with the struggle of the nascent bourgeoisie and the popular masses against feudal practices and institutions. An important feature of the Enlightenment was the urge of the thinkers concerned to restructure all social relations in correspondence with Reason, Eternal Justice and Equality.

Rationalism: Accepting reason as the only basis in determining one's opinions.

Ram Mohan Roy: (1774-1833). He criticised orthodox Hinduism for its polytheism, its idol worship, caste divisions, sati (self immolation of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands). He also developed the idea of equality between men before a single god. whom he envisaged as an impersonal Universal Being. He was also the founder of the Brahmo Samaj.

Romanticism: The movement was marked by a rejection of the ideals and rules of classicism and Neoclassicism and by an affirmation of the need for a freer, more subjective expression of passion, pathos and personal feelings.

Utilitarianism: The doctrine that the worth and value of anything is solely determined by its utility and that the purpose of all action should be to bring about the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

UNIT 2 THEMES IN *RAJMOHAN'S WIFE* - PART 1

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Language and Audience
2.2.1 Bankim's Use of Language
2.3 The Location of this Community
2.4 Matangini
2.5 Passion versus Duty
2.6 *Rajmohan's Wife:* As Conduct Literature
2.7 Let Us Sum Up
2.8 Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will take up a detailed textual analysis of the novel *Rajmohan's Wife*. First we will look very briefly at some of the questions that arise from the fact that this is the first ever novel Bankim wrote and the only one he wrote in the master language or if you like, the language of the colonisers. Two very important questions need to be asked here: Why does he choose to write in English and not in Bengali? And secondly, why did he cease to write in English? One could say English was (and still is) the language of power -- in the sense that it was the master's language and all serious business was conducted in English. Let us explore this further.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the first things that any middle class family aspired to do was to educate their sons in English. To write in it was to assert or at least aspire for the power that it represented.

However, if it was empowering, why did Bankim not carry on using it in his other novels? In his use of the master language, Bankim was anything but slavish. He adapted it boldly, wrote it with a confidence and defiantly chose not to translate some words that he very easily could have: these are the choices every writer makes and none of these choices are "innocent". That is, each choice made by a writer should be understood as motivated by his/ her overt or covert politics. It is not as if the choice of language can be seen as a simple choice without political implications. If, for instance Bankim writes English as if he is translating ancient Sanskrit Kavya literature, it must be seen as his assertion of that indigenous model of writing over that of other western models which he was also familiar with. At any rate it shows his acknowledging the influence that Indian writing had over him. It also shows that he chooses not to copy the style of his western contemporaries whom he had also read. Thus his adapting of English in a manner that made it his own tongue is a significant choice.

After a cursory look at these kinds of issues, we will take up a close textual analysis focusing on the characters of Matangini and Rajmohan in the novel and the treatment of marriage in the text. This was a theme that Bankim persisted with through more than half a dozen of his novels. We will look at Matangini's near transgression and to what extent it is justified by the parameters of the text. Does the fact that she has a brutal husband extenuate her circumstances or is there a sub text, another underlying

logic in the narrative that undermines her moral position? In the section that follows we shall try and determine why Bankim chose to write this particular novel in English and also address the question of who Bankim was really writing for. Was it the Indian readership that he had in mind or was he writing for the English reading and speaking public?

2.2 LANGUAGE AND AUDIENCE

In this section, let us familiarise ourselves with the peculiar relation between an author's choice of a language and his audience. The issue is quite problematic. We should try and see how questions of this nature emerge from such a consideration.

> Some sorrow or deep anxiety had dimmed the lustre of her fair complexion. Yet her bloom was as full of charm as that of the land-lotus half- scorched and half-radiant under the noonday sun. Her long locks were tied up in a careless knot on her shoulder; but some loose tresses had thrown away that bondage and were straying over her forehead and cheeks ". (3)

This is the description of our eponymous heroine, Matangini – and it is certainly not in the tradition of the purest English prose. Here we have Bankimchandra Chatterjee experimenting with the alien language of the coloniser. The aesthetics of the language quite apart, there is certainly an interesting politics in the choices involved. Most obviously, the writer's vocabulary reveals a deeply rooted, culture- specific content. Clearly the culture specific nature of the story does not permit a simple mimicry of more purist styles – it is a story that is so deeply rooted in rural Bengal that to write English is only possible if he makes it his own. When he writes about "loose tresses which had thrown away the bondage" or about the "land lotus", what he is doing is introducing images from his own culture into a language that belongs to his rulers – an act which requires a great deal of confidence. The author attempts a prose that tries to knit together different cultural images into the master's language – he is appropriating English into the service of his own culture. This particular passage reads more like Sanskrit prose in translation. Sanskrit Kavya literature is not the only influence at work in the novel – in fact the novel contains a whole range of cross cultural influences ranging from **Fielding**, **Richardson** and **Thackeray** to regional and native literature closer home. This is revealed not just in the ideas, but also in the vocabulary used which remains fairly multilingual.

Meenakshi Mukherjee talks about "the contradictory signs embedded in the text" which make it difficult to construct the identity of the reader". She points out the use of Bangla words like *Thakurpo*, *mal*, *Jama-dut* – words which to us seem to insist on a specific cultural nuance where the author refuses to use the equivalent terms in English. But what is more baffling is the use of certain Hindustani words like *zenana* and *Bur* trees which have Bangla equivalents but are preferred over them. This preference of multilingual over monolingual vocabulary seems to point towards a wider audience – or at any rate a more cosmopolitan audience. But the most puzzling use is of terms like 'Go to Jericho' that seems to pretend momentarily that the characters are really speaking in English whereas for the most part the characters sound as though they have been translated. The only conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the only reader familiar with all these vocabularies would have to be from a socio- linguistic background identical with that of the author. The reader would have to be English educated and therefore upper class. It is actually difficult to assess the number of readers – but it is not hard to see here a notion of a community that is specifically targeted. What we should try to do is to see the ramifications of the creation of such a community. It is hard to actually assess the number of readers Bankim imagined writing for. If he wanted to include all English speaking Indians, then was he disappointed – was his disappointment the cause of his having switched back to his native Bengali?

2.2.1 Bankim's Use Of Language

The language used, with a lively mix of the colloquial and the proverbial styles, raises questions about the implied reader of Bankim's novel. We shall use the term "implied" to indicate that all writers address a specific community. For instance, sometimes we find French and Latin words in an English novel, this implies that the reader was assumed to be familiar with these languages. Similarly we might come across a vernacular word in a novel by an Indian in English, while at other times, a word of common usage is translated-for instance, a writer might say "vermilion in her hair" or she/he may use the term "sindoor", one implies a readership that is confined to an unfamiliar linguistic background, the other implies a readership with a similar linguistic background. Thus an Indian writing English may be writing for a limited Hindi-speaking readership, or for a wider international market. The most important point about Bankim's use of language is the one raised by Meenakshi Mukerjee, when she says that from the vocabulary he employs, which are borrowed from different languages, it is not possible to single out the exact nature of the readership. The only thing we can actually conclude is that Bankim aspired for a wider audience here, than in his later novels where he used only English.

2.3 THE LOCATION OF THIS COMMUNITY

Before we study the intricacies of the text, let us offer at least one of the readings of *Rajmohan's Wife*. The opening of this story is in an old fashioned rural landscape. Two women are carrying pitchers to fetch water. There are " numerous roses and mallika buds caressing the eyes of the passers-by", the men watching them were as "fascinated by the sight as a deer is by the sound of the flute", even the manner in which the villainous Mathur glimpses the heroine tells of a rural landscape. Matangini's beauty draws on old fashioned folklore where a strong gust of wind blows away the veil, thereby exonerating the woman completely of blame and making her as innocent as the damsels in the days of yore. Matangini here is not admired merely through simple description she is also contrasted rather favourably with her companion Kanakmayee. We are told that Kanakmayee is coarse and her accent is East Bengali, while Matangini is refined and bears no trace of the poorer, rustic East Bengali accent. That her features, gait and attitudes are also superior only follows. We are now lulled into expecting an easy correlation between the submissive Hindu wife and a refinement of manner. Our heroine disdains the defiance suggested by the rather rustic Kanakmayee with amusement. The contrasting manners of the two women are seen not merely as regional, but also in terms of class difference. In the chapter entitled "A Letter – Visit to the Zenana", we have a very perturbed Madhav searching for his aunt. He finds to his chagrin that his voice is drowned by the melee created by the team of women engaged in domestic chores .The women labouring are shown to be 'hurling dire anathemas, demanding, eloquent, active engine in mouth'. When Madhav complains about his house resembling a bazaar, the masi replies: 'It is a woman's nature to be screaming', (27) Clearly this is not a statement meant to be universally true – as much as it is meant to be class specific.

The readers for whom Bankim wrote would perhaps not have thought twice about such a statement. But it is the preceding chapter that looks at the origins of the zemindar family that is rather bold and unusual. The chapter sets out to trace the family history of Madhav and Mathur Ghose. The chapter begins with a scathing observation 'It is a notorious fact that many eminent zemindar families in Bengal owe their rise to some ignoble origin'. In this case, it is revealed that it was their grandfather who rose to acquire land and wealth. We are told he was a crafty menial in the house of a wealthy young widow. He used his youth and virility with tact and then discretely moved to his village. He however inherited her property, while leaving her to die, and 'soon she got a fever from unintelligible or rather very

intelligible causes, became fearfully violent, forced (the anxious widow) to part with her domestic and with the world before age had chilled her fires,'(16).

This digression, structurally, very close to Fielding, has far greater sting than the rest of the story put together. Its profound insight on female sexuality and its irreverence towards the aristocracy signal the changing times and the shifting class dynamic in Bengal as well as usher in the need felt for a new set of social values. The demythification of the aristocracy -- by exposing the ignoble origins of the Ghose family is also interesting not just because it debunks the privileged position that the zemindar families have occupied for centuries but in another way as well. It refuses the didacticism of rewarding the good son and punishing the prodigal. The usual story with a moral tells us that we get what we deserve, but in this digression, the lazy son gets a good son and the hard working son has the bad son. This seems to suggest the reverse of the usual moral fable. The hard working, diligent son of the erstwhile servant has a son who he sends to a provincial school (Mathur) and the prodigal son sends his son (Madhav) to a western school. The complete contrast between the two cousins is offered to us largely as a product of their education .We are told that the eldest son i.e. Mathur Ghose's father was suspicious of western education and so the upbringing is provincial and very clearly, the implication is that the horizons are very narrow. While Madhav's father produces a worthy son despite his improvident ways – or because of them – the implication very clearly is that colonial education expands civilisation and brings in a new, vigorously needed set of values .The novel does not shy away from using western / colonial / metropolitan education synonymously with good education. In the chapter "A zemindar family", we are told:

> One good result however had followed Ramkanai's residence in the metropolis. Influenced by the example of the metropolitans, he had bestowed on his son Madhav as good an education as he could receive in Calcutta, (17).

This point is made by **Nirad C Chaudhuri** as well when he talks about how the word *ejoo* was applied only to those well educated in English and never to those who were learned in any other native language. Let us now turn to an examination of the character of Matangini in the following section.

2.4 MATANGINI

Of particular importance in the novel, as we have seen, is the character of Matangini. How should we view her? To put it in another way: the men are the products of their education – but what about the women?

> The dainty limbs of the woman of eighteen were not burdened with such abundance of ornaments, nor did her speech betray any trace of the East Bengal accent, which clearly showed that this perfect flower of beauty was no daughter of the banks of the Madhumati, but was born and brought up on the Bhagirathi in some place near the capital. ...Her long locks were tied up in a careless knot on her shoulder; but some tresses had thrown away that bondage and were straying over her forehead and cheeks (3).

Which tradition does our heroine Matangini come from?

When we see her in the beginning, she is contrasted with her companion Kanakmayee – she is reluctant to even part with her veil.

> Kanak laughed and said, 'come now, my proud girl, let's go and show beauty's splendour to the gaping idiots.' Hang you, monkey cried the other and hid her blushing face in her veil. (6)

When her face is revealed, it is only accidental – because of a gust of wind. her "immodesty" is punished by her cruel husband and we do not see her retaliate, all this can only place her in the tradition of good Hindu wives – compliant, modest and long suffering.

> Only tears were streaming down her face. At the sight of her silent suffering the cruel man softened a little. He no longer tried to beat her, but continued his abuse. (13)

As was said earlier, the scenes that frame her at the beginning depict her as docile and sacrificing – entirely conforming to good Hindu notions of womanhood. But the story later develops in quite another way. In the chapter entitled "Love Can Conquer Fear", she runs away from home at night in order to save the fortunes of her sister and brother-in-law. In doing so she puts everything she has at considerable risk.

> Then summoning all her resolutions, she made rapid but noiseless steps. Her heart beat as she walked through the jungly path. The dreary silence and the dark shadows appalled her. (39)

When she is later alone with Madhav Ghose, she confesses her passion for him.

> 'Ah, hate me not, despise me not,' cried she with an intensity of feeling which shook her delicate frame. 'Spurn me not for this last weakness; this, Madhav, this, may be our last meeting; it must be so, and too, too deeply have I loved you – too deeply do I love you still, to part with you for even without a struggle.' (53)

In fact this outburst of passion and her recklessness here is in sharp contrast with the way she is portrayed in the beginning. What brings about this transformation? The transformation is a fairly obvious violation of psychological plausibility. One of the basic rules of traditional story telling is surely a consistency of character – but this is defied. But this appears to be a very deliberate choice. The narrator could have shown her as defiant to begin with – or he could have had her simmer with silent, sinful passion that remains unarticulated. But the writer forgoes both these options. This is a very revealing choice – it offers only one explanation. We shall consider this option in the next section.

2.5 PASSION VERSUS DUTY

What is the impact of this early portrayal of Matangini as long suffering oppressed and victimised? It seems that Bankim wants to create a character whose suffering is unjustified. The reader is thus perforce made to give unqualified support to Matangini. The villainy of Rajmohan – cruel, surly and a man of unmitigated evil (attempting to rob his benefactors) – furthers this agenda. Thus, when Matangini finally blurts out her doubly forbidden love (violating in one fell swoop both marital and familial boundaries), she is at once forgiven. In fact, there is an anticipation of the reader's judgement.

> Yes reproach me, Madhav", she continued, " censure me, teach me, for I have been sinful; sinful in the eyes of my God, and I must say it, Madhav, of my God on earth, of yourself. But you cannot hate me more than I hate myself ..." (55)

Bankim has risked the traditional reader's disapproval by having Matangini defy her husband. However, before the reader can judge her, she condemns herself. How does she do this? She does this by submitting herself to Madhav and admitting the wrong that she has done. Her expression of an extra-marital love here is an obvious rejection

of traditional values. But her simultaneous submission to Madhav and the vocabulary that she uses, that sees man as a godlike figure, undermines the rebellion of her earlier rejection. Once again, it makes her more traditional than rebellious and undermines her defiance as makes her acceptable to the traditional reader.

Madhav accepts his godlike status without flinching – thereby reinforcing the very patriarchy which the text seeks to question. He makes a predictable speech that places him firmly in the tradition of 19th century *Bhadralok* heroes who remain benevolent, progressive, liberal and deeply patriarchal. He is not unsentimental because he repeatedly bursts into tears, but the emotion is kept under check by an irrefutably reasonable mind. That is why at the cost of making him sound priggish, the author has him say:

> Listen to me Matangini,' replied Madhav, scarcely cool himself, 'listen and spare both of us this sore affliction. At your father's house the flame was kindled which seems fated to consume us both and which then we were too young to quench by desperate efforts, but if even then we never flinched from the path of duty, shall we not, now that years of affliction have schooled our hearts, eradicate from them the evil which corrodes and blisters them? Oh! Matangini, let us forget each other. Let us separate ', (55)

We have quoted Madhav here at length because we want to pick on his vocabulary here which uses fate, desperate efforts, path of duty and evil – all of this places him squarely on the side of tradition and convention. His understanding is simple: theirs is an illicit love that is corrosive – it must therefore be forgotten and eradicated. To do otherwise would be evil. But is this voice authorial? It would not be wrong to suggest that even if it has some authorial approval, it does not have all of it. The next passage amply illustrates the point we are trying to make.

> Matangini rose and stood erect in the splendour of new flushed beauty. 'Yes if the human mind can be taught to forget, I will forget you. We part now and for ever' (55-56).

Her answer to Madhav recognises the superior claims of duty over illicit passion. But this is only one part of the story. Every other sign in the text indicates that the author's imaginative sympathy lies with her. Her beauty at this point is celebrated. Just a little earlier we were told that the

> distant and reserved demeanour, the air of dejection and broken-heartedness which had marked her from the first had disappeared ...for the wild current of passion had hurried her to that region where naught but the present was visible , and in which all knowledge of right and wrong is whirled and merged in the vortex of intense present felicity ..."(54).

The reader is first drawn into the vortex of the "intense present felicity" and then before one can censure this transgression, Matangini admonishes herself. But her last words to Madhav hauntingly contest the claims of duty. When Madhav says to her that they must forget each other, she bows to him, but her whisper "If the human mind can be taught to forgive" remains unanswered, ultimately leaving open-ended any attempt on Madhav's part to seek closure here. Because what Madhav has said implies an end – a termination of their feelings for each other. He says it must end because their feelings for each other are somehow not permissible. Matangini agrees that their relationship has no future, but her words here undercut Madhav – if reason must dictate their behaviour, then so be it. What she says is that feelings will not be governed by reason, that the human heart will follow its own course. And this is the nature of transgression that we will discuss at length in a later unit. But for the moment let it suffice to say that while the story through Madhav tries to bring their feelings to an end, Matangini's words which talk about the impossibility of reason governing emotion prevent the neat ending that Madhav wants.

2.6 *RAJMOHAN'S WIFE: AS* CONDUCT LITERATURE

Here, we shall acquaint ourselves with the viewpoint that governs the text. In one way or another, all literature has a morality- most writing consciously or unconsciously expressing a world-view. But when we use the term "conduct literature" we do not refer to all literature. We are specifically referring to a lot of early writing that was produced for popular consumption that took upon itself the role of educating its readers. It could be directly or indirectly didactic. For instance it could tell us how to eat or bring up our daughters, or it could tell us a story in which the path of virtue is rewarded. We use this term conduct literature to include all forms of didactic writing – but particularly the kind of writing that became popular with the rising number of middle class readers.

What is contained in *Rajmohan's Wife* are contradictory positions: it remains finally ambiguous about its attitude to women and marriage. We will talk later about why the story seems to be on the brink of a radical break with social norms, but then withdraws and concludes on a sober, rather conservative note. The contradictory signs embedded in the text on women's issues and on morality as a whole are a product of an attempt to grapple with a change visualised at the core of the situation. The complexity of the historical process underpinning such an attempt is best put forward by **Raymond Williams**. He talks of the residual, dominant, and emergent elements that coexist at any cultural moment, (Marxism and Literature, 121-7). Williams means that culture is not a unitary phenomenon – it is not a homogeneous unit that can be located in a single category. For instance, if we were to say that the culture that dominates our society is the urban upper class one, we would be right. But to say that society is shaped only by the middle class would not be true. There is also the rural poor, the urban poor, the zamindars, and the urban upper class. The zamindars and the bonded labour that can be found in rural areas could be seen as the residual class, the class that remains from an older feudal structure. The urban middle class could then be seen as the class that is on the make and the class that is about to be the dominant class.

Williams acknowledges that there is a dominant culture that is the most powerful, but it is not the only element that constitutes culture. At any given moment there are less powerful elements that either resist the dominant culture or run counter to it. **Dollimore** elaborates Williams' categories, and he defines residual as that which

> denotes ...experiences, meanings and values which have been formed in the past, which cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture and may even be in opposition to it, yet are still active. Emergent culture on the other hand involves the finding of new forms, in the process of which there occurs 'pre-emergence', that is an expression which is 'active and pressing but not yet fully articulated'". (*Radical Tragedy*: Jonathan Dollimore, 7)

What we are trying to suggest is a relationship between emergent culture and the grappling of the text with an incipient change in social mores. This happens subtly in the process of literary composition. To the reader, a fictional work poses numerous challenges. Read at one level, the story maybe seen as a cautionary tale that is one kind of conduct literature. For what else does Samuel Richardson attempt if not a rewarding of virtue? By cautioning his female readers of the pitfalls of lust, he is steering the emergent bourgeois morality away from the path of dalliance. In the case of Bankim, the readers are a newly colonised class, negotiating tradition and modernity. The author is then targeting an audience which might be receptive to a questioning of traditional boundaries – but this interrogation is done not blatantly but with circumspection. The structure of the tale is like several others in its genre, i.e. didactic. In *Rajmohan's Wife,* an unhappily married and much oppressed woman is consumed with an illicit passion for her brother-in-law. All this is silent till finally

Matangini confesses all. Madhav acknowledges a diluted version of the same. He reminds her of the path of righteousness, she sighs and agrees, (well almost). And then? As the story unfolds, we discover she suffers. While all other characters get the ends they deserve, Matangini's suffering is unmitigated. We are told that Mathur Ghose hanged himself, Rajmohan was apprehended, Matangini was dispatched to her father's house, "History does not say how her life was terminated, but it is known that she died an early death" (124). As if this were not bad enough, we are told that while she lived with her father 'Madhav increased the pension he allowed the old man, on her account.' If this is not the most patriarchal and convenient of all ways of extenuating himself, we may never know what is.

The point of course is that given its historical juncture, this was the most cautious end possible. An adulterous, incestuous passion can neither be forgotten (even though our hero urges Matangini to do so) nor consummated. It cannot be forgotten because there is too much emotion there that Matangini confesses cannot be wished away. Yet to have them give in to such a passion would be to take the risk of defying tradition. The end Matangini meets here vindicates the moral status in traditional terms. The conservative section of society would perhaps approve of this end. (We have talked about the outcome of transgression in Bankim as always tragic). Matangini's unhappy brief life and her early death echoes, the fate of the woman who bestowed all her fortune on the grandfather of the Ghose cousins. So far everything fits. The imagined reader Bankim wrote for would probably have understood Matangini's plight and appreciated the end as inevitable. The story addresses the fundamental anxiety that monogamy imposes: what happens when you are attracted to someone and neither of you is unattached. But there are different possible ends:

- Matangini and Madhav consummate their love and live happily ever after.
- They acknowledge their love and die of unhappiness.
- They concede that they both must go back and suffer their respective marriages and maybe suffer their thwarted passion equally.
- That the woman suffers the solitude silently and the man resumes at least a seeming normalcy.

We could perhaps go on, but the truth is that Bankim selects the last possibility – perhaps the most unfair as well as the most psychologically plausible one. To have a happy end would be to defy common sense and middle class morality. To have them both dissolve their marriages is always possible (and as was said earlier, Bankim plays a lot with different versions of that) -- but here the woman is clearly the greater victim.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have delineated some of the important questions this book raises for us as students of literature written in English. We have to try to see why we have been asked to study some books over others. Why should we read an apparently unsuccessful book written by some 19th century Bengali? To take these questions in the order that they appear to us, we have first taken up its significance as the first novel Bankim wrote in English. His choice interesting – yet the fact that he takes liberties with the language of the British masters, by following the influence of Sanskrit writings is an anticipation of what was to later become a full-fledged nationalist streak in him. From questions of language and audience, we have gone on to discuss the portrayal of Matangini and her relationship with Madhav, her brother-in-law. The delineation of her character is extremely strategic. Bankim has tried to locate the core of the problem with marriage, but in order that the conservative section of his audience should not feel too alienated from her, he has shown her initially timid and virtuous. The passion she later articulates therefore makes her sympathetic, rather than immoral. We have argued that the role Bankim took upon

himself was one of a moral guide for his community. He is divided between his desire to talk about the nature of suffering, and a contradictory pull to try and school this weakness in the human heart. The novel then becomes a useful demonstration of the politics of Bankim, which is progressive in some ways, and traditional in some.

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Bankim chose to write his first novel in English? Does the novel betray a sensibility that is informed by Western education? Give a reasoned answer.
2. Discuss the way in which Matagini has been characterised in *Rajmohan's Wife*.
3. What role does the choice of language play in the writing of a novel, particularly when one of the available languages enjoys social power?

culpable where Rajmohan's ill treatment is concerned. Her infatuation and his awareness of it create a space where she is no longer an innocent victim.

This authorial choice may be seen as the moment of rupture (the moment where the story goes back on what it has been saying so far) where the overt logic of the narrative is betrayed. It is this moment in the novel when the dominant logic or the main narrative is suddenly turned on its head. So far the story has been saying that Rajmohan is entirely to blame and Matangini's hatred for Rajmohan is entirely understandable. But here Rajmohan's words threaten the integrity of Matangini – his words prove to be haunting and we are made to wriggle with discomfort as he says that she has caused him to become what he is. The uncivilised manner in which he has behaved earlier – especially with Madhav is suddenly seen in a different light. He tells her he ceaselessly hounded every footstep of hers. This threat to what is so germane (the innocence of Matangini) to the story illustrates the author's inability to extricate himself from the dominant views of his time that could only portray female desire as unnatural and threatening. Bankim has shied away from taking a clear stand on the issue of a woman's sense of freedom. This moment that embodies such a conflict in values then helps us to tie up a lot of the questions raised so far – such as questions about intended readership, attitudes to class and to sexuality. We began this essay by talking about how the text addresses itself to a new, fairly cosmopolitan readership that would be familiar with multiple linguistic registers. Such a class is by virtue of its education more modern and progressive with a desperate need for a new socio cultural niche where it can locate a set of values that are more acceptable than the ones it has inherited. This is where a need for conduct literature – or more appropriately, didactic literature steps in. And this is where the debate over values comes in. *Rajmohan's Wife,* makes a great deal of sense in this particular context which demands a questioning of traditional values – a laying bare of myths in society and simultaneously, it also articulates the fears that emerge from such a questioning. This probably accounts for both the role that Matangini plays as well as the hauntingly powerful threat that Rajmohan articulates.

3.3 TREATMENT OF MARRIAGE

The above section will have hopefully raise questions about the problematic nature of the story. There are however, related questions that arise. What is Bankim saying in this novel about marriage? Is he saying that some marriages are unfortunate – such as that of Rajmohan and his wife? Still more, does Bankim suggest that this failed marriage is an exception and not typical? The point is that the story is saying something more disturbing and potentially far more threatening about the institution of marriage. What we are trying to say is that where the story of Matangini reinforces the unhappy lot of women in arranged marriages, it also becomes far too threatening in its implications. There are two ways of softening the blow to a still dominantly masculine readership. One is to villanise Rajmohan to such an extent that he is purely hateful and Matangini's hatred of him is completely justified. But such a reading: which sees extra-marital desire as a result of an unhappy and incompatible marriage is not a reading that is reinforced by the experiences of the other characters in the story.

The first thing to be considered is Madhav's reciprocal love for Matangini. His feelings are not extenuated by a fate similar to hers – he cannot rationalise his feelings for Matangini as being a result of his bad marriage. He has a perfectly good wife – so how are we to look upon his situation? It would have been easy for Bankim to depict the wife (Hemangini) as undesirable. But she is shown to be kind, gentle and unsuspecting. But Bankim does not take the easier option. Madhav presumably respects his marriage enough. So his desire for Matangini is not necessarily a product of bad relationships – rather, Bankim seems to imply that it is a very potent force that may rear its head at any moment in even a good, monogamous relationship. The

nature of desire is not what the author judges, it is the choices that people make which define them as good and bad. In this context, Madhav's rather priggish lecture on the path of duty to Matangini is a reminder of the difference between him and his cousin Mathur Ghose. He acknowledges his long history of desire for Matangini but says they must not stray from the path of duty. In contrast, his cousin Mathur Ghose is shown to have little self-control over his sexual desire. He disregards his virtuous and beautiful first wife Tara and marries a younger woman who has little to offer but a youthful sexuality. Her manipulation of him portrays him as foolishly uxorious.

But till now Mathur Ghosh has been only ridiculous, it is his lust for Matangini that makes him become really reprehensible. His desire for her is different not merely because he tries to force himself upon her, but because fundamentally he has no hold over his desire. In the case of Mathur Ghose, the underlying message is that to live by desire alone cannot lead to happiness, because there is no end to it. That despite having married a second wife, and being sexually manipulated by her, he is seized by a desire to possess Matangini. His desire is of course of a lower order, as he does not care about her feelings in the matter: the fact remains that he is unhappy despite having two desirable wives who both want him in their own ways. Ultimately the text, through repeated examples, proves the destructive nature of desire. Matangini suffers, Mathur Ghose hangs himself, Rajmohan (with his violent passion for Matangini) ends up in jail and the unnamed benefactor of the Ghose family dies a premature death like our heroine.

Though the nature of desire is celebrated briefly is pervasively shown as destructive. There is a certain inexorable movement to which even the best fall victim. No longer is virtue a matter of intrinsic worth alone – it is defined by the choices people make. Thus, the institution of marriage is shown to be vulnerable. But the cautionary nature of the narrative demonstrates the need to hold onto this rather fragile institution.

3.4 MELODRAMA IN THE NOVEL

And finally before we draw close to concluding this unit, let us talk about the melodramatic style of writing. The word "melodrama" comes from Greek and means 'song drama'. Sensationalism and extravagant emotional appeal are two prominent features of melodrama. There could be a reason to support this. The

> flourishing of melodrama in the 19th century produced a kind of naively sensational entertainment in which the main characters were excessively virtuous or exceptionally evil (hence the luminously good hero or heroine and the villain of deepest and darkest dye), an abundance of blood, thunder, thrills and violent action ...and also...realism in the shape of extravagant tales of the wickedness of drinking, gambling and murdering, (J A Cuddon, A Dictionary of Literary Terms 387-388).

Why does any writer choose an exaggerated mode of writing? While watching a Hindi film have we ever asked yourself why situations, language, body movements, and even characteristics are so vastly "unbelievable"? If we haven't, then it shows us the success of the mode. If we have ever cried in any of these unbelievable situations, and later been amused by our own reaction, it shows how we willingly suspend belief. When catering to a large audience, most writers do not like to risk losing the reader's approval. They want to ensure the reader does not miss the point they are making. So points are simplified, repeated, exaggerated as means of emphasis. Thus, works that are obviously trying to preach something or are didactic often use melodrama to ensure that the reader/ viewer does not get the "wrong" message. Melodrama in *Rajmohan's Wife* and in Bankim's other novels is used in the form of exaggeration of, character, situation, and language. For instance, the villainy of Rajmohan and the lechery of Mathur Ghose are of an unmistakable magnitude. Then

there are at least two situations that are extremely melodramatic. The one in which Matangini overhears the conversation between the robbers and Rajmohan and then escapes to warn Madhav. Her journey at night, the suspense, the fear of discovery, the natural elements all seem familiar to an audience brought up on Hindi cinema. And the other situation is where we are kept in the dark about Matangini's whereabouts and the plot resembles a detective novel, till we actually discover her imprisoned by Mathur Ghose in a dungeon like place. Apart from character and situation, the language is often melodramatic. Let us quote the following this time to make a different point:

> Woman,' he said fiercely, deceive me not. Canst thou? Thou little knowst how I have watched thee; how from the earliest day that thy beauty became thy curse, I have followed every footstep of thine -- caught every look that shot from thine eyes. Brute thou I be,' continued he again becoming gentle, I was proud of my beautiful wife ...Did I not see before thou wert a woman, thou didst already become fond of that cursed wretch? Did I not see how time ripened thy fondness into sin? ...'(60)

It is hard to decide the matter of influence. Here we see a style reminiscent of **Nathaniel Hawthorne** as well as dramatic voices closer home in India. But the one thing that Bankim's readers did not complain of was melodrama. And to some extent we have to understand that understatement was not always considered a virtue in aesthetics.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In Units Two and Three, we have located a common central problem through Bankim's treatment of character. Writing in a realist genre has certain conventions, one of which is characterisation. Early novelists did not follow the same conventions as the novelists who arrived later on the scene. **Henry Fielding** wrote about characters that were mainly one dimensional, defined by one exaggerated feature. But with the development of the novel, the emphasis on complexity of character grew. It followed from this then, that the character remains consistent, because, people in "life" are not expected to be inconsistent. Yet, we see in *Rajmohan's Wife* that both Matangini and Rajmohan have moments where we are taken unawares. We are not suggesting that those moments are implausible. For those moments are significant because they represent contradictory pulls felt by Bankim to appease different sections of his reading public. In attempting to shape his community, he cannot allow a dent in the existing morality.

In this Unit we have tried through a close textual analysis to locate some contradictions, inconsistencies, gaps and silences. These questions are important because they show the discrepancies between the stated intent of the narrative and the actual narrative. By now we also hope that we have suitably indicated the problems in this text. The central problem lying in the treatment of Rajmohan. Till Rajmohan's outburst of passion and jealousy, the text is weak but consistent. After his outburst, it suddenly erupts into life and produces a problem. In a nutshell, the question is, why does the story/ author betray the woman Matangini? Till that point she is an ill-treated woman who falls in love with a sensitive, beautiful man. Now she suddenly becomes someone who through her passion for another man has reduced her own husband into a state of unreasonable and monstrous jealousy. This is not central to the story it is only briefly shown and then quickly forgotten. In the final analysis, the textual sympathy remains with Matangini and Rajmohan meets the end he deserves. We have emphasised this seemingly marginal point, because it allows us to illustrate the nature of contradiction in the story. The loneliness of the woman is what comes across as the strong and central point in the novel. And yet, this moment seems to articulate and justify the man's suffering, making the story suddenly more complex.

The point is never developed, perhaps, it was never meant to outweigh the suffering of Matangini. Yet, where does it come from if not from a traditional point of view, where as we said earlier, women are depicted as naturally treacherous, and men as natural victims of their treachery?

This seemingly unimportant moment allows us then to see that a text does not tell just one simple story that often even the simplest of stories is a complex weave. It is possible sometimes just to read it along its grain, i.e to see it as telling the story that it seems to be unfolding. This is normally the skill of a good storyteller because of which the reader is seduced by the obvious story. But literary theory has now provided us with a lot of insight where reading against the grain becomes as valuable if not more valuable than reading it along the grain. By detecting moments of rupture, gaps and silences, we are able to see the "unconscious" of the novel. In this way, we are allowed to see the anxieties and conflicts that the writer felt. These conflicts could be personal or social – but it is the repressed or unstated nature of these conflicts that is of interest to us, more than the stated and obvious nature. Finally we have tried to define the appeal that Bankim had for his readers that allowed him to shape his reading community. In doing so, we have discussed the use of melodrama in his novels. It is this element that makes his characters so violently good or bad.

3.6 QUESTIONS

1. How far is Matangini seen as transgressive and threatening? Does the text justify her violation of her marriage? Or do you see contradictory signals in the text?
2. What do you think of Bankim's treatment of marriage? What do you think of Mathur Ghose and his two marriages? If all marriages are satirised and exposed as hollow, then why does Bankim uphold Madhav Ghose's attitude? Discuss.
3. What do you understand by melodrama? Do you agree that *Rajmohan's Wife* has melodramatic features? Give reasons for your answer.

3.7 GLOSSARY

Authorial Voice: The voice of the author, here used to see if its possible to see Madhav's position as identical with that of the narrator. Literary theory and criticism has made us sensitive to differences between narratorial voice, authorial voice, and the voice of the leading character/s

Coloniser: conqueror

Didactic: moralising so that the reader gets converted to the author's point of view.

Eponymous: An eponymous hero or heroine gives his or her name to the title of the work. For instance: *King Lear, Dr. Zhivago, Emma.*

Mimicry: imitation

Radical: fundamental or deep-seated, also challenging and rebellious.

Sub text: In any text underlying the stated or overt views, there is another set of views that often run counter to the overt views.

Unconscious: In Freudian theory it refers to the sum of all thoughts, memories, desires, etc. of which the individual is not conscious but which influence his emotions and behaviour. I have used it to say in more general terms that a text could also have its own " unconscious"

Unmitigated: complete, absolute

UNIT 4 MARRIAGE AND TRANSGRESSION IN BANKIM'S OTHER NOVELS

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Musing on Morality
4.3 "Evil" in Bankim: The Widow and the Heart of Darkness
4.4 Nature of Tragedy in Bankim's Fiction: Historical or Eternal
4.5 Ideological Stereotypes Built Around Desire
4.6 Bankim's Universalist Paradigm
4.7 Let Us Sum Up
4.8 Questions
4.9 Glossary

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will take up a comparative study of three other novels of Bankim. We have chosen to discuss these novels along with *Rajmohan's Wife* because the thematic preoccupations are very similar. The comparison will hopefully enhance our understanding of Bankim's vision. Think of this statement first: "Marriage relations may be made in heaven; but they are with frightening regularity broken on earth" (Sudipto Kaviraj, 20) In this Unit we are going to examine *Rajmohan's Wife* in relation to three other novels, which are thematically close to it: *Bishabhriksha* (The Poison Tree), *Krsnakanter Uil* (Krishnakanta's Will) and *Indira*. All three stories are about marriage and love, or very broadly- speaking, they all deal with the nature of human desire. Desire is an omnipotent force and few can resist it. What do you say? Bankim's own moral position remains elusive as each text dramatises a variation on this tireless theme. In many ways *Rajmohan's Wife* is the least troubling, most conformist of the texts we discuss here.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

To begin with, let us go over the ordinary details of representation in the novel *Bishabhriksha*. It is the story of a young girl Kundanandini who is left orphaned and destitute. Nagendranath, the hero (a wealthy zamindar) sees her in her trance like grief and is moved by the vulnerability of her beauty. He decides to adopt her. Inexorably, Kunda is carried to her tragic fate. It might be noted here that the presence of a beautiful, single woman – often a widow is a recurrent feature in all these texts. We will return later to the significance of such a figure. Kunda's presence – her beauty and her dependence – is so immediately apparent, that Nagendranath's otherwise generous and good looking wife Suryamukhi decides to "fix" a marriage for her. Accordingly, Suryamukhi marries her to her own rather unattractive foster brother Taracharan. But Kundanandini is soon widowed, and once again and this time irrevocably lodged in Nagendranath's large feudal establishment. Nagendranath is hopelessly infatuated and his wife realises that very soon.

However, Bankim adds a different perspective to this apparently simple story. This is made to happen in a peculiar way. Consider this. The hapless Kunda who reciprocates her benefactor's feelings is herself being pursued by a debauched young babu called Devendra. Devendra disguises himself as a singing woman saint or a

sanyasin – a ruse that is discovered after a while. Soon a scandal breaks out and Suryamukhi who has been miserable with jealousy finds a convenient excuse to expel Kunda. Meanwhile a nasty maid -servant of Suryamukhi decides to fish in troubled waters. Hira – another child widow – goes and quietly observes the unreasonable conduct of the wife of the master of the house. Things come to a head between husband and wife – culminating in the marriage of Kunda with Nagendranath, arranged by Suryamukhi herself. There is a further twist to the story when Suryamukhi's sudden departure takes place followed by Nagendranath's obsessive infatuation for Kunda that vanishes and converts to anger. There is a lot of melodrama from here on – (not unlike in *Rajmohan's Wife*) – ending in the restoration of the first wife and the convenient suicide of Kunda.

As would have become obvious to us by now, Matangini's story and that of Kundandini are not very dissimilar – and certainly even though Matangini does not commit suicide, her early death and unhappy life convey a tragedy that is no less undeserved. And like Madhav Ghose, Nagendranath too, is caught in the dilemma of having a wife who is virtuous and beautiful – but who feels compulsively drawn to a more powerfully beautiful woman. While Madhav remained faithful – at least physically, Nagendranath remarries and succumbs to temptation. That is the only deviation and a minor one considering that he felt very close to her.

4.2 MUSING ON MORALITY

At this point we are going to quote at length from **Sudipto Kaviraj's** extremely thoughtful study on Bankim. He talks about how the

> Stories of his novels often turn around a conflict between two inevitabilities, two things that are equally necessary truths of human life. A social world requires definitions, a kind of basic social map which defines permissions and prohibitions. At the same time, there are the elemental drives of human nature which these social constructs are meant to discipline into reasonably safe forms, but hardly can. The social and moral worlds in which men actually live are made up of these two dissimilar and contradictory elements – the desires that control men and the controls that make society. Much of Bankim's fictional movement arises from this central conflict – between the inevitability of moral orders and the inevitability of their transgression", (Kaviraj, 2).

Kaviraj further elaborates what he sees as unique about the nature of conflict in Bankim. He distinguishes the morality of Bankim's universe from that of the Victorian universe from where he borrowed / inherited the structure of his narratives. The morality of Victorian narratives, according to Kaviraj is far less ambiguous. Don't you think what he says of Victorian writers is more true of **Dickens** than of **George Eliot**? In Bankim's novels the inevitability of desire undercuts any narrow understanding of morality. His characters are never simply right or wrong – they are in the throes of a conflict that goes beyond a conventional understanding of good and bad. This is something we appreciated in Bankim in the previous unit. For instance, we commented on the depth of Matangini's passion – the passion of Kunda is no less intense.In fact the depth, the intensity of the tragedy has come from each character's knowledge of that inevitability.

In the first chapter of *Bishbhriksha,* we see an orphaned Kudanandini lying almost unconscious, while Nagendranath sees her and is struck by her beauty. What impact can it leave on the reader? The sense of fatality and doom sets in the very first chapter itself when the reader is made privy to Kunda's dream – a dream which warns her to beware of a very beautiful man (who resembles Nagendranath) and a dark, attractive woman (Hira, the maid servant). Kunda is seen in a trance-like fashion following

Nagendranath to her doom. The whole thing is done to make an important point. Beauty for instance, in Bankim is no mere ornament – it is an instrument of fatality. Beauty seems to be in the service of passion that is, constantly opposed to the call of duty. (This you would remember from our discussion on the theme of passion versus duty in the previous unit). Beauty in Bankim's novels serves a more fundamental purpose. It is what in a sense makes the beholder helpless. It emphasises that the beholder of beauty has to become a victim of this great force of nature. We must understand this notion of beauty as an agent that blinds and infatuates the beholder and makes him/her transgress. Bankim's characters: whether it is Rohini or Govindlal in *Krsnakanter Uil* or Kunda and Nagendranath in *Bishabhriksha* or Matangini and Madhav in *Rajmohan's Wife*- are all struck by the power of each other's beauty . It is rather interesting that men in Bankim are described as being as powerfully attractive as the women. When Kunda dreams of Nagendranath, we are told that "...the figure of a god-like man. He had a fine, noble, tranquil brow; a candid, compassionate look; his swan-like long neck was slightly curved; ...". (*Bishabriksha,* 12)

One can see similarities between this and *Rajmohan's Wife* where the good looks of Madhav and Matangini are a sign of inner moral worth. In *Krsnakanter Uil*, the scenario is in a sense completely obverse to the one in *Bishabriksha*. In this novel we come across a happily married couple Govindlal and his child bride Bhramar. Their marriage is portrayed as playful and companionate – almost as if child marriages were being advocated. But just then Govindlal encounters the beautiful but morally ambiguous Rohini (yet another child widow). Rohini is consumed with passion for Govindlal and slowly her beauty draws him away from his path of virtue. Yet, as with Nagendranath, straying away from the path of virtue must lead to tragedy – here, all the characters are punished equally. When Govindlal abandons his child wife Bhramar, her childhood abruptly ends and she slowly pines away to death. Meanwhile, the luckless Rohini provokes Govindlal into a jealous fit and he shoots her dead. Govinlal spends most of his life after this trying to escape the police and finally finds solace in religion. What we are suggesting is that Bankim consistently grapples with the idea of morality in the dace of temptations and desires.

4.3 "EVIL" IN BANKIM: THE WIDOW AND THE HEART OF DARKNESS

The stories in these novels are the obverse of one another because in one the childlike woman tempts away some married man from marriage and in the other she is not successful in her mission and is thus rebuffed. So if one can be read as an indictment of child marriage the other novel resists such a reading – demonstrating the sexual attractiveness of young girls to older men. But in both narratives it is interesting to see that it is the widow who destabilises the marriage. Kunda is more like Bhramar – both suffer blamelessly, while Rohini is an active agent in her tragedy – in some ways Rohini is more like Hira – the maid -servant in *Bishabriksha*. Let us now quote two passages, one from each of the two texts and the similarity will be seen as self-evident. The first one is taken from Hira's introspection and the second one is Rohini's.

> Well, why am I so angry with Suryamukhi? She has never done me any harm; rather she has favoured me and treated me well. So why am I angry? Does Hira not know that? ...Suryamukhi is happy and I am miserable; this is why I am angry. She is important and I am insignificant. She is the employer, I am the servant. ...If you say God has made her important, what fault is it of hers? Why do I harm her? - to that I say, God has harmed me, for what fault of mine?(*Bishabriksha*, 78).

> For what fault was I destined to become a widow while still a child? Have I committed more sins than others that I should be deprived of all worldly pleasures? What is my fault that although I am young and beautiful, I am condemned to live the rest of my life like a dried up piece of wood? People who have all the happiness that life can give – take Govinlal's wife for instance – what virtues do they have that I have not? ...(*Krsnakanter Uil,* 194)

Let us take a critical look at these passages. At one level these two passages are significant because like Rajmohan's outburst of jealousy that we have discussed in the previous section, the point of view of the otherwise 'villainous' characters in a sense, makes them more human, more understandable. Thus, these passages demonstrate the artistry in Bankim that enables him to see the undesirability of villainising a character beyond redemption. That is his skill at characterisation. But there is something else that cries for comparison. There is in both portrayals, a hint of irreverence. As widows, they ought not to feel the way they do, but Bankim even though he condemns them for their flaws, sees the humane aspect and their perception of injustice. Both Hira and Rohini are child widows who resent their fate as widows. Rohini, though condemned to wear white sarees – chooses white sarees with black borders - a very small but significant violation. She also chews pan that ensures her lips remain red. Bankim is indulgent about her violations. He is more harsh with Hira – but even there Hira's passion for Devendra is so intense that 'sinful' though her heart is, Bankim somewhat redeems her. In fact, Devendra is dealt with more severely. We are not arguing that Bankim does away with conservative didacticism – his didacticism is apparent from the outcome of the transgressions. It is not a banal belief in the right and wrong that is socially defined – rather, it is a realisation of the impossible co-existence of desire with duty.

Kaviraj argues that a "moral judgement often judges an act or a life against rules set down by a particular moral system, and evaluates them ethically as right or wrong. But the kind of judgement this type of story-telling invites is very different. What we come to reflect upon and judge is less the moral quality of an act than the nature of morality itself, and the rightness and wrongness of having this kind of a system of right and wrong." (Kaviraj, 5). Obviously, Kaviraj's emphasis is not on the morality of a person's conduct but on what morality means in a situation. This takes us on a higher plane of understanding of Bankim's fiction.

4.4 NATURE OF TRAGEDY IN BANKIM'S FICTION: HISTORICAL OR ETERNAL?

This then leads us to the question of the nature of tragedy. How can we define the nature of tragedy in Bankim? Is desire defined in terms that are primordial – is desire something that is fundamentally at odds with human happiness? Or is it always socially constructed? Is it embedded in the fabric of society, so much so, that it is no longer possible to distinguish what is historical from what is eternal? Let us elaborate on the nature of this questioning. What is seen as historical is seen in terms of change and is seen as specific to a particular historical moment which is specific to a society, a class, a region, a race, culture or/and gender. It is these categories that construct histories that determine difference between one historical moment and another. An artist's vision may subscribe consciously to this understanding of the world, or it may subscribe to an ahistorical understanding. In the latter case, the worldview informing the argument erases the real constituents of history and cloaks them in a discourse that sees life in terms that are fundamentally unchanging. For instance, if we were to say that there is an evil impulse that is at the core of the human heart, this would be an " essentialist" or if you like, an ahistorical view, because it assumes that the human heart is essentially the same and differences are only superficial. On the other

hand, if we were to say that Matangini's suffering is because of the nature of patriarchal society that insists on a repression of desire, we would be making a historical statement i.e we would be looking at society as contingent upon historical factors where differences happen because of changes in the social or material world. A historical view privileges change and difference over stasis and similarity. The historical mind will see change as the basis of life and the development of society as a natural historical process. On the other hand, the a historical mind will erase change and emphasise that which has remained constant over time. If we apply this to Bankim we will see that Bankim clearly is a product of his circumstances where he participates in the changing nature of contemporary norms.

The tragic vision of Bankim is articulated in a vocabulary that is fundamentally historical. By and large, the tragic conflict arises because of circumstances and conventions: both of which are historically determined. For instance, the recurrent presence of the widow – a troubling presence that destabilises marriages and bends the course of history is perhaps the most significant of these historical determinants. If Govindlal forsakes his marriage and his fortune for the widow Rohini then, Nagendranath does likewise (well forsakes at least his wife) for the widow Kundanandini. So also, is the role of Hira the widow crucial in bringing about the tragedy in *Bishabriksha.* In *Rajmohan's Wife* it is the untamed erotic desire of a widow that changes the fate and fortunes of the entire Ghose family. If you recall, in unit two, we discussed how in a digressive chapter on zamindars, the narrator tells us how Madhav and Mathur Ghose's grandfather came into money. The widow for whom he works is youthful and he proves to be a discreet man. Later, she bequeaths him her wealth inherited from her old dead husband and he quietly leaves for his village. The widow languishes and dies after his departure. This telling little story can be seen as a significant precursor to a whole genre of widow representation in literature. Here we see in miniature, the way that historical conditions shape the lives and destinies of men. Were it not for the fact that widows were not meant to have a life, this little episode would have had a very different end.

It might be noted here that the widow remained a troubling presence in a lot of popular representation – in literature and film. This would be particularly true (as in Bankim) of the child widow or the young widow. The reason is self-evident because, the widow's own desires are unfulfilled. Also, there are very few options left to them as they have no claims anywhere – neither on their husband's family, nor on that of their in-laws. Their rejection was partly because of their dependent status and partly because their sexuality was a threat. Often, the widows were either children or very young, they were seen as both sexually desirable and easily available. They were dependent on the men in their families and did not have the power to refuse their sexual overtures, thus they provided easy sexual opportunities within the home. But since a male dominated society sees the woman as the temptress and not the man as the victimiser, the widow began to be associated with someone who threatened the stability of regular family life. It is precisely because of their threatening sexuality that they are de-sexed or made to follow very rigid codes of dressing and behaviour. This was to ensure that they were no longer "sexually desirable". Very strict codes were formed to see to it that they did not destabilise conventions of bourgeois society. Bengali widows had to have their heads tonsured, wear white sarees. They were also supposed to avoid food that was linked to stimulating sexual desire- i.e. eggs, fish, meat and so on. It is because of this deeply inhuman condition of widows prevailing at that time that reformist movements raised the demand for allowing widow re-marriages to take place. But even years after widow re-marriage was permissible, it remained emotionally unacceptable to the conservative sections of society. As mentioned earlier, Bankim was not amongst the reformers – in fact in his writings he distances himself from the reformists. Perhaps it is this ambiguity of his real life position that gets reflected in his novels as well.

But it is not as if transgressions only take place in the presence of widows. In *Durgesnandini*, the hero Jagatsinha who is in love with Tillotama is confronted by

Ayesha's growing passion for him. The barrier between Jagatsinha and Ayesha arise out of the "deep prohibitions between the two religious communities." As Kaviraj says, "Bankim's concern is chiefly for liminality – by which he means relationships that are posed at the threshold. He elaborates his point by discussing a lot of his novels where the conflict is arising because of some " uncrossable social distance" which places a conflict between the demands of desire and those of duty". (Kaviraj, 4) What Kaviraj is pointing to is the sameness of the problem at the heart of some of Bankim's novels and this is the fundamental conflict between what the person really wants to do and what society has taught as "right". Tragedy stems not from mere circumstances, but from the human inability to reconcile conflicting voices within. Desires are usually independent of norms, but social norms are not just enforced from outside, they also lodge themselves within the social man as the voices of conscience. Hence, the irreconcilable nature of conflict from which tragedy ensues.

One of the shorter novels that playfully deal with this kind of issue is *Indira*. A conventional but spontaneous young girl, the eponymous heroine, tells the story in a lively first person narrative. Married off by her parents, she has just come of age and though she has not met her husband, she is looking forward to being united with him. This gives rise to a series of rather implausible events that take place. Her palanquin is rested in a very notorious area and she is robbed. Seeing her beauty, one of the younger bandits suggests taking her along, but is reprimanded by a senior bandit. Subsequently, she finds herself starving, almost naked and lost in an unfamiliar village. She encounters a vast number of kindly souls and next she is placed as a cook in a very respectable home where she gets quite intimate with the mistress of the house. As she finally reveals her story to her benefactors, the mistress and the master plot to reunite her with her husband. Let us see the interesting implications of this situation. We are face to face here with a number of issues. Indira is left high and dry in the middle of nowhere in a world that predates forms of instant communication that we are all too familiar with. She cannot return to her parents nor can she understandably arrive robbed and disheveled at her husband's home. The problems are both mundane and not so mundane. We can relate to these even today. Can't we? Think of Indira's helplessness. She does not know how to communicate her plight to anyone. Nor can she tell the truth of what happened- because nobody will believe that the robbers did not rob her off her virginity as well. She cannot come clean to her husband. Even though he is invited to their home, she cannot be introduced to him as his wife – after all, she explains reasonably that, she has been robbed by a notorious gang, lost and in the hands of strange men. Why should anybody then believe that her precious virtue is still intact? Aided by the mistress and abetted by the master, she decides to seduce her husband into falling in love with her. This was the staple of early Indian films, based as they were on popular folklore. Thus, she overcomes the 'modesty natural to a virtuous woman' in order to seduce the husband – thereby demonstrating the constructed nature of female virtue. The fact that her lively mistress enacts the ways of a temptress with such ease and experience only shows that Indira is not an exception.

4.5 IDEOLOGICAL STEREOTYPES BUILT AROUND DESIRE

At this point it would be worth quoting a little from this novel that could well be entitled the Tricks of the Harem.

> For eight days I inflamed my husband with all the means which Providence has given women to inflame men with. I am a woman – how can I divulge these things? If I had not known how to ignite flames, he would not have been so enkindled ...It can be said that it is women who are earth's thorns. More harm is caused by us than by men...(Indira, 363)

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have looked at three short novels that share the same preoccupations as *Rajmohan's Wife*. The latter only comes near a transgression but draws away as it approaches temptation. Later in his career, Bankim was to actually show the consequences of transgressions. It may be argued that Matangini suffers even though she is not physically unfaithful to her husband. But she suffers because she has felt and articulated desire. To go back into a prelapsarian world (the age of innocence; before the fall of Adam and Eve) is shown as impossible – i.e to say that they can all return to live the way they used to before their loss of innocence would not be credible. Nagendranath can never recover his love for Kunda, nor can Govindlal recover his love for Bhramar. No amount of repression of desire can actually lead them back into the earlier age of innocence. The fact of immediacy and life however, cannot be overlooked.

We have tried to see the similarities of themes and motifs in order to be able to reconstruct Bankim's understanding of desire. Does he indict society and its laws or is he troubled by the destructiveness of the human heart? Are these two statements contradictory? Bankim seems to be consistently trying to resolve these two positions. He sees the culture specific conditions that facilitate tragedy- but he also sees the human heart as inevitably violating its possibilities of happiness. To that extent one could say he is universalising the nature of tragedy. And as was said earlier to universalise is to deny history, it is to deny the necessity of change. What it could imply is that there is no point in reforming laws and improving the position of those who are marginalised such as women and particularly widows. If man is doomed to suffer, then why imagine that things will improve if we reform laws? However, this would be an extremely ahistorical view and in our view, retrogressive in its implications. This would be the opposite of a historical view. The point is that Bankim negotiates the two extremes without completely supporting one or the other. Therein lies the problematic of his fiction.

4.8 QUESTIONS

1. In the context of *Rajmohan's Wife,* how would you respond to child marriage or child marriage? What problems, if any, can they cause? Support your answer with illustrations from the text.
2. Matangini declares her passion for Madhav but even as he reciprocates it, he reminds her about their obligation to duty. Where does the authorial sympathy lie in that scene? Where does your own sympathy lie? Give reasons in support of your answer.
3) How do you understand the concept of transgression in Bankim? From your reading of his text/s and the above essay do you think of his morality as strengthened by and based upon orthodox? Give a reasoned answer.

4.9 GLOSSARY

Paradigm: model, pattern. A theoretical term much in use today.
Primordial: primeval or elemental. Very early in human history, much before men and women became socially organised.
Prelapsarian: before the fall of Adam and Eve
Stasis: the condition of remaining static or fixed. This is not merely opposed to change, but also has its own logic of permanence.

Sexism: discrimination on the basis of sexual difference. Feminism squarely criticises and attacks it.

Stereotypes: fixed or conventional notion or conception of a person or group, idea, etc. held by a number of people, and allowing for no individuality, critical judgement, etc.

Transgression: wrongdoing, lapse or violation. Of course, social institutions feel challenged by it.

SUGGESTED READINGS

UNIT I

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Sarkar, Tanika., (2001), *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation : Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism,* (Permanent Black : New Delhi)

UNIT II

Dollimore, Jonathan., (1984), *Radical Tragedy* , (Harvester: Sussex)

Mukherjee, Meenakshi., (Ed) , (1996), *Rajmohan's Wife: (With a Foreword, Notes and an Afterword),* (Ravi Dayal Publisher : New Delhi)

UNIT IV

Kaviraj, Sudipto., (1998), *The Unhappy Consciousness : Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi)

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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

Block

4

DIFFERENT ENGLISHES

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block will look at the place of English both as language and as literature within a multicultural country like India. It will examine the various historical reasons for the promotion of English as a language by the imperial rulers. It will also look at the goals of teaching English in India today and at the concept of Indian English. In this block we will analyse the process whereby English came to be adopted and adapted by the Indians as another Indian language, and also look at how the English Discourse came to be nativised as far as syntax, morphology, and phonology were concerned. It will study the concept of the intelligibility of Indian English and address the question of native and non- native English. It will also look at the space of English in multilingual India.

This provides an overall understanding of the contemporary pedagogical and learning situations in India and the status of English in a multicultural context. What are the functions that it fulfils, what are the issues concerning its nativisation, what are the changes requisite in the English curriculum and how the use of English as an Indian language has led to the development of creative impulses in the field. The unit also focuses on the postcolonial concerns of English as the site of postcolonial resistance and appropriation through indigenising it.

Unit One looks at the evolution of English as one of the many languages of the Indian sub-continent. It explores the goals of teaching English in India today and the pedagogy behind the teaching of English in India while also dealing with the future of English pedagogy in India.

Unit Two talks about the linguistic processes of nativisation that has pervaded the many domains of English in India. These domains have been identified as the domain of family, of friendship, of neighbourhood among others. It also examines the various socio-culture factors that make people choose one language over another.

Unit Three deals with the ways in which the Indianisation of the English language has led to many deviations in phonology; morphology; syntax and grammar, and at how these deviations have transformed an imperial language into a language of the country. It also examines in detail the way these changes have been wrought and how they have accorded a distinct flavour to the language.

Unit Four looks at Indian English (IE) as a non-native variety of English, having developed in very un-English situations, fulfilling very un-English functions. So how does this un-English English function in the global context? Is IE intelligible and acceptable to native speakers of English? What opinion do people have about Indian English literature? These and similar issues have been discussed in this unit. IE is intelligible to global audience as long as it confirms to some standards.

Unit Five looks at the same issues, but in the context of other non- native Englishes like Dialects and Creoles, Nativised Varieties and Anglo Hybrids, and English / Fractured English.

The last unit of the Block **Unit Six** explores the whys and hows of the introduction of English in India by the British, why English was retained in India even after Independence and what position the language occupies in present day India in fields of education, law, administration, judicial set-up and journalism etc. Though Hindi is the official language English continues to rule the roost.

UNIT 1 EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Nativisation of English in Postcolonial India
1.3 Goals of Teaching English in Contemporary India
1.4 The Pedagogy of Teaching English and Its Fallouts
1.5 Towards an Alternative System of Language Pedagogy
1.6 The Pedagogy of *Indianness* in Indian English
1.7 The Future Of English Pedagogy in India
1.8 Let Us Sum Up
1.9 Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to locate English as language and literature within a multi lingual culture/ country like ours. It also focuses on the need to create a space for the interaction of a variety of discourses in not only English and other disciplines but also between English and the vast literary tradition that is available to us. Additionally, the unit traces some of the issues related to the discipline of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the future of English Studies in India.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In multilingual societies, different languages perform functions different from one another. In such a scenario, the domestic language is not the same as the languages of profession, entertainment, pedagogy or commerce. It is common that children in these societies acquire more than one language. Thus at the beginning of school education, an Indian child is already proficient in two or three languages. This means that the learning of English in the school as the 'first' or the 'second' language actually indicates that the child is probably learning a 'third' or 'fourth' language. Moreover, in a country like India a child is exposed to a variety of literary traditions. It should, thus, be possible to cultivate a meta-linguistic awareness among children through a comparative study of languages in their repertoire.

Sadly, education in India has not taken advantage of the aforementioned rich co-existence of languages in a classroom and has given an undue stress on the learning and acquisition of English. We could have come a long way towards translating the multilingual and multicultural Indian ethos into concrete classroom transactions if we helped our children to reappraise and respect each other's language and culture. Whether in terms of geography or climate, moral values or social ethos, flora or fauna or the network of human relationships, an Indian child remains alien to British literature. Not only that, an Indian child gets deeply frustrated when s/he realises that studying English over a long period of time has not equipped her/him to grasp successfully the day-to-day transactions demanding the use of English. The future of English in India is, therefore, largely dependent on relocating English in the multilingual context of India, that is, children should have a functional knowledge of the language as well as the linguistic competence to read English (not just British) texts (not just literary texts) independently. We need to create a space for an authentic interaction between a variety of discourses in English and other disciplines. Any language teaching project, first, second, or foreign, including ELT in India, should

not end up just being an exercise in enhancing linguistic or communicative proficiency. Mere tolerance of different languages in a society perpetuates the status quo where the languages of the powerful and the elite remain associated with domains of prestige and social mobility whereas languages of learners survive only on the margins.

We have for a long time associated proficiency in English with acquisition of knowledge and solution of our problems. It is now becoming increasingly clear that this emphasis on English not only obstructs development but also breeds unhealthy negative stereotypes among learners about their own languages. For over a period of hundred years teaching of English in India meant the paraphrasing and interpretation of 'respected' canonised English texts, in particular the Elizabethan, Restoration, Augustan, and Romantic texts, involving largely a reproduction of *accepted* critical opinions. Most classroom lectures and examination scripts are often bad reproductions of easily available *kunjis* (guide-books). The ability to note with discrimination day-to-day social encounters demanding the use of English and the ability to read texts critically in a socio-historical context is rarely witnessed in pedagogical practice.

However, recent developments in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and literature teaching have brought in a number of much needed changes. While the development of the communicative approach or suggestology, monitor model or the total physical response approach, procedural syllabus or task-based curriculum, has brought the learner at the centre of language pedagogy. The advent of theoretical models such as *postcolonialism*, *nativism* and diasporic writing has shifted the attention from canonical texts in English literature to more indigenous varieties of writing in English. Moreover, these approaches and models have questioned the hegemonic presence of English in the curriculum and subverted its importance by focussing on the nexus of power and knowledge that exists in the learning and teaching of English in India. They have largely contributed to the process of nativisation of English in India and are no more dependent on the structures of hierarchy that English was meant to create in accordance with the **Macaulayan** model. However, a great many changes need to be incorporated to fully revamp the existing myth that learning of English is synonymous with prestige and social power. From here, we can take a step towards the process of evolution of English in India in the post- independent era. How did English come to be adopted and adapted by the 'natives'? The next section will analyse this aspect.

1.2 NATIVISATION OF ENGLISH IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

English that became the language of the elite during the colonial times retained its supremacy after independence in India. Despite efforts by early politicians, and most notably by **Mahatma Gandhi**, the Indian languages could not compete with the imperial and coercive nature of English. Thus, English became the language of the elite and therefore of prestige and power. It must be remembered that the English that we had inherited from our colonial masters is not the English that we see spreading creatively all over the sub-continent today. It was soon realised that English had to be reformulated according to the needs of the Indian ethos and had to develop an idiom that could satisfactorily express the emotions and feelings of a large section of the population in times of nation building and development. **Raja Rao**'s famous statement (in the foreword to *Kanthapura*) captures the dilemma of English India:

> *One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word*

'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as a part of us.

With the advent of independence, it was keenly felt that our relationship to English should be redefined. The goals and priorities that were to be set in education had to take into consideration the large body of indigenous languages that existed and that had been seriously neglected during the colonial times. The fact, however, is that English education in postcolonial India has been a continuation of the colonial experience and did not take into account the nativisation process that **Raja Rao** envisaged. English is still the language that examines students in universities, conducts through its use foreign affairs, and transacts business with the world outside. The numbers waiting to learn English are increasing everyday.

Units III and IV of Block I have already dealt with the **Radhakrishnan Commission** and the other Commissions that followed. Suffice it to say that the first education commission set up in free India was the **University Education Commission**, called the **Radhakrishnan Commission** (after its chairman, **Dr S Radhakrishnan**). The Commission submitted its report in 1949. It was the tertiary level that received attention first. The **Committee on Primary Education** was appointed only in 1951 and the **Secondary Education Commission**, a year later. It is again an interesting fact that given the composition of the first Education Commission which consisted mostly of educationists and liberal intellectuals, it should have conceived the role of university education in broad, universalistic terms rather than in relation to the immediate social, political and linguistic needs. In other words, the Commission did not go into details, contenting itself with general, often, vague formulations like the awakening of the innate ability of men and women 'to live the life of the soul by developing wisdom.' The **Secondary Education Commission** (1952-53) was perhaps the first official body to concern itself with methods of teaching, materials for teaching and the evaluation system. This is what the Commission had to say about the educational method:

Any method, good or bad, links up the teacher and his pupils into an organic relationship with constant mutual interaction....Every teacher and educationist knows that even the best curriculum and the most perfect syllabus remain dead unless quickened into life by the right methods of teaching and the right kind of teachers.

The Commission insisted that 'the emphasis in teaching should shift from verbalism and memorisation to learning through purposeful, concrete and realistic situations and for this purpose the principles of 'Activity Method' and 'Project Method' should be assimilated in school practice.' It is hard to understand why many of the recommendations of this Commission have not been fully implemented.

We notice that things started moving after a while. Language planning in India arrived at a crucial stage during the sixties. After more than a decade of independence, the relative status of English, Hindi and the other regional languages (both as official languages and media of instruction) was still not clear in the minds of the people or even in official documents. The anti-Hindi riots in the South (especially in Tamil Nadu) as well as the 'Angrezi-hatao' campaign in some parts of the North lent urgency to the problem. The conference of the chief ministers in 1961 recommended the use of the three-language formula in all schools. This meant:

1. The regional language, or the mother tongue when different from the regional language;
2. Hindi, or any other Indian language in Hindi-speaking areas; and
3. English, or any other European language.

The intentions behind the three-language formula were noble but unrealistic since they did not take into consideration the lack of motivation among students in the Hindi-speaking areas to learn any other Indian language, and perhaps consequently, the continuing political opposition in Tamil Nadu to the introduction of Hindi. No wonder that the three-language formula was not uniformly adopted, at any rate not in the areas where it mattered most.

The **Kothari Commission** (1966) reiterated the three-language formula. From the 1960s to the 1990s English language teaching received a new impetus from the various establishments of English Language Teaching Institutes (first in Allahabad in 1954 and then in Hyderabad in 1958, the latter being called the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages) all over the country in collaboration with the British Council.

The next landmark in the history of English education in postcolonial India was the **National Policy on Education** and the **Programme of Action** (1986). However, this policy was not very different from the recommendations of the **Kothari Commission** and emphasised that 'a major effort will be directed towards the transformation of teaching methods' and that 'urgent steps will be taken to protect the system from degradation.' The **Acharya Ramamurti Commission** appointed to review the 1986 **National Policy on Education** and the **Programme of Action** submitted its report in 1990. The Report must be commended for making, for the first time, a frank analysis of the problems in the implementation of the three-language formula. It observed, however, that whatever the difficulties or the unevenness in the implementation, the three-language formula had 'stood the test of time' and that it was 'not desirable or prudent to reopen it.'

This brief survey of the development of English teaching and learning in postcolonial India provides us with a paradigm shift from learning the language for its 'humanistic' values to learning the language for special purposes. The English that **Macaulay** wanted to teach with its imperialistic agenda has given way to a more native curriculum and methods of teaching. However, the stranglehold of English on contemporary education is still quite strong and we, as thinking citizens, must undertake a searching scrutiny of the crisis in contemporary English education in India caused by lapses in our cultural memory. Let us now try and examine the aims that informed the teaching of English in contemporary India.

1.3 GOALS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

What are the long-term goals of learning English in the modern world? It would be better if in answering this question, we define the objectives on the basis of what the learners themselves so obviously want. We should perhaps start with the question, why is English education becoming a large-scale industry in postcolonial India? Why is there such an increase in English-medium schools? Why do students opt for English, even in states where it has been made optional? Why is there such a big market for institutes of spoken English with their crash courses and 'English Made Easy' programmes?

Macaulay might have thought that the knowledge of English was essential for civilising Indians along with their earlier generations that might have thought English was necessary for the shaping of individual character or the development of 'humanistic' values. But the present generation is convinced that English is needed for mobility and social and economic advancement. English is the language of opportunities because it takes one outside one's own community to places (within or outside India) where more opportunities are available for professional and economic

growth. That is why there is a great demand for English; it has a lot of 'surrender value' and learners rightly want to cash in on it.

Our students have realised that English not only gives us 'information advantage'—it provides information in every conceivable branch of knowledge—but also the power to understand our social environment. In other words, English is the language, not of Westernisation, but of modernisation. This is why English is the language of our agricultural universities though not of our agriculture. Students of English in India have realised that English is necessary if they have to talk about their identity, their languages, their literature, their science and technology, their society and economy and polity, their values and culture so that the world outside will get to know what they are. We need English to project and interpret India to the rest of the world. For example, we have to talk about **Panini, Bhartrhari, Patanjali, Nagarjuna** and **Sankara** in English so that the world may know that there is a rich tradition of language philosophy in India that can engage the latest in modern Western thought. We must be in a position to talk about our writers, both ancient and modern, or our filmmakers or about our achievements in the industrial and economic aspects.

The 'empire' should talk and write back in English. We need, moreover, to translate; there is a great market for competent translations and adaptations of Indian books, classical as well as contemporary, in English. Only then can a meaningful interaction take place between English and the variety of Indian languages; only then can English be turned into an instrument of subversion. It would not remain anymore the vehicle of transmitting knowledge; it would become a medium for transforming knowledge. Let us examine the pedagogy of teaching English and its fallouts in the next section.

1.4 THE PEDAGOGY OF TEACHING ENGLISH AND ITS FALLOUTS

The initial obsession with language correctness and a great amount of stress on classical texts has marred the project of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India during its inception. Till recently, all ELT materials had a kind of Englishness about them. Anthologies of English poets, playwrights and short story writers were especially prepared to introduce Indian learners to the 'best literature and culture' in the world. A play by **Shakespeare,** poems of **Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats** and **Eliot** and novels of **Fielding, Meredith, Lawrence** and **Hardy** would constitute essential components of any undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum. The focus of teaching was always on reading, comprehension and on a critical appreciation of the work of these authors that more often than not, ended up just being the reproduction on the part of students the ideas of these authors in the final examinations. However, the disdain that one witnesses for the native languages of learners today in most approaches to language teaching was not present in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in India. Translation was very often used as a reliable tool of language teaching. Most of the second language teaching materials across the world were bilingual in nature and could often be used to learn either language. What the learner already knew was at least implicitly seen as an asset. In addition to translation, grammar, memorisation of paradigms and vocabulary building constituted the backbone of language teaching.

In post-independent India two parallel traditions of language teaching established themselves. The English medium convents and public schools generally located in an urban area or metropolitan centres (or hill stations) catered to the needs of the elite and the powerful. English language teaching in these schools focussed on the spoken skill than on reading or writing. The British accent of these children set them apart as a class fit to be recruited in the army and the administrative services. In the ordinary vernacular schools that catered to the needs of the masses, English was often not the

medium of instruction and was taught only as a subject. The facilities available were minimal. The focus in English language teaching was on reading, comprehension, grammar, translation and précis writing.

Before the advent of such methods as the 'Direct Method' or the 'Audio-lingual Approach', the English language teaching scene in ordinary government schools of India generally looked as follows: primary education was through the mother tongue or the dominant regional language; English was introduced in Class V as a subject and it became the medium of instruction for science, mathematics, and social sciences in the higher classes. English was taught largely through the mother tongue to begin with and gradually one moved to the reading of poems, short stories, and one-act plays by well-known British authors. Translation, grammar and vocabulary were extremely important components of the programme. Those who excelled in English were supposed to be good at essay and précis writing. The scene was of course quite different in convents and public schools where children were immersed in English language and culture.

In borrowing language-teaching methods from the West, we have often borrowed the jargon and the slogans rather than the spirit. Have we carefully examined the issue whether methods evolved predominantly in monolingual and mono-cultural societies will be suitable for the complex and fluid multilingual situation in India? The 'Direct' and the 'Audio-lingual' approaches in fact make very heavy demands on the teachers and also require rich audio-visual support. For the English language teachers in India, it simply meant rejecting the languages of their students.

In the past few decades, however, the learner has come to the centre of most methods of language teaching. These approaches give importance to the creativity of output, active learner involvement in interesting tasks and situations, authenticity of materials and the facilitating role of the teacher. In India, these approaches have arrived recently and are being carried out on an experimental basis. In this context, it must be kept in mind that an uncritical acceptance of Western procedures and treating English as 'an international language' to acquire Western knowledge is fraught with dangers of its own and must be examined within the parameters of multiculturalism and multilingualism in India. The next section will examine an alternative system of language pedagogy.

1.5 TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM OF LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

We need to evolve alternative materials that will be in tune with the new perceptions, changing realities and postcolonial objectives. A conventional English textbook, for example, may contain a number of essays by English essayists, a few short stories and a one-act play. However, the students may not need to study these pieces at all since the entire testing system is based on the pattern of a catechistic question-answer that does not evaluate the reading abilities or language acquisition of the learner, but a simple correspondence between the asked and the answered. Thus, all that a student requires to do is to memorise the answers that his/ her teachers dictate to him/ her in the class and reproduce them in the examinations without ever really reading a single line of the pieces included in his/ her syllabus! One of the major reasons why this occurs is the treatment of the students as passive listeners.

The conventional prose and poetry anthologies necessarily elevate the teacher to the position of a 'performer' and reduce the student to the level of a 'receiver'. The student is expected to receive the right answers, memorise and reproduce them, using whatever method s/he can adopt during the examination. The system promotes neither critical thinking nor even an attempt at original writing on the part of the

students. A non-conventional approach has to look beyond the classroom, beyond the textbook, and beyond the examination based on 'prescribed books'. Ideally, only skills and abilities should be specified without the prescription of any texts. Unfortunately, teachers and students are now so used to the idea of the prescribed textbook that they would not know what to do in a class without a textbook. Let us realise that even a conventional textbook can be used to elicit thought-provoking responses. The text can always be used as a sort of pretext to probe the imaginations of the learners. The supplementary activities possible with a text can be multifarious and infinite. The activities should be designed in a manner that they encourage the students to read intelligently, respond critically and write creatively to use the language in situations other than the ones in which it was learned.

For instance, in an experiment conducted in an autonomous college, the students were asked to respond to a modern fable by **James Thurber**, *The Little Girl and the Wolf* where, at the end of the short text, the writer states the moral: "It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be." The students were asked to compare the old story, *Little Red Riding Hood* with the modern story and to answer some critical questions by way of responding and expanding on the text. One of the questions was:

Can you visualise how a modern woman would have acted in the following situations?

a) When Draupadi was about to be dishonoured by Dushasana.
b) When Rama asks Sita to enter the fire.

Such awareness -raising questions not only help the students relate an 'alien' text to their immediate surroundings but also help them understand a text in the context of its wider implications and situatedness.

The pattern of evaluation should, too, serve these objectives of expansion and creation and not reduction and reproduction. If the students can interpret intelligently what they read, respond critically and write creatively, testing their memory becomes unnecessary. English education would then truly be meaningful and inventive to serve the purposes of the learners.

1.6 THE PEDAGOGY OF *INDIANNESS* IN INDIAN ENGLISH

What makes Indian English 'Indian'? Though later units would specifically deal with this problem as regards the sound patterns, word formations, sentence patterns and grammar, and intelligibility of Indian English, here we would have a brief overview of the issues concerning the Indianness of English.

How can a language that was forcibly imposed upon a nation by an imperialist power claim to be a native language? Well, there are two ways of looking at the problem. **Firstly**, if we consider English to be a Western language then obviously we would have to define what we mean by 'western-ness'. That English was the language of imperial rule cannot be denied, but it would be wise to remember that it was also the language of our nationalist struggle for independence. It was the language that united the South with the North. It was also the language through which the nationalist leaders communicated with one another as well as the imperial rulers. In a way, the function of English that was originally meant to create a slave race out of us was subverted by our *appropriation* of it. The language was moulded and suited to serve our purposes in a way that the colonial rulers could not even imagine.

It must however be remembered that English has also played a largely divisive role in our country by creating a distinct separation between the English-knowing class and

UNIT 2 NATIVISATION OF ENGLISH IN POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA: FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Domains of English in India
  2.2.1 The Domain of Family
  2.2.2 The Domain of Friendship
  2.2.3 The Domain of Neighbourhood
  2.2.4 The Domain of Transactions
  2.2.5 The Domain of Education
  2.2.6 The Domain of Government
2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors in Language Choice
  2.3.1 Degree of Formality
  2.3.2 Topic of Discourse
  2.3.3 Linguistic Region
  2.3.4 Professional Status
  2.3.5 Education
  2.3.6 Reading Habits
  2.3.7 English Use in the Family
2.4 Introduction to Functions of English in India
  2.4.1 Social Function
  2.4.2 Educational And Professional Functions
2.5 Functions As A Link Language
2.6 Code-Mixing in the Functional Use of Language
2.7 Let Us Sum Up
2.8 Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will try and examine the Indianisation of English following independence. It will attempt to analyse the role played by English as a language and look at the function of English in post-independence India. It takes up particularly the function of spoken English and does not deal with written English.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of Indian English (IE) in the past fifty years has produced a large amount of critical literature with a view to explaining its phonology, syntax, lexis and style. A large amount of work in the area of applied linguistics has been done on the use of Indian English in various socio-linguistic areas. Surprisingly, not much work has been done on the functional aspect of IE—who speaks English, for what purpose and to whom—although a need to study this aspect has been felt. In order to present a profile of IE an empirical investigation into its functions has to be made. One has to understand with reference to educated bilinguals what the domains in which English tends to be used are and what other domains tend to use the mother tongue.

It is a very common phenomenon in India to have educated speakers switch from one *code* to another. An educated Indian English bilingual is generally proficient in both

the languages—the mother tongue and English. S/He finds it quite easy and often convenient to indulge in ***code switching***. Any investigation in the functions of English in India has to keep in mind this significant factor. In this regard, certain generalisations can be made at the beginning. Firstly, in the case of an IE speaker, a pattern can be seen in his/her use of languages. Only one of the theoretically co-available languages would be chosen for a particular social situation. This implies that a broad allocation of societal functions to English and other languages generally exist. Secondly, the IE speakers are generally aware of such functional allocations and do not use them arbitrarily. In other words, an IE speaker would instinctively know the appropriateness of the use of a certain language for a certain social function. Thirdly, English is generally used for more formal situations and higher domains and the mother tongue with certain informal situations and 'lower' domains. Finally, educated IE bilinguals show a positive attitude towards the use of English.

The use of English by an Indian bilingual may often vary due to certain other socio-cultural factors. A wide difference may exist due to the economic background of the speaker, the age-group s/he belongs to, the professions that one is in, the reading habits that one has developed, the status of the mother tongue in the culture of the IE speaker, internal migration etc. These factors often determine the functional aspect of the English spoken and govern its spread. Generally speaking, the speech repertoire of an educated Indian comprises two languages—English and the mother tongue. However, there are several educated Indian men and women who know more than two languages. The number of languages that an individual would know depends on several factors such as, place of birth, work and education, mobility and personal interest. Moreover, an IE speaker may use more than one language from a cline of formality to that of a non-formality according to the changing situation. Thus within a certain speech event, an IE speaker may consistently change his/her language as the functional demands of the situation changes.

It would be vital to remember that the functions of English in India would differ significantly from its functions in, say, England or America. The obvious reason is that while English in India is only one of the many languages available to educated speakers here, in countries like Great Britain and America it is the *only* viable language of communication. Thus, while Indian speakers of English learn the language primarily as a second language, for British or American speakers, English is the mother tongue. Moreover, a multilingual country often offers a larger variety of language functions than a monolingual country. Since in a monolingual country, states of formality or informality would have to be built in within the same language, in a multilingual country, the formal and informal functions of language may be distributed between different *languages*. Finally, since English has been sufficiently nativised in the Indian context, the functions of English in India often would not tally with the functions of English in a mother tongue situation. The next section shall deal with the various domains of English in India.

2.2 DOMAINS Of ENGLISH IN INDIA

When we refer to the functions of English in post-independent India, we are primarily dealing with English as a spoken language. The functions of written English would perhaps be in sharp contrast with that of spoken English. In spite of attempts of successive central governments to impose Hindi as the language of the officialdom, most bureaucratic and administrative work in India is still carried out in English since it is still the most viable *lingua franca* available to Indians. Moreover, more formal the situation the more preferred language is the English language, especially in the drafting of official letters and semi-official correspondence. Moreover, written English is supposed to carry a bit more *weight*, a greater amount of prestige than an Indian language, especially in the affairs of the state.

2.3 SOCIO- CULTURAL FACTORS IN LANGUAGE CHOICE

In the previous section we have seen the domains in which English is generally used in India. In this pattern, only one of the co-available languages in the bilingual's speech repertoires tends to be used in a particular situation type. We can thus say that there exists an awareness of functional allocation of the 'subjects' languages to situation types or domains. In other words, the functions of the mother tongue and English are clearly demarcated particularly in the domains of education, government and employment that is dominated by English. In terms of societal functions, we can term English as the *high* language and the mother tongue as the *low* language. This phenomenon in socio-linguistics, the presence of two standards in, a 'high' language used for formal occasions and in written communication, and a 'low' language used in colloquial conversation, is termed as *diglossia*. In other words, we can say that English exists in a *diglossic* relation with the mother tongue in these domains of language use. However, what are the defining factors that determine the choice of a certain language in a certain situation. This section would look into those factors that formulate the use of a certain language in a given situation in a given domain.

2.3.1 Degree of Formality

We would all agree that the domain of the government is the most formal domain that we have investigated and the domain of family the least formal amongst them. We have also seen that the use of English increases with the level of formality– in the domain of the government, English tends to be used extensively, while at the level of the family, it is restricted only for certain purposes. Broadly speaking then, English can be considered as the language of formality and the mother tongue the language of informality. Thus, the choice of language in a particular situation can be said to depend on the formality or informality of the situation.

2.3.2 Topic of Discourse

Another factor that seems to govern language choice in India is the topic of discourse. Certain topics tend to elicit a certain kind of language while some other topics seem to combine with another language. Thus, topics like children's educational performance at school/college, official topics related to work/profession, topics related to science, technology, medicine, space travel and politics, would generally use English, while more informal topics related to family affairs or discussing one's health or gossiping with the neighbour would use the local language.

2.3.3 Linguistic Region

Since India is a multilingual nation divided into several linguistic regions, the choice of a certain language also depends on the bilingual's placement in his/her own linguistic region or outside it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that since the local language in India enjoys a certain amount of prestige and also demands a kind of loyalty, an IE speaker within his/her own linguistic region would tend to use more of his/her mother tongue even in domains of formality. However, since internal migration is quite a common factor in India, it is quite common to find a bilingual speaker outside his linguistic region. In such instances, English tends to be used more according to the cline of formality already discussed.

2.3.4 Professional Status

One of the major factors determining language choice in India is the professional status of the IE speaker since it is also a determinant of the social status of a person.

The use of English in India seems to be directly related to the professional status of an IE bilingual. Higher the social ladder, more the English. Another reason for this phenomenon may be the kind of social contacts that such speakers make. Since they are exposed to a varied range of mother tongue speakers and are more often open to international fora, the language they use more is English since it serves as a link language. Another reason may be the extensive use of English in the written medium in professional organisations that determines their language choice.

2.3.5 Education

Educational attainment and the medium of education play an important role in the use of English in a certain situation. An IE bilingual is wont to use more English if s/he has undergone education through the medium of English, than a person who has attained education through the medium of mother tongue. However the bilingual's use of English is also dependent on other variables like English in the family, the nature of work and the medium of education. A large number of IE bilinguals are equally adept in the use of English as well as the mother tongue. It is also generally noted that a bilingual who has undergone training in English would probably be unsure in the handling of the mother tongue in literary and formal situations that demand the use of mother tongue and *vice versa.*

2.3.6 Reading Habits

Although reading is a receptive skill, it reflects the individual's preference for a language. As reading habits are directly related to the use of a language, it may be safe to say that one's preference for a certain language of reading reflects one's preference for using the language. Where the reading habits do not have a direct correlation with the use of a language, this can be generally taken to be true of most of the IE bilinguals.

2.3.7 English-Use in the Family

The use of English in the family is also a determining factor in a bilingual's language choice. Families that are largely cosmopolitan in nature tend to use more English than traditional or conservative families. Moreover, in families where the parents tend to use more English, the children too prefer English to their mother tongue. It is also true that in families where the spread of English education is quite high, the preferred choice of language is English.

We can thus safely posit the following points about the preference of English in India among the IE bilinguals:

- English is associated with formality and the mother tongue with informality and intimacy
- Certain topics such as science and technology, educational and professional matters tend to be discussed in English
- Geographical mobility influences language choice
- Bilinguals tend to use more English when they move out of their linguistic region
- There is a correlation between high status jobs and use of English
- The children of English-knowing parents tend to use more English than whose parents did not know English
- Reading habit is an important determinant of language choice.

All said and done, English as a language serves several important functions in India, some of these functions will be examined in some detail in the next section.

2.4 INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Although certain domains favour the use of English and certain others the use of the mother tongue, language choice is socially determined. What language (or variety) will be selected in a particular situation depends on where the speaker is, what the speaker's and the addressee's social, cultural and educational background is; whether the relationship between the addresser and the addressee is formal, informal or intimate; and above all, what social norms of appropriate linguistic behaviour the interlocutors share. Another important factor that determines language choice is the speaker's attitude towards the language that s/he knows. The functional aspect of English has long been under review and the functions allocated to the language have changed over a period of four hundred years. While no one can deny the importance of English in our national struggle for independence, since Independence the attitude towards the language has been ambiguous and often ambivalent. In fact, there exists in India a strange love-hate relation towards the language. While it has slowly gained importance globally as the language of international trade and commerce and more importantly as the language of knowledge, there has been an urge to learn the language and a certain air of inevitability about acquiring it. On the other hand, there is also a strong reaction from the intelligentsia about the downgrading of Indian languages and their slow disappearance against the inexorable onslaught of English. There is an emerging consensus that English in India is now no more a question of choice but a question of necessity. *This is primarily due to the following functional roles that English plays in India:*

- It acts as the link language between the different states, especially between the states in the north and those in the south. Thus, it has an important role to play in national unity
- Since the rapid influx of computers and information technology and the subsequent globalisation of English, it has become a language of information and knowledge
- For quite a long time English has played the role of the intellectual language in India and is still looked upon as one

There is a strong current of thinking that English has been sufficiently nativised to be claimed as one of the Indian languages. The cline of bilingualism that exists in the country can range from Butler English to Educated English. Thus, it is not true that the language is restricted to only a chosen few and has created a wide platform in the country.

English is not only the link language in India but also of communication globally and therefore has a major functional role to play. It has also long been the language of technical and technological advancement and thus is required to keep pace with the ever-changing nature of today's world. Due to a lack of political consensus, English has long played the role of communicator between different political spectra. It has also long been the preferred medium of instruction in higher education and research areas. Moreover, Indian writers in English have charted a rich course in terms of creative writing in a language that was primarily the legacy of the British but was soon indigenised enough to suit our needs. We can thus say that the functional aspects of English may be divided into various social, political, economic, technological, educational, and creative domains. In the next section we shall cast a brief glance over each domain and examine the functional role that it plays in that domain.

2.4.1 Social Functions

English plays a major role in inter-subjective communication in urban as well as semi-urban areas. We have seen that in the domain of the family, neighbourhood and

other social spheres, IE bilinguals use English quite extensively. Moreover, it is often the preferred language of communication in multicultural and multilingual gatherings. It forms a common bond between speakers of different languages. Such interaction is limited to a certain class of people belonging to a certain social position in a certain geographical area. A sort of *pidgin* English is gradually developing in the sub-culture of the cities and even semi-urban areas. This English primarily serves the purpose of communication between semi-literate or illiterate speakers and literate or English-educated bilinguals who may not possess the local language. We will look at such instances of **code mixing** in one of the later units.

Another aspect of the use of English for social purposes is the ready attention and respectability that it confers upon the speaker. English is considered to be the language of social importance in a number of circles especially in those social situations that demand a language that is essentially the language of the elite. Thus, the social function of English is essentially a class oriented one and is to be found within a limited sphere of activity.

2.4.2 Educational And Professional Functions

One of the major reasons for the spread of English in the Indian subcontinent has been the insistence on English education all over the country. The famous **Macaulayan Minute of 1835** that envisioned the creation of a class that could effectively act as a buffer between the ruling class and the subjects was based on the premise that this buffer class would be English-educated and therefore a touch removed from the non-Anglicised natives. It is for this purpose that various colleges, schools and universities were set up in India to boost the designs of imperialism in the country. However, India has come a long way from the **Macaulayan** era and has nativised a language that was primarily an imposition. Moreover, this nativisation has also been reflected in the educational institutions in most of the states that follows a three-language formula. Along with the learning of the regional language and Hindi, English too is learnt as one of the languages. Moreover, English has been introduced in most of the states at the primary level since the importance of English is felt not as a language to serve the interests of the ruling-class, but as a language that has global implications. In most of the Indian schools, English serves the function of second language.

There is still a wide chasm between the introduction of English at the primary level and the training accorded to teachers for ably handling the language. Thus, in rural and semi-urban areas the lack of a proper pedagogy as well as certain apathy towards the language has led to a severe dearth of English-users at the secondary or the tertiary level. While the theoretical function of English is to open a window to the world, the way it is taught in most of the schools has led to it being viewed as a language of complexity and difficulty. In order to address this problem, serious steps should be taken on the part of the government as well as individuals to improve the pedagogic practices of the curricula. After all, English is no more a luxury, but a necessity in today's globalised and privatised world.

The international language of reading today has become English. From computers to science, from space to household products, English is everywhere. This ubiquitous nature of English has to be grasped since information or knowledge is no more bound by space or time, but is increasing in quantum leaps. In order to process this amount of knowledge that is most of the time freely available (for example, on the internet), one needs to have access to the language. This is also a major function that English plays in India.

A large number of professions that are linked with the educational set up demand the use of English at the secondary and the tertiary levels. High prestige professions such as doctor, lawyer, university teacher, and certain others not considered to be high on the prestige scale such as postman, policeman, factory worker, farmer etc require English at all levels. It must be remembered that the knowledge of English in these

professions is useful and often more paying. Though sometimes the usefulness of English in certain professions is prerequisite in certain others such is not the case. But it is an inevitable fact that English is required for success in almost all spheres of Indian life keeping in view the recent trends of globalisation and communication explosion. Moreover due to the rapid increase in the fields of specialisation, English has become one of the most important professional and technically viable languages of the world.

2.5 FUNCTIONS AS A LINK LANGUAGE

One of the major 'language issue' in India has been the debate over inter-state communication. Two languages—English and Hindi—are generally discussed in this connection. Strong opinions are held for and against. Those who support Hindi say that Hindi should be the only language for establishing link between the various states of the Union of India and also between India and foreign nations. The argument is that since the European countries too have not adopted English (the French communicate in French, the Russians in Russian), Hindi should be made the link language. The problem with this argument is that while the European nations are monolingual countries where only one standard language is spoken, India is a multilingual country where various languages vie with each other. Thus, use of Hindi might seem to be a sort of imposition by users of other languages.

It is primarily due to this debate that English was accepted as the 'associate official language' in the Constitution of India. English plays an important role, especially in administrative and bureaucratic spheres, as the official language that establishes a bridge between various intra-state and inter-state departments. Moreover, since English has been sufficiently nativised we might as well claim it as our own language and make use of it in international communication. After all, we do not speak as the Americans or the Britishers do. We have our own indigenous variety of English and there is no reason why it should not be used in national as well as international fora. Thus, one of the major functions—one that serves a nationalistic as well as internationalist purpose—is the use of English as a link language.

2.6 CODE – MIXING IN THE FUNCTIONAL USE OF LANGUAGE

Our discussion of the functional aspect of language would not be complete without the widespread use of ***Code Mixing*** and ***Code Switching*** that is found in the use of English among the IE bilinguals in this country. ***Code Switching*** entails the ability to switch from code A to code B and is determined by the function, the situation and the participants. In other words, it refers to categorisation of one's verbal repertoire in terms of functions and roles. Code-mixing on the other hand, entails transferring linguistic units from one code into another. Such a transfer (mixing) results in developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction. It may so happen that ***Code Switching*** may lead to code-mixed varieties. A multilingual or a multidialectal person is generally able to associate a function and an effect with various types of language or dialect mixes. The code-mixed varieties thus, provide socio-linguistic indicators of various types. For example:

> *Tum nahin janti, he is Chairman Mr. Mehta's best friend. Yahan do char din ko aye hain. Maine socha, I should not miss the opportunity.*
> *bhej do. Another fifteen minutes and I am off to the station. Lautne tak kaphi raat ho sakti hai. Khane ke liye wait mat karna.*
>
> [Taken from **Lalla, Y K** and **Srikrishna**, eds. 1975, *Hindi Lekhikaon ki Shreshth Kahaniyan* (Best Short Stories of Women in Hindi), Delhi]

In both the examples cited above, one code has been mixed with another—in this case, Hindi with English—indicative of a certain social class and a certain level of education. This is what can be termed the *westernisation* of India.

Both these devices are extensively used as communicative strategies with various motivations. In discourse, ***Code Switching*** may be used as a device to mark, among other things, an identity, an aside, or a specific role. ***Code Switching*** may be used to reveal or conceal a region, class and religion. In conversation it is used to make an aside, or to indicate non-membership of a person in the inner group. Often both devices are used with a clear effect in mind: for example, in Bengali, a professional discussion may be marked by ***Code Mixing*** with English, and a switch from that may indicate change of context. One might mention four functions, among others, in which ***Code Mixing*** is used as a communicative strategy.

The first function being its use for register identification before we further our discussion. For example, it is quite common in administrative discussions to have English words interspersed with the regional language since it definitely locates the discussion within a specific context. Second, ***Code Mixing*** provides formal clues for style identification. This is a major feature of mixing in India since it is quite common to have *Sanskritised*, *Persianised* or *Englishised* versions depending on the context. Third, it is used as a device for elucidation and interpretation. For example, instead of the more Sanskritised *apekshit ghanatva*, it is quite common in Science classrooms to mix it with *relative density*. The fourth function, is the role of ***Code Mixing*** for *neutralisation* with a view to using lexical items which are attitudinally and contextually neutral. In other words, they do not provide contextual clues and thus language is used to conceal various types of identities. Since, many words in English carry a neutral connotation, they are preferred to Indian words that may indicate regional, caste or religious identities.

Code Mixing with English is pan-South Asian. In attitudinal and functional terms it ranks highest and cuts across language boundaries, religious boundaries and caste boundaries. It is a marker of modernisation, socio-economic position, and membership of an elite group. In stylistic terms, it marks a deliberate style. The widest register range is ***Code Mixing*** with English. It continues to be used in those contexts where one would like to demonstrate authority, power, and identity with the establishment. The phenomenon of ***Code Mixing*** and, in a lesser way, ***Code Switching*** is slowly gaining the upper hand in terms of acceptance in social and cultural circles. This indicates the pliable nature of Indian culture that admits all counter-currents and is able to nativise it by giving it a new form. It is perhaps this language of code-mixing that would remain as the language of the future where all languages co-exist with English and English is accepted as one of the many languages in the subcontinent not accorded a special status or prestige.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

As regards the functions of English in the Indian subcontinent, a few generalisations can be made on the basis of what we have discussed till now:

> *A broad allocation of societal functions to English and other languages constituting the 'IE bilinguals' verbal repertoires exist;*
> *The IE bilingual is aware of this functional allocation and is able to report it;*
> *English is used with formal situations and higher domains of social control, and the mother tongue with informal situations and lower domains;*
> *The IE bilinguals have a positive attitude towards English and an awareness of its uses;*
> *The IE bilingual is often involved in* ***Code Switching*** *and* ***Code Mixing*** *as a strategy of exclusion and power in situations of social control.*

Moreover, in addition to the degree of formality-informality, certain other variables, namely, topic, linguistic region, internal mobility, professional status, educational background, reading habit, and the background of the family *vis-à-vis* English condition the IE bilingual's language choice. The choice of English is also related to high status jobs: the higher the status of an educated bilingual the greater the amount of English she/he uses. More highly educated tend to use more English. The use of English tends to be frequent in case of those IE bilinguals who were educated through the medium of English. Reading habits and language choice are also co-related. Certain topics such as scientific, technical, educational and professional matters tend to be discussed more in English than in any other language. All this indicates that the uses and functions of English in India are determined by a large number of 'extra-linguistic' factors.

Finally, English is often used as a means of social control and as a matter of prestige. However, the elements of code-switching and code-mixing that has found a wide acceptability in the metropolitan centres also has helped to nativise the language in India. Nowadays, it is widely used over radio stations, Television ads, serials and films representing a certain kind of social class. Thus, we can safely say that it is perhaps this code-mixed language that would gain ascendancy in the IE bilingual's language repertoire and, who knows, would probably become a language in its own right!

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. What role does "prestige' play in the choice of English as a means of communication?
2. Comment on the nature of relationship between English and an Indian language.

UNIT 3 NATIVISATION OF ENGLISH DISCOURSE: SYNTAX, MORPHOLOGY, PHONOLOGY

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Indianness of Indian English
- 3.2.1 Transfer of Context
- 3.2.2 Transfer of L1 Items to L2 Items
- 3.2.3 Transfer of Form- Context Component
- 3.2.4 Formal Equivalence of IE and BE Items
- 3.2.5 Indian English Collocations
- 3.2.6 Hybrid Formations
- 3.2.7 Context- Bound Indianism

3.3 Syntax And Grammar
- 3.3.1 Syntactic And Grammatical Variations

3.4 Morphological Innovations in Indian English
- 3.4.1 Innovations In Single Items
- 3.4.2 Hybridised Items
- 3.4.3 Classification of Hybrid Items According to the Units and Elements which Operate in their Structure
- 3.4.4 Indian English Collocations
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3.5 Phonetics and Phonology: Indian English
- 3.5.1 Segmental Phonemes

3.6 Non- Segmental Phonemes
3.7 Let Us Sum Up
3.8 Questions
3.9 Glossary

3.0 OBJECTIVES

What constitutes Indian English? Is it a mere conglomeration of certain grammatical, semantic, lexical and morphological features that govern its use, or a channel that opens out to a wider world—a world that entices the learner and the user with promises of greater prestige and power? English in India is used as a medium of communication by more than eighty million people, an estimate which far surpasses the speakers of English even in Great Britain. That too in a country where there are nineteen other official state languages along with numerous dialects crossing the thousand mark. Could we talk about a distinctive idea called 'Indian' in English spoken in this country? What is this 'Indianness', in other words can we trace certain linguistic features that could set apart the language spoken in this subcontinent from that spoken in say, Australia or Canada or the Caribbean?

In the course of this unit, we would look at the distinct patterns of 'Indian English' that probably distinguishes it from other varieties of English. The chapter would deal with not only the linguistic features that characterise Indian English as a distinct variety of English, but would also throw light on the discursive features of this variety. But before we embark on that journey, it would be best to remember three features of Indian English that puts the entire study of Indian English in perspective. First, Indian English (IE) is primarily learnt as a second language (L2) in India after one has acquired the mother tongue (L1) resulting in interference with or transfer from L1. Secondly, Indian English is primarily used in a different socio-linguistic context, that is, the use to which English is put in India demands an understanding of the social and the cultural factors that govern such use. Thirdly, one cannot really talk

about monolithic 'Indian English' since the practice of English in India entails a number of variations depending on region, ethnicity and proficiency. Therefore, we may have 'Bengali English or Benglish', Gujarati English or Gujlish', 'Hindi English or Hinlish', etc.

The regional variations of English may be dependent on the primary language of the region that determines the pronunciation or intonation of the English spoken. Therefore we can have Tamil English, Marathi English, Punjabi English etc. The ethnic variation cuts across regional or dialect boundaries and is the characteristic of a particular group, e.g., Anglo-Indian English. Variation according to proficiency is a topic that would be dealt with in details later. It is for this purpose that this unit would deal with general features of Indian English rather than with specific variations within the English spoken in the country.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

English in India has such variations that it represents a multicoloured spectrum rather than a single whole. How then can we trace the features of a language that has no commonalities either across regions, ethnicities or proficiency? To compound the problem, Indians learn English rather than acquire it. This is an important distinction since learning indicates a certain kind of formalisation, while acquisition would point to a natural appropriation of a language. Most of us learn English as a second language (L2) after acquiring our mother tongues. Moreover, Indian English speakers constitute only 3.5% of the population and even within this marginal population there may be differences that are too difficult to bridge. One could perhaps talk about Indian Englishes rather than one Indian English. Yet isn't it also true that an educated Indian bilingual (IE) would intuitively recognise another Indian English speaker as a standard speaker or not. How does that happen? What are the features that are intrinsic in educated Indian English that provides the 'Indianness' to the language that we speak? In order to answer this question, one has to define what one means by an 'educated Indian English speaker?'

A Standard (or educated) IE bilingual may be defined as one who is intelligible not only to other Indians in different parts of the subcontinent, but ideally speaking, to the educated native speakers of English, too.

In other words an IE bilingual uses English as a *lingua franca* intelligibly and coherently. But before we proceed, any further a brief look at the history of English bilingualism in India may be enlightening. Since it has already been dealt with in detail in the first two blocks, here I would restrict myself to the basics of this historical development.

There are four distinct phases of English bilingualism in India: the missionary phase of proselytisation when English was used as a tool of conversion and translation to gain understanding of the basic Indian religious, cultural, legal and literary texts and then retranslating them to suit the needs of the proselytisers; the Bengal phase when the 'demand' for English by prominent Indians such as **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** and **Rajunath Hari Navalkar** led to the infamous *Seal of Approval* by **Lord Bentinck** on **Macaulay**'s *Minute* on 7th March, 1835, that finally led to the institutionalisation of English education in India; the establishment of Universities and schools for English education which then led to the development of English-educated Indians who became instrumental in subverting the aims and aspirations of the British Empire; and finally, the literary phase that led to the refashioning of English in the hands of novelists and poets to give the language a typically 'Indian' idiom. This last phase was the phase of appropriation and indigenising the language that led finally to the acceptance of 'Indian English' as a distinct variety as vibrant and fertile as American and the Irish varieties of English. This unit would chiefly deal with the third and the final phase of the development of English bilingualism in India with

special reference to its syntactic, morphological and phonological characteristics. However, it would be helpful to start with general features that distinguish Indian English from other standard varieties of English. The next section shall examine the Indianness of Indian English. How Indian is the English that is spoken in India?

3.2 INDIANNESS OF INDIAN ENGLISH

One of the major concerns of linguists has been to locate the general features that create a clear demarcation between the Indian variety of English and other varieties. While many variations in Indian English are context-dependent, that is, would depend on the actual use of the language within a specific spatio-temporal coordinate, there are certain factors that may be safely labelled 'typical Indian English'. These variations or deviations however should not be understood as errors or mistakes by the Indian English bilingual but as a representative of the distinct voice that s/he possesses. The deviations in this unit are marked against Standard British English though it would not necessarily mean the Received Pronunciation.

3.2.1 Transfer Of Context

One of the most common deviations in Indian English is the transfer of cultural patterns, which are absent or different from those cultures where English is used as the first language (L1). Commonest examples are use of terms related to caste system, social attitudes, taboos, superstitions, notions of superiority, inferiority, etc.

3.2.2 Transfer Of L1 Items to L2 Items

This transfer of mother tongue meanings to items of Standard English may be lexical in nature or may involve even higher units of description like sentence, clause, phrase, etc. For example, the word *flower-bed* is often used in Indian English to indicate *nuptial bed* (phoolon ki sej) though in Standard English almost always invariably means a garden plot. The transfer at higher levels may involve sentence, collocation or compounds not usually found in the Standard variety. For example, the compound 'salt-giver' in British English (BE) would indicate a man who gives salt, while in Indian English would mean 'a person who provides subsistence'. Thus, cultural semantic values are transposed onto the BE.

3.2.3 Transfer Of Form-Context Component

This transfer involves transfer of those formal units from mother-tongue languages that are context-bound and cannot be otherwise used in B E. This involves a double transfer. First, the formal unit is translated into Indian English literally and then transposed onto the regular syntax of conventional English. Good examples of this category are speech-functions such as 'abuses', 'curses', 'greetings', 'blessings', 'flattery', etc. Expressions like 'May thy womb be dead', 'bow my forehead', 'let the sindur-mark ever trace the parting of your hair', 'cherisher of the poor', etc are a direct translation of the mother-tongue expressions. It is however important to note that the difference between the first variation and this one is that while the former involves an extension of the register range in IE and adds a new contextual unit to the language, in the latter it is not necessarily so.

3.2.4 Formal Equivalence of IE and BE Items

Formal equivalence may involve two processes:

a) Translation: This involves transfer of L1 items by maintaining a structural equivalence in IE, for example, the word dvija (dva + ija) into twice-born, 'go-puja' into cow-worship etc. They may again be rank-bound or rank-shifted, for example 'car-festival', 'caste-mark', 'cousin-sister' etc. are all rank-bound translations,

while 'dung-wash', 'dining-leaf', 'sacred-paste', 'sitting-planks' etc. are examples of rank-shifted translations. In the latter type of translations no structural equivalence is maintained.

b) Shift: In this, no attempt is made to maintain formal equivalence and is generally an adaptation of an underlying Indian item into IE. For example, 'may the fire of ovens consume you', 'a crocodile in a loin-cloth', etc. See that the two forms 'fire of ovens' and 'consume' are seldom linked in BE, or in the latter example the forms 'crocodile' and 'loin-cloth' are never put together in BE. Generally in this kind of shifts, the underlying Indian source item is a fixed collocation of an Indian language.

3.2.5 Indian English Collocations

This is the largest supplier of Indian English words to the vocabulary of English language. There can be various forms of collocations and details of those would be taken up while we deal with morphological characteristics of IE. However, an interesting process that greatly aids the formation of these collocations is the process of deletion. For example, it is quite common in Indian English to reduce standard phrases in B E like 'a bunch of keys', 'an address of welcome', 'love of god' etc to 'key-bunch', 'welcome address', or 'God-love'. The most commonly found examples are perhaps the collocations 'America-returned' or 'Britain-returned'.

3.2.6 Hybrid Formations

These are commonly found items that have two or more elements where at least one element is from English and one from an Indian language. For example, 'attar-bottle', 'police-raj', 'Congress-pandal', etc.

3.2.7 Context-Bound Indianisms

These can be of two types: formations that involve a semantic shift in Indian English; and formations that are typically Indian. This will be discussed later.

3.3 SYNTAX AND GRAMMAR

Indian English demonstrates a number of features that shows that the language of the colonial rulers has been appropriated and nativised over a period of two hundred years since its formal introduction. Nowhere is this seen more than at the level of syntax and grammar. Indian English has a number of features that are intrinsically its own and sharply define its identity as compared to other varieties of English. There are many factors involved in these grammatical and syntactic shifts, the primary one being the influence of indigenous languages on the grafted language. Moreover, to understand the Nativisation of English in India it is necessary to realise that English is spoken with different purposes, in different contexts, and with varying proficiency levels that **Kachru** calls the 'cline of bilingualism'. In India, the proficiency level of the speaker may vary from person to person even at the level of educated Indian English speakers. Thus accordingly, we may have a wide range of speakers varying from the educated variety to *Babu English, Butler English, Bearer English, Kitchen English, Legal English* etc. These Englishes can actually be graded according to their usage and can form a 'cline' from an extremely proficient speaker of English to a relatively poor speaker of English. However, there may be common factors found

even in the educated variety that may not accord with the standard usage. In the following sections we shall see how certain changes have been institutionalised in the use of English in India at the syntactic and the grammatical level.

3.3.1 Syntactic and Grammatical Variations

We list below some of the most common syntactic and grammatical variations in Indian English:

a) In constructions such as verb + particle (or in phrasal verbs, e.g. 'dispose of'), the particle is added to such verbs as normally do not take the particle (For example, 'rear off' or 'eat off'). It is quite common for an Indian to say, "He died off". In Gujarat, for instance, death is referred to as "being off". One of the reasons for this is the strong influence of the use of ancillary verbs in Hindi or even the Dravidian languages. For example, Woh mar gaya/gaye.

b) As regards the word-order (SOV or SVO), most educated Indian speakers may instinctively identify an 'unacceptable' word-order. However, there may be deviations in terms of positions of adverbs and adverbials. For example:

"The heavy lab work that I have now here is forcing me to stay back." (Instead of the more standard 'here now')
"I will be definitely joining." (Instead of 'definitely be')
"Cosmic ray methods also should be tried" (instead of 'should also be')

c) There is a tendency in Indian English to use postpositive adjectives attributively. For example: "The concerned authority should take appropriate action" or "The concerned person should immediately collect the check from the bank", instead of 'authority concerned' or 'person concerned' which is more acceptable in standard British or American English.

d) There is a strong tendency in Indian English to use the present perfect tense for the simple past. For example: "Funds have been received last year" instead of "Funds were received last year". However, this tendency is also becoming a part of British English today: " He's played for us last year".

e) There is also a tendency to use the present progressive for the perfective aspect of the present progressive. For example: "I am running a school for the past four years" instead of "I have been running...."

f) As for the use of prepositions, IE has a tendency to

i) add, for example in 'mention about', 'discuss about' which is not a part of the standard British variety
ii) modify, for example in "This nutrition is helpful for animals" instead of "helpful to" or "These books can be classified as literature" instead of 'classified under'.

g) There is also a tendency to use adverbials or nominals, which a BE speaker might find redundant. For example,

i) "The letter was (duly) signed by the Director.
ii) "The allopathic (line of) treatment.
iii) You may receive the journal from next year (onwards).
This tendency is however more to be seen in officialese than in common conversation.

h) There is a tendency to use the more formal if + were subjunctive, than the indicative if + was construction. This is true at least at the school level where

students are asked to write essays on 'If I were the Prime Minister of India' etc.

i) In terms of negatives, Indian English prefers to use explicit negations, while British English, when choices are available, prefers implicit negations followed by raising. Explicit and morphological negations are used in Standard British English only when the preferred alternatives are not available. For example, an Indian English speaker is more likely to say, "I think Satish is not likely to come" (Explicit Negation) than "I think Satish would probably stay away" (Implicit Negation) or "I don't think Satish is likely to come" (Raising).

j) One of the most interesting deviations in the use of Indian English and an intrinsic characteristic of its nativisation is its use of 'yes' or 'no'. The choice of 'yes' or 'no' in an answer depends on

a) the form of the question;
b) the facts of the situation.

If both of them have the same polarity, that is, both are positive or both negative, the answer is 'yes'. For example,

Q: "Didn't I see you yesterday in College?"
A: "Yes, you didn't see me yesterday in College."

In this exchange the form of the question is negative (Didn't I see you...?). Since the answer also is negative, that is, the responder was not in the college, the answer takes the 'yes' form.

On the other hand, if the polarity is not the same, the answer is negative.

k) Indian English might tend to use an excess of polite forms primarily because the kind of English introduced in India was meant for administration and law, both of which use polite registers. Later, they became a part of conversational Indian English. For example, "I would be greatly obliged by your munificence."

l) There may be a use of excessive conversation-openers, for example, "well", 'you see", "I think", "I hope" etc.

English as we know was the language of the imperialists that was imposed on us and has now come to stay. No doubt the English that is spoken in India has its own unique characteristics and its own history of evolvement. Let us now examine the morphological innovations that have been made in Indian English.

3.4 MORPHOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN INDIAN ENGLISH

When **Sir Thomas Roe** presented his credentials as **Ambassador of James I** at the Court of **Jehangir** in Delhi in 1615, the **East India Company,** which had already been in India for some fifteen years, had established factories at Surat and other places, and had brought the English language to the shores of India. In the beginning, i.e. in the early years of the seventeenth century, communication between the **East India Company** and the Indian people with whom they had to deal must have been entirely through the help of middlemen. There was, however, in the seaport towns of India, a kind of *lingua franca* that had grown up with the establishments of the

Portuguese who had been in India nearly a hundred years before the **East India Company** came to stay. Not only the natives speaking to Portuguese, but also Europeans of different nationalities speaking to one another used this pidgin Portuguese. Thus, in the first phase of the contact between Indians and the English merchants and sailors, many Portuguese words in their Indianised form or Indian application, and many Indian words in Portuguese orthography and pronunciation, were adopted in English. Many words of Portuguese origin, and also several Arabic words in their Portuguese form, were adopted by Indians into their own languages and then incorporated in the vocabulary of 'Indian' English. Gradually, as the **East India Company** became more and more influential, and the importance of English grew with the gaining of the political power by the British, the vocabulary of Indian English also grew.

By the time **Warren Hastings** became **Governor General of Bengal** (1773) the number of Indians who had acquired the knowledge of English had increased rapidly, and English was the language of administration and law. The **East India Company** did not come up with an educational policy till 1813, and Persian was still 'the language of diplomacy and high society'; but schools for the teaching of English had already sprung up, and Western missionaries who arrived on the scene helped to meet the growing demand of English. With the establishment of the first Universities in 1857 English for all practical purposes became an Indian language.

Indian English has certain special features. Its vocabulary contains a number of words not found in British English: ***words of Portuguese origin*** such as *almirah, ayah, caste, cobra, mosquito, peon*; ***Indian words via the Portuguese***, such as *betel, bamboo, coir, copra, mango, curry*; ***Indian words representing names of things***, such as *chit, chintz, tussore, jodhpurs*; ***administrative and functional terms***, many of them of Arabic or Persian origin, continuing from the Moghul period, such as, *mamlatdar, zamindar, mufassil (mofussil), chowkidar, sepoy, bandobast, davakhana;* a large number of ***miscellaneous words of Asian***—(not necessarily Indian)—***origin***, such as *pyjama, polo, compound, bandicoot, bakshish, cushy*; and some ***words of uncertain origin and hybrids*** like *posh, blighty, mulligatawny, kedgeree, gymkhana.* However, along with these loan words that had highly interactive origins, Indian English also created a number of words that are not to be found in Standard British versions. This unit describes some of the processes involved in this creative process and the ingenuity with which the English language was nativised by Indian speakers in a course of four hundred years.

3.4.1 Innovations in Single Items

This process consists of a large number of word-formations that involves the transfer of a L1 item into Indian English. They are primarily loanwords that have been standardised and are now accepted in the main lexicon of British English (BE) or American English (Am.E). However, a distinction can be made as regards their use, i.e. the frequency with which they are employed in these languages. On the basis of language-use, therefore, we could divide these into two major sections:

a) Assimilated items: This group would include items that have been accepted largely in the Standard British or American English and are used quite regularly and frequently. Moreover, these items are not context-specific, that is, they do not require an Indian context for their use any more. Thus words like *advaita, almirah, aranyaka, bawarchi, purdah, chintz, muslin, jungle, raga* etc are assimilated in the lexicon of BE or Am.E.

b) Restricted Items: This group consists of words that have a restricted use, that is they are context-specific and can be understood only in terms of India or the subcontinent. Moreover, they are bound by the region and have a high frequency in Indian English though they may not have semantic value in BE or Am.E. For example, *pradhan, panchayat, gaon sabha, vidwan, alapana, khayal, thumri, masti,* etc.

3.4.2 Hybridised Items

This group shows the maximum nativisation of English in India. The introduction of English in India was a political decision though largely supported by a section of the Indian intelligentsia. However, the language of the rulers was nativised to such an extent that these words became a part of the ruler's lexicon. One of the methods that was widely used to make English indigenous was the process of hybridisation. A hybridised item is a lexical item that has two or more elements, at least one from English and one from an Indian language. Since the contact of the British was largely with the Hindi-speaking belt of India and since leaders from this belt played a major role in the National Movement many of the words would have Hindi or Urdu items as one of their components. This large group can be divided into three major sub-sections:

a) Hybrid Collocations: These items are restricted to one register both formally and contextually, in other words these items are not to be found in BE or AmE without a conditioning reference of India. For example, *Khilafat Committee, Sarvodaya Leader, Satyagraha Movement, Swadeshi cloth,* etc.

b) Hybrid Ordered Series of Words (OSW): Ordered Series of Words are such items that are not restricted to one register and all members of OSW have one element in common. In other words, these hybrids can be found in different contexts and are not restricted to one specific use. For example, the head *angrezi* can take various modifiers like *–chair, -furniture, -proverb, -race, -sweet, -teapot, -woman,* etc.

c) Hybridised reduplication: This is a rare instance when two or more components with an 'identical' lexical meaning in the languages are put side by side. Such examples are to be found in Anglo-Indian literature as well as novels set in the subcontinent by British writers. For example, *lathi-stick, cotton-kapas, curved-kukri*, etc.

3.4.3 Classification of Hybrid Items According to the Units and Elements Which Operate in Their Structure

The Hybrids in Indian English can also be classified in terms of the units and elements that operate within the hybrid term. Since a hybrid is a composite term comprising one English and one native item, there may be different ways in which they may combine and permute. In the following classification, the term that is the subject of the hybrid is called a head and the term that modifies this head is called the modifier. Thus, for example, in the hybrid *Sarvodaya leader*, the item *sarvodaya* would be considered as the modifier while the item *leader*, the head. Let us discuss a few.

a) Native item as head and English as modifier: This set would include those heads that do not have an equivalent in the BE and therefore have to be retained in the hybrids. They are also often put to literary use to produce a distinct local colour. These items are also quite commonly seen in Indian journalism and other media. Examples of such hybrids are, *Christian sadhu, cotton-pyjama, tamarind-chutney, British sarkar, imperial raj, burning-ghat,* etc.

b) English as Head and native item as modifier: These are a restricted group of hybrids that convey cultural and social meanings that are not to be found in BE or Am.E. However some of these items are being slowly recognised as acceptable in the main body of Standard BE or Am.E. Examples of such items are, *anjali salutation, bazaar musician, haldi invitation, beedi-smoking, ghee-fried, lathi-charge, janta express, shagun ceremony,* etc.

c) String Formations: This set consists of two or more elements one of which may be a compound modifying a head either from IE or BE. For example, *state-wide hartal, homespun khaddar, high-class log,* etc. In these examples the first item is a compound in BE which then acts as the modifier for the Indian item that follows.

d) Hybrids and Derivational Suffixes: One of the most common processes through which a large number of Indian English words come into existence is the combination of Indian or English words to suffixes that may either be Indian or British. A derivational suffix is a particle that transforms a verb into a noun or a noun into another noun or a noun into a verb. There is however a morphological pattern in these combinations. We may look at a few here.

i) Non-English Head + English derivational suffix: There are a number of words in Indian English that combines a native term with an English suffix to give rise to another word. For example, *babudom (babu + -dom), sadhuhood (sadhu + -hood), goondaism (goonda + -ism), upanishadic (Upanishad + -ic), diwanship (diwan + -ship)*, etc.

ii) English head + non-English derivational suffix: Often Indian English hybrids are formed by combining an English head with a non-English derivational suffix. Examples of such hybrids are *factorywallah, policewallah*, etc.

iii) Non-English head + English negative prefix: Examples of this can be numerous. In fact, the list can be never-ending. Example, *non-Brahmin, non-Adivasi, non-babu, non-diwan,* etc.

3.4.4 Indian English Collocations

There seems to be an underlying pattern in the formation of IE collocations. The collocations in IE can be formally deviant, that is, they may have no British or American equivalent and are therefore meaningful only in an Indian context. We have already seen some examples of lexical deviations in the formation of IE collocations such as 'salt-giver', 'three-eyed', etc. In these lexically-deviant collocations the unusual one lies in the two terms of the collocation coming together in Indian English whereas in British or American English such collocations would not be formally possible. Terms of abuses like 'sister-sleeper', 'dining-leaf', etc are examples of this type of collocation.

Another form of IE collocation may not be formally deviant but can be contextually deviant. Such collocations may also be found in British or American English, but the semantic context in which it is used in IE may be absent in those languages. An example of this is the collocation flower-bed which in British or American English would indicate a garden plot. However the term is extensively used in Indian English literature to indicate a nuptial bed of flowers. The latter context is completely absent from B E or Am. E.

Another kind of collocation that is quite common in IE is what **Kachru** calls 'phrase-mongering'. There is a marked tendency in Indian English towards phrasal collocations with a view to emphasising concepts. These collocations are often sighted in journalistic prose and demagogic speech patterns. Collocations like 'Himalayan blunder', 'nation-building', 'change of heart', 'dumb millions', etc fall into this category.

3.4.5 Style Features

a) Latinity: Indian English tends towards a more formal structure of English usage. Thus, words that would be used in an extremely formal context in BE and Am.E would be used in a highly non-formal situation in IE. This primarily stems from the fact that English in India was primarily taught as a classroom language and not as a communicative language for practical use.

Thus the stylised form of language that text's contain tend to impose their structures even in informal or intimate situations. For example, it is quite common to substitute 'demise' for 'death' or 'pain in one's bosom' for 'pain in one's chest,' etc.

b) Initialisms: There is also a marked tendency in IE, especially in its administrative and bureaucratic version, towards using initials. Thus, English used in the administration, law, politics etc. is sometimes a cryptic code that has to be deciphered. The most common is PM for Prime Minister, CM for Chief Minister, SP for Superintendent of Police etc. This may also extend to names of places like CP for Connaught Place, SN for Sarojini Nagar in Delhi, etc. The reason for this is quite simple. The language of the imperial administration was replete with such initials. However, with the passing of the Raj, the language in Britain lost its use for such initials and they were thus gradually discontinued with. However, the legacy of the British remained in the legal and the bureaucratic systems of India and the initialisms became a part of IE.

c) Cliches: Use of phrases that have either disappeared or have become archaic in their usage in BE and Am.E, are still a part of IE and are often used in both formal and informal contexts. Thus phrases like better imagined than described, each and every, leave severely alone etc are quite commonly found in IE. The recent addition to this characteristic of Indian English is the kind of clichés used by **Navjot Singh Sidhu**, an ex-Indian cricketer and a commentator. For example, "The ball pierced the field like hot knife through clear butter."

The next section shall examine the phonetics and the phonological nature of Indian English.

3.5 PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY: INDIAN ENGLISH

A great amount of research has been conducted on the phonetic and phonological nature of Indian English in the last fifty years. There may be two reasons for this: first, due to the influence of structural linguists since the thirties, a great emphasis has been laid on the phonetic and phonological structure of the language and a great amount of research conducted in these fields; secondly, pedagogically, these studies were always considered to be primary and, therefore, a lot of pedagogic attention was devoted to the studies of these features.

While dealing with the nativisation of English in India at the phonetic or the phonological level, we would have to keep in mind the following factors:

a) The phonetic deviation in IE is primarily based on the L1 spoken in the region: Thus, there is no uniformity in the phonetic deviations in Indian English. We may have a variety of phonetically deviant English depending on the regional context in which the language is spoken. We may have different sets of variations giving rise to phonetically deviant Benglish, Gujlish or Hinlish.

b) The phonetic and phonological deviations in IE are essentially determined by the phonetic and phonological structures of the L1. These deviations are of two types, a) those of segmental phonemes, and b) those of non-segmental phonemes.

3.5.1 Segmental Phonemes

The segmental phonemes may be described in terms of their structural or in terms of their systemic differences. A structural difference involves the absence of one of the

structures of L1 in English. A systemic difference occurs when the structures of L1 and English may be identical yet may have differences in the elements of the structure. For example, in both Hindi and English CVC (Consonant Vowel Consonant) morphemic structure is possible. Thus in this restricted sense both these languages may be considered identical at the phonetic level. But, for instance, while /f, q, d/ do not occur in Hindi as members of any system, it results in transfer or substitution of English elements by L1 elements. In phonetic terms this transfer is of two types. First, it may involve a substitution of one or more phonetic elements in a full series of sounds, e.g., the fricative series, which is not absent in Hindi but which shows 'gaps' when compared with the same series in English. Thus instead of the above series an Indian English speaker would tend to pronounce these sounds as /ph, th, dh/. Secondly, there may be a complete transfer of a series, e.g., the whole alveolar series is replaced by a retroflex series in Hindi.

3.6 NON-SEGMENTAL PHONEMES

Though research on the deviations in Indian English and the extent to which IE has been nativised in terms of its non-segmental phonemic features is relatively poor, it has been observed that the main phonological features of IE that separates it from British or American varieties of English are dependent on stress, rhythm, intonation and related factors. All major Indian languages are syllable-timed languages as opposed to English that is a stress-timed language. For example, while scanning a poem in English the syllables contained in a line are secondary to the stress patterns that are there in a line. The rhythm in the poem is created through the distribution of stress and not through the distribution of syllable, leading to iambic or trochaic metres. However, a poem in Hindi for instance would create its rhythm through the distribution of its syllable and is not stress-governed.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

Let us briefly go through the terrain that we have covered till now. As we have seen in the previous sections, the linguistic characteristics of Indian English are transparent in the IE sound system (phonology), sentence construction (syntax), vocabulary (lexis), and meaning (semantics). The reasons for these transparent Indian features are not difficult to find. In India, Indian English is generally used as a second language, which is acquired only when one has already learnt a first language, or what is usually called the mother tongue. This then results in interference or transfer from one's mother tongue in the second language. We see the same principle at work, for example, in the non-native varieties of Hindi. When we identify a person as a speaker of South Indian Hindi or Punjabi Hindi or Bengali Hindi, we are actually referring to such transferred characteristics. The problem of interference in Indian languages is however more complex, since the interference is caused by a large number of mother tongues.

The other reason for the existence of Indian features is that in India the English language is used in a different socio-cultural context than that of, say, Unites States or Australia or Canada. The distinct socio-cultural parameters with which English has been used in this country for the last four hundred years, therefore, has given rise to a distinct variety called Indian English and these large number of innovations are known as Indianisms.

The English prevalent in India however is not of a monolithic variety but has innumerable shades and gradations. For this purpose, Indian English has to be studied in the context of a cline of bilingualism that may contain a wide range of Englishes within its ambit. We may have a cline of Englishes ranging from educated Indian

English to varieties such as Babu English, Butler English, Bearer English and Kitchen English.

Finally, a word about the term 'deviation' that I have used in some of the earlier. It must be remembered that a deviation in no way consists a mistake. The term deviation serves a useful purpose when it refers to the linguistic and cultural nativisation of a variety of English. Nativisation is the result of the new 'unEnglish' linguistic and cultural setting in which English is used as a tool for communication. However, such deviations are not to be considered mistakes. Deviations are as much a part of one's own cultural identity as Americanisms or Australianisms or Canadianisms are part of a national identity.

3.8 GLOSSARY

Bilingual: Individuals or communities speaking two languages.

Collocation: Two or more words, considered as individual lexical items, used in habitual association with one another in a given language.

Context-bound: Linguistic features that have meaning only in relation to the features of the external world, that is, a certain context.

Delction: The process or result of leaving out a part of a construction.

Derivational Suffixes: A suffix which is used to form a derivation. For example, -ness in happiness or –ly in quickly.

Dialect boundaries: A number of differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary in adjacent regions.

Elision: The omission of speech sounds between syllables or words in connected speech, usually for ease of pronunciation.

Formal equivalence: Equivalence between those features of language that can be used in linguistic analysis as a basis for setting up certain categories and units such as word shapes, sound patterns and word order.

Hybrid: A compound word made up of components which originate from different languages.

Interference: The errors made by carrying over the speech habits of the native language or dialect into a second language or dialect. The features of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary may cause interference when a person is learning to master the patterns of a second language.

lingua franca: A language adopted by speakers of different speech communities as their common medium of communication.

Non-segmental phonemes: Features of the spoken language such as pitch, stress, intonation etc.

Pidgin: A mixture of elements from different natural languages in regions of intensive language contact, usually restricted to certain groups.

Postpositive adjectives: An adjective that is placed after the noun that it governs.

Proficiency: The ability to produce a language correctly and coherently

Rank-bound: A translation is said to be rank-bound if there is a consistent 1:1 relationship between the source language and the target language texts at the word, group, clause or sentence level.

Rank-shift: The process or result of a grammatical unit being moved down the hierarchical scale of rank from sentence and clause to phrase, word and morpheme.

Received Pronunciation: Pronunciation of standard British English based on the speech of educated speakers of Southern British English.

Register: A variety in a language used for a specific purpose as opposed to a social or regional dialect.

Segmental Phonemes: The analysis of the continuum of speech into significant distinctive features of sound thus allowing it to be written with the help of a phonetic alphabet.

Semantic shift: A change in the semantic value, i.e., meaning of a linguistic element.

Sense-stress: Stress within a sentence on certain words to emphasize their semantic importance.

Speech-functions: Linguistic terms in a language accorded certain functions in its social and cultural milieu.

Stress-shift: Transfer of stress from one vowel to another within a string of words having the same root.

Structural equivalence: Equivalence at the semantic, syntactic or phonological terms.

Transfer: The process or result of carrying over grammatical forms from one language into another. In language teaching, for example, the patterns of the mother tongue may interfere in the acquisition of the foreign language.

Variations: A linguistic form that does not follow the standard usage patterns.

Word-order: The placing of words in a sequence according to the conventions of a given language.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. What does nativisation of English mean in the Indian context? Explain
2. How does bilingualism influence the use of English in India? Illustrate with examples.

UNIT 4 INTELLIGIBILITY OF INDIAN ENGLISH GLOBALLY

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2. Variety Of Indian English
4.3 Barriers in the Way of Understanding Indian English
4.4 Intelligibility of Indian English
4.5 Attitudes Towards Non- Native Varieties Of English
4.6 Indian Literature in English-Intelligibility and Acceptability
4.7 Towards a Dictionary of Indian English
4.8 Let Us Sum Up
4.9 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The use of English in India for more than 200 years has changed the complexion of the language, through hybridisation, nativisation etc. The native speakers of the language may well disbelieve that the languages s/he speaks and the language spoken in large parts of the Indian sub continent are the same. What is Indian English? Why has it risen? How is it different from other varieties of English? How far is it intelligible to other speakers of English around the world? What attitudes/reactions do English speakers around the world have towards Indian English? Some of these have been taken up in the previous units. We will explore a few of them in this unit.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Various euphemistic names have been invented to describe Indian varieties of English – for e.g. *transplanted English, transported English*, or as **Meenakshi Mukherjee** says *twice- born English* since Indian English is "the product of two parent traditions" Indian and British. But the main impulse behind such imaginative naming is to convey the fact that the context in which these different varieties of English are used in India is not the same as that in Britain.

The *Indianess* in Indian English is the result of the acculturation of a Western language in a linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the Indian subcontinent. The parameters of Indian culture and languages determine the extent of changes and adaptation in the English language. It should be remembered that Indian English (IE) is a cover term and does not in any sense imply that all Indian users of the English language have equal proficiency in understanding and speaking English. The variations in Indian English arise basically due to three reasons—regional, ethnic, and proficiency levels. The ethnic varieties cut across regional boundaries though there has been no extensive study of this phenomenon in India. From here we can work towards subsystems of these on the basis of Individual languages like Tamil, Hindi, and Malayalam etc. The features of Dravidian English or Indo-Aryan English can be abstracted on the basis of the features of these individual languages. In the next section we shall look at the concept of *Indian English.*

4.2 VARIETIES OF INDIAN ENGLISH

The issue of variation in proficiency is especially important in India where English is mostly learnt as a second language. It has been suggested that the English-speaking

bilinguals in India should be ranked on a scale - even an arbitrary one – so that one can differentiate them on the basis of competence. It can be better explained with reference to the *cline of bilingualism* given by **Kachru**. The cline comprises of three measuring points – the zero point, the central point and the ambilingual point. In other words there is a cline of Englishes in India ranging from *Educated Indian English* to *Babu English, Kitchen English, Cheechee English, Butler English, Boxwallah English* etc. An example of Butler English would be the following:

> An Englishman wishing to assure himself that his orders have been carried out asks—Is that done gone finished, Appo? And Appo replies in the same phraseology-*Yes sare all done gone finished whole.*

Babu English is mostly associated with the work of clerks and is marked by extreme stylistic ornamentation, superficiality and verbosity:

> *The extreme stimulus of professional and friendly solicitations has led me to the journey of accomplished advantages to proceed with these elucidatory and critical comments; wherein no brisking has been thrown apart to introduce prima facie and useful matters to facilitate the literary pursuits of lily -like capacities.*
>
> (Kachru: 1988: 228)

Boxwallah English was mostly the language of trade and commerce used by hawkers/salesmen to sell whatever goods they carried. E.g. the language used by Kashmiri traders who come to the plains in winter to sell their goods.

Cheechee (CCE) *English* is marked by hybrid formations, especially in pronunciation. But some formations are peculiar to this sub variety, as illustrated by the following comparisons:

CCE	**English**
To blow ones' self	*to hit ones' self*
To get tossed	*to be thrown from a horse*
To cover	*to sleep under a sheet/blanket*
To roll a bird	*to hit a bird with a stone*

At one end of this cline/spectrum is Educated (or standard) Indian English and at the other we have *Kitchen English*. Other varieties like *Babu English* come at various points of the spectrum. These points present a gradation towards an educated form of Indian English. The *zero point* is the lowest point on the axis but it is not the end point at the bottom. In India and South Asia it is very common to come across users of English who have acquired restricted proficiency of English but cannot use the language in any serious sense. As **Randolph Quirk** had observed:

> *In the Indian and African countries, we find an even spectrum of kinds of English, which extend from those most like Pidgin to those most like standard English, with imperceptible gradations the whole way, issue of the global intelligibility and acceptability of IE.*
>
> **(Kachru: 1988: 71)**

Available research on educated / standard IE is rather sketchy. In spoken form, the term 'educated IE' is used in the same sense as suggested by the terms 'educated American English', 'educated British English' etc. However, all speakers of educated IE do not have the same levels of proficiency. In addition, an IE user reveals other characteristics through his /her speech- his/her mother tongue, regional affiliation etc. The phenomena of variation are not unique to IE. Following this logic we can say that there are *American* **Englishes**, *British* **Englishes** etc. But at the same time it is

worth pointing out that in spite of variations there are several common features shared by users of IE. An IE speaker recognises another IE speaker. Almost at the same time the classification of educated/standard and non-standard is done.

Kachru's cline of bilingualism has three measuring points of proficiency-the zero point, the central point, and the ambilingual point.

> *An English speaking Indian who ranks just above the zero point is considered a* minimal bilingual. Such bilinguals may have some knowledge of the written/and or spoken aspects of English but they are not considered proficient in the language, the proficiency levels of travel guides and postmen in India being a good example.

The central point is an arbitrary point—for instance an individual with adequate competence in one or more registers of IE like the registers of the law courts, administration and science. This includes a large number of those Indian civil servants and teachers who learn English as their main subject of study and are able to use the language effectively in those restricted fields where English is used in India.

A standard (or educated) IE bilingual is one who is intelligible to not only Indians but also (ideally) to the native speakers of English. A standard user of IE is one who ranks somewhere between the central and ambilingual points on the cline of bilingualism. But mere intelligibility does not guarantee that the user's command of English is equal to the native speaker's command over the language. We shall take up these difficulties in the following sections of this unit.

4.3 BARRIERS IN THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING INDIAN ENGLISH

Available research on various varieties of Indian English is rather limited and superficial, mainly due to the attitude of Indian and non-Indian speakers towards Indian English. The first major barrier in the way of intelligibility is the differences in the consonant and vowel inventory of English and Indian English. The consonants {f, θ, δ) in English do not occur in the consonant inventory on any Indian language, a fact that leads to the substitution of {ph, th, dh} for those sounds in Indian English. This creates problems of intelligibility for native speakers of English. Secondly in Indian languages like Hindi and Urdu, consonant clusters like sk, sl, sp do occur but the distribution of these clusters in Indian languages is different. In Indian English as spoken in Hindi-speaking areas English words such as *school, stool* etc., are pronounced as {*isklu:l*}, {*istu:l*} because in Hindi the clusters do not occur in initial positions.

Thirdly, a complete set of consonants from an Indian language may be transferred into Indian English. Fourthly, deviation in the stress system may create problems of comprehension. English is a stress-timed language as opposed to Indian languages, which are syllable-timed. In the latter, the rhythm is based on arranging long and short syllables, while in stress-timed languages it is based on the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables. This is one of the linguistic factors, which impedes intelligibility between an Indian English speaker and a native speaker of English. Lastly, grammar also causes problems of intelligibility. It should however be noted that the deviations in Indian English should not be regarded as mistakes. As **Kachru** writes:

> *A mistake may be defined as any 'deviation' which is rejected by a native speaker of English as out of the linguistic 'code' of the English language...a deviation, on the other hand may involve differences from a norm, but such*

deviations may be explained in terms of the cultural and /or linguistic context in which a language functions.

(Kachru: 1983: 76)

Many of these deviations are variety - oriented (marking members of the Indian English speech community as separate from users of other varieties of English), register - oriented (e.g. politics). Some are author - oriented and may be present only in the works of Indian English writers who write about typically Indian contexts. Some deviations are text specific but cannot be generalised. For example the style of *Kanthapura* (written by **Raja Rao**) cannot be generalised as the style of **Raja Rao**. Formations like 'May the vessel of your life never float on the sea of existence' are as deviant as **Cummings** and **Joyce** in native English but they still create problems of intelligibility. The frequent use of the progressive tense where the native speaker would use the simple tense also makes Indian English stand apart. The habit of reduplication, which Indian English shares with West African and Black American English, is a problem for native speakers of English. In Indian English reduplication is used for emphasis and to indicate continuation, for example –hot, hot, tea, long-long, hair, he sells different-different things etc.

The use of English in India for over 200 years has nativised the association that English words traditionally keep in their native settings. The Indian linguistic and cultural context has extended the domain of native collocations or typically Indian English collocations have been formed. Constructions which are more English would sound less deviant but then they would also be less Indian and therefore, less effective. These Indian collocations naturally sound foreign to native speakers: after all they have to be understood in their Indian context.

4.4 INTELLIGIBILITY OF INDIAN ENGLISH

In India, English has blended itself with the cultural and social complex of the country and has become, as **Raja Rao** says, the language of the "intellectual make-up" of Indians. It is the language, which symbolises cultural and socio-political aspirations of Indians. Thus, a foreign language has become more culture-bound in India than Persian and Arabic were in the times of the Mughal rulers.

The linguistic implications of such acculturation of Indian English are that the more culture-bound it becomes, the more distance is created between Indian English and other varieties of English. In all discussions of Indian English and nativisation of English we have to pause and ask ourselves two questions. First, in spite of all regional variations, is Indian English intelligible to people all over the subcontinent? Second, is Indian English intelligible to educated speakers of English all over the world? Very little research has been done on this area of intelligibility of non-native varieties of English. The answer to the first question was attempted in 4.2, that standard /educated English has pan-Indian intelligibility. In spite of variations due to region and mother tongue, standard Indian English is more or less comprehensible to all. Yet even educated speakers of Indian English reveal some regional characteristics. In written speech, several pan-Indian registers have developed like the language of the newspapers, law, administration etc. These are distinctly Indian in their lexical and grammatical categories. Out of the seven daily newspapers in India, which have been in existence for more than one hundred years, four are in English, namely, *Times of India*, the *Pioneer*, the *Mail*, and *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*. A significant number of periodicals and magazines in English are published throughout India and English newspapers are published in every part of India.

The intelligibility of Indian English by native speakers forms a cline; some Indians are fully intelligible, others less so. Intelligibility cannot be judged exclusively from a

native speaker's point of view. A speaker of educated IE (and other non-native Englishes) may have repertoire of sub varieties that vary in their Englishness. Very little empirical research has been done in this area, one of which was done by **Bansal** in 1969, the conclusions of which are summarised below. It presents the results of tests for measuring intelligibility between the speakers of the following varieties of English-IE speakers and native speakers of American English and Received Pronunciation (RP); IE speakers and other non native speakers of English like Germans and Nigerians; IE speakers with other IE speakers:

Participants in test		highest %	lowest %	average
1.	IE&RP speakers (group)	73	67	70
2.	IE&RP speakers (Cline of intelligibility)	95	53	
3.	IE &American Eng. Speakers	81	72	74
4.	IE &German speakers	67	40	57
5.	IE speakers & Nigerians	66	34	53
6.	IE &other IE speakers	54	74	
7.	RP speakers with Other RP speakers	100	95	97

(Kachru: 1988: 84)

As is evident from the above table, the educated IE speaker maintains his/her 'Indianness' without making any effort to mask his/her social or local origins and yet retains his/her intelligibility.

At the other end of the spectrum, towards the bottom of **Kachru**'s cline, is *Kitchen English* or *Babu English*, which is often used by Indians with native speakers of English; native speakers use this language so that Indian speakers of this variety can understand them. It is an attempt to communicate in a variety of language that has undergone a process of pidginisation. A good example of this is provided by **Yule** and **Burnell**:

> *The broken English spoken by the native servants in the Madras Presidency; ...it is a singular dialect; the present participle...being used for the future indicative, and the preterite indicative being formed by 'done'; thus I Telling =I will tell; I done tell = I have told; done come = actually arrived.... The oddest characteristic about this jargon is (or was) that masters used it in speaking to their servants as well as servants to their masters.*
>
> **(Kachru: 1988: 70)**

So IE consists of all the varieties discussed above, from *Educated English* to *Kitchen* and *Babu English*.

In short it can be said that the closer the language is to standard or educated forms of English, the more intelligible it is to other speakers / hearers of English. The moment the language becomes culture-bound or culture specific, it will inevitably create problems of intelligibility. At the same time it should always be remembered that issues of intelligibility / acceptability are best solved by keeping in mind the formal and contextual conditions and the functions that the language is expected to perform in particular situations.

The contextually deviant forms may be unintelligible to the native speakers of English, but only because s/ he is not acquainted with the contexts of Indian culture. A similar parallel can be found in America and Australia where English-speaking settlers had to coin a large number of new words like- 'friar-bird', 'frogs-mouth', 'ground-lark', 'thousand-jacket' etc- to meet local needs. But the situation in India is different from that of America or Australia because in India it is not a group of new

settlers using their L1 in new settings. In this case it is a second language that is being used by Indians in their own context.

4.5 ATTITUDES TOWARDS NON- NATIVE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

In recent years there has been a change in attitude, both of Indian and Western scholars towards IE and other varieties of Non-Native English. This phenomenon of 'linguistic tolerance' is mostly a post World War II development that gained further momentum after the Independence of many Asian nations during the 1940s and 1950s. Many of these nations decided to keep English as a link language and there was political support towards the continuation of English.

But on the other hand regional varieties of English were regarded as substandard, and were often called *Babu English* and *Cheechee English* in a derogatory sense. The thirties and forties were a time of pessimism of IE and other varieties of English in general. The gradual change in attitude towards IE and other non-native varieties of English can be traced from the following summary:

1. *Authoritarian View:* The first reactions were mostly monolithic asserting that despite its diversity there is only one 'good' or 'standard' English, which should be defended at all costs. Substandard dialects and Creoles were expected to eventually fade under the impact of universal education and media.

2. *Mildly Traditionalist View:* This school opined that though the varieties of English cannot be regarded as languages, they should however be acknowledged. It was in spite of the belief that Centre must hold and efforts must be made to educate people in the good/standard variety.

3. *The Liberal and Pragmatic View:* Both monolithic and pluralistic, they tried to reconcile opposed views—that English encompasses everything that has been identified with it, yet all cannot be regarded as languages simply because they are incomprehensible to others. It was realised that standard varieties are vital tools in the areas of education, law, media etc. and tend to sustain the standard varieties.

4. *Liberal, Egalitarian Response:* This regarded the monolithic worldview as outdated and believed in a more multicultural and decentered worldview, and considered diversity as good. All varieties of English were thought to be autonomous languages or a range of variations, which are a part of a mass of usage. Standard forms—local, national, and international—constantly need to be renegotiated and should not encourage the continuance of existing elites; nor should it lead to the formation of new ones.

5. *The Uncertain/ Confused Response:* Not sure of the intricacies of the debate, but aware of the importance of communication, the upholders of this response are inclined to change their opinion according to time and place. Theirs is more of a wishful thinking that everybody should speak the same language. Traditionalists concerned with safeguarding the purity of the English language are not likely to have much sympathy today when people have started responding more positively towards the idea of multiple Englishes. As has often happened in the past, new generations have grown up wondering what the fuss is all about. These new generations find *an English* and *Englishes* no more controversial than *wine* and *wines*.

4.6 INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH- INTELLIGIBILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY

Responses towards Indian writings in English have ranged from ridicule, skepticism and cynicism to grudging acceptance and now outright praise and respect. Here distinctions have to made between non-Indians (mainly British writers like **Kipling, Forster, Paul Scott** etc.) writing in English about India (called 'Anglo-Indian writers); Indians writing in English about India; Indians translating works from Indian languages into English (called Indo-Anglian writers). In the use of English as a medium, two distinctions are possible determined as they are by the reading audience. Thus on the basis of reader/writer relationship we have two types of IE-written in India: Those, whose reading public is mostly Indian: and those whose reading public is outside India. The growth in recent years of a new tribe of writers who are settled abroad (or spend most of their time outside India) and write about India cater to a foreign (mostly Western) reading public (**Salman Rushdie, Gita Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri** etc.) belong to this category. This distinction is important because the forms will vary in their degree of Indianness and use of Indianisms.

Indian writing in English was regarded with great skepticism and its creative worth questioned till about 1950. From then onwards however attitudes towards both (in India and outside) have changed. In the last few years a considerable body of work by talented writers like **Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De** and their likes have brought respectability (and money) to the profession of Indians writing in English. The amount and quality of work is such that it can no longer be ignored and Indian English literature has become a very important part of world literature.

The short history of Indian English Literature is mired in controversy and schizophrenia. Writers of literature writing in Indian languages suspect the integrity of those using an 'alien' language for creative purposes. They accuse their counterparts of commodifying India, having monetary motives and of pandering to the Western demand for the *exotic* East. Writers in other English speaking countries tend to marginalise them from the mainstream of English literature. The answer is, of course, that Indian English Literature is as much Indian as the works of **Thoreau** and **Hemmingway** are American literature. Despite these controversies, Indian writings in English have found worldwide audiences and large publishing houses are making a beeline to sign up talented Indian writers. Indian English fiction is now a worldwide phenomenon.

The post –Independence period initiated a split among Indian English writers, living in and outside India. This has resulted in

> *...two different, and sometimes even hostile streams: the Aliens and indigenous writers...the Aliens (who often retain Indian nationality but prefer to stay abroad for a complex variety of reasons chief among them being the...possibility of finding a reasonably well-paying market), are in the final count contributing to the tradition of English literature, while the Indigenous writers are adding to the spectrum of Indian literature....*
>
> **(Kachru: 1988: 88)**

Of course not every agrees with this point of view.

The spectrum of use of Indian English has also widened – essays, political writings, journalism etc. that have found acceptance not only inside India but also elsewhere. The cynicism of the early years has given way to respect and IE literature has

increased both in terms of volume and quality. It has now been accepted both in India and in the English-speaking world as a whole.

As far as the issue of intelligibility is concerned, since IE writers are primarily writing about Indian situations, lack of understanding of Indian contextual situations may cause problems of intelligibility for the Western reader. The following examples will better illustrate the point:

> *Welcome! My eyes have gone blind looking at the way along which you were to come to grace my house.*
> *Why did you sit down on my footsteps?.... you have defiled my religion...now I will have to sprinkle holy water all over the house.* **(Kachru: 1988: 45)**

The first is a *speech function* used in greetings in typically Indian situations and determined by the relationship of the participants. The second cannot be appreciated unless the *register of the caste system* and the contextual units are understood in the typically Indian sense. The uninitiated Western reader may find these usages funny and may have difficulty comprehending their meanings, both at the literal level and at the level of their function in the social and cultural contexts. The intelligibility of such items as *collocational deviations* and *semantic shifts* (adding or subtracting meaning to words than what they generally mean) for L1 speakers depends on the understanding of the appropriate Indian contexts.

Let us consider a few more examples:
1.May we live to see ourselves tomorrow.
2.He has no chest.
3.He has no shadow.
4.What honourable noun does your honour bear? **(Kachru: 1988: 222)**

From the native speaker's point of view, these examples are not only contextually deviant, but the lexical selection also seems odd and unintelligible. But from the non-native speaker's point of view, they form part of the communicative repertoire and make perfect sense. The contextual equivalent of (1) in native English would be *goodnight* and of (2) would be *He is timid* (3) and (4) taken from **Khushwant Singh**'s *Train to Pakistan* may not be used in daily speech for they are author- bound and typically Punjabi in context. At first, these formations function like lexical innovations and seem unacceptable. But with time they gain currency, and no longer seem funny.

4.7 TOWARDS A DICTIONARY OF INDIAN ENGLISH

In the postcolonial period it has been realised that Non-native users of English constitute almost 35-40% of the English-using population, in diverse countries as India, Nigeria, the Far East, South Asia etc. The linguistic and literary contribution of these areas has been immense and can no longer be ignored. However, very few serious studies have been made on the lexicographical aspects of these varieties of English. Whatever earlier dictionaries had been made, had mainly intended to provide word lists, glossaries, and meanings for Englishmen and Americans visiting India for administrative, commercial and tourism purposes. These word lists were meant to serve as manuals for explaining un-English nativised lexical items. Thus lexicographical research was inadequate, keeping in mind the magnitude and importance of the task. Grammatical information about IE was not included in these early dictionaries– for example the proliferation in IE of constructs like *I am hearing, I am seeing, you must be knowing;* information about phonetic aspects of IE were also not included, chiefly because the British scholars and British trained Indian educators regarded the RP as the ideal –the desirable norm for Indian users of

English; semantics of IE (i.e. the process by which Words in IE came to mean more [+] or less [-] than the dictionary {native} meaning of these words)- was also ignored.

So any new research on the lexicographical aspects of IE must include information on of the following linguistic aspects– orthographical, phonetic, grammatical, semantic and etymological. The compilation of dictionaries for IE and other non-native varieties is a crucial step towards their standardisation. They are also important for descriptive and historical analysis. In short lexical research is a step towards recognising these varieties as distinct varieties of English. It should be remembered that, the discussions contained in 4.4 to 4.8 apply equally to the issues discussed in the unit entitled **Debate over Native and Non Native English.**

4.8 LET US SUM UP

IE is a cover term and it would be erroneous to think that it is a homogenous commodity and that users of these varieties are intelligible to users of other varieties. In fact, linguistic homogeneity is a dream of linguists and never a reality. The varieties within IE is perhaps more mind-boggling than the varieties in native English. As **Quirk** had said, these varieties:

> *'are so widespread in a community and of such long standing that they may be thought stable and adequate enough to be institutionalized and regarded as varieties of English in their own right rather than on the way to a more native-like English.* **(Kachru: 1988: 224)**

In India we have Englishes that are used in different Indian contexts. These may be termed as national uses of English. The situation is such that English has come to be regarded as an Indian language though not it is not of Indian origin. There is, however, a substantial number of Indians who use English for international communication, speaking what may be called international English. The English used in these contexts is 'educated IE', which has close proximity with educated British, or American English. The distinction between national and international English and national and international uses is important to understand the issue of global intelligibility and acceptability of IE. Communicative competence of IE has to be seen with reference to the local, intra-national and international uses of the language.

It may well happen that for some communicative purposes the native speaker may have to unlearn some aspects of his native language and learn some features/ characteristic of the local variety. Thus an Englishman/woman may have to de-Englishise him/herself and an American may have to de-Americanise him/herself. The rules before English pedagogy are complex – the educated/standard variety referred to in this unit emphasise a monomodel approach in the teaching of English. One should realistically aim at a polymodel concept– the choice of a model of language cannot be done in isolation from the functions of language and naturally appropriateness, implying thereby that acceptance and intelligibility cannot be isolated from the total pragmatic context.

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical note on the communicability of English literary writing in India.
2. What should be our attitude towards an English that 'deviates' from the British norm of English? Explain with reasons.

UNIT 5 DEBATE OVER NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH

Structure

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Native and Non-Native English
5.3 Standard English / Native English
5.4 Non –Native Varieties of English
  5.4.1 Dialects And Creoles
  5.4.2 Nativised Varieties And Anglo Hybrids
  5.4.3 Near-English / Fractured English
5.5 A Tripartite Model: ENL, EFL, ESL
5.6 The Diaspora of the English language
5.7 Changing Attitudes and the Future of English
5.8 Let Us Sum Up
5.9 Questions

5.0 OBJECTIVES

At present the position of the English language is unique in our world. It is used either as a mother tongue, as a second language, or as a foreign language by over a billion people all over the world i.e. by about a fifth of the human race. In this Unit we shall attempt to explore the vast body of what comprises Native and Non- Native Englishes and shall also place these different Englishes in the larger context.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The division between native and non-native English is in no way intended to divide the English speaking community on grounds of colour, or race. On the contrary, the terms are intended to highlight the "pragmatics of the new Englishes which have developed in new contexts, and to initiate linguistic, attitudinal and functional realism about their uses."(Kachru: 1983:211) The non-native–Englishes are a legacy of the long arm of imperialism and colonialism. The language too has developed in 'un-English' cultural and linguistic contexts. Due to extensive colonisation in Asia, Africa, the Far East, the Middle East, among other places, the Queens' English (so to speak) was called upon to function in very alien environments. In very un-English conditions the English language was called upon to discharge social, political, judicial, administrative, economic, and diplomatic functions. The next section looks into the debate between Native and Non- Native English.

5.2 NATIVE AND NON- NATIVE ENGLISH

English language in these very new conditions obviously had to undergo dramatic modifications to answer the new demands being made upon it. Any such discussion has to address crucial issues like the following:

- Factors which led to the growth of non-native Englishes in Asia and Africa;
- Reasons why English has been retained in these countries even after independence;
- Functional and pragmatic contexts in which these Englishes are used; the nativisation of the language (i.e. the lexical, phonological, syntactical and idiomatic changes);
- Growth of varieties within varieties; the interaction between native and non-native English.

The early years of the 20th century were marked by the rapid spread of the English language all over the world. Wherever people went, they were secure in the belief that they had a common means of communication through the English language. But millions of English speakers all over the world who had grown up with the belief that they are native speakers of English were suddenly brought up short on the issue of the intelligibility of the language they were using.

5.3 STANDARD ENGLISH / NATIVE ENGLISH

The spread of the English language in the early 20th century means the spread of what is known as Standard English. But what is this Standard English? Is it that which is held as the yardstick against which every other English is measured? The word 'standard' as used in the term Standard English has a military origin and started to be associated with language from the early 18th century. Of the various dialects, which were spoken on the British Isles—Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish and West Saxon around 900 A.D The dialect became widely used in course of time and soon gained ascendancy in courtly, literary and administrative matters. This happened first in England around the 15th century, next in Wales, Scotland and Ireland from the 16th century onwards and then throughout the English speaking diaspora from the 17th century onwards. The spoken form of this 'good' English developed by the 19th century and the concept of **'Received Pronunciation'** (RP) was introduced in 1925. Since the 18th century there had developed a tendency to regard the usage of the upper and middle classes (who had mostly studied in public schools) as more legitimate and real than any other English be spoken in any other part of England. This minority usage, which was also the usage of academic and professional writers in England soon gained the reputation of being the only *correct* English and was promoted to the status of Standard English. Through much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, English was regarded as the property of England or the United Kingdom. Communities using English elsewhere regarded themselves as the linguistic offspring of a "Mother Country' whose royalty, upper classes and cultural and media institutions served as exemplars and arbiters of good taste and good English. There has also been a long link between two expressions widely used for the English language—a **Standard Language** (whose norms and conventions closely follow the standards of education, print, administration and high culture) and a **Language Standard** (i.e. the level below which language usage should not fall). The phrase Standard English has come to mean a broad set of rules / standards/ norms available to anyone who goes to school for a sufficient number of years and whose general performance should not fall below a certain point. The phrase Standard English is sometimes used synonymously with another term **King's /Queen's English**, and has a reference to the language of the royal court.

It should be remembered that the very idea of a Standard English is a myth because as modern linguistics states, a dialect has as much intrinsic value as a so-called standard language. We should bear in mind that, however elevated and refined, present day English has its origin in a dialect, and was elevated to the status of a standard language by factors outside the scope of language.

5.4.2 Nativised Varieties and Anglo-Hybrids

In addition to dialects and Creoles, there are two more types of usage, so distinctive from conventional English that they pose problems of intelligibility. The first is called ***nativised English*** (or sometimes called indigenised English) and occurs in territories where it was not originally present but has been present now for sometime. Such a variety incorporates features of the regional language in terms of accent, intonation, grammatical structures, rhythm etc. Given below is an example of nativised English of Malaysia, nicknamed *Malenglish* or *Manglish* at an acrolect level in the form of a conversation between two women, one is a Tamil and the other is Chinese. Neither of them are native speakers of English or Malay. They have learnt Malay or English as their second or third language:

> *CHANDRA: Lee Lian, you were saying you wanted to go shopping, nak porgy tak? (Malay: Want to go?)*
> *LEE LIAN: Okay, okay, at about twelve, can or not?*
> *CHANDRA: Can lah, no problem! My case going to be adjourned anyway.*
> *LEE LIAN: What you looking for? Furnitures or kitchenwares? You were saying, that day, you wanted to beli some barang- barang (Malay: buy...things)*
>
> **(McArthur: 1998:11)**

In the above case those who know English but not Malay may get the gist of the conversation, but if the speakers move to the Malay end of their linguistic spectrum they will soon reach a point where they will become unintelligible to non-Malay speakers, despite the fact that they are basically speaking English, a situation exemplified by the following conversation between two Malaysian women, one a Tamil and the other a Malaya, in London:

> *VIMALA: Apa ini? (What's this?) What happened to you? I tunggu tunggu sampai dah (waited waited still already) fed up! Mana you pergi, (where you went) you joker!*
> *ZAINAB: Nowhere-lah! (Emphatic article) I was stuck in computer room. Big queue there. Hanya (only) three computer, thirteen orang (people) line-up-up. If I keluar,(If I move out) I go back to the end of the line. Jadi sampai sekarang pun, (Therefore till now also) I'll still be there! Mana lah!*
> *VIMALA: Okay, now you dah makan? (Already eaten)*
> *ZAINAB: Not yet! Sampai nak pengsan. (Nearly wanting to faint) Come let's go to Nahar. Dekat saja, (Near only) much easier, faster (too) pun!*
>
> **(McArthur: 1998:11)**

People in such situations have more than two languages at their disposal and can fluently switch systems from A to B. They have in fact a third system at their disposal AB in which A dominates and BA in which B dominates. If they have an additional language at their disposal, their hybridisation capacities are multiplied even more. In the US, along the Texas-Mexico borders, Latinos routinely mix Spanish and English into what is locally called *Tex-Mex* or *Border-Lingo* to form part of the larger complex whole called **Spanglish** which is spoken in California, Florida, New Mexico, New York, Puerto-Rico, Texas and elsewhere. In the Philippines the Anglo-hybrid is called **Mix-Mix** or **Taglish** (being a mixture of English and Tagalog, the main indigenous language of Metro Manila)

Developments of this kind constitute drastic changes in the way English, Malay, Spanish have been traditionally used and understood. Many names, often disparaging, have been coined to designate these hybrid varieties- *Chinglish, Frenglish, Swenglish, Russlish, Japlish* and so on. But now for the sake of convenience or lack of something more respectable, they have become virtually technical terms. The

hybridisation of English and the indefinite range of other languages that arise out of this phenomenon are at its most extensive form today. Contrary to general perceptions, English is simply flowing into them and endlessly creating new languages.

5.4.3 Near-English / Fractured English

The phenomena discussed above include dialects, creoles, nativised varieties, hybrids, etc. But the discussion can hardly stop here. Within the world English, there is another variety, often called *fractured English*, the aim of which is to get things done, somehow. Often the butt of many jokes, the following examples give a fair idea of what is fractured English:

- *American Dentist. 2nd floor - Teeth extracted by latest Methodists.*
- *The lift is being fixed for the next days. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.*
- *We are thankful to the professors of the English Department for their educational actions on us.*

(McArthur: 1998:19 -20)

The humour aside, these constructions are serious attempts at communication and such usages are becoming widespread across the spectrum of the English-speaking world. This fracturing of English happens every day at a very useful and vital level. **Tom McArthur**, quoting US journalist **Barry Newman**, says that what is called near English is being massively used across the globe to finalise business deals, for academic purposes, in legal affairs, in administration and so on.

Françoise Chevillet, Professor of English at University of Stendhalin Grenoble, France, has defined English as a *world language* while at the same time calling Spanish, Russian, even French *international languages*. **Chevillet** sets it apart not only from the prominent languages currently spoken but also from all languages ever. He also points to the inordinate speed at which the language has grown and expanded in the recent times, and to the fact that as the language has expanded, it has become more and more varied, leading some commentators to express the doubt that the language will soon break up into mutually unintelligible forms, much like what once happened to Latin. Traditionally most people have regarded languages as ethnic and communicative monoliths—that the French speak French, the Arabs speak Arabic and so on. The traditional thinking has been 'to each nation its language', rather than to each nation its *languages* (for example India, Canada, Singapore). In fact, the punch line should be 'to each language its nations, (for example Arabic, French, Spanish) In addition, some languages are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and geographically, so closely interlinked that it is difficult to decide whether they are *really* different. Swedish, Danish and Norwegian are cases in point. Despite the fact that they are separate languages, Swedes Danes and Norwegians communicate well with one another. The question arises: do they use different Scandinavian languages or different varieties of one Scandinavian language?

There is something comparable to the Scandinavian situation in **Chevillet's** idea of bilingualism within world English. As the British scholar, **C L Wren** had observed nearly 50 years ago:

> *One effect of universal schooling is the weakening of regional dialects and the growth of 'modified' standard English in imitation of teachers and through their efforts after producing the 'received pronunciation'. Many children now shew a sort of 'bilingualism', speaking one form of English at home and another at school.*
>
> **(McArthur: 1998: 32)**

5.5 A TRIPARTITE MODEL: ENL, NL, EFL, ESL

At the very outset it should be remembered that the terms *native* and *non-native* convey an impression of homogeneity, which is not at all the case. Among the non-native speakers, one must differentiate between those who learn English as a *second language* and those who learn it as a *foreign language* in both of which there are substantial variations of competence. Although there is nothing simple about the spread of English, in the 20th century, one relatively easy set of categories has been used by linguists and language teachers – a tripartite model described in 1970 by **Barbara Strang**, Professor of English and General Linguistics at the University of Newcastle:

> *At the present time, English is spoken by perhaps 300-400 million people who have it as their mother tongue. .... I shall call them A-speakers. There are many millions more for whom English may not be quite the mother tongue, but who learnt it in early childhood, and who lived in communities in which English has a special status.... These are B-Speakers found extensively in Asia...Then there are those English is a foreign language, its study required ....as part of their country's educational curriculum, though the language has no official or even traditional, standing in that country. These are C-speakers.*
>
> **(McArthur: 1998:42)**

Noted scholars like **Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech,** and **Jan Svartvik** have all agreed with this classification of English as a Native Language **(ENL),** English as a Foreign Language **(EFL)** and English as a second Language **(ESL)**

English As A Native Language Variation

English varies markedly from one ENL territory to another. For example, within UK there are significant differences of accent, grammar, and vocabulary between the inhabitants of the island. Cockney is very different from the English that is spoken in and around London and both are again different from Scots in which Scots and English are routinely mixed. Similarly in the US of A, there are vast differences between White English, Black English, the English spoken in the south and that spoken in the north. So the ENLhood of a place is no guarantee of unhampered communication in English.

ENL Speakers in English As A Second Language/English As A Foreign Language Territory

Significant groups of native speakers of English have been found in certain ESL territories, for e.g. the Anglo Indian community in India and the British expatriates in Hong Kong and so on.

ESL / EFL Speakers in ENL territories

Similarly, there are significant numbers of non-native speakers of English in ENL territories as a result of immigration. This is exemplified by ESL speakers in the US, with Spanish as their mother tongue.

The Distribution Of Pidgins And Creoles

English based pidgins and creoles do fit into this tripartite model and run across the three varieties. Thus, they are founding ENL settings in the Caribbean, in ESL settings in West Africa, in both ENL and ESL settings in Australasia-Oceania and the EFL settings of Panama, Surinam, etc. The long-standing impression in the minds of the people about native and non-native speakers is native speakers vs. foreign learners. The contrast here is between a group defined by *birth right* and one defined by *acquisition* .In conventional definitions a native speaker is by definition prior (and implicitly superior) no matter how inept the native speaker and how adept the non - native speaker. But in recent years ESL and EFL speakers are increasingly challenging such chauvinism.

5.6 THE DIASPORA OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The English language has been in a sense always on the move. This will be obvious from the discussion in the next and the following sections.

The British Isles

As soon as the English language arrived in England from Northern Europe it spread around the British Isles– in Wales, Cornwall, Cumbria and Southern Scotland, traditionally the stronghold of the Celtic languages. After the Norman invasion of 1066 the language spread through the Scottish lowlands. From the 12th century onwards, Ireland gradually fell under English rule. Up to this stage, the movements of the English language were on a local scale. The first steps towards the development of English as a global language began towards the end of the 16th century with the beginning of the process of British imperialism and colonialisation. At that time, at the beginning of the reign of **Queen Elizabeth I** in the 16th century, the number of English speakers was somewhere between 5-7 millions. By the time of the beginning of the reign of **Queen Elizabeth II** (1952) the number of speakers rose to 250 million, the vast majority living outside the British Isles.

America

The first permanent English settlement in the Americas dates from 1607 when an expedition arrived in Chesapeake Bay. The colonists called the settlement Jamestown (after **James I**) and the area Virginia (after virgin **Queen Elizabeth**) and further settlements followed quickly along the coast. Then in November 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers arrived at Cape Cod Bay and established what is today known as Plymouth, Massachusetts. The two settlements – one in Virginia and the other in present day New England– had very different linguistic backgrounds. The southern colonists came mostly from England's 'west country', i.e. from Somerset and Gloucestershire and brought with them its characteristic accent with its voicing of *s* sounds, and strong *r* after the vowels. Echoes of this accent can still be heard in the speech of communities, living in isolated valleys and islands. These 'Tidewater' accents are said to be closest we will ever get to the sounds of Shakespeare's English. By contrast the Plymouth colonists originated from the eastern counties of England such as London, Kent, Essex, Nottinghamshire etc. These eastern accents were different, notably lacking the *r* after the vowels, and they proved to be the dominant force in this area. The later population movements across America largely preserved these dialectal differences that arose out of these early patterns of settlement. Huge waves of immigration in the 17th century further diversified the linguistic spectrum of America, for example Pennsylvania came to be dominated by the Quakers who originated from the Midlands and the north of England. People speaking different kinds of English found themselves' living together as the New York area increasingly

became the focus of settlement. As a result the sharp differences between regional dialects began to disappear.

The English, the Dutch, and the French contributed to the richness of American English. Germans, Italians, Central European Jews fleeing from Europe arrived at the cauldron called America. Within a generation or two most of these immigrants, through a process of assimilation, had begun to speak English resulting in a massive growth in the mother tongue use of English. According to the 1991 census over 86% (198 million) of the population spoke only English at home

Canada

The first English contact with Canada was as early as in 1497 when **John Cabot** reached Newfoundland. Following the US Declaration of Independence in 1776 thousands of loyalists fled to Canada and settled in what is today known as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and further inland. Many British people identify Canadian accents as American and many Americans consider it British while Canadian themselves prefer not to identify themselves with either. The presence of French as a co-official language, especially in the Quebec area produces a socio-linguistic situation, which is unique.

The Caribbean

While the English language was spreading in the Americas, a highly distinctive variety was emerging in the islands of the West Indies, chiefly due to the huge influx of Black African Slaves, transported there to work in the sugar and cotton fields of the South. The policy of the slave traders was to bring together people of diverse linguistic backgrounds so as to make rebellion impossible. The result was the growth of several pidgin forms of communication, and in particular a pidgin between the slaves and the sailors many of whom knew English. Creole forms of French, Spanish and Portuguese also developed and in turn interacted with the English Creoles.

Australia and New Zealand

Continued British colonialism in the 18th century led to the introduction of the language in the southern hemisphere. **James Cook** had first visited Australia in 1770 and within 20 years the first penal colony had been established to relieve the overcrowded prisons in England. 'Free' settlers also began to arrive and from the mid-19th century immigration rose rapidly fuelled by discoveries of gold. The British Isles provided the majority of settlers and thus had a major influence on the language. Many of the convicts came from London and Ireland and the Cockney twang of London English and the brogue of Irish English can be traced inn the speech patterns of Australian English. The aboriginal languages as well as American English contributed extensively to the repertoire of Australian English.

Captain Cook Charted the island of New Zealand in 1769-70 and Europeans started there in the 1790s. Christian missionaries began work among the Maoris from about 1814 and the first official colony was established in 1840. Three strands of New Zealand's social history have influenced New Zealand's linguistic repertoire. Firstly in contrast to Australia the New Zealanders evince greater sympathy for British values and institutions and speak with an accent, which clearly displays British influence. Secondly, they emphasise their differences with Australia motivating the use of a distinctive New Zealand vocabulary. Increasing awareness of Maori rights has led to an increase in the number of Maori words in New Zealand English.

South Africa

Although Dutch colonists had arrived in the Cape as early as 1652, the first British settlement was not established until 1806 and settlements began in earnest from 1822 onwards. English was made the official language and attempts were made to anglicise the large Afrikaans speaking population. Initially there were certain number of regional dialects but in due course a more homogenous accent emerged, somewhat similar to the accents of Australia, which was also being colonised during the same period. English was used as a second language by the Afrikaans speaking population, which was carried to the northern parts of the country by Dutch colonists escaping British rule. An African variety of English also developed spoken largely by the black population, learnt in the mission schools and influenced by the language background of the speakers. Afrikaans, which was granted the status of Official language in 1952, was the language of the majority, including the whites and those in power. It is also the language of the majority coloured population. In recent years, people have increasingly become bilingual, with fluent command over a variety of languages ranging from Standard British English to languages strongly influenced by Afrikaans.

South Asia

In terms of numbers South Asia ranks as the third largest, after USA and UK. This is largely due to the position that the language has come to occupy in India. (Explained in detail in Unit IV) Elsewhere in the region, in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan etc. the English language has come to occupy a very important place and the different varieties are collectively known as South Asian English. Largely due to its size and strategic importance Indian English has come to dominate South Asian English.

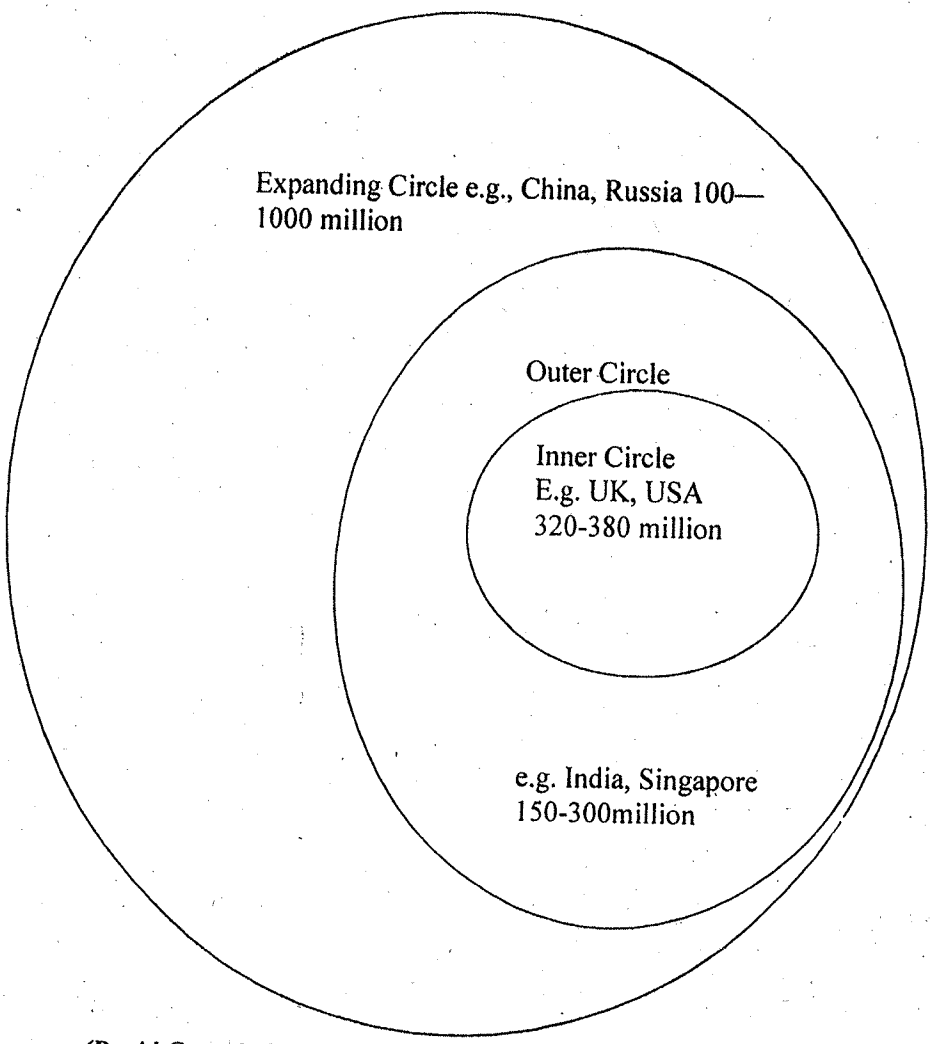
Africa

Despite several centuries of trade with Europe, by the end of the 18th century only the Dutch had established permanent trading posts. However by 1914 England, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, and Belgium had established colonies in Africa as a result of which the continent was cut up like a birthday cake. In most African countries English is popular as the second language or English based Creoles and pidgins serve as the *lingua franca* of the country.

South - East Asia and the South Pacific

The territories in and west of the south Pacific use an interesting mix of British and American English. Hawaii, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malacca, all came under American and British influence and borrowed their systems of law, education, administration etc. from one of these dominant countries. Increasing Chinese and Indian migration to these areas enhanced the importance of English and Standard English became the mark of social respectability and medium of opportunities.

Braj Kachru has observed that we think of the spread of English across the world in the form of three concentric circles. Although not all countries fall into this division, it has nevertheless been regarded as useful. The **inner circle** refers to the traditional bases and where it is the primary language - UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland. The **outer or extended circle** involves the earlier phases of the spread of English and plays the role of an important second language in a multilingual setting, as in India, Singapore, etc. The **expanding circle** includes those nations which recognise the importance of English as an international language but do give English any special status-for e.g. China, Japan, Greece, Poland, Russia etc.



(David Crystal: Cambridge University Press: 1997:54)

The inner circle is the norm - provider, the outer circle is the norm modifier and the expanding circle is the norm follower.

5.7 CHANGING ATTITUDES AND THE FUTURE Of ENGLISH

Given the worldwide expanse of English, it is obvious that the future of English does not depend on any one English speaking -territory, whether the UK in terms of its tradition and empire or the USA in terms of its size, population and power, or even the 'white 'countries in terms of their British heritage. The emergence of so many Englishes (discussed in 5.6) raises the **spectre of fragmentation –will English go the Latin way?** Will English eventually dissolve into a range of unintelligible languages much in the same way that Latin gave rise to the various Romance like French, Spanish and Italian? The whole topic is of very recent origin and it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions. English has indeed developed numerous varieties but they remain closely linked with one another. Problems of intelligibility do exist between (**Kachru's**) circles, but with the availability of international television, the continued presence of written Standard English in text books, newspapers etc. these variations can be overcome.

5.8 LET US SUM UP

As has been discussed in this unit the whole debate over native and non-native English is a motivated one, started by the erstwhile colonial powers to preserve their fast dwindling power. What is defined as native /standard is as much a dialect as any sub/non native variety spoken in any part of the world. In the course of its spread throughout the world on the wings of imperialism and colonialism, the English language was called upon to perform many functions, which were very un-English. Naturally, the language had to undergo many modifications, which in many cases so drastically altered the language that they became different from the original. But mere difference does not entail inferiority. As long as the languages effectively perform the functions they are meant to perform there is no need to label any language inferior, or sub-standard.

5.9 QUESTIONS

1. Explain briefly the process of evolution of English as a world language
2. What does the term 'Englishes' mean as against: 'English' in the modern world? Elucidate.

UNIT 6 SPACE OF ENGLISH IN MULTILINGUAL INDIA

Structure

6.0 Objectives
6.1 Introduction
6.2 English In Colonial India
6.3 Consolidation Of English In Imperial India
  6.3.1 English In Post- Independence India
  6.3.2 Place Of English In The Indian Educational Set Up
6.4 Future Plans
6.5 Role Of English Literature In English Language Teaching
6.6 The Question Of Numbers
6.7 The Future Of English In India
6.8 Let Us Sum Up
6.9 Questions

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will study the introduction of the English language into the country, the circumstances and motives surrounding it, its position in pre and post-independence India, its role in the educational set up of the country, the problems associated with English learning and teaching in India, its relations with the Indian languages and finally the future prospects of English in India. The space of English in post-independent India cannot be de-linked from this phenomena. Any understanding of the status and role of English in present day multilingual India has to necessarily take into account the circumstances under which English studies were introduced in India and the direction English studies have taken since then.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Any discussion on the space of English in present day multilingual India is bound to be a very complex one because Indians among themselves do not agree or as to whether or not English is a foreign language. Many Indians feel that despite use of the language in India of over five centuries, English has not become an intrinsic part of the Indian social fabric. Yet some people continue to feel inferior for their lack of proficiency in English and are defensive and embarrassed about their vernacular or mother tongue education. But again there are some who feel the indispensable need for English in the country.

6.2 ENGLISH IN COLONIAL INDIA

The European languages arrived in India with the discovery of the sea route to the subcontinents by **Vasco da Gama** in1498. The influx began with the Portuguese and the French, who later surrendered political power to the British. Through the 15th and 16th centuries the British quietly devoted themselves to the gathering of information about India, and once that was done they arrived in India with full vengeance and drove out all European competition very soon. Where the British were qualitatively different from the Portuguese is that while the latter language became a *lingua franca*

wherever the Portuguese set-up shop, English never interacted with the Indian languages in the same way, did not go through the process of creolisation and de-creolisation and remained more or less an elite phenomenon. The teaching of English in India dates back to the early 19th century and was initially associated with the energetical spirit of the missionaries.

The **East India Company** entered the picture when the **Charter Act** of 1813 made the **Company** responsible for the education of the Indians. It was at this stage that the issue of the medium of education took center stage. These early attempts at English language teaching in India were overshadowed by political compulsions. The efforts of the pro English lobby culminated in **Macaulay**'s *Minutes* of 1853. **Macaulay**'s *Minutes* of 1835 advocating English education in India reflects this limited perception of the rulers and their imperial design. Despite protests from vernacularists and orientalists, **Lord Bentick** accepted this proposal and directed all funds to be employed in imparting to the native population knowledge of English literature and science in the English language. **Lord Auckland** resolved the issue once and for all in favour of the English (in 1839). **Lord Hardinge** contributed his bit to the controversy by promising jobs only to those trained in English. This proved irresistible bait for Indians with the result that

> *The period from 1833 to 1853 is replete with the efforts to popularise English both by the rulers and the Indians themselves. English became the sine qua non for the scholar, the job seeker, and the affluent in the society.*
>
> **(Sood: P 24)**

So a kind of three-language formula came in to existence. English became the most popular medium of instruction but existing facilities for oriental and vernacular education also continued. But obviously they did not enjoy the same status as English – e.g. while Persian continued in the Lower Courts, in the Higher Courts English continued. Language thus became a marker of social differentiation and the British rulers consciously tried to promote English to a position of prestige. This led to sharp divisions in the population between the English educated elite, the vernacular educated and the illiterate masses. The elite by virtue of their closer links with the rulers became absolutely alienated from the masses.

6.3 CONSOLIDATION OF ENGLISH IN IMPERIAL INDIA

As **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** has pointed out, the consolidation of the English language in India coincided with the consolidation of the colonial power in India. Learners were introduced to a literary cannon comprising **Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats,** and the likes that were presented as the finest in literature. A shelf of these books was said to be worth all the literatures of the orient. So the net result of this brain washing was that, irrespective of whether Indians had knowledge of their vernacular literature or not, every educated Indian swore by this cannon, a fallacy which continued till very recently. To take care of its elite nature a series of reforms were introduced by the **Morley-Minto** Reforms (1909), the **Montague-Chelmsford** Report (1917) and the **Calcutta University Commission** recommendations (1919), but neither the English language nor the English model of education reached the masses.

The Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920 suggested that children should be withdrawn from English medium schools and be admitted to National Schools. Within a very short span of time, several national institutions, namely the Gujrat, Bihar, Kashi and Maharashtra Vidyapiths, the Quami Vidyapith of Lahore and the National Muslim University of Aligarh were established, with the clearly defined agenda of controlling Indian education and fostering love and respect for Indian

languages and culture. Through the 19th and 20th centuries several language associations developed-The *Brahmo Samaj* (1828), The *Arya Samaj* (1875), The *Satyashodhak Samaj* (1873) all of whom knew that they could far greater numbers of people through the Indian languages. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries voices continued for Indian languages and vernacular education, most notably **Gokhale**'s famous **Bill for Compulsory Primary Education** (1910-12), and the **Zakir Hussain Committee Report** (1938) prepared under the influence of **Gandhiji**, who all insisted that mother tongue draws out the best in each child and should be made the basic tenet of all education philosophy.

Despite these efforts English continued to gain importance in pre-Independent India and English medium schools and colleges continued to multiply and flourish. English became an important weapon of the freedom struggle—the Indian leaders used the language of the colonisers against them and became a medium of sharing, collecting and spreading information in different parts of the country. As **Agnihotri** and **Khanna** point out

> *" It added another voice to the Indian multilingual repertoire, though a voice that did not rise from its grassroots nor perhaps a voice that could ever reach its grassroots."*
>
> **(Agnihotri and Khanna:1997: 28)**

6.3.1 English In Post- Independence India

English in India in the post-1947 period has passed through the same stages of development and controversy as in the Pre-Independence days. When India became free in 1947 the immediate task before the leaders of the country was to find a national language (*lingua franca*), which would serve as a symbol of national unity and integration. According to the first census of free India (in1951) there were 845 dialects and 15 major regional languages belonging to different language families. None of these languages could claim superiority to the others and no consensus could be reached for some time. The battle came down to two languages –Hindi and English. Hindi was seen as a threat by south Indians. Those who had fought for India's independence however felt the presence of colonial rule in the retention and spread of English. It was obvious that a compromise needed to be evolved.

Finally in 1950 the Constitution of India stipulated that Hindi in the Devnagri script would be the official language of the Union of India and laid down a time frame of 15 years to effect the change over from English to Hindi. It was expected that by 1965 Hindi would become the language of mass communication and replace English in most of its domains. All this has been discussed earlier, so a brief mention will be sufficient. By 1959 it became obvious that proposed changeover from English to Hindi was not going to happen. In 1959, Prime Minister **Nehru**, in a speech in the Lok Sabha assured the non-Hindi speaking people that English would continue as long as they wanted it. But Nehru's death in 1964 rekindled the apprehensions of the non-Hindi speaking population leading to agitations and violence. Finally in 1967 The Official Languages (Amendment) Act, settled the issue by making English an associate language of the Union of India without any time limit.

In 1956 the **Academy of Tamil Culture** objected to the imposition of Hindi as the official language on the grounds that it is an unfamiliar language to a population of about one hundred million. Again in 1958 the All India Language Conference demanded "the continuance of English as the Union language without ant time limit". Similar anti-Hindi agitations continued through the 1960s. While the anti-Hindi groups pressed for the retention of English, the pro-Hindi groups agitated for the introduction of a highly sanskritised Hindi which made the language an alien one for even the native speakers of the language.

6.3.2 Place Of English In The Indian Educational Set Up

Do we need English in India and especially in the educational sector? Some experts argue that English has no place in rural India and that poor people can hardly afford English education. They feel that though English may serve as a link language and the language of opportunities, local or regional languages should be preferred. But such views are in a minority and most Indians regard English as an Indian language and a necessary part of everyone's development. They feel that English had made positive contributions to our freedom struggle and occupies a neutral position, thus making it more acceptable to the southern states. It is also supposed to be the language that will open newer worlds of knowledge and opportunities and power. It was the common consensus that English is here to stay. As Professor **Amitabha Basu** put it:

> *English is the language of the new global world. Wherever you go, you can manage with English. There id no point in wishing away the importance of English.*
>
> **(Agnihotri and Khanna: 1997: 117)**

Spread of democracy and expansion of educational opportunities have led to a phenomenal increase in the number of students, schools and colleges. Education is no longer the exclusive privilege of the upper classes. More and more students from the lower strata of society, from marginal groups and from rural areas are enrolling in schools and colleges. Most of them are first generation learners and do have an environment conducive for learning, both in terms of technology (namely facilities for learning and teaching languages like T.V, radio etc.) and home and peer environment. Many of them are even unable to afford even basic textbooks, let alone extra reading material. They have very little time to devote to their studies, as they have to help their parents in the fields or at home. Most of them are from regional medium schools and cannot relate to English.

A vicious circle operates at the school levels-the socially and economically backward cannot afford to give their children expensive private school education because they are unable to complete at the national level, which in turn keeps them where they are. At the college level the teaching of English has been more commonly associated with literature than with language teaching. Initially, the majority of students seeking admission to colleges came from English medium backgrounds and had no problems in adjusting to the college atmosphere. But things started changing in the sixties when more students from the lower sections of society and from rural areas started seeking admission to the colleges. The medium of instruction in most Indian universities continued to be English though the **University Education Commission** had in 1949 recommended regional languages to be the medium of education.

The demand for English education has led to a phenomenal growth in the number of English medium schools and colleges, with their attending problems. Education has become such a lucrative business that several erstwhile charity organisations have set up expensive private English medium schools. Minority rights guaranteed in the constitution have helped in these malpractices. Nothing prevents the minority institutions from admitting in their institutions children not belonging to minority communities. The vague three- language formula enables them to teach English as a mother tongue, even when it is not the mother tongue of anyone even remotely connected with the school.

The position of English in is a complex one, made even more complicated by the varied condition under which Indian learners learn the language. English is not really a foreign language, more like a second language. Yet it is not really a second language in the sense in which it is used in the English speaking countries. So English language teaching in India is different from the teaching of English to immigrants in UK, US and other English speaking countries. Moreover the existence of a non-native variety of English, namely, Indian English, complicates matters.

Kachru has identified two broad categories of non-native English in India-the *institutionalised* and the *performance variety*. The performance variety is confined to a few functional contexts like tourism, commerce and other international transactions. It is the institutional variety, which had some educational and pedagogical value. English language teaching and learning in this context is a complicated affair because the learners in this situation are not exposed much to native varieties of English (i.e. material written abroad) but are surrounded by non-native varieties of English through radio, TV newspapers, journals etc. The non-native varieties naturally clash with the standard variety but it is this non-native variety that comes naturally to the students, not only because they are more exposed to it, but also because of the pull of the mother-tongue. So any future plans regarding the role and importance of English must keep these factors in mind.

6.4 FUTURE PLANS

One has to be realistic when planning the future of English in India. What one must aim at neither the native nor the non-native variety but a compromise between the two (.e. the variety used by the educated non-native speakers using English as a world language). The aim should be to equip the learners with an ability to switch from the local variety to the standard variety whenever the need arises, not only in the limited sense of the formal features of the language, but in all those widener aspects which makes communication possible. This should be the realistic goal, rather than the idealistic goal of 'native-like' linguistic/communicative competence.

One fallacy in the English language teaching efforts till now has been the total banishment of the L1from the English language classroom. Instead what should be done is to exploit the learners L1 competence to enhance their English competence. There may be more similarities between the two languages at the discourse level that there are dissimilarities at the formal/structural levels. What is needed is to equip the second language learner with the mental ability to translate at the discourse level from one language to another, provided of course they can also make the required formal/ structural changes in the language. Instead off regarding it as a menace, one has to positively exploit the learner's tendency to understand the target language in terms of his L1or the target language systems already learnt.

The learners needs have to be made primary and one way of doing so is the introduction of *English for specific purposes* (ESP). It entails the provision of English language teaching to meet the learner's particular needs; is related to the particular occupation or area of study; selective (and not general) language content. But ESP teaching is made complex by the fact that students at both school and college levels have little in common. They have varying levels of language competence, (having been exposed to English for anything from 2 to 7 years), gender, mother tongue, regional language etc.

Let us discuss the target and focus of English at the present time. *The target for ELT planners in India should be inculcating fluency* and *accuracy* among learners. Students should be provided enough opportunities for conversations and discussions in formal and informal situations so as to maximise the benefits from their limited knowledge of the language. Focus should be not only on RP (Received Pronunciation), intonation and stress. The aim should be not to teach rules and grammar but to enable the learners to convert and use the rules that they already know. 'Accuracy' teaching should be limited to the school levels, and after that learners should be made aware of the common errors that Indian speakers of English make. Integration of fluency and accuracy in English teaching will be more beneficial than the present focus only on accuracy.

The overall target should be the enhancement of the *communicative skills* of the learners. Conversation, discussion, writing, listening all will be covered under the umbrella skill of communication. The provision for fluency will take care of the conversational aspects but special measures will have to be devised to improve the comprehension, writing and listening skills of the learners. Writing skills are different from speech in as much the interlocutor is not present to make his/her contribution to the interaction. In a spoken situation it is possible to make adjustments and modifications and continue the conversation. But in written speech both the roles have to be undertaken by the writer, thus making the task more difficult. The same ability has to be used by the reader to comprehend written language.

At the same time provisions have to be made to teach *functional skills* to students if they decide to discontinue studies and join vocational courses or any job (as discussed earlier.) Functional skills can include items like reporting, correspondence, abstracting, summarising, narrating, editing etc. In this context ELT planning assumes crucial importance. No amount of syllabus changes will bring about significant improvements if the situation in the classroom does not change. Classroom activity is far more important that syllabus content. In India, school teachers, need to acquire professional qualification (i.e. a B.Ed degree) in colleges language teaching is entrusted in the hands of teachers having degrees in literature. This may not be enough for language teaching, particularly second language teaching.

The selection of teachers, the selection of textbooks also leaves much to be desired. Textbooks are selected without considering the cultural, linguistic backgrounds of the students, (and also the teachers) the beliefs and practices. For example prescribing **Henry James'** *The Ambassadors* for second year BBA students, hailing mostly from rural, non-English medium backgrounds is the height of foolishness. Moreover foreign, when prescribed are not properly edited making them unsuitable for both the learner and the teacher. Texts should be prescribed keeping in mind not only thematic appropriateness, but also style (i.e. who wrote it and for whom.) The aim should be to prepare material in such a way as to guide students to an awareness of the communicative requirements operating in that field in real life. A written text involves as much interaction between reader and writer as in a spoken face-to-face interaction situation. To understand the text the reader must engage in interpretive and decoding exercises. So when editing texts proper comprehension exercises must be framed in order to develop this understanding faculty.

6.5 ROLE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In any discussion of the role of the English language in India one issue we cannot avoid is the role and relevance of English literature in the teaching set up. What is under fire today is not the teaching of English literature but the lopsided content which puts too much focus on British literature. It is recognised that literature can play a very constructive role in language teaching activities. Literature both foreign and Indian is a repository of masterful language use which no student of language can afford to ignore. Moreover, literature can provide the students with an opportunity of comparative study. Through literature it is possible to compare the values and attitudes of different countries and cultures. This widens the worldview of the students and makes them world citizens in the true sense of the term. Literature is the repository of the greatest thoughts of human kind and the most valuable parts of cultures of different nations. In addition, study of literature can foster in the students critical and scholarly habits, develop aesthetic and philosophical tendencies and in certain cases inculcate faith in collective life.

The benefits of literature study are undeniable. But what is needed is to reorient literature studies and modify the focus to keep it in tune with modern requirements. Out of the three aims of teaching *(i.e. giving information, imparting skills and changing attitudes)* literature teaching till now has remained limited to only the second. The drawbacks of this method is obvious- it presupposes the learners familiarity with the language; secondly with proliferation of *bazaar notes* it is possible for the student to pass all examinations without actual contact with the textbook; thirdly instead of encouraging the students to relate with the text on an individual level, the present system encourages them to mug up the sayings and opinions of critics and reproduce them verbatim in the examination without any personal addition whatsoever. As a reaction to the extreme subjectivity of literature studies the discipline of *Stylistics* developed but also could not survive for long due to its inherent drawbacks. But the welcome change was a greater focus on language. While literary focussed more on content, the linguists gave importance to language. Both come with their own dangers and when taken to extremes can defeat the whole purpose of teaching.

To sum up, literature has an important place in Indian language teaching endeavours, provided it is handled carefully and sensitively by keeping the learners, needs in mind.

6.6 THE QUESTION OF NUMBERS

Amidst all these discussions of Imperial designs and political compulsions, some important questions remain unanswered: How many people in India do speak English? What are the criteria for the definition of bi-lingualism as fixed by the Indian Census Office– is it a few words, some basic communicative skills or complete linguistic mastery? How many people *regularly and fluently* use English in their daily affairs?

The standards adopted by the Indian Census Office in themselves lack standardisation. Down the years the Census Questionnaire on language has undergone dramatic changes. The questions in 1901,1911 and 1921 were confined to the respondent's knowledge of English only. In1931 the aim was to find out the language which language the respondent uses most commonly in addition to the mother tongue. In the 1941 and 1951the language question was repeated on the pattern of the 1931 question with the specification that only an Indian language could be mentioned as a subsidiary language and only that language was to be recorded which the respondent knew best. In the 1961 census two important changes were made to the concept of bi-lingualism, first that even a non- Indian language could be recorded as a subsidiary language and secondly instead of one, two secondary were recorded. Dialects of the mother tongue did not however qualify as mother tongue. In 1971he same pattern continued except that the conditions regarding dialects were dropped. In 1981only one subsidiary language was counted. So figures from different census are not comparable –for example the figure of English bi-lingualism declined from 25 million in 1971 to 2.6 million.

Year	Total population (In millions)	Total 7+literacy rate (In millions)	Bilinguals (In%)	Eng.Bi-lingls (In Millions)	population (In Millions)
1951	361	289	20	not recorded	not recorded
1961	439	344	30	45	11
1971	548	432	36	71	25
1981	685	556	44	73	3
1991	844	701	52	not recorded	not recorded

(Agnihotri and Khanna: 1997: 37)

English Bi- linguals constitute about 4%of the total bi-linguals in India. But unless more standardized and uniform methods of evaluation are developed census data will remain suspect. The 2001 census throws up interesting facts about the present position of English in India. English is nowhere among the top 15 languages in India, is not the first language among language in even the north eastern states, and at best qualifies as the second preference language for some speakers. The language data collected from the 1991 census gives a fairly correct idea of how many people actually speak English in India and at what level.

The 1981 census reported 13.3 percent of the population as bilingual. The People of India project of the Anthropological Survey of India, which assembled statistics on communities rather than on individuals, found that only 34 percent of communities reported themselves as monolingual. An Assamese who also knew Bengali, or someone from a Marathi-speaking family living in Delhi who attended a Hindi-medium school, might give Bengali or Hindi as his or her second language but also know English from formal school instruction or picking it up on the street. It is suspected that many people identify language with literacy and hence will not describe themselves as knowing a language unless they can read it and, conversely, may say they know a language if they can make out its alphabet. Thus people who speak English but are unable to read or write it may say they do not know the language.

English-language daily newspapers have a circulation of 3.1 million copies per day, but several people probably read each copy. There are estimates of about 3 percent (some 27 million people) for the number of literates in English, but even if this percentage is valid, the number of people with a speaking ability of the language is certainly higher than of those who read it. And, the figure of 3 percent for English literacy may be low. According to one set of figures, 17.6 million people were enrolled in English classes in 1977, which would be 3.2 percent of the population of India according to the 1971 census. Taking the most conservative evaluation of how much of the instruction would "stick," this still leaves a larger part of the population than 3 percent with some English literacy.

6.7 THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

As **Khanna and Agnihotri** (quoting **Khubchandani**) point out Language teaching and learning in the traditional Indian set-up was quite different. Education was mainly through *pathshalas* and *madarsas* and was an integral part of a complex social order of interaction and communication. The linguistic inheritance that the child brought to the school was not looked down upon. Instead the existing skills were

polished and a linguistic repertoire was built up which included styles ranging from local dialects to "highbrow styles". For example a Sanskrit scholar could read Sanskrit not only in the Devnagri script, but also in Telugu and many other Indian scripts. This produced a linguistic heterogeneity that is perhaps unparalleled in the world. Linguistic variation instead of acting as a barrier to communication was actually facilitating interaction and communication.

Uncomfortable with this heterogeneity the British rulers imposed the English language to create a monistic solution for all India's language problems. But as was apparent from the very beginning this could never succeed and voices of caution and protest continued to be raised throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. After Independence numerous committees and commissions were established in an attempt to find a solution to the vexed language problem. Without exception all these committees emphasised the importance of the mother tongue in the education of he child. This also was not the solution because it ignored the basic heterogeneous nature of Indian society where different languages are used for various occasions.

Despite repeated attempts to enhance the importance of the regional languages and mother tongue in the educational system of the country, it seems to be a losing battle. As can be expected in the present situation were English has become synonymous with power and prestige the importance of English has continued to rise. It has got tremendous 'upmarket value'. Be it education (especially professional and technical), administration, judiciary, administration, Information Technology, job opportunities in multinational companies, fluency in English in the primary requirement. English continues to be the language of commerce, industry, and banking and is. English continues to be the passport to higher professional and technical education by renowned institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs). It is the general belief that proficiency in English will open the doors of material prosperity and well being. The language remains associated with career advancement, social mobility and social status and prestige and power. It being a world language it will open windows of opportunity not only in India but also all over the world.

6.8 LET US SUM UP

There is a general craze for 'convent education' and this type of education has remained the exclusive privilege of the rich. Again, without exception the standard of English teaching in Indian schools (with the exception of a few elite schools) has fallen dramatically, chiefly because infrastructure has not been able to keep up with the exploding number of students. But the role and importance of English in the Indian society continues to rise unhindered. Vernacular and mother tongue education continue to be neglected. Thus, while Hindi remains the 'official' language, English continues to rule the roost. Problems caused by this phenomenon are indeed difficult to resolve.

6.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the importance and role of English in modern India.
2. Bring out the link between language teaching and the study of literary texts.

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8. Web Site: www.censusindia.net

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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

Block

5

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH LITERATURE

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block we shall look at the specific problems of teaching and learning English literature in the postcolonial Indian context. In the **First Unit**, we shall trace briefly the history of the institutionalisation of English literature in Indian universities before Independence. This will be followed by a discussion of the strategies of teaching and the goals of learning English literature. After which would be an analysis of the growth and development of English studies in the Indian academy in the decades following 1947. The discussion would take stock of augmentation of English studies in the decades following globalisation, recent trends in the market and demand for English literature graduates. Why is English literature studied today? What are the objectives of today's students opting for this course? What is the profile of these students? Are there specific class gender dimensions that assume significance in the context of English literary studies in our country? In other words, do students only from particular social strata or from a specific school background, opt for English studies? Do more girls opt for this course than boys? If so, why? Such are the questions we have to consider in this block.

The block would analyse the nature of the historical predicament that plagues the teacher of English literature in the Indian classroom. The problems of teaching and learning English literature would be placed in the frame of a cultural negotiation that is embedded in historical, market-biased forces. We shall also take up the issue of pedagogic challenges, strategies of learning and translation practices that prevail in our classrooms. We shall examine how far English education has been designed and implemented for the exclusive consolidation of our middle-class in social, legislative, bureaucratic power structures? What role can English Literary Studies (ELS) play to empower the masses? In what ways can it address itself to the everyday life of the masses? What are the implications of English education in universities in a country that is plagued by a high rate of illiteracy?

In the **fourth**, **fifth** and **sixth** units, specific texts prescribed in your syllabus will be taken up for detailed analysis. The essays would be analysed for their contribution to the debate initiated in the early 90s on the place of English studies in Indian universities. We shall examine how TELI (Teaching of English Literature in India) could be made socially relevant in contemporary India. Alternative strategies of teaching would be examined to see how TELI could be made an invigorating discipline.

This block then would effectively contextualise, problematise and investigate the place of ELS in our society and the academy.

UNIT 1 PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH LITERATURE

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Popularity of English Studies Today
1.3 Profile of Students of English Studies
1.4 English Studies in India : A Gendered Choice
1.5 Let Us Sum Up
1.6 Questions
1.7 Glossary

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to highlight the place of English studies in our society. To this end a brief historical overview of the introduction of English studies in Indian universities would be undertaken. This process would be traced through the period of struggle for Independence from imperial rule, to decades following India's Independence and its current status in a globalised context.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

> *English is today studied because of its commercial and so-called political value. Our boys think, and rightly in the present circumstance, that without English they cannot get government service. Girls are taught English as a passport to marriage... I know husbands who are sorry that their wives cannot talk to them and their friends in English. I know families in which English is being made the mother-tongue... The cancer has so eaten into the society that in many cases, the only meaning of education is a knowledge of English.* Gandhi 1921

Most of us would nod in agreement with the writer quoted above. You would notice the anguish and the candour that mark this writer's comment on a subject that we shall probe together in this Block. Well, do you recognise this writer? Can you guess when this comment was made? Does this sound as contemporary and familiar as today's editorial? In fact, the writer quoted above is none other than **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**, writing in YOUNG INDIA (dt1/6/1921) His observations are as thought-provoking, and insightful today as they were eighty years ago. Why do we learn English? What is the objective of teaching English in India? Such questions as these have been raised and problematised ever since 1835 when **Thomas Macaulay** recommended in his *Minute* on education that Britain should officially encourage English education in India and withdraw its support to Arabic and Sanskrit. **Gandhiji**'s critique of English education in India raises pertinent questions pertaining to colonial policy on the introduction of English in India. It is also pertinent to the present discussion on the continued use of English in post-1947 India.

Let us, now, probe the historical cultural and political forces that initially paved the way for the introduction of English as a medium of instruction as well as the inclusion of English literature in the curriculum of institutions of higher learning in India. It is important to recognise that the entry of English literature in Indian universities was beset with colonial politics. The establishment of three Presidency universities in 1856 was governed not so much by any altruistic desire of conferring liberal education to the colonised subjects but rather by a design to create an elite

class amongst them that would appreciate and consume British goods and imbibe British taste. The colonial compulsion to economise and minimise the costs of administering a vast colony like India led to the creation of an indigenous officialdom. The need arose to fashion "a class" of people 'who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.' (**Macaulay**, *Minute on Education*).

The introduction of English in Indian universities, you will notice, conferred social power and material gain to a select class. English emerged as a language of power and political privilege. The cultural hegemony of the English-educated class resulted in the segregation of professional middle class from the masses. Incidentally, the *1835 Minute on Education* maintained a calculated silence on primary education. English literature was introduced in universities for its professed "universal" values. Thus, the primacy allotted to literature over literacy precipitated a myopic and elitist vision of higher education that enlarged the gap between the learner's social reality and the subject of learning. This, in turn, led to a distancing, to an inevitable alienation of the educated class from the masses that it was trained to govern. Let us quote **Gandhi** again:

> *The English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools...I was fas becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. (Harijan, 1938).*

The cultural elitism of the English educated class is a social reality to reckon with even today. If colonial administrative needs ensured secure government jobs for English educated persons, the scenario has not altered in the post-1947 India either. Social mobility, cultural elitism and better access to the job market continue to be the immediate gains for the English educated class. English literature, in fact, is a popular optional paper among the aspirants to Indian civil services even today. How many of you recognise this nexus between English language/literature and privileged bureaucratic posts? How many of you have enrolled for an MA in English as an enabling peg to gain entry to the prestigious civil services? English studies, even today, as in the colonial past, makes it possible to acquire jobs in the government sector. Let us now analyse the popularity of English Studies in the present scenario.

1.2 POPULARITY OF ENGLISH STUDIES TODAY

The confusion over a course in English literature and a course in English language has persisted over the decades. The notion of a degree in English honours as a weapon of power in our social, economic and cultural space has crystallised as never before. The rush for a course in English Honours is regulated by social elitism and the cultural privileges it promises to confer on the students. The prevalence of English in the higher echelons of legislative, executive and judicial power, its hegemony in the academia, at seminars, in professional sectors and in technology has consolidated the position of English-speaking class in our society. The ever expanding presence of multi-nationals companies, corporate banking and the latest entrant to the corridors of cultural and economic privilege – the Information Technology (IT) sector - have further boosted the demand for English-knowing candidates. The mushrooming of coaching institutes that offer crash courses in "English conversation" (in 30 days!), prepare candidates for job interviews, competitive exams and for aspiring emigrants indicates that English learning is a time- tested means to social advancement.

English is not a mere instrument for us but a force shaping and moulding personality, making us a wholly different kind of character from what we should have been if we did not know the language.

The "character" that **Chaudhuri** alludes to here is not the individual's personality but rather the social and cultural privileges enjoyed by a class of persons equipped in English. This fact is wholly recognised by the hitherto underprivileged sections of our society as well. Hence the ever-increasing demand for English medium schools in rural areas and the rush for admissions in such schools in semi-urban clusters. The maid who is illiterate works for longer hours in order to be capable of sending her son to an 'angrezi' school. The mason spares a hefty amount from his daily earnings to pay for his children's tuition fees in a private school imparting education in English. He prefers the 'English medium' schools to the less expensive municipal corporation-run schools that stick to the vernacular medium. Many states like Maharashtra and Punjab have introduced English in the state-run primary schools to cope with the demand for learning through English from the local residents. Let us now probe the profile of students who wish to pursue English studies in India.

1.3 PROFILE OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Problems that accompany teaching a set of students who enrol for a degree in English owing to their perception of its cultural privileges are manifold. As such, we encounter a heterogeneous group. Colleges affiliated to universities are also heterogeneous in terms of standard of teaching, infrastructure, library facilities, etc. Students hailing from non-metropolitan pockets or first generation learners often enrol for a degree in English in order to polish up their linguistic skills. When they are required to study canonical texts of pre-modern British literature, they are rudely shaken out of their maze. Far from learning to speak and write fluently in English here they are faced with the task of studying **Chaucer**, **Spenser**, **Milton** and **Joyce**! Others join the course owing to academic compulsions: either because they failed to get an entry into other market-savvy, professional courses or else they prefer English Honours as a soft option that would allow them adequate time to prepare for entrance exams for professional courses.

There are yet others who are blessed with an inherited business empire and need to obtain a degree purely for the social prestige that it offers. The choice of English studies has an unambiguous class value and this, in turn, categorises teaching and learning of English literature as a highly problematic choice. The students' disinterest in literature as an area of cultural interrogation pushes them to elitist corridors that remain oblivious of social and cultural issues. Any literature is studied with the objective of investigating its representation of social and cultural issues concerning the age and polity. The study of literature is meant to enable the student to analyse, critique and contribute to issues that shape the thinking as well as reflect the struggle for betterment of one's society. But large pockets of students enrolling for English studies are swayed by the prestige that such a degree confers on them rather than the ability to critique or reflect which a training in a literature course offers. Such categories of students in fact force us to pause and probe the historical processes that led to the introduction of English literature in Indian universities as well as take stock of emerging lobbies of power (both rural and metropolitan) whose vested interests have helped in the continuance of English studies as a tool of immense power. In a country with a rich, multilingual literary tradition, what are the forces, do you think, that account for the continued hegemony of the English language? How is it that novels, plays, poems, etc., from India in English are credited with instant recognition and showered with international awards while literary productions in other Indian languages have to await the mediacy of translation into English to merit attention even within the country? Do you perceive a politics of categorisation that attributes

qualitative distinctions to literary works on the basis of the class angle from where it has been written? A hierarchical framework regarding literatures of various languages prevents healthy exchange of ideas. Over the years a distinct trend can be perceived. While fiction, poetry or writings in any other genre written in Indian languages are categorised as per the specific language in which they have been expressed (for example Marathi literature, Tamil literature, Sindhi literature, etc.), literary works composed in English by Indian writers are categorised as national literature. The tag of regional literature affixed to writings in various Indian languages assumes an implication of inferiority. This has set up a spurious hierarchy between literary productions. The western academy remains unaware of the wealth of our literature unless it gets translated into English. How would you account for the centralizing force of English language in our country? How effective a link is English in India where only 2-2.5 per cent of the population is well versed in English?

Recently, Hindi journalist and writer **Mrinal Pande** commented that vernacular media persons are ignored even when they are as good as, if not better than their English counterparts. She noted that "language segregates society...It is the single most important cause of communalism". From **Mohandas Gandhi** to **Mrinal Pande,** writers and leaders have agonised over the misplaced, exaggerated hegemony of English in India. The anglicism has only intensified over the decades. Let us now examine the motives behind the choice to study English Literature today.

1.4 ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA: A GENDERED CHOICE

There is yet another significant and interesting aspect of English studies in India. The choice of English studies is, by and large, a gendered choice. The English departments both in terms of student strength and in constitution of faculty reflect a pronounced presence of women. Women as repositors of cultural and moral values are encouraged to opt for a course in English literature - the overriding belief being that English literature holds forth "universal" and "eternal" values that would be congenial to the fashioning of a woman's subjectivity. This, in a way, extends the colonialist argument of **Lord Macaulay** that "a single shelf of a good European library" "was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." This suggested that western literature carries universal values and essential truths that can be unproblematically assimilated by the native population, solely to their benefit. The tendency to essentialise literature and dehistoricise English studies; to wrench its literary productions out of its cultural location and perpetuate ahistorical readings of the same needs to be strongly contested/resisted. No literary text can be studied in isolation from its historical and cultural context. While **Macaulay** camouflaged the imperialist intention in introducing English literature in Indian universities by his discourse of liberal, essentialist tropes, the continuation of English studies in India without a keen awareness of the rationale behind its initial entry into our academia would indicate a complicity in the earlier imperialist agenda.

A subtle variation of the prescribing of "universal" texts to colonised subjects finds reflection in the profuse encouragement extended to women students to enrol for a BA or an MA in English. "It's good for them." "It assures them an NRI bridegroom." "It enhances their prospects in the marriage market." "They can help in their children's studies later." "It trains them in sound values"...How many of you have encountered these familiar arguments? Don't you think, this is yet another challenge to teaching and learning of English literature in our universities? No literature is superior to others in an absolute sense. The popularity of English literature course among women students cannot be delinked from the economic and social insurance that it offers them. The elitist privileges held out by an English Honours degree in our country subsumes women students only too well. Girls from the upper middle-classes of society make the class and gender conflation in the choice of the study of English

of society make the class and gender conflation in the choice of the study of English literature well known by their demand for this course. When English education was introduced in Indian universities, women did not have easy access to centers of higher learning. Even the few privileged ones who received formal education were often instructed in the vernacular medium or taught the western classics at home. In the decades following Independence, when larger number of women enrolled in universities, English literature was strongly recommended to them. It was perceived to give women a head start in social graces, cultural superiority and earn them a cherished match. In a country where marriage is considered the accepted career for young women the similarity between colonised male subjects enrolling for a university degree in English to ensure a government job and the preference for a "convent educated, English Honours graduate" bride in the marriage market is rather striking. The hierarchical, elitist-paradigms that govern the formations of English studies also help in the fashioning of female subjectivity in our society.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

English studies right from its inception have been deeply ingrained in the discourse of power. In the colonial era, it empowered selectively - the group of babus - for example- an exclusive political, imperialist objective. In the decades following India's Independence, the link between political power and social prestige vis a vis English educated citizens took deep roots further. In the past two decades, the clout of English and as a consequence of persons trained in English has remained unchallenged. English as a global language has bestowed a fresh impetus to English studies in India. The market value of an English Honours degree has gone up considerably. As a language of technocrats and now as the singular language of the information technology empowered personnel who are keenly sought after by the public sector and the multinational alike, English is gaining further ascendancy in our socio economic fabric.

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the objectives of English studies in India before and after Independence.
2. Comment upon the profile of students of English literature. What are the class and gender configurations of English studies in India?

1.7 GLOSSARY

Ahistorical: without regard for the temporal or material world, inevitably resulting in abstractions or half-truths.

Elite: a privileged, select group that exerts influence and authority in society.

Hegemony: dominance in the cultural, political sphere.

Indigenous: originating in the land, existing social structures or material resources of a land before colonial aggression.

Paradigm: pattern, framework. Also refers to a typical, conditioned response.

Technocrat: a technical expert, one who exercises managerial authority in matters relating to technology.

UNIT 2 THE MARCH OF TELI

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 The March of TELI (Teaching of English Literature in India)
2.3 The Invasion of Theory and TELI
2.4 Pedagogic Challenges in TELI
2.5 Let Us Sum Up
2.6 Questions
2.7 Glossary

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall examine the history, trends and nature of the teaching of English literature in India (TELI). The consequences of the beginnings of TELI as well as its status in our contemporary context would also be discussed in this unit.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us briefly comprehend the course of Teaching of English Literature in India (TELI) from the period of colonialism to the era of globalisation. We have already noted the ideological underpinnings in the history of TELI's development as an academic discipline. The traffic between TELI and the historical processes have also been indicated. As **Makarand Paranjpe** has traced the various phases of the institutionalisation of English and the teaching of English literature in our universities (See *Provocations*, ed **Mohan Ramanan** et al, pp. 49-58), TELI has passed through, broadly speaking, the following historical phases:

Colonialism
Nationalism
Independence
Postcolonial or the neo-colonial phase

2.2 THE MARCH OF TELI (TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN INDIA)

Paranjpe rightly notes that TELI was "a handmaiden of the cultural and educational interest of Empire" that actively aided in the production of an "efficient, plodding, perpetually secondary, and of course much cheaper clerks for the rulers." During this phase, the cultural superiority of western classics was propagated among students at Indian universities. They were taught to regard British authors and their writings as liberal, enlightened and superior to native writings. In its second phase, Nationalism (broadly located from 1900-1950), a new feature entered TELI. While government jobs were still sought after, Indians slowly began to occupy important positions in universities. A greater number of Indian teachers of English joined the academia and left their imprint on TELI. Many of them chose to write in their mother tongue and also undertook to translate works from English into Indian languages (but not necessarily vice versa). The traffic between English and Indian languages,

nevertheless, assumed a healthy tone gradually. The entry of Indian teachers in the teaching of English literature helped to locate English education and the use of English language in India in a historical context. At the peak of the Swadeshi movement, TELI could not, always, retain its aloofness from immediate historical forces.

Thus the teaching of English literature in India in the hands of Indian teachers assumed political overtones. In the process, Indian teachers brought in their perspectives and insights on British literature. The colonial location and nationalist politics of the teacher invariably led to a historicising of English literature. The British authors' concern for freedom and individual dignity was deployed by the Indian English teacher as a value congenial to the Indian freedom struggle. In the post-Independence phase (1950-80), higher education was thrown open to larger sections of the population. The democratisation of higher education, paradoxically, pushed TELI towards an Americanisation of it. This was also the period when grants and fellowships were doled out generously by the British Council Library (BCL) and the United States Information Services (USIS). Publication in foreign journals by Indian scholars and starting of literary journals in English in India marked the 70s and the 80s. The western focus on Indian writing in English under the all-subsuming category of Commonwealth literature gained popularity in this period. Interestingly, there was strong resistance from university departments to the inclusion of Indian writing in English in the English curriculum at Indian universities. Students had no option but to study canonical British and American texts. Pedagogical strategies too, were markedly historical. The English texts were taught as though they contained profundity and universal appeal in content and the narratives were treated as objects of reverence. For instance **Milton's** *Paradise Lost* was taught as a grand narrative, an epic in English with a strong classical, allusive, Christian texture. It was not placed within the historical context of post-Republican England and its import on the poet's radical response to the English political climate. Further, the entry of *Paradise Lost* in Indian universities, its timing, the imperialist agenda in introducing it as a discourse of obedience to colonial subjects/ readers was also not taken into account. The ideological use English was put to during the colonial regime was hardly ever foregrounded.

Similarly, the continued expansion of English studies in post-Independence India was hardly debated upon until the end of the 80s and early 90s. **Badri Raina** elaborates upon "the ideological tie-up between a secularising modernity and the use of English", that ultimately played into the hands of neo-colonial forces. (Raina in *Rethinking English*, 288). In the post-Independence era, TELI chose to remain cut off from the major concerns of the masses on issues like corruption, unemployment and the economic divide. TELI, in fact, became an automatic extension of public school elitist culture that stood alienated from the population at large. In the next section we shall look at the inroads that literary theory made into the teaching of English Literature.

2.3 THE INVASION OF THEORY AND TELI

There is yet another phase in the history of TELI and that brings it closer to the present. Since the late 80s and early 90s, literary theory began to influence teaching of English literature in India. The subaltern voices began to be heard. Marginality of important trends and issues almost began to be foregrounded in academic discussion. Much of the theoretical input came not from Britain but from North America, France, the US and Russia. Theory greatly helped to liberate TELI from the shackles of ahistorical, myopic new critical readings. Continental theory and feminist politics have reinvigorated the study of literature in western academy as well. In India, apart from these contexts, a radical rethinking of the location of English studies in the present form in our country has been made possible by an attention to issues such as

language politics, the standard of higher education, etc. In the southern states, English has been received/accommodated as a lesser evil as against the threat of the imposition of Hindi. Over the years, resistance to Hindi is less vocal, thanks, largely to popular Hindi cinema and mega TV serials. In South India, English is still perceived as a safer ally in the context of regional linguistic politics.

While critical theory had gained entry in Indian academia primarily as theory from 'there', its practice 'here' has quite often been met with stiff resistance from teachers who had unfailingly "universalized" **Shakespeare** and **Milton** in our classrooms since the nineteen thirties. English teachers in India, of course, have to rigorously locate critical theory in relation to the urgencies of pedagogical practices in Indian universities. Despite resistance, critical theory is here to stay. Over the past few years, theory has secured a firm foothold in English literature studies in metropolitan universities in India. This trend coincides with an engagement among teachers of English to locate English studies within a historical and cultural context. As **Svati Joshi has** observed:

> *...our growing sense of dislocation within our discipline and an even greater sense of bedevilment at the contradictions and crises of the time we are living in have left us with many questions concerning our academic engagement and its relation to our historical situation as well as the nature of political and cultural processes in our contemporary society. (Rethinking English, 1).*

In the absence of such an engagement as **Joshi** outlines above, the trend to borrow west-generated theory does not necessarily enrich TELI. In the era of the internet, dissemination of knowledge is remarkably fast and access to latest publications, theoretical positions and western academic preferences reach the Indian academic community much quicker than before. This in turn has led to peer pressure on teachers to equip themselves with the latest theoretical orientations. Since knowledge is power, it follows that theory grants immense power to students and teachers of humanities. The invasion of theory has changed the tenor of English literary studies in India forever. It has led to a situation where you're either a theory literate or else an academic illiterate. Teachers and students from non-metropolitan universities find themselves at a disadvantage. To them theory is a destabilising oppressive tool. While TELI had always enjoyed a preferential position in the hierarchy of academic disciplines, the entry of theory has carved out yet another hierarchy within the discipline. The oppressive polarity between the initiated and the uninitiated with respect to theory has given rise to a class of privileged scholars who have steadily benefited in terms of academic exposure, credibility in the publishing world and most significantly in their access to western academy in the form of fellowships and travels abroad. The non-metropolitan student and scholar feels deprived of such privileges owing to his/ her lack of access to latest trends in critical theory. Let us now examine the pedagogical challenges in the teaching of English Literature in India.

2.4 PEDAGOGIC CHALLENGES IN TELI

How much of a teacher's theoretical orientation filters down to the students in the classroom? How much of it is desirable? In the given context of academic prestige enjoyed by critical theory, is it fair to deny students access to it? How long could students be taught by time-honoured ahistorical pedagogical strategies? How much theorisation is helpful in a reading of literary writing? Do we valorise a particular theory over the others? By and large, teachers adopt an eclectic practice rather than sticking to one particular theoretical position. For instance, teachers could take a Marxist and feminist stand on **George Eliot**'s *The Mill On The Floss* or combine postcolonial and feminist readings in an assessment of **Austen**'s *Mansfield Park*. Does such classroom praxis prove gainful or does it lead to a handicap whereby the student gets a smattering of critical jargon but fails to gain any critical insights? How do we bridge gaps in dissemination among heterogeneous sections of students? Although some universities have now prescribed basic texts on different theoretical

approaches, the methodology and quality of teaching varies from institution to institution, from one university to another. Besides, some universities have prescribed critical theory as an optional paper. This, in a way, negates the principle behind the demand for inclusion of such a paper in the curriculum. By allowing a selective dissemination of recent critical theories, the effort to achieve a uniformly high standard of teaching in English Departments across the country gets defeated. Further, it provides an elitist flavour to the institutionalising of TELI thereby reproducing the colonial legacy. Metropolitan universities begin to exert their hegemony by their informed access to theory while universities located in non-metros continue to lag behind.

In recent years, the formulation of literary production emerging from Asia, Africa and Latin America as Third World Literature has added yet another problematic dimension to teaching/learning of English literature in India. Variously categorised as "Commonwealth literature", "New Literatures in English" or "Postcolonial literatures" in the past five decades, the latest formulation of such literature as "Third World literature" has to be placed in its political context. How embedded is this category in neo-colonial politics? Who coined this formulation? Further, could there be a homogenous category of Third World literature that encompasses such heterogeneous cultures as Asian, African or Latin American are? The noted critic **Namwar Singh** comments, "It is but a devious device to maintain the hegemony of "first world literature" and if we look at it carefully, the formulation "Third World literature" is nothing but neo-"orientalism" of the post-colonial age." (*On Decolonising the Indian Mind.*) He further elaborates upon the Euro-American academy to need some entity as their "other" that has resulted in this formulation. The formulation of "Third World literature" is of course a highly inadequate and unsatisfactory one. **Aizaz Ahmad** vociferously critiques such a lumping together of divergent and heterogeneous literatures by a high sounding all-encompassing terminology. He rightly observes that one cannot with any possible accuracy or theoretical coherence speak of an "Indian literature", let alone speak of such a sweeping category as Third World literature. (Ahmed, *Rethinking English*, pp.206-263. Also see Ch.7 in his book *In Theory*.). At this stage we shall not go into too many details on these two critics and their observations, as they will be dealt with in great detail in Block VIII. In the context of this on-going debate, it becomes imperative to modify our pedagogical strategies in our evaluation of "English" literature. The old school of teaching that deciphered universal truths and eternal values in English literature/in any literature is passe now. The origin of location of a particular literary work cannot, justifiably, be passed over. Literary discourse is as embedded in history and as specific in its cultural moorings as any other discourse. Writers do not live in a cultural vacuum. They are sensitive, thinking members of their society and age. As a consequence, their works are shaped by their cultural context. In turn, that context is reflected in their works. Apart from taking cognisance of this necessary task, we also need to foreground our postcolonial position in our readings of English literature. This would open up a more productive traffic between the East and the West. In this endeavour, we would have to wrench, use, adapt and refashion west-generated critical theories so as to render them enabling pedagogic tools for us in our classrooms.

2.5 LET US SUM UP

Let us recall certain major concerns at this juncture regarding problems of learning English literature. What is the role and function of TELI in our present historical context? It is not merely a colonial anachronism. Many of us pursue it for the economic and cultural privileges it offers. It also has a relevant task in our cultural fabric. We can make teaching and learning of English literature a vehicle of ideological transformation. Our job is to equip students to analyse major concerns of

their culture from an ideologically informed position. Let us put our heads together to explore some of these issues in the next unit.

2.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the various stages of TELI.
2. Write short notes on:
   a. The influence of the global market on English studies in India
   b. The impact of critical theory on TELI

2.7 GLOSSARY

Anachronism: chronologically out of place

Marginalized: refers to those persons, usually groups or sectors that have been pushed to the fringes of the social system; those who have not been assimilated in the mainstream culture.

Pedagogic: principles and methods in formal teaching.

Subaltern: belonging to lower rank, those who have been deprived of power or a voice in society.

UNIT 3 ROLE AND FUNCTION OF TELI IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 TELI and the Job Market
3.3 Teaching/ Learning Strategies for English Studies
3.4 Hinglish vs. Queen's English and TELI
3.5 Translation as Pedagogic Praxis
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Questions
3.8 Glossary

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall examine the role and function of Teaching English Literature in India (TELI) in our contemporary social context. We shall also briefly look at some of the comments made by academics and critics on this issue.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To begin with, we need to think in depth about English studies in India. If we attempt it, a rigorous historicising of TELI would be inevitable. TELI after all is a product of an important period in our nation's history. In an earlier block we analysed the place of English in post-Independence India and the space occupied by English in the Indian multilingual setting. English has now begun to be perceived by many as one of the Indian languages. While the fashioning of middle-class subjectivity has been historically ordained and regulated, by the institutionalising of English studies in colonial India the demand for English has steadily continued in the past five decades and remains unabated. The position of English as a tool of command, as a signpost of cultural privilege has tremendously increased in the past two decades in as much as globalisation has made English-learning a necessary stepping stone to social success and material gain. The boom in information technology has benefited English-knowing Indians immensely in the job market. The liberalisation in the Information and Broadcasting sector, the expansion of print and electronic media, the steady growth of numerous news channels, the increased glamour and social success of copy writers and advertisement personnel: such have been the areas where English is extensively used and valued. Let us examine the position of TELL in today's job market next.

3.2 TELI AND THE JOB MARKET

One has to critically examine the nature of jobs offered to us in the global market in response to our command over this language. We would notice that neo-colonial paradigms govern the global job market. In the nineteenth century, India was used as a site for raw materials and as a ready market for British goods. At present, Indians are in demand in professional/services sector in capitalist countries. While Indian professionals have carved a niche in the Information Technology (IT) sector abroad,

it is worth reckoning that it is only in the field of software that we are sought after and not in the designing of hardware. While hospitals offer lucrative administrative and professional posts to their own citizens, medical transcriptors are hired from India. Institutes offering medical transcription courses have stormed the markets in India, even in mofussil towns. Many of our under-graduate English honours students enrol for such courses. Yet how many of us recognise the fundamentally hierarchical neo-colonial design in the hiring of secretarial transcriptory services of an Indian national for a pay package that is a mere pittance by western standards? India still offers cheap labour to Anglo-Euro-American economies. How complicit is TELI in this neo-colonial enterprise? Are we still regulated by **Macaulay**'s intention? Do we still provide them labour for the better governance of their corporate empire? We need to pay attention to this aspect.

Makarand Paranjpe posits that TELI could act "as a broker between the West and India" (*Provocations*, 54). But then, what is the quality of this traffic between these cultures? Are neo-colonial natives taking over the colonial burden? If TELI was the empire's hand-maiden during the colonial era, has TELI emerged as a subordinate, service-providing entity to neo-colonial hegemonies represented by MNCs? What is the quality of empowerment that is granted to us by a study of English/English Literature? If one has to free TELI from this vicious trap, one has to radically alter the teaching strategies and the learning processes that govern this discipline. In this context one has to recognise the fundamental difference between teaching English as a tool of communication and teaching the language to enable students appreciate its literature. In an English language classroom the focus is more on a thoughtful employment of the structures governing that language than, the way it is used in specific situations. Literature, on the other hand, is taught with the aim of effecting an ideological transformation of the reader. **Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak** comments, "The goal of teaching literature is epistemic ... it transforms the way in which objects of knowledge are constituted" (*The Lie of the Land*, 281). This pertains as much to the reader's subjectivity as to the cultural formations and institutional structures that operate in a particular society. Let us now look at the teaching/ learning strategies adopted for English Studies.

3.3 TEACHING/ LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

At this point of our discussion it would be pertinent to point out that teaching and learning strategies with regard to English studies have to take into account the various historical, cultural and market-driven forces that have shaped English studies in India. This calls for innovative and sensitive strategies so that undue emphasis is not placed on the printed word but that the historical context of the work and the cultural placing of that work in our culture specific environment is recognised and established. At the same time, let us remind ourselves, that literature is not to be studied as a distinctive, privileged discourse to be evolved in exclusion of other discourses. In fact, literature is one of the many discourses and one amongst the many modes of representation that circulate in a society at a particular historical time and space. As **Suvir Kaul** points out, "literature is one of our ways of ordering experience. It is not the only way of doing so." (*The Lie of the Land*, 214). This perception would lead us to another significant recognition that no one particular literature ought to be privileged over literatures in other languages. In the Indian context, the bi-lingual and often multi-lingual potentialities of our students and teachers need to be put into use in our English literature classrooms. As **Paranjpe** rightly points out, "We have to unlearn the monolingual, metropolitan manner of teaching texts which the West has handed down to us.' (*Provocations*, 54). Instead of a hindrance, our bilingualism actually could act as a positive force energising and sharpening our critical insights.

Gayatri C Spivak ably demonstrates this in her essay, 'The Burden of English' (*The Lie of the Land*, 275-299). She advocates a study of literary/non-literary texts from Indian languages along with English texts on India and English literary classics to negotiate, what she calls the burden of teaching English in India. **Spivak** explicates this strategy by her reading of **Tagore**'s *Didi* and **Kipling**'s *Kim* and **Binodini Dashi**'s *Amar Katha* to illustrate the complicity in the relationship that exists among these texts. Without erasing the difference that marks these texts, she argues, one could foreground the "collaborative/ parasitical/ contrary/ resistant" paradigms that regulate them. The complicity between British and colonial (in this case Indian) literatures needs to be brought forth in our classrooms. This does not necessarily involve a "conflating" of the two literatures or even "a collapsing" of boundaries, national or cultural. In **Tagore**'s *Didi* the protagonist Shashi's affection for her orphaned younger brother prompts her to protect him from the avarice of her husband. While Shashi's defiance of her husband could be seen as a revolt against patriarchy, her decision to hand over the custody of her minor brother to the British magistrate (representative of colonial authority) and her return to her husband's hearth at the end of the story complicates her position within the enclosing structures of patriarchy. Why does she choose to re-enter this suffocating space? What does her choice of transference of control of her brother's welfare and his legacy - the future colonial subject and his future - to the British official indicate? This text, **Spivak** argues, could be studied to analyse the development of colonial subjectivity. How did the colonial subject view herself in relation to the imperial rulers? How much of his/ her personality was moulded, conditioned by the expectations of the imperial master regarding the position and duty of a subject race?

In fact, the problem of teaching English literature in India is not unintersected with the subject of fashioning of colonial subjects. This is further amplified in Binodini Dasi's encounter with English theatre through her mentor Girish Babu's pedagogic indoctrination reinforcing the popular notion that a training in western literature encourages analytic learning unlike the mantric praxis of indigenous learning. And if you study **Tagore**'s *Gora* and **Kipling**'s *Kim* to examine the differences in the respective protagonist's response to India despite their common Irish nationality students could be sensitised to the colonial complicity in the formation of the consciousness of the citizen in the colony.

3.4 HINGLISH VS. QUEEN'S ENGLISH AND TELI

In the postcolonial context, the teaching of English literature can become critical only if it is intimately linked with the teaching of the literary production in the mother tongue or other regional languages. Most of our students are multilingual: they know Hindi and English besides their mother tongue and a language of the area they reside in (there could be an overlapping of these categories, of course). This proficiency needs to be fully exploited to critique British and Euro-American literatures. This exercise does not assume any professional linguistic proficiency in one's mother tongue or a regional language but rather it encourages the student to become what **Spivak** terms, "inter-literary". It is by no means aimed at comparative literary studies, an area that requires diligent scholarship and professional competence. In fact, at the cultural level, this form of forging a link between English and a regional language has promoted what is branded as Indian English or Hinglish. Hinglish circulates not only amongst postcolonial, MTV generation but also in hegemonic cultural spaces of the country. Electronic media, print journalism, popular cinema, glamour glossies, advertisements, popular franchised eateries, brand products and even certain news channels extensively resort to Hinglish. Besides, English in India has by now accommodated and legitimised typical Indian interventions like 'prepone', 'cousin-brother', 'cousin-sister', 'here only', 'big-big', he teaches 'aram se', she is a 'bindas' girl, etc. The list is endless, indeed. Many of these and other typical expressions have [illegible] most Indian languages as well in metropolitan cities. There are,

still, many votaries of **Queen's English** who bemoan the fall in standards of English in India. But a language, especially one invested with cultural power, retains its hegemony only when it assimilates from local languages that it seeks to lord over.

In such a Hinglish dominated society, English literature can no longer be studied/ taught in the good old new-critical purist style that venerated British critics and guides/ critical companions. We have to evolve our own critical insights and evaluation just as we have evolved our own brand of English. This is reflected in English writing (fiction and poetry) produced in India. In the critical domain too, we have to set up our own yardsticks. Then we would be able to analyse, examine and interpret English literature from our standpoint: What does it hold out for us? What do we learn from it to enable us to investigate our lives in our contemporary times and context? We could then explore how our readings could enrich the English texts that have been venerated and cannonised over centuries including those in which the traffic between the two nations was steeped in imperialist agenda and nationalist politics. In the next section we shall introduce the idea of translation as a tool to be used in the classroom by the teacher. In the first place, is it possible to do so? If yes, what forms can it take?

3.5 TRANSLATION AS PEDAGOGIC PRAXIS

The accommodative and assimilating trend in English is, of course, not a recent one. Only, it has gained wider acceptance. This trend has influenced the practice of translation in India as well. Texts from Indian languages (both classical and modern) are getting translated into a more fluid, layered, earthy and localised English. Translators increasingly recognise that resorting to "correct" or "standard" English (whose standard?) would make their rendering opaque, stultified and pedantic to Indian readership. Postcolonial discourse has revitalised English studies in India. And the resurgence of translations, both in the quality of its practice and in its theoretical orientation is a distinctive post-phenomenon/trend. There have been numerous instances of translations into English of the same text undertaken by western translators earlier. Orientalist translations of writings in Indian languages were selective, edited and suitably reconstructed productions that fashioned the text to western expectations and taste. Often, translations were undertaken by missionaries or administrators (**William Jones** is a known example). The purpose behind the activity of translation was largely to ensure smoother governance of the colony and to understand local customs. The Orientalist project invariably mutilated texts, distorted indigenous notions of history, self and the family and instead, fitted them to western classical notions of decorum, coherence, linearity of narratives, etc. In other words, such translations were deeply embedded in colonial politics. Texts selected for translation were invariably drawn only from Sanskrit and Arabic that were considered major threats to the spread of English education. The choice of translation again reflected the ideological collusion between colonial politics and translation practice.

The emergence of small-scale publishers in English and in various Indian languages in the past three decades has greatly corrected the Orientalist distortions. These publishing houses promote translations into English of both classical texts and contemporary writings in modern Indian languages. Indian translators in recent times have preferred to target primarily Indian readership rather than standardise and sanitise the text for a potential western reader. Translations into English have, thus, regulated a more meaningful traffic between English and Indian languages. This, in turn, has influenced pedagogic strategies in English studies as well. Translation as pedagogic praxis has been in use in English language teaching in our country for a long time. But translational strategies in English literature classrooms have also begun to be discussed in academic circles. The translator and the teacher of English share similar challenges and resort to, quite often, similar strategies to tackle them. English teachers in India constantly face up to the challenge of translating cultures,

histories and literary traditions to their students. The teacher, thus, like the translator mediates between two cultures and negotiates between the source text and the target learner. While teaching **George Eliot's** *The Mill On The Floss* in our classroom, attention is often focussed on discrimination between son's and daughter's education, the restrictions on their mobility and freedom to choose one's friends in the context of contemporary cultural codes in India. The Dodsons could be located with reference to relatives in our culture of extended/ large family set-up. Much of such readings are often carried out in Hindi or the regional language in our classroom. This is an added advantage for the students to participate more actively in the discussion when a literary text is used to investigate their own cultural, ideological framework. And invariably, this transaction takes place in a bi-lingual framework. Bilingualism among Indians is a matter of rule. It is the given state of our cultural being; an outcome of our colonial history. Thus, in English literature classrooms a vigorous inter-literary approach would be highly desirable as well as rewarding. It is pertinent to quote **Aizaz Ahmed** at length here:

> *It is only by submitting the teaching of English literature to the more crucial and comparatist discipline of historical and cultural studies and by connecting the knowledge of that literature with literatures of our own, that we can begin to break that colonial grid and to liberate the teacher of English from a colonially determined, subordinated and parasitic existence." (Rethinking English, 260).*

For instance in our classrooms, it would be a pertinent exercise to examine **Forster's** India and **Premchand's** India of the 20s and early 30s or study modernist poetry in English and Hindi/ other languages to understand the negotiation of race, culture and literary trends.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

English studies is here to stay. But it cannot be studied in a historical vacuum. Its entry as well as continued presence in Indian universities needs to be foregrounded. A vigorous historicisation of TELI is a political and academic necessity. Therein lies the possibility of a more rewarding negotiation in the classroom both for the teacher as well as for the student. While the continued use of English and its privileged position in our postcolonial culture needs to be problematised, it does not follow that we argue for dispensing with English altogether. It does not in any way resolve the problem, after all. Continuance of English is linked not only to a colonial legacy but, as pointed out earlier to the politics of language and region in our country. Use of English is preferred in certain regions, especially, in the South and the North-East to keep at bay the oppressive imposition of a Sanskritised Hindi. Further, recent political discourse has unfortunately linked Sanskrit and Hindi with sectarian and religious bearings. The setting up of a polarity between English and Hindi in terms of the native and the foreign, revivalism and westernisation is inevitably ridden with dangers and anxieties in particular for linguistic and religious minorities of our nation. In such a context, the demand for removal of English and its substitution by Hindi or one's mother tongue is likely to be counterproductive and may hinder the career interests of our students. And yet, the discourse of privilege and material power, its hegemonic status in a multilingual nation cannot be left uncritiqued. As students and teachers of English/English literature we are peculiarly placed. Threatening underprivileged learner communities and in turn threatened by a crisis precipitated by postcolonial politics centered on language and power. English students in Indian colleges are often perceived with awe and social esteem by students pursuing BA (Pass), Sanskrit (Hons) or even Political Science. But English students, in turn, are also getting isolated and insular within their social context. This is because English has been invested with such a high degree of cultural privilege that English students paradoxically are pushed to social periphery. Elitism associated with English studies cuts off English students from a healthy interaction with various

strata of their society. We, on our front, can carry on a productive, self-reflexive engagement with English literature by resorting to radical pedagogic strategies, by questioning/expanding the canon, by opting for interdisciplinary, non-literary studies and by exploiting our bilingualism proactively in our classrooms. The search for and choice of alternatives however should not foreclose the debate over the problems of teaching and learning of English literature in India.

3.7 QUESTIONS

1) Critically examine the view that translation is an effective pedagogic strategy in the English classroom.
2) Discuss English as a language of empowerment in our society.
3) Discuss the privileged position of English in the context of translation of literary texts.

3.8 GLOSSARY

Canonised: valorised or privileged texts in the academy. When a novel gets incorporated in a university syllabus or when a work of art is accepted/ labelled as a 'classic', it gets deified. This deification results in that text being canonised.

Franchise: the right granted to an individual or group to market a company's goods or services in a particular territory. For instance, the opening up of popular branded eateries or stores in various parts of the city.

Ideological: pertaining to an ideology.

Indoctrination: systematic inculcating or training in a specific mode of thinking, implanting ideologies on vulnerable minds.

Mofussil: small town, countryside.

Parasitical: dependent; feeding on another for survival.

Patriarchy: a form of social organisation that privileges the male and grants woman a subordinate position; the head of the family in such a social structure is the man, property is inherited by the male heir, a system oppressive to women.

Praxis: action oriented practice.

UNIT 4 ENGLISH TEACHING IN INDIA

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Legacy of the Past vs. Possibilities for the Future
4.3 Function of the English Teacher in India
4.4 Curriculum Framing: The Debate Continues
4.5 Concepts, Labels, Trends in TELI
4.6 Critical Theory and English Studies in India
4.7 Let Us Sum Up
4.8 Questions
4.9 Glossary

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall do a close reading of **Mukherjee**'s essay "Certain Long – Simmering Questions" and thereby explore how English teaching is negotiated in our classrooms. What are the specific problems associated with this enterprise? Are they unique to our context? How enabling is theory in our pedagogic practice? These are some of the issues that are dealt with in *Provocations*. **Mukherjee**'s essay shall be discussed at length to get an overview of the concerns of this book.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit let us critically examine the paradigms that envelop English teaching in our country through a discussion of the essay by **Meenakshi Mukherjee** prescribed in this course. This essay is included in the book *Provocations*, (ed. Mohan Ramananan, et al, Sangam Books, 1993, pp25-35). The essays in this volume have evolved from the papers read at a seminar organised by the British Council Library (BCL) and the University of Hyderabad in 1991. The essay in question examines major issues regarding English studies in India.

4.2 LEGACY OF THE PAST VS. POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

A careful study of the earlier blocks would have helped you perceive the burden of history that envelops English studies in India. English in India, a colony of the British till 1947, cannot be taught without correlating the literary text and the political context. Our colonial past cannot be brushed aside while teaching the erstwhile coloniser's language and literature. The legacy of the past, as **Mukherjee** points out, inevitably creeps in, in our postcolonial classrooms. While examining this legacy, we have to locate the study of English as something that has, from the beginning, intertwined with the consolidation of the empire. The institutionalising of English, as discussed in the earlier blocks, continues to shape the course of English studies even today. Thus, English studies in India inevitably is also a reappraisal of:

- What is taught in the classroom
- How a text is taught in the classroom

- Who is taught; and
- Why this is being taught.

An answer to the above categories of what, how, who and why would enable us to appreciate the state and function of English studies in India. Before we comment upon the function of English studies in India, let us be very clear about the objectives of literary studies as well. We have to recognise that literary studies do not operate in a social vacuum. Teaching of literature is not a mere unravelling of aesthetic markers. Literary studies do not exist in "some pure realm of aesthetics and ideas", observes **Mukherjee**. Literature is as much a product of a society that it emerges from as any of society's other material productions. The production as well as reception of literature cannot be divorced from its social moorings. Given these premises, English Literary Studies cannot be examined without the social/ political context in which it is negotiated.

How should we teach English literature in India? This question, argues **Mukherjee**, is inextricably linked with our perception regarding the nature of literature itself. If we look at literature as embodying transcendental truths, as a repository of universal, eternal, immutable truths and values, then we could teach literature purely from the point of view of its aesthetic merits. Our enterprise in such a case would limit itself to the aesthetic pleasure produced by a literary text and focus on its technical perfections or imperfections. New critical readings of a literary text were such exercises that totally disregarded the pressures of history, culture and material forces on a literary text.

On the other hand, if we view literature as a representative product of its age and culture, then we shall recognise its moorings in history and a specific cultural context. We would then locate literature within the context of social, political, linguistic and institutional structures that determine both its production as well as its reception in a particular age. Hence, an unquestioning internalising of British values and its literary contours by Indian teachers is ruled out under the framework we have adopted. While teaching English literature we would have to deliberate about our location outside the culture that such a literary text embodies. Such a strategy would enable us to place the text within its framework of historical formations. Further, it would also enable us to analyse and reflect upon our position as readers of that text. Such a self-reflexive perception would examine our relationship to the culture that has produced the text. The perception would also throw light on the processes that have canonised the text and have initiated its consumption in contexts outside its original site of production.

In other words, why does a British national epic like **Milton**'s *Paradise Lost* become a canonised text in our universities? Why and how do we study it? The ideological agenda governing the entry of this epic in our universities underlines the link between British rule and English literary studies in India. The discourse of obedience that *Paradise Lost* enjoins upon Man towards his creator was transferred to the colonial context to implicate the colonised subject in a similar hierarchical position of subordination towards the imperial race. Thus, while *Paradise Lost* was a radical text in many ways, it was also deployed by the powers that be for oppressive, imperialist designs in our soil. An English teacher/ student in India cannot ignore this placement of a text for the simple reason that English in India cannot be taught with any amount of political neutrality as is possible in the teaching of physics or statistics. In short, English studies in India involves an interrogation of class, gender, identity, language, power and nationality as embedded in a literary text. How we teach English literature is determined by:

- How we perceive literature as well as by
- How we receive our colonial past.

4.3 FUNCTION OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER IN INDIA

The function of the English teacher in the Indian context is, directly linked to the phenomenon of English literature teaching in India. If we reflect upon it we will realise that it is impossible for the English teacher to teach English literature without historicising either the text (subject) or the teacher/ taught (object)? In other words can she/he teach English literature in the tradition of an essentialist, universalist position whereby English literature can impart eternal values to all its readers without taking into account cultural specificity of the reader. If we concur with the discussion outlined so far, our answer would definitely be an emphatic no. The English teacher unlike her/his counterpart in other disciplines or even in other literature studies is located within our academy in a unique position. This teacher has the burden of assimilating English studies into the larger academic calendar of syllabus, examination and evaluation for a market-friendly degree, the practice shares with teaching in other disciplines. In addition, the English teacher alone is, perceived as someone determined by our colonial past, and one who has the potential consciousness of a postcolonial society that would wrestle with our history and contemporary culture. With the intent of carrying such a responsibility the English teacher would be able to bring to English literature studies a self-reflexive sensibility that could critique, problematise as well as explore the possibility of English literature studies in our context. The negotiation between our colonial legacy and the possibilities for TELI in a postcolonial context is a task that has been entrusted to the English literature teacher in India. This dual task empowers her/him to critically examine questions regarding class, race, strategic significance and enabling opportunities that lay hidden in English studies.

Such a task is not only mammoth but is also inadequately defined. It is not a very well demarcated space. Interestingly, it offers far greater autonomy to the teacher on the one hand and an exacting responsibility towards the student community on the other. A teacher of English literature is not imparting specific skills or linguistic competence, but a more important capability of ordering one's experience, of perceiving one's cultural identity and examining one's location in the immediate social context. It would be helpful to remember that Mukherjee emphasises the fact that while English is conceded as one of the official languages of India, it does not occupy the same position as the other fifteen-odd recognised languages. It occupies a more privileged position. Why? We have noted in the earlier units how English occupies a distinct class in our society. It is not a foreign language like Spanish or French. Nor is it an Indian language like Tamil or Urdu. English, in fact, is the language of empowerment. Hence, this language and its literature cannot escape the complex texture of class, race, nation and politics of power that lay embedded in its dissemination. The English teacher is, thus, ever aware that he/ she is not teaching a "value-neutral tongue" as **Mukherjee** aptly puts it.

> *Recognition of the common assumption of the student and the teaching community regarding English as a language of class privilege and economic power invests the English teacher with enormous clout in our society. The traffic between curriculum/ canon formation and value formation assumes a formidable significance. The values held out for emulation are deeply marked by perceptions of the privileged social class. How representative are they of the teeming millions who struggle for their daily survival in our country?*

The answer is obvious. The tacit complicity, the undeniable link between pedagogy and power needs to be explored in the context of the poor, working, economically and socially deprived classes. How empowering or disempowering is English to them? Does the English teacher stand alienated from the masses? Can she/he impart a new impetus to English studies in India by bringing the aspirations, anxieties and modes of struggle of the under-privileged classes of our country to bear upon the literary discourse under scrutiny in the classroom? If this could be done, the elitist

badge of English literature studies could be combated in a significant manner. Further, by establishing a dialogue between literature discourse and the struggle of the masses for social and economic parity, English literature studies could recover its fast eroding centrality in the academy where professional courses have begun to assert their hegemony. The teacher then could also encourage students to establish a two way movement /trafficking between literatures in the Indian languages, the literature in English written in India and literatures in English from other parts of the world. The time has come to make a critical appraisal of the role and function of the English teacher in India. She/he has to raise questions, hitherto brushed under the carpet as discomfiting, regarding "literature and power, language and identity, class and gender, education and employment." This would result not only in a critical examination of the legacy of English but also set up possibilities for a change in its agenda. Teaching of English is ideologically implicated – it always has been. Only now a keener awareness has to be brought into focus to retrieve English studies form being sucked up by the newer dominant, privileged sections of society. Let us now examine another aspect of the same complexity- curriculum design.

4.4 CURRICULUM FRAMING: THE DEBATE CONTINUES

The course of English studies in India remained more or less fixed and rigid from its days of institutionalisation in the mid-nineteenth century to the first two decades of post-Independence era. English studies was imparted as an ennobling, value-filled, humanising exercise. Authors like **Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson** and **Shelley** formed the staple diet. Secondly, their works were taught as embodying universal, morally elevating values that cannot fail to ennoble Indian hearts, never mind the latter's tryst with colonial history. There was an unwritten but rigidly enforced compartmentalisation of "our" literature and "their" literature. No traffic was envisaged or encouraged between the two. Indian students switched themselves off from their knowledge of their folklore, their music, traditional arts, theatre traditions and their literatures when they entered the English classroom. The twain shall never meet, they were told. And Indian students continued to study authors who were considered canonical by the British academy. In other words, it was a canon imposed from the outside, unresponsive to our culture, our needs and expectations. Such a canon was regarded as sanctified and impregnable to challenge or questioning. **Mukherjee** argues that we have to be acutely conscious of the issue of 'canonicity'. In other words, we have to be alert as to who defines a canon of literature texts -- when, why and for whom. If we evade this issue, we are doomed to confine literature and life as mutually exclusive categories.

We should have the choice of framing our syllabus – restructuring it to suit our changing needs and concerns. Once we agree upon the purpose of literature teaching as a socially useful activity, an ideologically constructed and contextually formulated exercise, then we can embark upon drawing up innovative, alternative, multiple optional course to energise English literature studies and bring them closer to our cultural matrix. Curriculum revision also entails a recognition of important facts such as the availability of texts, marketing and publishing constraints, flow of funds/ grants, fellowships, library infrastructure, etc. This, in truth, further foregrounds how the academy or literature studies in particular do not operate in a pure, aesthetic realm but are governed by material forces both non-literary and non-academic. In the next section of our discussion we shall look at some of the trends and key concepts in the teaching of English Literature in India.

4.5 CONCEPTS, LABELS, TRENDS IN TELI

At this point of our discussion, we have to deliberate upon an interesting aspect concerning English studies. Not only have we been studying a canon envisaged for us

by the western academy, but periodically, we have also accepted the numerous labels and nomenclatures formulated by British/ American universities. Over the years, this culminates in what one can term as a literary trend. At times, new labels are coined for older, traditional areas of study and are unquestioningly accepted by us. One good example of this practice would be the concept of commonwealth literature. To begin with, this concept did not take its origin in our country or for that matter in any of the former colonies of Britain. Commonwealth literature denoted literatures in English originating from the various ex-colonies of Britain. The commonality of these literatures was restricted to the shared experience of imperial dominion by these diverse cultures. Thus, literatures emerging from diverse, cultures like New Zealand, Australia, India, South Asian countries, Africa, etc. were all clubbed together under the nomenclature "Commonwealth literature". We can see that this grouping puts together extremely divergent cultural spaces under one canopy for political convenience. It was an attempt to estimate their literary output purely as vague and shadowy reflections of their contact with the British Empire. It assumed and encouraged a secondary, critical perspective that still looks up to "academic leadership and intellectual recognition" from their erstwhile rulers. The institutionalising of Commonwealth literature thus was envisioned from outside. The intent was clearly political aimed at creating a subordinate category of writing in English. It assumed that literature writing from India, Africa or Australia would be identical and open to easy homogenisation. This is a totally false promise. Africa in itself is a highly rich and complex, cultural space. So is, the case with a country like India with multiple traditions, linguistic, regional, religious and other variations that help form a multi-textured composite discourse. Studying such writing under the common banner of Commonwealth literature was misleading. The common link between heterogenous cultures was a British colonial past and the use of English. This was hardly sufficient to sustain a discipline or any ideologically pertinent premise.

In the late 80s strong resistance gained ground against this label. This category of Commonwealth literature made sufficient inroads in the academy. Much academic research, projects, M Phil Programmes and MA courses were devoted to this trend.

Slowly this began to wane and was displaced by another label that gained steady momentum. What we have come to call the Postcolonial Studies remains till date a popular trend. This is yet another interesting story. The emergence of postcolonial studies or what some posited as postcolonial theory was in fact a rechannelling of the earlier concept of Commonwealth literature in a slightly more radical and better formulated mode. Postcolonial studies emerged following a strong resistance to the term Commonwealth literature. It postulated a self-reflexive, critical awareness of postcoloniality on the part of the writer as well as the reader. Beginning with the nineties, the term Commonwealth has been disbanded and in its place the term postcolonial has gained prominence. There are two aspects to this nomenclature. One connotes postcolonial as a chronological marker i.e. the era following the liberation of a colony. The second includes experience of the colonial period after the colonisinf powers beat a retreat following resistance from the colony. This includes a specific way of reading, a particular perception of global traffic in moments of history. It also demarcates a longer period for consideration. Like the earlier tag of Commonwealth literature, postcolonial literature also includes only literature written in English not in the other languages of the former colonies. For instance, in India, there has been a strong resistance against the empire and colonial politics not only in English but, much more stridently in Bengali, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi and other languages. The concept of postcolonial literature does not take such writings into consideration.

We have to recognise the disturbing fact that English in a postcolonial society is not just a neutral medium of unification. Nor is it, except perhaps in Australia and to some extent in Canada, a language of the soil. Far from being a language of the experience or tradition, is, in fact, a language of political and social empowerment. In such a context, the exclusion of non-English literary discourse from the purview of

postcolonial studies is a serious limitation. Further, with the liberation of most of the colonies and the comparative dilution of Britain in the global power equation, postcolonial societies have shifted their focus from the empire to the grid of neo-colonial forces that have invaded their economies. Hence, their writings can no longer be simplistically estimated only in the tradition of "the empire writes back" but rather in a wider context where the conflation of capitalist, consumerist interests and neo-colonial corporate designs on developing, newly liberated societies have drawn the attention of writers, artists and readers. In a multilingual society, a homogenising composite label like the Commonwealth literature or postcolonial literature does not truly reflect the nature and ideology of its literature. It overlooks the distinctive marks of each culture, its history and its place in the contemporary world. Such labels tend to impose an artificial, reductive, hierarchical relationship between the west and the non-west.

4.6 CRITICAL THEORY AND ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

Mukherjee concludes her essay by analysing how contemporary critical theories can validate alternative strategies of teaching and learning English literature in our country. By dismantling the central authority of "one unitary system of knowledge", critical theories have empowered teachers and students of English literature in India to evolve innovative strategies in the transmission of English studies. One fixed, monolithic interpretation of a text has been rejected now. Thus, it has been made possible to break the shackles of centralised, pedagogue-centred learning. In our classrooms, now an active, two-way negotiation of text is being encouraged. The teacher is no longer the sole disseminator of knowledge. The text is open to interpretation, based more on discussion, dialogue, debate, thus paving the way for a more fruitful negotiation. Critical theories supportive of pluralistic perspectives and multivalent discourses have made it imperative to adopt "collaborative learning" in our classrooms. Let us quote **Mukherjee** at this point:

> *If instead of presenting a course in literature as 'objective truth' or knowledge with a capital K, the teacher can be explicit about her rationale behind the choice of readings, her own position and confess that her own perspective may be partial, then a truly dialogic process of learning may be generated. If there is conflict of opinion or of interpretation between the teacher or student, or between student and student, it may be a positive factor rather than a problem. (Provocations, 34)*

Critical theory guarantees that teachers equip students with ways of reading a text. The monolithic lecture method whereby students are lectured at rather than promote a dialogue between the teacher and the student has, of course, to be abandoned. When students are empowered to read literary texts based on their acquired reading skills backed by an ideological orientation, they would be able to negotiate the various texts that they tackle in their daily life - texts of their society, the electronic and print media, of religion, politics of fashion and that of the market. Ways of reading literature, after all, prepare one to read life with keener intelligence and sensitivity. To prioritize such a task in our teaching of English literature would be a meaningful and rewarding engagement.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In the context of English studies in India, the legacy of the past has to be probed in conjunction with an exploration of the possibilities of change. English teaching in India has to be an enterprise that co-relates the literary text with the social text that

forms the living experience for the teacher and the learning. As English is the language of empowerment for us, rather than the language of tradition or culture, we have to posit English literature within the framework of race, class, gender, identity, language, employment and power. This also calls for a keen awareness of the question of canonicity - who formulates a canon, for whom, when and why. Instead of adopting labels, concepts and trends that are current in western academy, we have to subject them to a critical examination and set up our own agenda based on an awareness of our needs, aspirations and anxieties. As contemporary critical theories have liberated us from univocal discourse and a centralised authority, it would be highly rewarding to apply those insights in our classrooms. Collaborative learning, inter-active discussions are better strategies in negotiating literary texts in the classroom.

4.8 QUESTIONS

1) Critically evaluate the role and function of the English teacher in India.
2) Discuss how theory can validate alternative pedagogic strategies in the classroom.

4.9 GLOSSARY

Aesthetic: pleasure derived from appreciation of art, often in exclusion of social relevance.

Assimilate: to absorb, to adopt.

Concur: to agree.

Critique: to evaluate critically.

Emulation: (here) to mimic, to model oneself on; mindless imitation unconcerned of one's social, cultural context and requirements.

Envisioned: to devise, to visualise.

Matrix: foundation, an enveloping structure.

Nomenclature: categorisation.

Neo-colonial: newer formulation of colonial intent in a post-colonial context, often pertaining to economic and cultural sphere. For instance, the MNCs in India are perceived to cater to neo-colonial impulses.

UNIT 5 THE LIE OF THE LAND: ENGLISH IN INDIA

Structure

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 The Colony and the Nation
5.3 The Language Debate/Politics
5.4 The Scene of Education and English
5.5 Let Us Sum Up
5.6 Questions
5.7 Glossary

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall analyse **Rajeswri Sunder Rajan**'s essay "Fixing English: Nation, Language, Subject" in the context of our ongoing discussion of the position of English literature studies in India. We shall take up the emergence of English literature studies as a sign of cultural imperialism in colonial India that continues to dominate the Indian cultural space even after independence.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of English literature in India has been fraught with ideological paradoxes both in colonial as well as in postcolonial India. In the late 1980s a serious, systematic and honest critical scrutiny was set in motion to study some of the basic questions regarding English literature studies in India. How relevant or valid is this to our society? What are its social and cultural functions? What is its position in institutional structures? What specific pedagogic practices are pertinent to this area? Some of these questions were debated upon at seminars and workshops. One such seminar was held at Miranda House, Delhi, titled 'The Study of English Literature in India: History, Idcology and Practice'. This was held in April 1988. Some of the papers presented at the seminar were compiled in book length studies. One such book was *The Lie Of The Land: English Literary Studies in India* (ed. by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, OUP, 1992). The essays in this volume examine various aspects of English literary studies as a discipline in Indian universities. Their broad areas of focus are situating English within British and post-independence India, teaching English in the colonial context, teaching it in our contemporary context, analysis of Indian classroom responses to widely prescribed English literary texts and also examining certain material forces that help strengthen the continued institutionalising of English literature studies as an academic discipline viz. the publishing industry and the role and function of the British council.

Three essays from this volume are prescribed as part of this block:

Fixing English: Nation, Language, Subject by **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** (7-28)
English in a Literate Society by **Gauri Viswanathan** (29-41)
The Burden of English Studies by **Gayatri Chakravorty** (275-299)

The issues raised, by **Spivak** and **Viswanathan** have already been dealt with in our earlier discussions in Unit 1-3 of this block. In this unit we shall examine at length **Sunder Rajan**'s essay.

5.2 THE COLONY AND THE NATION

We have already noted how the introduction of English education in India, more specifically, of English literary studies was intended as an ideological force. We also discussed how English literary studies was introduced with an aim to erode Indian classical literature, both Sanskrit and Persian and that it was targeted to fashion a class of officials who would help in the running of the imperial administration and remain subservient to the imperial designs over the colony. In this scheme, yet another pernicious design lay embedded. This was to legitimise and institutionalise social reform and social control in the colony. The encouragement extended to English education in India was aimed at creating a class of persons who by their contact with British liberal writing would acquire a political consciousness. This would lead them it was believed, to demand social and political reforms. Demand for reforms would thus effectively curtail/ avert/ nullify the ferment of a revolution. If the empire had to continue unchallenged, revolution had to be kept at bay. The **Crown** was not prepared to face another war of independence that shook up the colonial administration in 1857. Hence, it was conceded that a systematic introduction of English liberal education would divert the native population from thoughts of another revolution or any form of collective action against the imperial rule. We, thus, have to recognise the reformist impulses/intent of English literary studies in colonial India as ideologically motivated. Many educated Indians did raise issues pertaining to social reform, be it the abolition of Sati or the education for women or later, the demand for representation in legislature, etc. English education was thus effectively put to serve the imperialist agenda.

At this point of our discussion, it would be pertinent to deliberate over the nature of the argument about the superiority of English in our contemporary society. The privileged position of English in our present culture, the prestige associated with English literature studies (as against the neglect of Indian language literature studies) in the academy and society at large invariably push us towards examining the political intent of the continuance of English literary studies. Do you not think that there is an elitist bias to English literature studies today in our society? Does this discipline not still keep the toiling masses - workers, peasants, rural students, socially deprived castes, students from government schools, etc., out of its ambit? Does it not, in other words, provide impetus to dissent and anger of the deprived, underprivileged classes and guard itself against radical change? Even a persistent resistance to purely academic issues like revision of curriculum, response to new critical theories, etc., all those could be an indication of the fact that this discipline is averse to radical social change. The notion of an "English literature" was formulated and systematised in England in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A select body of texts, scholarly editors of those texts, literary histories, biographies of writers, travelogues, etc., materialised around the time when Britain began to give shape to its empire- building project. Recent research has shown that the two projects - formation of English literature as a discipline and empire- building - came into being around the same time. Further, it also needs to be noted that the two projects received an impetus from similar ideological goals. English literary studies was put to political use. It was helpful in carrying out cultural imperialist tasks among the colonised. This corresponded with and subsequently further consolidated geographical annexure of numerous countries, sub-continents and continents to serve as materially profitable colonies for Britain.

A century earlier, English as a literary language had been developed very consciously as a national language to counter the hegemony of Latin in England. **Milton**, for instance, made a conscious choice to write his epic *Paradise Lost* in English. He had a specific agenda to pursue by writing in English. He remarked that he wished to enrich the English language: "To fix all the industry and art I could unite to the

adorning of my native tongue...to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect." (*Reason of Church Government*, 1642). English was developed as a national language and from the beginning it was promoted as a homogenising concept. However, this was always resisted by cultures within the English home turf: from Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They constantly contested the official, homogenised English that was touted as a national language as being far from representative or monolithic. But, of course, in the colonies, far removed from the reality of resisting Ireland, Scotland and Wales, English literature gained a homogenous and nationalist stature. The institutionalisation of English as the language of education for Indians has to be located in this context of formation of English as a national/ nationalist language of England.

Another important phenomenon that lends us a perspective on disciplinary formation of English and its colonialist introduction in India is another colonial project at this period, namely the orientalist translation. Orientalism refers to the representation of the orient, her culture, language, literature and lifestyle in a stereotyped, rigid, form that concurred with the western perception of non-western identities. A series of translation of Arabic and Sanskrit texts undertaken during this period conformed to colonialist intent. It represented the native texts selectively, translated select portions of the texts and created the impression of these literatures as inferior and undeveloped. Orientalist scholars collaborated with Hindu Pundits and Islamic scholars - both orthodox and insensitive towards the common people of their sects - to codify laws for Indians with a view to making colonial administration smooth and easy. In the Indian universities, English literature was never placed in the context of its association with the English rule. This was the state of affairs during the colonial rule and it continued even after independence. Instead of viewing the presence of English literature in India as an embodiment of a colonial agenda, it became the repository of universal values and abstract virtues available both to the colonised and the coloniser. In the absence of historicisation of English literature it became an epitome of essentialist and universalist discourse. In the post-independence era, this led to easy assimilation and continuance of English studies in the curriculum. As **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** comments,

> *It is this dissociation of English literature from its national origins that has made possible its unproblematic retention and continuance in the post-independence education syllabus in India." (12).*

In recent years hegemony of English literature in postcolonial societies is being resisted as a carrier of cultural imperialism. On the other hand, steady globalisation and comparative diminution of Britain's position in global power have led to the erosion of universal, trans-historical values of English. Its literature has now come to be recognised as emerging out of the English nation – one that has long ceased to be an empire. The next section shall examines the language debate.

5.3 THE LANGUAGE DEBATE / POLITICS

The debate over the choice of a national language in India is fraught with multiple, difficulties involving various sections of the society. English is not the first language in any state. It is only the second language. However, English is the state language in the four north-eastern states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura and of the Union Territories in our country. And yet all these states and Union Territories also have distinct indigenous languages with their own distinct scripts, literary traditions and well-developed cultural forms. Thus, English in India can never be what it is in America or Britain where despite multiculturalism, English primarily is the first language of the people and the state. And yet, English has a unique place in Indian polity. It is the official language and it shares the status of official national language

with Hindi. It is the language of the administration and the law courts and thus occupies a pre-eminent position. English by virtue of being the language of technology and communication is also our window to global commerce and scientific research. Its function as a link to communication with the international community cannot be easily dismissed. This aspect of English has, of course, more to do with the growing hegemony of the United States than to any influence of the erstwhile empire.

In India English is a site of conflict. Here, English connotes not just the language but loosely all that denotes westernisation. Hence English is opposed on grounds of cultural otherness. People arguing for positing Hindi as the national language oppose English on this ground: that it is a foreign language and the language of the colonial master. Hence, it is argued that it is also anti-national to prefer English to other Indian languages. On the other hand, those who advocate English as the national language counter it precisely on these very grounds. They point out that English is pan-Indian. It is considered a link between various regions and the fact that it is not the first language of any region is also its strength in serving as a national language. Their argument is further rooted in their equation of the nation with the state. As English is the language of the administration of the state, these groups advocate English as the national language. Another important aspect of the language debate revolves around the preference of English by linguistic and regional sections that oppose Hindi as the national language. The non-Hindi speaking people and their state governments have vigorously opposed the imposition of Hindi either as the national language or the language of state administration. They point out that Hindi is not spoken uniformly over the entire country and the non-Hindi languages, too, form significant percentage of the total population. They advocate the continuance of English and resist Hindi as the language of inter-state communication. The three-language formula whereby English, Hindi and the regional language had to be in use simultaneously was a pragmatic proposal. However, it failed miserably because the Hindi-speaking states defied it in practice. The non-Hindi states found that they were being burdened by Hindi under this formula while the Hindi-belt got away without bothering to implement it (i.e. they did not encourage the use of any non-Hindi language in their state). It gave rise to bizarre situations: for instance, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu wrote to his counterpart in Uttar Pradesh in Tamil and got a reply in Hindi! Instead of languages serving as tools of communication, the language politics led to a deadlock in communication.

Resistance to the imposition of Hindi was so strong that it even led to riots in Tamil Nadu in 1965 and in the sixties the movement against Hindi turned militant. Women joined the movement and courted arrest. It became a movement for assertion of one's identity in terms of one's language, culture and nation. For nation, too, began to be perceived not as a monolithic construct. The language debate influenced Indian politics in the 60s and the 70s. The demand for autonomy that was put forward by non-Hindi speaking states was primarily aimed at asserting their linguistic and cultural difference. The very federal structure was questioned as being not accommodating enough. Thus, we see, that language debate/politics shaped the ideology enveloping the nation as a category. The heterogeneity of our people was foregrounded and the nation as a monolithic construct was rejected. Yet another aspect that needs to be reckoned with in our discussion of the debate over language in post-independent India is the divide that it (the debate) precipitates between the English-speaking upper classes and non-English speaking, often illiterate masses. The social divide between the upper and lower classes, between the ruled and the ruling is entrenched in the knowledge of English. The English-educated, urban elite have occupied the spaces of power at the national level for decades. The non-English speaking, rural rich have now begun to assert their claim to such spaces. They are no longer satisfied to wield power only over their limited, rural pockets. They point out that they cannot be denied a share in power at the national level merely on account of their lack of access to English. Their argument, too, in a subtle way, questions the notion of a nation constructed by European models where one language unified a nation. In a multilingual country like India, the privileged monopoly of one class over

political and bureaucratic circles needs to be contested. The rural elite, of course, share a similar class and caste background with the urban elite. Their only handicap is their non-knowledge of English. Thus either they demand a reduplication of an elitist pattern of education or they assert their identity in terms of nationalist (in the sense of Hindi is Rashtra Bhasha and English is a foreign language) ideology. The masses, of course, remain largely illiterate. The language debate has not reconstituted their position in society. English continues to remain alien to their daily life, their daily struggle to earn two square meals. Either way, English remains entrenched in social elitism – be it urban or rural.

At this point of our discussion, we have to take note of the spread of Hindi in the cultural area and the influence of English in education. Through the electronic media Hindi has come to occupy a hegemonic place in Indian society. Even non-Hindi speaking viewers relish Hindi films, serials and game shows so much that the language politics of the 60s in these states has lost its edge considerably. The continued demand for English-knowing candidates for white-collar jobs has kept the dominance of English in our society at another but an important level. This explains the mushrooming of private institutes in the market that promise to impart competence in English according to the demands of the job-market. Newspapers, journals and, more significantly, film glossies in English also sustain the demand and privilege of English in the country. English has also influenced Indian literatures especially with respect to literary criticism. Much of French and Continental critical perspectives are available to native writers and critics only in English. Their writings in turn, are addressed to English educated bilingual readers. Even when written in an Indian language, the literary sensibility remains influenced by English and the western literary trends. Thus, the pervasive influence of English at multiple levels cannot be denied. In such a context a radical move to destabilise the unwarranted hegemony of English studies in the academy would be to foreground our bi-lingualism. A uniform medium of instruction in an Indian language and the teaching of English as one of the subjects would go a long way in freeing English literature studies from being viewed as imparting language competence and skills. English literature studies could then encompass cultural studies as a more rewarding negotiation in the Indian context. In the next section we shall examine the place of education and English among the masses.

5.4 THE SCENE OF EDUCATION AND ENGLISH

At the outset we have to grapple with certain hard facts:

- The rate of illiteracy in India is disturbingly high.
- The budget allocation for education in our country is among the lowest in the world.
- Out of the meager allocation towards education in the Union budget, a whopping 85 per cent of the outlay is diverted to higher education.
- Only two per cent of the total population has access to higher education.

The sharp divide between the privileged urban middle-class and the illiterate masses is a deeply distressing one. Instead of augmenting universal primary education, checking dropout rate from schools, the practice of disproportionate allocation of the budget to benefit the elite is grossly unjust to the vast majority. The university educated youth are not empowered either. For they remain largely unemployed. The rate of unemployment of the educated youth is increasing with each passing census. These facts throw light on the yawning gaps between university education and our national needs. The realities of our economy are not taken into account while framing the syllabi. Thus, our education remains largely irrelevant, superficial and unpragmatic. The university, which ought to be centres of research, specialisation and exchange of ideas among various disciplines have shrunk to mere fund-managing

institutes. By and large arts and science courses for the under-graduates and post-graduates have remained within the confines of the university while courses pertaining to professional, technical managerial subjects have fallen into the hands of the private sector that has ventured into the arena of higher learning and specialised study. Besides, the university arts or science degree does not ensure the student a ready job in the market. She/he has to spend a substantial amount of money and time to pursue a professional diploma or degree from a private institute in order to qualify for a job. Many private and public sector employees conduct a fresh entrance exam to university degree holders to verify their suitability for the requirements of job. In other words, the university degree has been much devalued. To a large extent, the irrelevance of the syllabus to pragmatic expectation of the employer sector, the failure to update, revise and upgrade existing syllabi and absence of inter-disciplinarity have contributed to the erosion of value of a university degree. The undemanding admission criteria and the obsolete syllabus have rendered this degree trivial and insignificant. It is the resort of those who could not qualify for any other degree. The devaluation of humanities in this manner has eroded the significance of a radical, subversive liberal arts course.

To place English in the Indian university curriculum for humanities without going into the contentious issues accompanying it would be grossly ill advised. English Honours courses tend to be studied in isolation without any adequate interaction with literatures in the other languages or with other subjects in humanities. English and other language departments would have to work in unison, would have to undertake collaborative teaching and learning to make the study of literature relevant to our culture. **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** summarises the scenario thus:

> *What the larger scene of education reveals therefore is the anomalous position of university education in a context of large-scale illiteracy, as the site of both privilege and state controls; the simultaneous importance and devaluation of the humanities within this structure; and the retention of 'English' within the humanities in imitation of the western model without a matching rationale for such incorporation." (25).*

5.5 LET US SUM UP

English cannot be wished away from either our universities or our culture. For one, English studies as a discipline is theoretically well developed in our country. Even Indian literature studies derive much of their theory as well as creative models from English Studies. The politics of language in our country would not allow a simple abolition of English and a switch over to Hindi or other Indian language. The increasing clout of revivalist nationalism brackets Hindi with specific religious, civilisational and nativist discourses that are linked to communalist, regressive trends in our society. Hence, English studies can help broker strategic counter moves in terms of pedagogic experimentation, expansion of the canon and inclusion of comparative world literature/ Indian literature in translation, inter-disciplinary studies, cultural studies etc. A rigorous historicisation of English would prove English studies greatly helpful to students and teachers alike.

5.6 QUESTIONS

1) Examine the formation of English literature as a discipline in the context of England and that of colonial India.
2) Discuss the various aspects pertaining to the debate over the English language in India after Independence.

3) Comment upon how the language politics has not altered the position of the illiterate masses.
4) Comment briefly upon the gap between the university education and our material needs.
5) Write in brief how English Studies in India can be made relevant to our society.

5.7 GLOSSARY

Heterogeneity: pluralistic in form or content or both, a recognition of varying, differing modes of thinking.

imperialism: empire-building.

Monolithic: to homogenise, to perceive all things in an undifferentiated, uniform pattern.

Orthodox: conservative, often regressive ideas, opinion, thinking or codified systems.

Paradoxes: mutually contradictory impulses/ principles.

Unpragmatic: impractical.

UNIT 6 PUBLISHING IN INDIA AND ENGLISH STUDIES

Structure

6.0 Objectives
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Publishing in Colonial India
6.3 Colonialist Education Policy and its Impact on Publishing
6.4 Publishing in English in Post-Independence India
6.5 Intervention from the Margins
6.6 Let Us Sum Up
6.7 Questions
6.8 Glossary

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit would be to explore the material forces that shape English studies in India. We shall examine how the state policies on publishing, in colonial and post-independence India have influenced the trends and scope of the publishing industry. We shall also explore the relationship between publishing and literary studies in India.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall move away from examining pedagogic strategies, the impact of critical theory and related academic issues. We have already discussed the ideological premise concerning the institutionalising as well as continuance of English studies in our country. Apart from political factors, there are many material forces that have fashioned, moulded and influenced the course of English literary studies. Earlier we had examined how the requirements of the job market have influenced the learner's choice of subject. Also how the job market raises or lowers the position of English studies as a discipline. In this unit we shall look at an aspect that is generally not addressed in academic discussion. And precisely for this reason, you would find the following discussion refreshing, informative and we hope thought provoking.

Whenever we discuss issues pertaining to the teaching/ learning of English literature, we assume that it is an arena of ethical values and aesthetic delights. The universalist and essentialist discourse that envelops English literature in popular perception has led to an indifference regarding the material forces that influence English studies in the area of curriculum formation, selection of texts, choice of editions, etc. Market pressures also influence canon formation. The Publishing industry plays a very active and influential role in the formation and continuation of TELI. A simple example would make it clear to you as to the interconnection between curriculum (re) formation and publishing industry. Let us suppose your university/ department undertakes a revision of syllabus of your course. While selecting texts, including classics, it has to reckon with availability of texts in the market. Can the proposed texts be easily made available to the students? Do libraries have a stock of them? Which editions? Who is the publisher? Would the publisher bring out the revised edition? How would it be priced? If a text is to be studied in translation, which of the available translations should be prescribed? The exercise entails knowledge of all these things.

Are there adequate number of prints in the market? If a new selection of texts has to be introduced which publisher could be contacted to publish it within the stipulated time? How much of a share in the profits would be given to the university/ department by the publisher? These are some of the additional questions that would be considered. Similarly, the publisher would also take into account the likely profits that she/ he could make with certainty before concurring to bring out a selection or a textbook for a university course. How many copies are likely to be sold? What is the percentage to be given as copyright to editors? Does it make good business sense to publish this book for the English department? And so on. Then another significant aspect relates to state policy on import of books, price fixation of newsprint, the laws regarding copyright, availability of latest technology in printing, etc. The nexus between the academia, publishers and state policies is a reality that students engaged with English studies cannot remain indifferent to. In this unit, we shall explore the nature of this nexus in the specific context of English education. We shall, of course, take up this issue in the colonial as well as contemporary Indian context.

We shall take up for a detailed analysis an essay by **Urvashi Butalia**, "English Textbook, Indian Publisher", from the book *Rethinking English* (ed. Svati Joshi, Trianka, Delhi, 1991, 321-345). While most of the essays in this book address issues that we have discussed in the earlier units like the ideological complicity of the middle class with the continued privileging of English studies, the politics of language in colonial and postcolonial India, etc. Butalia's essay foregrounds an area that is often kept out of purview. In this Unit we will zero in on this essay for these very reasons. It is an aspect that we need to investigate, and grapple with.

6.2 PUBLISHING IN COLONIAL INDIA

Let us evolve a consensus on certain hard facts regarding writing as well as publishing. No writer lives in a social vacuum. She/ he is a product of the society that she/he inhabits. A book is not a cold artefact but rather a pulsating response to the social and cultural aspects/ issues that envelop a writer's society and the world at large. Similarly, publishing is not a neutral enterprise but is deeply ingrained and implicated in the current cultural matrix. No publisher will publish a work unless she/he is assured of high sales and an appreciable profit. Similarly, a writer also would try out different publishing houses before settling for one who promises a decent remuneration and sound marketing credibility. Thus, publishing is influenced by economic and cultural conditions and it in turn influences the flow of ideas, trends in writing and even inputs of books that hit the market. Let us quote **Urvashi Butalia** to make this point more succinct:

> *...publishing should be seen as a social and cultural institution that plays a powerful role in shaping particular ideas, in ensuing their prevalence and acceptance at any given time and indeed, in turn being shaped by them." (321).*

We shall examine this interdependence specifically in the context of the English textbook. English study in India is largely a text-oriented study. It is not primarily an examination of historical and cultural context of English but rather a scrutiny of English texts. In such a situation, the centrality of the text/ textbook assumes a special significance. It is on the strength of the availability of textbooks that English departments negotiate their exploration of English literature. Hence, the intervention of the publishing industry is a proactive one. When the teaching of English in India was instituted, the publishing industry actively stepped in to make available texts that enabled teaching of English in India. In this way, the role of the publishing industry in the successful formulation of English studies in India and its smooth institutionalising became a central and participatory one. Publishing in English, thanks to the colonial/ official institutionalisation of English education became a

profitable enterprise. Much of the total publication in India was in English. Although publishing was done in Indian languages as well, the spread of English education, and the state patronage that it received at the expense of the vernacular languages, ensured the hegemony of publishing in English in colonial India. The market for English and in particular the English textbook is an immensely profitable one for publishers. Colonialist policies on education and the encouragement given to publishing were vastly instrumental in consolidating the influence of the publishing group on education.

The reasons for instituting English education in India and the reasons for the British involvement in publishing in India were ideologically similar. Both the processes were propelled by the colonialist requirement of an efficient administration. The officers of the East India Company were suspicious of native translators/ interpreters and they wished to handle their correspondence themselves. The first vernacular printing press was established in 1778 at Calcutta during **Lord Hasting**'s tenure as **Viceroy**. The printing machine brought with it greater authority and claim of reliability and correctness. Slowly, the advent of printing eroded the work of scribes who used to copy down texts assiduously. By undermining their efforts and asserting the superior authority of printing, the colonial state succeeded in setting up a hierarchy of authority, reliability and merit. It was dismissive of scribes and the oral tradition that formed the core of dissemination of knowledge in India. Thus, printing was put to ideological use: to undermine and restrict indigenous forms of knowledge assimilation. We can clearly see a parallel in intent in the colonial state's dismissal of Sanskrit and Arabic learning on the one hand and its undermining of native efforts at spreading knowledge and reduplicating texts on the other. The missionaries were the earliest to use printing to advantage. The printing of the Bible in the various Indian languages brought with it claim of greater accuracy and correctness. The context of the Bible as revealed truth further strengthened the claim of authority and sanction of printing over unprinted texts.

6.3 COLONIALIST EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON PUBLISHING

The year 1800, points out **Butalia**, was a significant year for the printing industry. The Serampore Mission Press that published books in Indian languages and in English and Fort William College were established in this year. Serampore and a few other publishing houses catered to the academic needs of Fort William College. Can we perceive the inter-connection between academic institution and publishing houses? In 1813, the **Charter Act** was framed that set the agenda for the education of natives and clearly spelt it out to be a concern of the state. This further boosted the nexus between the academy and the publishing sector. Schoolbook societies were set up first in Calcutta (1818) and later in other places that exclusively produced textbooks for schools and educational institutions. With this the Publishing industry emerged as a textbook producing industry. This nexus left its impact on the curriculum as well as pedagogic practice of educational institutes. The printed textbook supplanted the earlier manuscripts that were in use as a source of knowledge. As the textbook became central to dissemination of knowledge, it paved the way for agencies that selected, prescribed these texts and framed the syllabi. The examination system also underwent a change. The student was not subjected to an oral or dialogic examination anymore. Instead, the student was tested solely on his/her familiarity with the prescribed textbooks. Such a system, of course, as you are aware, continues even today. This gave rise to a mindless, 'rote' learning that effectively put an end to the student's curiosity and independent thinking.

The centrality of printed textbook allowed for greater intervention by colonial authorities. They selected texts, prescribed them and also regulated the pedagogic practice. In selecting textbooks, they were guided by what they thought was "useful"

to natives, omitted what they believed was "dangerous" to them. With the setting up of Hindu College in 1817 with English as a medium of instruction, the place of libraries came into prominence. Here again the colonial government could enforce its presence in the form of advisory and financing body. Generous grants for English books either printed locally or imported from England (highly expensive) and a simultaneous cut in fund allocation for native languages ensured the hegemony of the English book in Indian educational institutions. Owing to the underlying connection between English curriculum and printed textbook, the sale of English books shot up by leaps and bounds. **Butalia** says:

> *The School Book Society published and sold more than thirty thousand English books in the course of two years while the Education committee could hardly sell any Arabic and Sanskrit ones." (327).*

This scenario was used by **Macaulay** to dismiss Sanskrit and Arabic learning as useless. Indian languages were a bad bargain for the colonial government both financially and ideologically. Hence in 1835 in his *Minute on Education*, **Macaulay** advocated withdrawal of state patronage to Sanskrit and Arabic. Let us quote **Macaulay** to explain his stance:

> *About twenty thousand rupees a year are spent in adding fresh masses of waste paper to a hoard which one should think, is already sufficiently ample...The sales of Arabic and Sanskrit books during those three years had not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the meantime, the School Book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes every year, and not only pays the expenses of printing but realizes a profit of twenty per cent on its outlay." (Quoted by Butalia, 327-28).*

This assessment duly put an end to any kind of allocation of funds to Indian classical languages. Following 1835, English became the medium of instruction in institutions of higher learning and the English textbook began to occupy an authoritative, even sanctified position. Selection of textbooks fell exclusively in the hands of selection committees that slowly weeded out representation from native population. A coterie of selectors, publishers and inspectors emerged that arrogated to itself complete control over the nature of books to be prescribed. Books had to be "appropriate", "suitable", "good" and not "dangerous" to native population. The vernacular press, be it journals, newspapers or books, was put under heavy censorship while state grants were withheld. In the name of issuing licenses the state kept a strong vigil and control over vernacular publishing. State control over the publishing industry steadily increased. In 1900, under **Lord Curzon**'s viceroyship, a resolution was passed by the government of India that "only books authorized by the local governments were to be used in schools receiving government grants." (Ibid, p330). Students were prohibited from using textbooks not prescribed by the government. They were denied scholarships and refused permission to appear in public examination if they failed to follow this dictum. The numerous state controls on publishing in Indian languages did not allow it to thrive. On the other hand, government grants, state patronage, official institutionalising of English as a medium of instruction and state controlled selection of textbooks made it possible for publishing in English to grow continually. To meet the ever-increasing demands, British publishing houses entered the Indian market. This was the time when Macmillan, the Oxford University Press, Longmans, etc., set up their Indian offices. But their intervention, guided by the profit motive, was confined to publishing textbooks for schools and universities alone.

6.4 PUBLISHING IN ENGLISH IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

Following independence, the Indian publishing industry looked forward to a radical change in policy and vision concerning both publishing and education. But change was slow and unsubstantial. Colonial structures continued to dominate in matters of

governance, structures of administration and also in the sector of education. The old system continued even after independence. The primacy of the textbook continued unchallenged. So there could be no fundamental change in the nature and quality of publishing in India. The colonial legacy held sway in our selection, formation of curriculum, in attributing disproportionate importance to the textbook and also in retaining state control over the publication of textbooks. The state wielded enormous control over production of textbooks. It also took under its wings the process of selection and prescription of textbooks. The change from colonial to national government set in motion a process that deviated from fashioning a colonial citizen to the formation of the Indian citizen. The colonialist agenda was substituted by a nationalist agenda. In principle, this was called for- it was a much-needed corrective perspective. But it was put to practice in terms of state policy rather than a process of decolonising the Indian mind. As a result, "foreign" books were thrown out, price of books was subsidised and ideals of nationhood were forged through textbooks. The publishing industry was at once enabled and constricted. It still was not free to publish as per market demands. It still could not encourage new writers. It still had to conform to a state agenda. Nationalisation of curricula and the active participation of the state in publishing the new textbooks resulted in shutting down publishing avenues for the private sector. The state held a monopoly over textbook publishing. As Indian publishers survived and thrived mainly on textbook publishing, it served a hard blow to their enterprise. It was difficult for them to diversify into new, non-textbook oriented spaces in the publishing world.

The publishing companies that still managed to remain in the textbook -printing arena did not go in for innovative strategies or engage writers from India. They chose a more lucrative practice of reprinting British primers and classics for the universities. The Indian universities were continuing with the universal, canonised English writers. Keeping this point in mind, the publishing houses chose to take no risks by exploring the idea of selecting Indian writers, editors or commentators. Literary criticism was also borrowed from the Anglo-American academy. Teachers continued to prescribe **Matthew Arnold, Cleanth Brooks, T S Eliot, F R Leavis** and **E M W Tillyard**. There was no scope for critical intervention from Indian critics or academics. Even the few scholars who wrote on English authors preferred to get their works published abroad. They believed that a western publishing house gave them greater name and credibility. For instance, respected critics like **B Rajan** who wrote commendable, scholarly books on Milton got his books published overseas. The Indian university teachers while providing a reading list to their under-graduate and post-graduate students always put down books and critics published. Here again, we will notice a circuitous, recurring pattern. Publishing houses did not encourage local talent. Academics sought credibility by getting their works published abroad.

As a result whatever critical commentaries were published from within India were put down as of inferior quality. Over the years, only "Kunjis" began to be published from India in English. (We are of course, speaking only in reference to TELI, not the sciences, history or economics.) Hence, we were caught up in a system that prescribed Anglo-American classics, west-generated literary criticism and cheap, poorly produced, 'Kunjis' on these authors. These 'Guides', 'Champions', 'Kunjis' as they are variously called have poor production as well as dubious critical merit. They are written specifically to target the examinees. They in turn reproduce their ungrammatical English, lopsided summaries and spurious quotations. The result is an overall devaluation of TELI. Many publishers from the private sector who specialised in publishing for school, simply adapted old English books to the new context. How did they do this? Very easily! They were clever enough to delete British sounding names like Susan and John, Tom and Ann and replaced them with Indian names! So they merely recycled old books. This again ensured that the old colonial pattern continued in the post-independence context. The most lucrative publishing project for any publisher in English, big or small, has been the publishing of English anthologies, both in prose and verse. The syllabus for BA Pass Course, subsidiary courses, high-school curriculum, etc., is largely framed around anthologies.

Anthologies are embedded in a hideous politics. Powerful publishing houses, usually foreign publishing houses that have their branches in India, like the Oxford University Press and Macmillan, lobby for contracts to publish anthologies prescribed at universities. They approach the English departments of various universities and bargain to publish these textbooks. It is a lucrative, hassle-free and prestigious contract for them. Once an anthology is published, year after year, the publishing house simply reprints it without any significant production costs. It is an assured and a recurring source of profit for them. Syllabus revision is a very tardy and backbreaking phenomenon in Indian universities. Hence, once a contract for an anthology has been procured, the publishing house can laugh its way to the bank year after year for a considerable length of time. Departments, syllabus selection committees work in tandem with the publishing houses. It is an easy transference of responsibility to hand in texts in anthologised form for publication by prestigious publishing houses in India with 'foreign' connections. Anthologies are ideologically confused texts. They include three stories, seven poems, two plays, nine essays, one or two written by **Gandhi**, **Nehru** or **Khushwant Singh** to accommodate the demand for nationalist or local flavour. The other essays or poems could be utterly unrelated to the context of Indian classrooms. Anthologies suit profit-motivated publishing houses and ideologically conservative university departments/ selection committees. Such anthologies are then subjected to new critical readings, a close scrutiny of the text to unravel syntactical, linguistic and idiomatic expressions, organisation of matter, quality of prose, analysis of metre, images figures of speech, etc. They are not analysed within a specific ideological, theoretical frame.

The above discussion would have helped you appreciate the nexus between the English academy and the publishing houses. The English textbook in India thus becomes the site for privileging English in post-independence India. By now we have already noted the parallels between colonial and post-independence context in terms of complicity between English academy and publishing industry. This is a very important aspect of English Studies in India. It alerts us to the impact of material forces on English Studies in India. We perceive here, the falsity of essentialising English Studies. We appreciate therefore how erroneous it is to hunt for universal, normative values in English texts. We have now investigated yet another ideological control to which English Studies has been made subject.

6.5 INTERVENTION FROM THE MARGINS

In the first decade following independence, it was felt that the state should regulate the import of books without jeopardising the interests of Indian publishers. In 1957, an import policy pertaining to books was formulated whereby one publisher could not import more than a 1000 copies of a book in a year. This was to prevent monopoly of any one publishing house. But of course, Indian publishers floated numerous sister companies and each one of them imported a 1,000 copies each and aided the mother company to consolidate her position in the market! This policy also further pushed up the reliance on Anglo-American writers on all subjects and disregarding Indian inputs. Foreign subsidy schemes for critical supplementary reading further complicated the scene. Foreign publishing houses benefited the most. As the Indian Academy also prescribed only foreign critics and their readings, business flourished for these publishing firms. Their subsidised, foreign, 'superior' books flooded the market while the non-subsidised Indian books could hardly sustain themselves or offer any competition. Indian publishers demanded the license to print foreign books for Indian students if they were not easily available for a considerable period of time. This was called "compulsory licensing". This again led to even lesser number of opportunities to Indian writers to contribute, intervene or challenge the prevailing critical climate in the western (and obliquely Indian) academy. The Publishers did not want them. They did not want to publish from here since what was 'out there' was

good, the necessary corollary being that what has been produced 'from here' was not good enough.

In such a context, big publishing houses with a British or American corporate base continued to dominate the market. They also continued to make enormous profit. India's independence did not necessarily or immediately pave the way for decolonisation. Colonial structures of dominance continued under new labels. Butalia observes, "The post-independence situation has only brought a sort of replication of the colonial project." (p.340). How can this nexus be challenged? How can existing paradigms be subverted? Setting up of publishing houses with a strong, clear ideological grounding, a political commitment that questions the "process of privileging certain kinds of books" over others, is one possibility. Such publishing units would offer alternative sites that encourage Indian intervention in the world of ideas. They would debunk ideological neutrality of the publisher and assert their political commitments in a creative, socially useful form. Avoiding propagandist discourse, such publishing houses can intervene and rupture the commercial interests of the academy/ big publishing houses. They would thus decenter the valorised, western, (therefore) superior, hegemonic academic discourse that is assimilated by the Indian academy. In its place, it would posit, hitherto marginalised, Indian writers', multiple discourses most of them emerging from subaltern groups and thus enable them to find an entry into the education structure. This radical questioning of what has been handed down for decades would hopefully be a most welcome beginning of decolonisation and recognition of challenges posed by neo-colonial forces in our midst. Such publishing houses could have marked ideological affiliations; they could be left, feminist, dalit, black or adhere to other forms of radical orientation. ***Kali For Women*** is a feminist publishing house publishing from Delhi. ***New Century Book House***, Pvt. Ltd, (Chennai), ***Samudhaya Chintanai***, (Madurai), ***Prakashan Sansthan***, (Delhi), are all dalit publishing houses. Such publishing endeavours allow interventions by alternative, marginalised voices and thereby subvert hegemonic, elitist academic/ critical/ social discourse. Let us conclude with the famous last word on this discussion by one such publisher:

> An indigenous, politically motivated or committed publishing house is truly an act of liberation, for it is here that the stranglehold that has seemed so unbreakable, suddenly becomes more fragile. (Butalia, *Kali For Women*, 342.)

6.6 LET US SUM UP

Publishing is a not a neutral, apolitical activity. In the context of English studies, publishing houses have shown complicity with ideological designs of the colonial state. After independence the continuity of the nexus between the academy, state and publishing houses remains. This is best reflected in the selection and production of the English textbook. The possibility of dislodging this nexus lies in the publishing endeavour of ideologically committed publishing houses that have been set up in recent years such as feminist, dalit and other radical press. This could be a significant step in challenging the elitist, academicist enveloping English Studies in India.

6.7 QUESTIONS

1) Trace the political complicity of publishing houses in the colonial project regarding English education in India.
2) Discuss the centrality of the textbook in English studies. What are its repercussions on publishing in India?

3) Examine the possibilities of dislodging the publishing house – academy nexus over critical debates in English studies.

6.8 GLOSSARY

Apolitical: to be disengaged with the material world, refusing to take an informed position on any issue.

Assimilated: adopted, u imbibed.

Decolonisation: the process of emerging out of colonial structures of thought.

Devaluation: to be rid of values or meaning, to be no longer marketable.

Discourse: argument that is moulded by and reflective of social institutions and cultural preferences.

Jeopardizing: to put at risk.

Nexus: inter-linked; (here) in collusion.

Propagandist: to propagate, having a clear programme/ agenda to promote specific modes of thought.

Supplementary: not primary, an add-on.

Unsubstantial: not of importance.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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2. Lahiri, Mohuha., Kumar, Sanjay., & Anand Prakash., (1992), *Our Story: Indian Response to Nineteenth Century Literature,* (Academic Foundation: Delhi)

3. Ramanan, Mohan., Marathe, Sudhatar., & Robert Bellarmine, (ed), (1993), *Provocations The Teaching of English Literature in India,* (Sangam Books in Association with the British Council (India): Madras)

4. Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari., (ed), (1992), *The Lie of the Land English Literary Studies in India,* (Oxford University Press: Delhi)

5. Trivedi, Harish., (1995), *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India,* (Manchester University Press, 1995, Calcutta, 1993)

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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

Block

6

QUESTIONING THE 'CANON'

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The Block primarily focuses on how the *Canon* can be questioned. In the academic field we use language as a consolidated frame without thinking about the problems associated with its role or use. For us each language has a fixed form and a kind of universal and deterministic meaning with minor variations of dialect and form. These variations manifest in the form of accented pronunciations that differ with the area where they are in vogue. We accept these language variations without looking into the relation between language and its context. What then should be the considerations of a course that is apparently language based? What we mean to ask is- what are the expectations of a specialised course in English or in any other language? For the purpose of this Block we are going to focus on the course in English Literature. As the name suggests it is a course that considers works only in one specific language– English. But is this language a feature of a particular country or can it be seen to have roots elsewhere also? We understand that the implications of English in Britain are different from those in say India. The introduction of English Literature in the Universities in India is a product of the Indo-British imperial relations of the colonial period.

It is with the recognition of these and related ideas that we are going to proceed in our analysis of *canon* formation. To challenge the assumptions of the *canon* it is first important to understand its construction. Thus, the present block is to discuss in detail the factors that have constructed the *canon*, to evolve a process of questioning the canon in its formation both in the First World and in the context of the Third World. We are going to emphasise the need to attack canonical ideas from a specific point of view. The idea is to show how a canonical interpretation limits the scope of literature. The questions raised in this Block point towards the need to establish a relation between literature and society which alone can enable us to comprehend the nature of ideas governing notions of the useful, significant and mainstream.

The **First Unit** introduces you briefly to the ideas that will be discussed at length in the context of specific theorists in the other units. This unit also provides an overview of the larger argument that encloses our discussion of different essays.

The **Second** and the **Third Units** discuss **Terry Eagleton**'s essay, *The Rise of English* from *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* The issues raised by **Eagleton** are complex and for benefit as MA students, his ideas have been discussed in the form of two separate units. **Unit II** defines the term canon and explains the social, literary and historical co-ordinates that have contributed to its formation. **Eagleton** exemplifies his ideas in his discussion of literature from the eighteenth century to the beginnings of the twentieth century, in the process of observing the changes in history as related to social structures in society. In **Unit III** we confront **Eagleton**'s views on the connections between literature, criticism and the contribution of figures such as **Leavis** and **Eliot** who modified the canon in their own way. According to **Eagleton** there is a link between the transformations introduced by **Leavis** and **Eliot** in literature and their specific class position. In this unit we have traced with **Eagleton**'s help the evolution of critical theory in the twentieth century. This unit raises some important questions about the application of critical theories to works of literature.

Unit Four focuses on the establishment of the English courses in the **Universities** of **Oxford** and **Cambridge**. The critic **Bergonzi**'s views are discussed here to see the way in which administrative and literary bodies came to mythify the idea of English. **Bergonzi** helps us to understand the role played by the **Newbolt Report** in the consolidation of the programme in English Studies in India. The report featured as a landmark in the way the courses were organised in the universities. This unit questions the assumptions of the basis of the courses offered in our universities. It

also studies the impact of the **Oxford** and **Cambridge Universities** on the educational institutions elsewhere in the English dominated world.

Unit V examines **Widdowson**'s ideas on what he understands as a crisis in English studies. This unit explains the implications of studying English literature as an unchanging body comprising canonical texts. **Widdowson** tries to formulate a relationship between literature and criticism by challenging the assumptions that posit a simplistic relation between the two areas. **Widdowson** also tries to locate a theoretical premise for understanding works of literature. However, like **Bergonzi** he eliminates Marxist theory from the literary field to subdue the questioning of the canon.

Unit VI explores **Hillis Miller**'s views on the problems within literary theory. He advocates the need for a theoretical enterprise to tackle problems raised by a canonical reading of literary texts. **Hillis Miller** suggests that the confusions within the literary problematic can be resolved by emphasising a reading of the text. According to him theory can be located within the process of reading that simultaneously resists a reading of the text. However, his, remains a limited academic view as he privileges the text against the context.

With the exception of **Terry Eagleton**, the other theorists under-estimate the influence of historical materialist studies. They borrow ideas from the theoretical construct of materialism but do not allow for the establishment of a fully evolved theoretical paradigm. They misconstrue the meaning posited by Marxism to foreground other bourgeois ideologies like aestheticism and liberalism. The argument in this block reveals the biases of these ideological structures that consider the change-oriented historicist thought as dated. In the context of literary theory the underlying argument that discusses these theorists in this block foregrounds a connection between the text and the context.

UNIT 1 QUESTIONING THE *CANON*, IDEOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE *CANON*

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Matthew Arnold and F R Leavis as Makers of the *Canon*
1.3 Universities, English and the Third World
1.4 Criticism, Literature and T S Eliot
1.5 The *Canon* and "Us"
1.5.1 Slants in Theory and the *Canon*
1.6 Let Us Sum Up
1.7 Questions
1.8 Glossary

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to explain the complex and fractured state of English studies particularly in the context of literary theory. This unit will introduce the conflicting ideas of what constitutes literary theory. We are first going to focus on the factors that construct the canon — a specific version of literature as the correct one. As against such mainstream thought processes we shall study the need to bring in alternative methodological strategies to understand literature. These are not merely tools that bring forth the meaning of literature. Instead they locate meaning within a definite socio-historical context. The process of questioning finally helps formulate a theoretical premise that constitutes a meaningful relation between literature and society at a specific moment in history. Let us begin by introducing the *Canon*.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

To begin with the debate on differing interpretations of the *canon* we must first discuss the present academic state of English Literature. In its present form it has come to embody a whole range of literary, social and cultural signifiers that determine important aspects of the world of the academic institutions and the one outside it. For the non-academic populace a degree in English Literature indicates a specialisation in English as a language. But people who are part of the literate minority understand it to mean a perfection of language skills as well as an exposure to a range of texts that are signifiers of literariness.

A student majoring in this language is subject to the interpretations of the course by the University. The course indicates the individual as a kind of literary elite who is somewhere at par with the products of the English Universities. This has implications for the social set-up as well. In the world outside the academic one the students of English Literature are regarded in some way as superior to the rest. These are the biases generated by the canonical readings of a course modeled on the ways of the West. One of the ways of attacking these established ideas is by re-formulating the course in English by adapting it to a specific context. Another way would be way to question the assumptions of the canon so that resistance can be made part of the process of studying literature in English. For the moment however, we will focus on the latter.

The study of English Literature is a study of the English language as understood in the context of England. What then is the application of a language in a context to which it did not belong at an earlier moment in history? While using English are we, the people of the Third World aware of the nuances of the nineteenth century imperial policies in which it originated? In India today, English is a second language only in name. It might not be the official language of India, but is definitely used in some way or the other in the different strata of our society. We are not trying to suggest the impossibility of the introduction and use of a new language in a context other than where it is the main language. Still, what we are doing is trying to make the Third World user (us) of this language conscious of the implications of language usage.

What do we mean by the term *canon* and how is it constructed? The term *canon* is a body of texts the understanding of which constitutes the literary range of a group studying English Literature. Texts that are part of this category are considered canonical and therefore constitute Literature. On the other hand texts outside the *canon* can be referred to as popular fiction or some other alternative genre. For example, works by Third World writers in English are not part of the *canon* and for them a separate title has to be framed. We are familiar with the debate on the identity formation of writers of the Third World. Should they be grouped as postcolonial literatures or Commonwealth literature? In all this the *canon* continues to occupy a place of its own and students studying a specialised course in English are subject to the canonicity of texts a pre-determined concept that regulates their response to a given text.

In studying the formation of the *canon* in our context we will first take a look at the way it was understood in the context of England. This is because our version of the *canon* is an offshoot of the one studied in the First World. The canonical texts of English Literature have been based on the ideas of **Macaulay, Arnold**, the **Newbolt Report**, and by the influence of eminent figures like **F R Leavis** and **T S Eliot.** A cross-section of nineteenth century English society shows the transformations in the structuring of its social set-up. Firstly, the economy of English society changed radically from a largely agrarian though emerging bourgeois society to a predominantly industrial one. Money came to more and more people and differentiated one class from the other — the privileged group formed the upper class, the emerging section that was slowly becoming powerful occupied the second position and at the end were the masses uprooted from the village and planted in the industry. The upper class also comprised the then redundant aristocracy.

Mind you, this is what nineteenth century England witnessed. Education and literature therefore rested in the hands of these few privileged people who had a limited perspective. But as the middle class acquired power, they also received exposure to education. So then we had the formation of two conflicting points of view- the powerful group wanted to dominate the field of education whereas the emergent middle class felt that the quality of literariness had to be passed on to more people. Both groups had vested interests. The former wanted to preserve its power whereas the latter wanted to attain it. Even though the middle class section wanted to make the system of education flexible, they had their own limitations. They wanted education for certain individuals only and did not allow it to filter down to the masses. The *canon* was therefore formed and re-structured to suit the interests of these two groups. This leads us inevitably to the question of culture.

1.2 MATTHEW ARNOLD AND F R LEAVIS AS MAKERS OF THE *CANON*

In this situation how did English Literature become synonymous with culture? One of the major reasons for this was the approach **Matthew Arnold** adopted. According to him in a scenario where the existence of God was increasingly subject to doubt

literature provided all the answers. **Arnold** noted that **Darwin**'s theory of evolution fragmented the sensibility of people who had believed that their lives were regulated by the Christian idea of birth, suffering, death and a life after death. On the other hand, science emerged as a body of knowledge that could provide logical answers to the questions that people confronted in life. As a consequence, faith became an empty area without any basis. Thinkers like **Arnold** felt that literature could give some direction to the people of Victorian England in this regard. According to **Arnold** culture was recommended as an answer to the 'present difficulties' of society. The problem however remained that culture was accessible only to the privileged few. According to **Arnold:**

> *The highly-instructed few, and not the scantily-instructed many, will ever be the organ of the human race of knowledge and truth. Knowledge and truth in the full sense of the words, are not attainable by the great mass of the human race at all.*

Arnold contributed to the formation of this literary *canon* by demarcating a specific section of society as possessing the capability to gain knowledge and truth. This gave the privileged group in possession of culture the mystical power of transmitting education to the masses in their own arbitrary way. Thus, even if literature could provide the answers to the problems of the nineteenth century society, it definitely classified education as the prerogative of only a few people. In this context let us raise the question — who are going to be the 'highly-instructed' few who will constitute the literary organ of the country? The obvious answer is that they are going to be people who have the economic power to purchase education. What about the economically deprived? **Arnold** does not go into this question seriously. What is however, certain is that the answer to the first question is the educated elite because of their notions of excellence, and privileges. This defines parameters of the *canon*, the formation of which is controlled by a privileged minority.

1.3 UNIVERSITIES, ENGLISH AND THE THIRD WORLD

Another factor that contributed to the formation and dissemination of canonical works was the **Newbolt Report** of 1921, *The Teaching of English in England.* The English establishment had prepared the Report with diligence. It set forth the aims and objectives of the course. It also clearly sets out to determine the cultural/ literary requirements of the colonial population. According to the report,

> *To every child in this country, there is one language with which he must necessarily be familiar and by that, and by that alone, he has the power of drawing directly from one of the great literatures of the world.*

This report operated at two levels. It was aware, for instance, that in the wake of nationalistic fervor each nation and even community had become conscious of its own specific cultural indices. This had serious political implications in the context of the imperialistic strategies employed by England. The British tried to foreground English as a universal language against French, a language that enjoyed a privileged place in the world till the beginning of the twentieth century. Reports like the one by **Newbolt** made way for the dissemination of the English language in other countries particularly the colonies. It asserted that English as a language with global significance and English Literature as the 'great literature of the world'. Familiarity with the English language became a pre-requisite for becoming a part of the literary group. Therefore, a course in English acquired a literary value not available to other courses. **Arnold** came in handy to give shape to the *canon* by giving a special place to literature and the **Newbolt** Report elevated the English language to the level of a myth. After the formulation of this report English became entwined with signifiers

that indicated power. The teachers of this course regarded as missionaries by the report became people who had a significant role to perform in society. They would not only impart education but they would circulate belief in the myth of Englishness. A reading of English literature ensured a place within the larger *canon* in society — its power structure.

Another important factor that allowed for the perpetuation of the *canon* was the influence of eminent literary personalities such as **F R Leavis** and **T S Eliot** in the first half of the twentieth century. The ideas circulated by these people still have a determining influence on the minds of the students in English Universities as well as study centers outside England. Whereas **Leavis** belonged to the lower middle class, **Eliot** was part of the aristocratic circle that no longer enjoyed any power. **Leavis** tried to reformulate the *canon* so as to accommodate members of his class the sensitive middle class individuals, but he did not extend it to the masses. Thus, his view remained limited. The liberal humanist group behind the journal *Scrutiny* believed in the essential goodness of individuals- the idea that there were certain people all over the world who were good in nature.

This faith in individual goodness is a characteristic feature of such thinkers who try to privilege themselves as against the others. The ideas of the *Scrutiny* appealed to the minds of the people due to its liberal policy that allowed for an increase in the number of people who could be part of the literate group. This thinking suited the class ambitions of the bourgeois i.e., the class that wanted to figure in important positions in society. That is why **Leavisian** thinking holds the attention of the students in academic institutions even today. The vested interests of the middle class people also influenced significantly the object of the focus of English literature. This can be seen in the formation of one of the greatest canonical works by **Leavis**- *The Great Tradition*. A canonical work privileges certain texts as great literature and others as ordinary fiction that provides entertainment. That is why the **Leavisian** *canon* kept **Dickens** out of *The Great Tradition*. The same treatment was meted out to women authors like **Emily** and **Charlotte Bronte**. The attitude of **Leavis** coupled with his wide appeal to the student of Literature has contributed to the formation of the *canon* in our context. Another interesting feature that **Leavis** introduced into Literature was the association of literature with Criticism. Before him, the relation between the two had remained largely undefined. In this one must discuss the contribution of **T S Eliot** we shall do this in the next section of this unit.

1.4 CRITICISM, LITERATURE AND T S ELIOT

As pointed out earlier **T S Eliot** belonged to a class that was looking for ways and means to assert itself in the contemporary scenario. One of the ways in which it could manifest itself was by allying with the new intelligentsia as embodied in **Leavis** and others. **Eliot**'s class aspirations become clear by an analysis of his ideas on criticism. His essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is considered an important marker in the association between literature and criticism. In the context of literature he created space for himself by foregrounding criticism that focuses on the idea of 'Tradition'. According to him a study of literary criticism would be meaningless without bringing in the works of the past. In a way the idea was interesting as it looked for a cohesive view of literature. There can be no doubt that **T S Eliot** was able to accommodate the powerless aristocracy as an important figure in the literary field by invoking the idea of tradition. However, his idea of what constituted tradition was rather arbitrary. Further, the idea of including new works within this gamut was without a logical basis. In terms of literary devices, **Eliot**'s early poetry suggested that meaning could not be located in society but in a vague and undefined time. The world had become in his view too complex and was beyond comprehension.

However, his later poetry pointed towards the Anglican Christian thinking suggesting that all complexities could be resolved within this specific religious frame. This was a process of subsumation that simplified all social contradictions and indicated a straight path of faith. The other problem with **Eliot**'s thought was that he was considering only the minority in society the select few who had the capacity to 'objectively' consider a pattern in human existence. Where was the possibility of spreading this education to a larger group? This was of no concern to either **Leavis** or **Eliot**. They had both in their own ways contributed to the *canon*. Thus we can see that various social, literary and historical factors constructed the *canon* so assiduously reinterpreted and accepted by us. However, what was the significance of canonical formations of English studies in the other countries, particularly the Third World, under the imperial rule of the English? This we shall take up next.

1.5 THE *CANON* AND "US"

What were the implications of the study of English Literature for people outside the English context? This question is relevant particularly in view of the requirements of the Third World. As we know, the model of imperialism always projects the ruler as superior to the 'native'. Thus, English language performs a dual role. On the one hand a study of English language perpetuates the myth of Englishness because the native or 'other' can never perfect the language. And on the other it inspires the native to behave like the English. This is evident in **Macaulays**' views on education. The Indians would become, said **Macaulay**,

> *A class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect...The languages of Western Europe civilized Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the tartar.*

The emphasis in **Macaulay**'s *Minutes* on education is on the consolidation of the British Empire in India. The aim was two-fold: to replace Persian with English as the official language in India and to posit English conduct and approach as an answer to the social evils in India. This is reinforced by what **Lord Bentinck** said to **Alexander Duff** in an interview,

> *If there was one opinion on which he was more decided than another, it was the expediency of teaching English in all our higher Seminaries gradually substituting it throughout every department of government business, instead of the Persian which ought as soon as possible to be abolished.*

The association of the English language with the imperial agenda is paradoxical. It functioned as a major point of connection between the 'English' and the Indian community. It made the Indians feel literate only if they gained proficiency in the language creating a 'babu' culture. At the same time it maintained a line of difference between the two groups privileging the English over the native. The language of the native was derogated and it was thought that the sooner it was abolished, the better it would be. Somehow or the other, the need was felt to evade native languages. Clearly, native languages could be subjugated by spreading a *canon*ical interpretation amongst the Indian masses. The 'native' was subsumed within the myth of Englishness and believed that the emulation of Englishness could provide the Indians with a refinement they otherwise lacked. In terms of social groups this introduced the idea of the 'elite'- one who held some kind of mastery over the English language. Thus the English language was privileged over other languages of India.

The introduction of the English language in the Indian education system influenced its academic as well as social structures. The infiltration of this language into the administrative system and the category of the literary elite affected the thought

processes of the educated groups in the seats of learning. The Universities of the First World have controlled through influencing those of the Third World particularly in the context of imperialist domination. Even as we refer to the larger context of the Third World, the examples cited are from our immediate context- a specific space in Indian society. We are not suggesting that the Third World is a universal entity and the co-ordinates in the case of India would be applicable to Africa or Latin America. The idea is to pose questions valid in a specific problematic, so as to generate the possibility of resistance in other areas. At the end of the nineteenth century the establishment of the Oxford and Cambridge Universities signified the materialisation of a struggle that stressed the importance of education.

However this education had a specific purpose in mind. We have already discussed this in terms of the **Newbolt Report**. But how did the programme of education in England affect the Third World? The authorities framing the English courses in our Universities have faced pressure from institutions of England or America. Even before the outline of the English course is prepared for a University, the format to be followed already exists. Our language skills, writing skills and our understanding of literature have to conform to the standards that have been set by the Oxford or Cambridge Universities. There is a specific idea of English that is generated by these Universities and we are expected to follow them unquestioningly. It does not come as a surprise that students studying English Literature consider themselves closer to the English set-up and, therefore, more literate than the others. The courses in English have to be adapted and re-written taking into cognisance the aspects of literature in one's own context. That would be more worthwhile. It is interesting to note that as a resistance to this imperialist aftermath eminent teachers from our Universities show proficiency and awareness of, both English as well as Hindi, Urdu, and writings in other languages as well as their translations in English. Thus we can see the connection between the construction of the *canon* in the First World and its impact on the Third World. The *canon* is an entity that has far-reaching consequences and this is the reason why we need to formulate resistance to the *canon*. This takes us to the next point where we see the presence of certain biases behind what we call the *canon*.

1.5.1 Slants in Theory and the *Canon*

Before we formulate a theoretical position to resist the *canon*, let us first focus on the relationship between literature and criticism. Criticism is considered by some literary scholars as an allied branch of literature and by the others a well-integrated and necessary part of it. Our purpose is to see whether there are any canonical formations even in critical perspectives that claim to understand works of literature. This is essential. Critical theory has increasingly become an important area for the understanding of literature. However, is literature a body of thought that can be easily decoded by Criticism? We do not think this to be true. It is not as if the function of Criticism is to merely locate meaning in the form of definite answers to solve the riddle called literature. There are contradictions within both literature and criticism. The two must be considered in an objective materialistic way. The nature of contradictions is as much internal as it is external since both literature and criticism shape and are shaped by the actual surroundings in which they operate.

What is the thrust of the objective historicist point of view and how is it going to prove an appropriate 'slant' for us to discuss the aspects of literary theory? For us, literary theory recognises the transitions in English economy from an agrarian to a capitalist economy. It traces the development in society from an earlier period in history to the contemporary state of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It recognises a relation between different social stages and its corresponding economic system. It analyses the development of new productive forces and works out their relation to other aspects of society. What we mean is that imperialism has been at the centre of *canon* formation in our context and needs as such to be comprehended in its multiple ways of functioning. The contradictions of which we talked about gets, further compounded under imperialism since it brings to bear on them its own weight of problems. What for instance is the relationship between the masses of western

'advanced' countries and those of the colonies? Normally, since both are exploited, they should have a commonality of interests. This, however, is not the case. In our context, the ordinary English citizen was prevented from relating to common Indian people by the fact of his position in the imperialistic structure. Therefore, we have to place this whole phenomenon in a new cultural- ideological framework and recognise its specific nature. Let us use somewhat simple terms to explain this phenomenon.

Today we have entered a new phase of capitalism in which different kinds of relations are formulated amongst the members of society. These are new manifestations of the earlier relations. We can see that in a given country with a market- oriented economy one section emerges richer than the others. In the global set-up then the developed country moves faster than the developing countries and the First World continues its control over the Third World. Today, the old system has remained even though the forms have changed and we have entered a new era of consumerism. We are puppets both at the hands of the indigenous markets and the multi-national corporations. In such a scenario should we dismiss the political- social nexus or should we deploy the ideas of economic suppression to counter the ever-emerging strategies of global capitalism? The literary *canon* tries to blur the boundaries of such ideological processes so that *status quo* prevails. This allows the proponents of the *canon* to work out their motives effectively. But we need to put a stop to these dominant modes of thinking. They are tempting and lucrative and it is easy to fall prey to them. We need to develop inter-related matrices to develop a cogent theory to counter canonical tendencies in literature. One such method is the alliance of materialist thought with Feminism.

As a theoretical enterprise feminism is also trying to work out methodological strategies to question canonical assumptions. The feminist groups have not restricted themselves to the text but are bringing it alive in the social context in the form of theatre, arts, and so on. But feminism cannot be worked out completely till equality is established at all levels in society and for this it has to function in co-operation with forces that aim to end exploitation. One of the most important ways of doing this is by beginning with an implementation of these theoretical concepts in the classroom. It is only with a meaningful interaction between the teacher and the student that these ideas can be extended beyond the room to the world outside. Therefore a questioning of the *canon* has to take place from a specific vantage point that is able to articulate meaningfully the voices of dissent. We need to sharpen literary minds so that the resistance offered against the established literary *canon* can be used to reformulate and define existing social tendencies.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this introductory unit we have tried to understand the various factors that have made for the easy perpetuation of the *canon*. Factors like the influence of **Arnold**, the **Newbolt Report** and others will be taken up in each of the units that follow. We have tried to recognise the pattern of relationship between literature and criticism and have discussed both the canonical renderings of this association and the possible alternative. These ideas point towards the need to question assumptions of the *canon*. We must articulate our voice from a specific point of view to challenge the basis of the *canon*. A view that stresses the influence of imperialism in our midst is one such point of reference that helps us undermine the influence of the *canon*. A critical perspective on the neo-colonial suppressions in our part of the world offers an appropriate paradigm to question the *canon* in a meaningful way.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Write in brief the factors that have led to canon-formation
2. What is the effect of the canon on the Third World?

3 What were the implications of Macaulay's ideas on Education for India?

4 Do you see any relation between canon formation and economic systems in a given society?

1.8 GLOSSARY

Agrarian Economy: Economic structure that is land-oriented

Babus: As the Britishers left India, the Indians who continued in the administrative set-up fostered the remnants of colonial superiority and considered themselves 'babus', people better than the others.

Methodological Strategies: Literary techniques that are not merely objective tools. In fact, they are based on a specific method related to a definite point of view.

Parameters: Boundaries that define the field of operation of a particular idea.

Myth: It is a system that posits its cultural ideas as naturally superior. It employs the arts, culture and other literary factors for the process of naturalisation.

UNIT 2 THE RISE OF ENGLISH AND ISSUES CONCERNING THE 'CANON'

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 The *Canon* in Relation to the Literature of the Eighteenth Century
2.2.1 Imagination and Literature: The Nineteenth Century
2.3 Romanticism and the *Canon*
2.4 Good or Evolution
Literature and Society
Or Other Women?
Wrapping Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to make us understand theoretically the formation of the *canon* in the context of [illegible] specific developments in society that in turn take place on the [illegible] nations in history are the outcome of [illegible] economic structures from one social system to another, from the era of [illegible] political formations, for instance, in our context to industrialism and imperialism. The consideration of these will then help us to answer the larger questions: What is the relationship between literature and society? Does the *canon* take into consideration the different classes in a given society? Where is the Indian student positioned with respect to the canon? [illegible] look at **Terry Eagleton**'s essay *The Rise of English*.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In **Terry Eagleton**'s essay titled *The Rise Of English* the term 'English' is discussed in theoretical terms. However, certain questions arise. Does it mean the rise of the English civilisation, the beginnings of English Studies or the English as a power to reckon with? **Eagleton**'s analysis takes into account the changing and ever evolving relations between the development of the English society in the last couple of centuries as an imperio-industrial power and the study of English. It is within these relations and the conflicting forces reflected therein that the familiar term '*canon*' and its implications are located. But what is the *canon*? The *canon* is not simply an aesthetic idea. It is a category that has a complex relationship with society and its powerful zones. The nature of this complexity is what we are going to. To explain further, '*canon*' is a term used initially in the context of the church. It implied a dogma decreed by the church council. *Canon* also referred to a set of books that were considered as holy by the authorities of the church. In due process the *canon* has started to signify the rules by which a certain set of books can be considered authoritative. The *canonicity* of the *canon* has become a yardstick to decide literary works as mainstream or otherwise.

2.2 THE *CANON* IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Eagleton discusses the *canon* with respect to the literature of the eighteenth century onwards [illegible] criticism of the early twentieth century. At the beginning of the

he makes an important distinction between literature of the Enlightenment and what we consider to be 'creative' or 'imaginative' literature of the succeeding era. The literary developments of the eighteenth century did not take place in isolation. They were related as **Eagleton** points out, to the emergence of a new class in this period- the middle class group of traders and merchants that forms itself as the developed capitalists later in the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century it comprised people who had started acquiring money from sources other than 'land'. Land had hitherto determined social relations but now the old medieval land-centred order had been challenged. The guild system of the seventeenth century in which people traded with one another developed into the idea of trade some time later. These transactions allowed people to relate power with a new co-ordinate, money. This replaced powerful groups like the aristocrats and the landlords the people who were slowly becoming socially strong owing to acquisition of money. The people of the waning dominant order of the past were compelled to acknowledge the presence of this 'cluster' as the latter were now able to wield importance. To suit the needs of this upcoming class, literature changed its emphasis by fore- grounding another latent genre- the periodical essay for example. As **Eagleton** says:

> *With the need to incorporate the increasingly powerful but spiritually rather raw middle classes into unity with the ruling aristocracy, to diffuse polite social manners, habits of 'correct' taste and common cultural standards, literature gained a new importance. (15).*

This category was designed to refine the emerging class so that they could fit in with and integrated into the upper echelons of society. The body of literature that had so far focused on poetry as a genre was now to acknowledge the presence of a new literary form whose aim was "to temper wit with morality and to enliven morality with wit." According to **Eagleton** this originated to suit the needs of a new class that lacked the code of social etiquettes laid down by the dominant forces of the previous period. The coffee house became the place where an intermingling of different clusters of people became possible. Our attention is drawn to the fact that the coffee house led to the formation of what we understand as 'opinion'. A sensibility owing allegiance to ideas and opinions was not possible in the feudal set-up where expression was a prerogative of those who were in possession of land. The coffee house culture made possible a different kind of interaction that threatened the interests of the aristocrats. The new group, suggests **Eagleton**, tried to reformulate the term 'aristocracy' to make space for itself. The system of values also had to be redefined so that the interests of this category could be kept in mind. We are told that it is because of this reason that the middle class started talking about relativity of morality and ideas of liberty, as their spirit of dynamism and change. This shows how in **Eagleton**'s words:

> *Literature did more than 'embody' certain social values: it was a vital instrument for their deeper entrenchment and wider dissemination. Literature interacts with social forces and creates another set of values altering the existing system.*

What was meant to be a 'correction' of taste for this new group formed the foundation of an emerging power. In his book, ***The Function of Criticism*, Eagleton** has explained this phenomenon in the following manner:

> *In the early eighteenth century, then, the bourgeois principle of abstract free and equal exchange is elevated from the market-place to the sphere of discourse, to mystify and idealize real bourgeois social relations. The petty proprietors of a commodity known as 'opinion' assemble together for its regulated interchange, at once miming in purer, non-dominative form the exchanges of bourgeois economy, and contributing to the political apparatus which sustains it.*

It is in this connection between what we understand as the exchange of 'opinion' at the coffee houses and the change in economic structures that the role of literature and

formation of the *canon* should be located. The free exchange taking place in the market place has its bearing on the formation of opinionated thought in society. Let us look the relationship between the *Canon* and the literature of the nineteenth century in the next section.

2.2.1 Imagination and Literature: The Nineteenth Century

Eagleton has pointed out in this essay that in our context there is a tendency to associate literature with the 'creative' faculty. This definition of literature was a result of the far-reaching transitions in the nineteenth century. The industrial revolution and its impact on the society led to a reformulation of the existing thought categories. The association of literature with creative thought arose out of a specific requirement in society. It is not as if literature has to be altered to suit the world outside. Still, we must understand that there is a relationship between works of literature and the society of the time when they were composed and our aim is to understand it. We have to ask as to how this definition of literature came into being: Did this have any connection with the changing face of the middle classes? It is a 'narrowing' of the meaning of literature to certain categories of thought that occupies **Eagleton**'s concern in the next part of the essay, as he points out:

> *But by the time of the Romantic period...to write about what did not exist was somehow more soul-stirring and valuable than to pen an account of Birmingham. (16).*

These evolved and became also different in the period that followed. The nineteenth century is the period in which ideas of Empire, industrialism, economic growth in the form of capitalism and literature intersect at various points. These connections manifest themselves in literary activity in the form of new ideas. One of these formations is the term 'imagination'. The faculty of imagination as a term came into being as a reaction of some groups against the barrenness created by increased industrialisation and reduction of relationships to economic coordinates of capital. These groups comprised the ascendant bourgeoisie whose expectations were belied by new historical developments. In the world of nineteenth century England, the people were regulated by a different structure of economy where the controlling factor was money and not land.

The nature of the co-ordinates being discussed in the context of the nineteenth century might share some similarities with the eighteenth century but at the same time the differences have not been ignored. One cannot ignore the contradictions of the historical process. In the eighteenth century the imperial policies of the English coupled with the regulation of the Enclosure system compelled people to move away from a land - based society. In this period therefore, we have the formation of different ideas that are at their experimental stage. It is only in the nineteenth century that these ideas harden into rules that form a different kind of society. Parallel to this are the people who exist as clusters in the eighteenth century, but it is only in the next century that this new group is able to crystallise itself into a new class that would alter the system radically. In the face of an emerging capitalism coupled with the utilitarian ideology, the people started desiring more in the form of products made available by the 'boon' called industrialisation. Human relations, earlier regulated by a feudal-patriarchal set up were now looked at differently. The vantage point had changed. Social relations were now defined in terms of market relations. For example, earlier groups of people would 'create' a product and then sell it as part of the guild system. In this case even in small-scale workshops the organiser would be in direct contact with the people working with him. However, the industrial set up generated another relation that between the owner and the worker. In this the owner no longer had any contact with the worker who was reduced to a name on the salary statement. As **Eagleton** points out:

> *In England a crassly philistine Utilitarianism is rapidly becoming the dominant ideology of the middle class, fetishizing fact, reducing human relations to market exchanges and dismissing art as unprofitable ornamentation. (17).*

Thus changes in the market place had a direct impact on the way society had been structured. Historically this was a very significant period as it witnessed the revolutionary fervour of the masses. In France and other places in Europe one saw the emergence of ideas of 'liberty, fraternity and equality. In the words of **Wordsworths,** "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive". It is in such a scenario that the literary group we understand as the Romantics gave birth to the idea of 'imagination'. According to **Eagleton,** this concept became a means of creating a space free from the invasion of economic ideas. It was a zone that tried to resist the onslaught of a system that was lucrative and therefore quite overpowering in nature. The Romantics, according to **Eagleton**, were not divorced from reality but were firmly rooted in it. Imagination was thus, not merely an aesthetic experience but as in the case of **Shelley,** it became a way of positing another system. To consider the idea of Imagination merely as 'escapism' would be a reductive interpretation, one that would ignore the relation of the Romantics with society. In fact the Romantics tried to redefine the *canon* in their own way. This group was thoroughly disgusted with the 'materialistic' approach of the proponents of the industrial set-up. This compelled the romantics to look for a new aspect of society through which they could in turn define themselves. Reason was therefore substituted by imagination and this provided succour to the otherwise barren situation in which the Romantics were placed.

2.3 ROMANTICISM AND THE *CANON*

How do we respond to and evaluate the *canon* of creativity as a field that offered scope to escape? The accepted position in mainstream English criticism is that **Romanticism** posited the individual against society and dreams against reality. Nothing could be farther from the truth. **Eagleton** helps us to understand that **English Romanticism** was caused by concrete historical circumstances that demanded a rejection of the prevailing and the newly emerging trends. The sheer sterility of their socio-political environment made it imperative for these people to locate other areas of expression. Imagination provided them with the possibility of materialising ideas of non-alienated labour, equality for the masses and transcendence in a depressing social situation. This is the reason why **Eagleton** sees the literature of this period as an 'alternative ideology' and imagination as a 'political force'. In fact poets like Shelly saw complete harmony between their poetic ideals and their socio-political leanings. It is another matter that, some of them were unable to continue their grip on reality. After transcending the real world by moving into the imaginative faculty, some of the Romantics were unable to crystallise their thought in any concrete way. But others were unable to understand with clarity the nuances of being part of this or that class. It can be argued that the Romanticists equated the suffering exploited masses with the capitalists because of which, they could not see the potentiality of protest within the existing society. They ignored the difference in their social set-up where the latter were the owners of property unlike the former who were only the workers. These together as human beings constituted the bourgeois social environment. This restriction of the forces of the imaginative powers to the individuals of a specific group prevented the materialisation of potential forces of the imagination into any meaningful alternative structure in society.

This manifested, according to **Eagleton,** in a kind of idealism in literature in newer forms such as 'symbol' and 'aestheticism'. The *canon* was formed in the context of these new concepts. **Baudelaire** and others considered the poet to be a seer who could 'see' through the existing order to one beyond it. Concrete images are looked at as symbols considered a 'unitary' entity having artistic sanctity, one that could not be

violated. The symbol would then help get a grasp on the ideal world. This meant that there was to be insularity in art that could not be-penetrated and that it was to have a privileged status that made it available to only the chosen ones. Any possibility of the symbol to be interpreted in a specific context was also ruled out. Art became an aesthetic experience which was to be 'felt' but in an isolated way. This singularised the multifarious social possibilities into a static thought allowing for little or practically no change in society.

Art was to have no connection with existing social forces. It was to be content formulating its own rules and regulations. We have a re-formulation of the *canon* — the aesthetic *canon* of imagination, sensibility and experience that would privilege certain groups and leave the others out. What importance did this assign to the literary artist and the reader of their works? As far as the writer was concerned the focus was supposed to rest on art for its own sake. As a result the literary worker was reduced to being an artist rooted out of context in the realm of an abstract universal space. The artist was compelled to believe in the illusion that his works have no relation to society except that of projecting beauty. **Eagleton** thus shows how *canons* in literature are formed; how a clever slant is provided to literature because of which injustice is done to a major part of creative endeavour.

2.4 GOD OR EVOLUTION

Eagleton's analysis of literature and social forces in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century establishes the ideological aspects of literature, which lead him to conclude in the following words, "Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology", (19). In the mid-nineteenth century, however there were two important factors that redirected the attention of the literary artist from imagination to what they would call the reality of life. One was the failure of the revolution of 1848 and the other was the dissolution of the dominant forces of religion. The revolutions of 1789 and 1848 fought to establish equality but there was a distinct difference in the social nature of these two movements. In the case of the former, the middle classes or the bourgeoisie is together with the working classes shouted slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity. However, as the bourgeoisie gained political ascendancy they started working in favour of the ruling class. The masses were betrayed. The revolution of 1848 saw the working classes get together to oppose the existing system but they were effectively curbed by what **Eagleton** calls a 'police state'.

From here **Eagleton** comes to the role of religion in this scenario and the aftermath of its disintegration, We ought to remember that **Eagleton** sees religion as an agency playing a role, — something unheard of in the preceding periods. According to **Eagleton**, the failure of the revolution of 1848 led to widespread dissatisfaction amongst the working classes and at the same time it made visible the distortions of educated middle class which had by now allied its ideas with the value system of the existing powerful group. Prior to this period religion, according to **Eagleton**, had performed the function of social cement. Religion played an instrumental role in projecting a narrow system of values and morality as one that is beneficial for the masses. The category we understand as religion was developed and adapted to provide an illusion to the common people. Strategies of 'mystification' and 'idealisation' allowed the perpetuation of the dubious ideas of the ruling class whose underlying agenda was to further its own interests and acquire more power. In the name of God this class would wield power and yet convince the people that it was for their good. This made society into a capitalist patriarchy headed by God in 'heaven' and the powerful bourgeoisie on earth. Religion became an effective 'social cement' in society. Its methods of binding people together ignored the socio-economic status of the different classes — and ruthlessly absorbed the 'others' into the ideology of the middle class. The virtues of self-sacrifice and meekness that it preached were meant

for learning by the people lower down on the social ladder so that they could be exploited effectively. Thus the *canon* can be seen as evolving in a specific context.

In the mid-nineteenth century when far-reaching changes shook the face of English society, **Darwin**'s theory of evolution displaced God from its seat and instead put the theory of evolution in its place. It was asserted that Man was no longer made in the image of God but had descended from the apes. He even had a generic name- *Homo sapiens*. The *Adam* who had categorised and named different species had now been put into a slot. **Copernicus**' ideas of the solar system, **Harvey**'s discovery of the circulation of blood in the body and **Newton**'s laws of gravity became some of the dominant ideas of this period. This led to a major questioning of the privileged place hitherto accorded to religion. According to this view, society no longer had a controlling force. It was now directionless. People started looking for zones where could assert themselves and maintain structures of power. Literature seemed to be a possible alternative.

Eagleton explains the phenomenon thus,

> *Literature has become a whole alternative ideology, and the 'imagination' itself as with Blake and Shelley becomes a political force". (17)*

The question that disturbed people was whether literary works had any importance in the wake of scientific theories. In his essay titled *Literature and Science* **Matthew Arnold** formulates this question to expand the dimensions of literature. He says,

> *I am going to ask whether the present movement for ousting letters from their old predominance in education, and for transferring the predominance in education to the natural sciences, whether this brisk and flourishing movement ought to prevail, and whether it is likely that it will prevail?*

The importance given to scientific works disturbed people like **Arnold** who had postulated that the only possibility for the people was through literature. The term that he suggested was 'culture'. This was for him, "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." The society needed a unifying force to substitute religion and literature seemed to provide the answer. English is now rendered a 'subject' that would represent this conflict. The study of English was entwined with the formulation of a structure of morality.

In this context the next question that comes to one's mind constituting the members of this literary group? **Arnold** in his essay, *Culture and Anarchy* divides the society into three different groups. The first group comprised the people who possessed the power of money and these he called the 'barbarians'. The next was the ascendant middle class who was trying to scale the social ladder. These people he called the 'philistines'. Finally, he clubbed the exploited masses into a single category, the 'populace'. For **Arnold** the solution lies not with the 'barbarians' but the 'philistines' who need to be reformed for this programme. According to **Arnold** a relocation of faith is possible only in this class or else the society is going to be endangered by anarchic forces. These ideas crystallised into the ideology of Liberal humanism that was to provide the right methods of changing this class.

The liberal humanists believed in the goodness of people. Theoretically they included the privileged and the deprived in this paradigm. However they did not evolve any socio-political programme to change the existing situation. Further, this schema did not take into cognisance the difficult conditions of the large body of people we know as the working class. **Arnold** also does not include the working class in his visionary plan since he regards them as people devoid of imagination. Even when the liberal humanists voice their opinion on exploitation, they are considered by **Arnold** to be the 'Hyde-Park rough,' those who do not understand things completely. One can

therefore say that liberal humanism is a way of blurring class boundaries and seeing human beings as divested of their social background. In the next section we shall examine the impact of all these social upheavals and changes on literature.

2.5 LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

What was the impact of all these changes on literature? Literature started projecting a simple plurality of perspective that was only superficial. The underlying agenda was to universalise interests of the bourgeoisie. The masses were made to believe that their point of view held equal importance to that of the ones in power. But this was only a false sense of well being as the power equation between different classes in society was ignored and *status quo* was maintained. What was finally socially significant was the 'version' of the ones in power – the bourgeoisie. Finally, such 'pluralistic' views would be reconciled in one stream of thought – that of the masters.

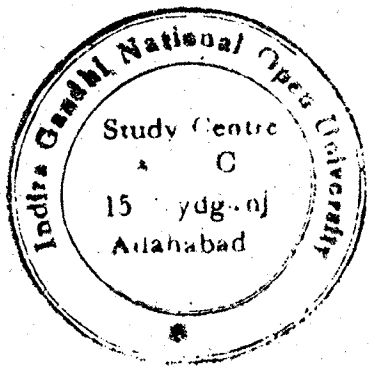
From here on, literature is further reduced to what **Eagleton** calls a 'solitary' activity that is going to prevent any political action. Therefore, the English subject becomes a category defined by the bourgeois in a way that allows for no change that can be implemented in the interest of the 'populace'. Like religion, literature operates on the emotional sensibility of the people to function as its substitute to facilitate the 'cementing' process. As the subversive potential of literature is curbed, it becomes, according to **Eagleton**, the enemy of 'ideological dogma'. A set-up that created the industrial proletariat tried to relieve itself of its social guilt by educating the workers at a primary level. They used literature to target such people to subsume them within the ideology of capitalism and exploitation. In a system that tried to universalise all differences, any kind of socio-political commitment was considered to be an aberration. Did this mean that the problems of the masses within England and those of the people outside were ignored? No, in fact that was not the case, it was much worse. Their social situation was converted into a fetishist image for the others to feast upon. The idea is that there was no need for the people to think about class differences, they were only supposed to gaze upon them as objects. In this respect, **Eagleton** has also been able to bring in the context of the colonised subject in other countries and its figuration in the literature of England. According to him, people who desired to 'know' about the other places could read the novels of people such as **Kipling** or **Conrad**. Readers were to get a holistic view of society by indulging in themselves in such literature to believe that there was only goodness all around and no exploitation. In literature, the problems of the masses in England and the colonised outside are reduced to a concept of art that plucks the problem out of its context and raises it to be gazed at. In short the reading masses are expected to subsume social differences within notions of goodness and morality. Bourgeois society derives its sense of power by converting social relations into mechanical ones and by regarding them as acts of fetish that are not to be changed. Where are the women located in this problematic of power? As we look at the links between literature and society, we also need to be conscious of specific vantage points. In a world regulated by a capitalist patriarchy the women are much worse as they do not exist either in reality or literature except in terms of their bodies. At the end of this section let us take a brief look at the way women have figured in relation to our understanding the *canon*.

2.6 WHITHER WOMEN?

In this discussion of the connections between the area of literature and that of society we need to ask a very important question – How and where are the women located in such a situation? The woman is a category that is never actively present in such analyses. Instead it is projected, as a passive category understood by implication only. In the eighteenth century the forces of trade, colonisation and industrialisation

Imperialism: The process by which one powerful country controls the land, and culture of another country and also bureaucratically- militarily runs its politics.

Periodical essay: In the eighteenth century, the essay formed a part of journals like the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. These essays were meant to educate the emergent middle class groups.



UNIT 3 POSSIBILITIES OF NEW AGREEMENTS

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Leavis and *Scrutiny*
3.3 Locating the *Wasteland*
3,4 Value- Aesthetic or Utilitarian?
3.5 Context and the *Canon*
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Questions
3.8 Glossary

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit we have studied the formation of the *canon*. We have seen the way in which certain texts can be termed as canonical and how they regulate the direction that English studies are supposed to tow. In the present unit we shall further acquaint you with **Eagleton**'s critical arguments so that we can study new methodological strategies evolved in English Studies in the first half of the twentieth century. The question that concerns us is whether these methods have any logic — social, linguistic, aesthetic or other and whether they can be applied in a predetermined sort of way to a text. We are also going to see how these strategies consider certain texts as canonical and others outside the *canon*.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

F R Leavis belonged to a social stratum that did not hold direct sway over the dominant discourses of the time. He was the son of a musical instruments dealer what **Eagleton** refers 'to as the 'offspring of the provincial petty-bourgeoisie'. The petty bourgeoisie is a class that constantly keeps moving between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. However, its interests are usually allied with the ones in power and not with those of the working classes. For the first time in England, the people of this group were getting the opportunity of University education. In fact **Eagleton** explains this phenomenon in these words:

> *In the early 1920' it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all; by the early 1930' it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else, (27).*

In the next section we shall try and see the uses to which this group put this new step.

3.2 LEAVIS AND *SCRUTINY*

The ideas of this group materialised into the critical journal, *Scrutiny* launched by the Leavises- **F R Leavis** and his wife **Q D Leavis**. Here, one needs to ask if the class-consciousness of these people was able to evolve any 'mutations' in the field of Criticism. **Eagleton** believes that the ideas that germinated in *Scrutiny* had such a

major impact that even today the students have not been able to free themselves of its influence. This is where our work in understanding the nuances of Leavisian thinking becomes important so that we can question the working of the *canon* effectively. We must focus on the reasons for the wide appeal of its ideas even as it had its origins in a 'different' i.e., middle class segment of society.

Scrutiny was the product of a class that saw itself as struggling against the ideas of the dominant group, one that comprised upper-middle class people. This was the segment that exercised a determining ideological influence on the economic and educational spheres. However, the people who contributed to the formation of this journal belonged to the lower middle class. They were reacting against the designs of a specific educated faction that played into the hands of the capitalist world. This is the reason that in its early phase this journal focussed on important social and political issues. As **Eagleton** says, Leavis in his early years saw the need to address social and political questions: he even at one point guardedly entertained a form of economic communism", (29).

However, **Leavis** does not consider equality as seriously as was claimed. This is interesting and we have to be fully alert to see the subtle workings of Leavisianism. The Leavises looked at literature as a 'moral and cultural' crusade. **Leavis**, too in the tradition of **Arnold**, stresses the importance accorded to literature as the only factor that could provide society with a direction.

Leavis in his essay titled *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* attacks the restriction of cultures in the hands of a privileged few. He reveals how culture has become part of a minority. To describe this phenomenon he uses the term high-brow. As he discusses the nuances of the term 'high-brow' he says,

> *High-brow is an ominous addition to the English language...culture has always been in minority keeping. But the minority now is made conscious, not merely of an uncongenial but of a hostile environment...the minority is being cut-off from the powers that rule the world as never before.*

To counter the term 'high-brow' and to salvage the position of the minority **Leavis** advocates the importance of a rigorous analysis of a particular work. Instead of wasting attention on other influences, *Scrutiny* narrowed the attention of the reader on the 'words on the page.' The importance given to words brought forth the importance of language in theoretical studies. As a result 'English' literature came to be understood in the context of the language. Methodologies to analyse a text now focussed on the quality of words used and their texture. The quality of language according to **Eagleton**, signified the 'social index' of a particular society. The concept of evaluating literary works arose giving birth to an associated body of thought- Literary Criticism. *Scrutiny*'s critique of capitalist system established literary criticism and managed to get for it mass appeal. However, even as it emanated from the minority segment of society it stressed spiritualism and a moral centrality inherent in a study of literature. As a result certain texts were exonerated as they had the potential of providing the moral and spiritual yardstick to society. The map of English Literature was finally ready in its new form. The ruling ideology was liberal humanism. Before we discuss the implications of this line of thinking let us analyse an extract from *Scrutiny*: In one of the essays titled *Literature and Society* that appeared in this journal, **Leavis** writes about his reasons for not taking the stance of **Marxist** thought. He says

> *A literature, that is, must be thought of as essentially something more than an accumulation of separate works: it has an organic form, or constitutes an organic order, in relation to which the individual writer has his significance and his being...it stresses, not economic and material determinants, but intellectual and spiritual, so implying a different conception from the Marxist of the relation between the present of the society and the past, and a different conception of society.*

A little later he states his belief in the potential of the individual and not the social. He says, "Without the individual talent there is no creation...the truth that it is only in individuals that society lives."

This extract makes clear the contradictions in *Scrutiny* and the thought categories underlying this journal. Let us first take a look at the term 'organic form'. It implies a composite structure that is neatly defined and has an aesthetic logic of its own, one that cannot be violated. The co-ordinates that determine this organic form are spiritual and intellectual. These also happen to be the points of reference for liberal humanism. However, the terms intellectualism and spiritualism do not have any material grounding. Theoretical categories are, therefore, reduced to an arbitrary process that considers certain groups as possessing these traits and others without them. The 'organic' nature of literature can only fulfil the needs of the few who have brought about this change in the idea of literature. Organicity assumes a certain harmony that is not there in the existing socio-economic set-up. The organic form then becomes a way of evading class-differences and those of language under the blanket cover of English. The individual who has a certain relation with this form belongs to a specific segment of society and the form in turn privileges this class. But where does this leave the others who cannot think of interacting actively with this order.

The Leavisian argument is equipped not to answer this but only to ignore this issue. There is a tendency in this thinking that does not look into the needs of a class that constitute the masses and instead looks for inspiration to the literary whims of the minority or the 'elite'. Therefore, even as **Leavis** attacks highbrow culture, he creates another category — the elite. According to **Eagleton:**

> *The Scrutiny case was inescapably elitist: it betrayed a profound ignorance and distrust of the capacities of those not fortunate enough to have read English at Downing College, (30).*

The second point is that Leavisian thinking stresses certain intellectual and spiritual determinants. But what is the relationship of these to the working classes that have been reduced to automatons in a machine? What kind of spiritualism is possible for the people whose identity has been subsumed into the giant industrial machinery? When the economic needs of the masses are not fulfilled, and they are alienated from their labour; how can they be expected to cultivate an intellectual sensibility? One can see that **Leavis** attacks the capitalist structure at one level and obviates it at another. It is clear that his attack on the upper classes is from the position of the petty-bourgeois intellectual who also maintains its distance from the lower classes. The *Scrutiny* lacked the potential to shift its vantage point from that of the petty bourgeois to those of the working class.

Eagleton's grasp of the *canon* formation is firm. He reflects it by analysing the relationship between creativity and individuality. How can there be any notion of 'organic' creativity in a world that is not aware of the needs of the groups it has rendered weak? Creativity should be looked at as a socially realisable process, not as an individual characteristic or only certain people will monopolise this quality. Further, what is the role that literature has to play under such circumstances? Should it harp on ideas like 'organic form' and 'liberal humanism' or should it reflect dialectically the problems of the masses and work out a solution within certain socio-historic parameters? The answers to these questions are complex and can only be located in the very process of "questioning the *canon*".

In fact **Leavis**' insecurities are quite clear in his work, *The Great Tradition*. This critical work *canon*ises **Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James**, and **Joseph Conrad**. He focuses on the last three for some 'special reasons'. He leaves out **Dickens** and women authors like **Charlotte Bronte** from this great tradition. According to **Leavis,**

> *It is tempting to retort that there is only one Bronte. Actually* ***Charlotte,*** *though claiming no part in the great line of English fiction has a permanent interest of a minor kind...The genius, of course, was Emily.*

The author of texts like *Villette, Romola* has been reduced to a minority. It is to resist such strategies of canonisation that academia like the Delhi University have changed the syllabus to include texts like, Jane Eyre. On the other hand even as Emily Bronte has been labelled a genius for her magnum opus Wuthering Heights the work is called 'a kind of sport'. For Dickens **Leavis** says that,

> *Dickens was a great genius and is permanently among the classics is certain. But the genius was that of a great entertainer, and he had for the most part no profounder responsibility as a creative artist than his description suggests.*

Even as **Leavis** traces **Dickens'** influence in **Conrad, James,** and the others, he relegates him to the level of a mere 'entertainer'. The seriousness of the Dickensian vision has been ignored by **Leavis**. Or may be the profundity, maturity and grim depiction of the evils of the industrial world threatens him. This insecurity is also visible in his attitude towards the French writer, **Flaubert**. In fact half-way through the book one has to ask if he is establishing a tradition or trying to overcome the threat writers like **Flaubert** or **Balzac** pose before him? He uses the comments of **James** and **George Eliot** to talk of a masterpiece like *Madame Bovary* as an instance of pre-occupation with 'form'. To extend the argument further, he praises the interest in life related to art. For **Flaubert** he says, "Far from having anything of **Flaubert**'s disdain or boredom, they are all distinguished by a vital capacity for experience." He seems to have completely missed out on **Flaubert**'s hatred for bourgeois society and its pretensions and has reduced it to boredom. What are these if not strategies of canonisation that privilege certain texts and eliminate the others from the sphere of reading? The kind of space that is accorded to Emma Bovary can only be regarded as immorality in the Leavisian context. Such flexibility is not present even in his analysis of **Eliot**'s *Middlemarch* even as he does her the favor of including her in *The Great Tradition.*

3.3 LOCATING THE *WASTE LAND*

Thus we can see the way **Leavis** redirects the *canon* by suggesting methods that focus on the text in isolation. We can say, therefore, with some certainty that *The Great Tradition* is nothing but *canon* in its new form. In fact **Leavis** constitutes the *canon* in relation to critical theory. One can now see the connections between the two. Where **Leavis** was able to formulate certain aspects of critical theory, **T S Eliot** redefined the *canon* from the perspective of 'tradition'. We go from here to discuss **T S Eliot**'s sense of tradition and the way it was related to his specific social sensibility. The idea is not to deliberately impose social and material co-ordinates on a text but to study the possible connections they share. According to **Eagleton**, "Culturally displaced and spiritually disinherited, **Eliot** arrived in England...and began to carry out a wholesale salvage and demolition job on its literary traditions", (33). **T S Eliot** belongs to the aristocratic social set-up- a class that no longer enjoyed the divine associations of power. What is meant is that earlier when this group was part of the feudal order, its members were placed closest to God. Their word was law for the lower classes. With the rise of the middle class, and restructuring society on the basis of money their privileged status was challenged. They were compelled to accommodate the emergent middle class or they would perish.

T S Eliot also belonged to this disintegrating aristocratic order. He experienced a fragmentation of sensibility and saw this as manifested in society as a universal concept. This is what most of us do we normally generalise on the basis of our

limited class experience and project it as an all –acceptable truth. He tried to resolve this schism by representing it in literature and suggesting the answer in the powers of tradition. This idea was to function as a coordinate from which to judge works of literature to evolve a new concept of the *canon*. The mainstream literature in its existing form has been modified, but on what grounds? The question remains to be asked- what is the nature of the tradition that he is trying to invoke? In his essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* he says,

> *Tradition...involves in the first place a historical sense...and the historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past but its presence...poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality.*

According to **Eagleton**, tradition for **T S Eliot** is an over-arching framework against which works of literature have to fashion themselves. The co-ordinates for judging a text have again been fixed- the vantage point is that of the redundant aristocracy trying to re-establish its power equation in society. The past has to be invoked and filtered through the likes of **T S Eliot**. The historical sense has to be understood only in the way the past manifests itself in the present. **Eagleton** points out that in this way in **T S Eliot**, the historical process is reduced to a simple linear category. As discussed earlier, in the case of **Leavis** the idea of organic form is another manifestation of liberal humanism. **T S Eliot** seems to be attacking the individualism of the middle class tradition of liberal humanism. The implied movement away from the selfish interests is no doubt to be acknowledged, but where does it head? Where **Leavis** introduces aesthetic categories, **Eliot** modifies it with tradition. He completely ignores the differing nuances of tradition and reconstructs the *canon* again sorting out different texts including the Metaphysical poets and eliminating **Milton**.

The *canon* as it existed had ignored the school of Metaphysical poets. However, these poets of the seventeenth century were fore-grounded by **T S Eliot**. Thus, we see an effort here to change the *canon*. According to Eliot, the seventeenth century poets displayed a "unity of sensibility, an easy fusion of thought and feeling." The later periods that witnessed the revolutions experienced what he calls "a dissociation of sensibility." For **T S Eliot** this dissociation was no longer connected with experience and this fragmentation was best visible in **Milton** in whose hands no such unity was possible. What we need to ask is whether the tradition of the working classes is the same as that of the bourgeois: Whose tradition is the focus - the exploiter or the exploited? The two cannot be equated. But, **T S Eliot** subsumes all contradictions in the fold of the degenerate aristocracy. According to **Eagleton**, "After his conversion to Christianity in the mid-1920' he advocated a large rural society run by a few great families and a small elite of theological intellectuals much like himself", (34).

This is what tradition is supposed to mean. It is supposed to mutate the *canon* on the terms of a group that is eager to concretize its position in society. Religion is to function as a tool that will further the interests of these people. **Eliot**'s conversion to the Anglican Christian group moves the reader and writer to involve itself with the tradition of Christianity. Two things are quite clear- firstly, even as **Eliot** captures the decadence in English society in 'form' in his early poetry, in his later poems he suggests transcendence towards a religious order. This seems to further fortify his idea of Tradition. In this context where do we locate the representation of people who have been thrown out of the arbitrary impersonal order of tradition or the Christian order? It implies that the society can rejuvenate itself only by reliving the past. In relation to class politics this means that the society needs to be re-structured as in the past. In the context of the present then we again have a privileged few that believe in tradition and Anglicanism. Actually, this was not merely a redefinition of the *canon* at the time but a new definition of the 'elite'.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* analyses the meaninglessness of modern life, its sterile and barren nature. The structures in society have lost all meaning and do not make any sense. The individual is pushed into a social situation that only inhibits his development. Human relations have broken down and communication between two people is no longer possible. According to **T S Eliot**, this is reflected in language that does not make sense any longer. Language can only be understood in terms of what **T S Eliot** calls an objective co-relative. However, the nature of the desolation he reflects in his early poetry is that of the middle class male- where is the female and where are the working classes? Further the problems of the middle class man are to be resolved only through a mythological structure- a radical socio-political change is not possible. In fact the *canon* and its proponents can never allow a change in the system, as that would threaten their position of power. But we have to keep the possibility alive by questioning the *canon*. Next we consider the *canon* in terms of its class nature.

3.4 VALUE - AESTHETIC OR UTILITARIAN?

It is clear that in the *Scrutiny* or **Eliot**'s idea of Tradition there is a pattern inherent in these ideological structures. These ideas are crystallised in literature in the form of literary theories like **Practical Criticism** that deployed methods like *Close Reading*. This strategy stressed on the need to focus on the reading of the text. We would be discussing this aspect in detail in the context of **Hillis Miller**'s essay in the sixth unit of this block. The idea was that literature had to be looked at from the point of view of the literary work alone. The 'greatness' of literature rested in the poem and not the context that produced it. Literature has been narrowed to the idea of an aesthetic ideal and has been completely rooted out of history and thrust into tradition. As **Eagleton** says, "It inescapably suggests an attention to this rather than to something else: to the 'words on the page' rather than to the contexts which produce and surround them". These ideas were further incorporated in the American **New Criticism.** Coming back to **I A Richards**, he too devises a system of understanding the relationship between the writer, reader and the literary work. The 'emotive' aspects of poetry are stressed. Let us look at an extract from *The Principles of Literary Criticism*-

> *What is the value of the arts, why are they worth the devotion of the keenest hours of the best minds, and what is their place in the human endeavors? is left almost untouched, although without some clear view it would seem that even the most judicious critic must often lose his sense of position...Thus arises the phantom problem of the aesthetic mode or aesthetic state, a legacy from the days of abstract investigation into the Good, the Beautiful and the True.*

He considers it a serious problem of aesthetics that it ignores the question of value of the literary work. According to **Richards** the literary experience should be understood in two parts- the critical and the technical. The former describes the 'value of the experience', the latter the object. However, **Richards** never clearly explains what he means by the 'value' of a work. It is to be related in some way to the 'human endeavors'. Where he attacks the aesthetic mode and its categories of 'good', 'beautiful', and 'true' he bases the question of value on some abstract concept. **Eagleton** points out that, "Society is in crisis, **Richard** argues, because historical change, and scientific discovery in particular, has outstripped and devalued the traditional mythologies by which men and women have lived". (39).

Even as **Richards** resists Utilitarian thinking he uses the term, value which is straight out of their discourse. What does he mean when he talks about the value of a specific work? Is he reducing the text to a category that would be useful if not economically, at least morally? He seems to be attacking a particular form of aestheticism but in the

process is only extending its scope further. In this context the equation between the poet, the reader and the poem is:

> *What concerns criticism is not the avowed or unavowed motives of the artist...but the fact that his procedure does, in the majority of instances, make the communicative efficacy of work correspond with his own satisfaction and sense of its rightness.*

According to **Richards** there is to be a correspondence "between the poet's impulses and possible impulses in his reader." **Richard**'s theory of value and the way the author and reader are positioned within it makes sure that all possibilities of change located in literature are ruled out and reduced to a linear equation. The reader is only an extension of the poet, and he is expected not to show any responses. The only reaction is one in which he is able to absorb the mind of the poet. How can any change be effected after such a static relationship between the different coordinates in the process of reading?

In this system of **New Critical** reading the reader is in a subservient position to the poet whose ideological inclinations he is supposed to embody. This system further imposes on the wide reading populace the value systems of a group of people who decide them arbitrarily. The readers then cannot assert themselves as a cohesive social force. Coherence and integration are the key words. This means that history is rendered free of its 'contradictions' and is linearised into the faculties of the 'elite' in different forms. All contradictions are resolved within the 'poem' that is supposed to provide the answers. As **Eagleton** says, "Poetry is an 'emotive' rather then 'referential language', a kind of 'pseudo-statement' which appears to describe the world but in fact simply organises our feelings about it in satisfying ways...he offers poetry as a means of exquisitely reconciling the anarchy of modern existence", (39).

The poem then, as **Eagleton** points out, became a holistic entity that signified that there was a single answer to the different social questions. Also, this answer could be located in the poem. The poem emblematised the belief that people like **Richards** could make decisions in the interests of the masses. The poem thus was 'dematerialised'. However, this was not a concrete social answer. To maintain a connection between literature and reality, **Richards** and the others assumed that such a resolution was possible in reality.

We can see a further shaping of the new *canon* in the later **New Critics** who modified the ideas of **Richards**. They did not believe in the supremacy of the author or reader's dependence on him. Instead, they believed that the poem was to be an object in itself and that it had nothing to do with either the reader or writer. The text was 'rematerialised'. The bourgeois has a strange way of reducing all possible relations in society to objects of fetish. In **Eagleton**'s opinion, the poem's isolation from its context also reduces it to an entity that has to be looked at from a distance. The nature of this fetishist object is one in which various tensions are integrated in form. This is indeed a long shot from the idea of social reflection and relevance earlier. This produced a 'technocracy' of method and style. Even as it decried liberal humanism the **New Critics** appealed to the liberal's sensibility as it allowed him to interpret the cohesive force as that of middle class humanity. According to **Eagleton**, "Like *Scrutiny*, in other words, New Criticism was the ideology of an uprooted, defensive intelligentsia who reinvented in literature what they could not locate in reality".

> *Thus, Empson appears to be an exception to the New Critics as he provides some vitality to the reader. Unlike the New Critical theory that is convinced about a definite resolution to the contradictions within the poem and society, Empson laid emphasis on the potentiality of ambiguities meaning thereby that it is the reader who brings in a range of social contexts and locates contradictions in their context.*

Empson is able to evolve an active equation between the poem, the writer and the reader. But he too locates the answers to various clashes within the 'pastoral'. He seems conscious of the disparity between the 'elite' and the common level of readership. He believes that they can be resolved within the pastoral. Usually, there is an underlying assumption that all is well in the pastoral but **Empson** picks this genre not for its organicity but its varied nature and contradictions. However, this as **Eagleton** points out is only an 'imaginary solution'. If the tensions are located socially the answers too need to be located in the same manner. This is a good example of questioning the *canon* by **Eagleton**. Where are we expected to locate ourselves in terms of the equation between the writer, the work of art and the reader? How important is the context? Is there a necessary relation between a work of art and the society? We could use two significant terms that would help us answer these questions briefly. One is the 'point of view' and the other is 'slant'.

Literature needs to be seen as an independent phenomenon following certain laws and showing the social reality through it in a slanted way so that an effort by the reader to reach its objective truth through the slant could be successful. The slant in this case signifies the point of view of the author who always positions herself/himself according to class preference. Extending this one can say that the authorial slant forms one possible connection between itself and his/her immediate social problematic. In each work is implicit the reader and this brings in another context. The two might cohere or dissociate or oppose. But for us the importance of slant lies in a questioning of the existing system to think about the possibility of an 'other' alternative which would rule out oppression and its various forms. We are more interested in a potentially relevant dialogue in society where the reader who might belong to a different social stratum can also voice dissent. This is the bedrock of our efforts to question the *canon*.

3.5 CONTEXT AND THE *CANON*

The next question we need to ask is: where are we the people of the Third World located in all this? Firstly, we need to be aware of the reasons why we are studying works of the previously established *canon*. As **Eagleton** has pointed out the answer lies in the policy of English imperialism. The colonial policies of the English have tried to perpetuate through the *canon* the English language and a specific moral structure that might not be applicable to our context. We are located in terms of the *canon* either nowhere or if at all then probably in some remote aspect of the canonised text. What is to be stressed is that we have to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the proponents of the *canon* through a process of questioning. It is a matter of visibility and we need to assert ourselves to evolve a vision that would help rule out forces of power and oppression. We have to keep our slant not only in relation to the *canon* but within the third world. The slant of the working classes and that of the women in differing social constructs has to be kept in mind.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

We can sum up by saying that there is a definite relationship between literature and society. This has to be understood in a way that others believing in equality, freedom and togetherness can replace the forces in society that have created the haves and have-nots. We also have to keep in mind that in society there are different constructs and each will have its own slant. They have to be adequately grasped and evaluated.

3.7 QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the relationship between literature and social forces?
2. Do you agree with **Eagleton** that students are still under the influence of **Leavis**ian thinking? If so how do you think we can resist this?

3.8 GLOSSARY

Dematerialised: Not matter-based but shadow-like. A writer or critic may do this consciously.

Liberal Humanism: A belief that there is a good world that exists somewhere and can be located not socially but individually. It is non-interventionist in nature.

Patriarchy: A system that privileges the King over the subject, family over the individual, father over son, man over woman.

Utilitarianism: The nineteenth century belief in the greatest good for the greatest number that also gave birth to the idea of free trade.

UNIT 4 EXPLODING ENGLISH: CRITICISM, THEORY, AND CULTURE

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Newbolt and Arnold
4.3 Leavis or Lewis- Which Way Are We Going?
4.4 Exploding English and Englishness
4.5 English Theorists and Theory
4.6 Let Us Sum Up
4.7 Questions
4.8 Glossary

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit we discussed ideas of literary theory as put forth by **Eagleton**. Having discussed canonical formations we are now going to take a look into the institutionalisation of these mainstream ideological agendas of the dominant western groups in our world. Our focus is going to be on how canonical ideas are realised in the form of specific propensities of the University programmes.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Bergonzi traces different canonical forms from the **Newbolt Report** of 1921 onwards. He studies how the report's aims influenced the ideas of University education. We are then able to note the difference in attitudes taken up by the leading faculty of the Universities in the process of defining the *canon*. But let us first take a look at what we have been given to understand by the term 'English' which constitutes a *canon* in itself particularly for 'us' Third World readers.

4.2 NEWBOLT AND ARNOLD

Bergonzi at the beginning of his argument states that, "English was and remains a 'synthetic' subject, comprising several elements". 'Synthetic' subject implies that there is an act of construction involved in the process of what English signifies and what we understand to be English. The two need not mean the same thing. In the context of our discussion such a distinction can help us understand that the *canon* is not a mythical entity but one that is created in specific socio-historical and literary circumstances. Such constructions allows for a free interaction between those who define the *canon* and those who critically interpret and displace it. **Bergonzi** fixes four different reference points for defining the term English. He says,

> *It can refer to (I) a nation, (ii) a language, (iii) a literature, and (iv) as an academic subject.*

In the first instance it can be looked at as a word that determines certain geographical boundaries- United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Therefore, the use of the term English brings to mind a specific place whose interests it reflects. In England the development of ideas of nationalism transformed the geographical enterprise into a

cultural one making it stand as distinct from the minority areas. In this sense English is restricted to the system of a particular area. As a language, however, it functioned as a signifier for a much larger area. It aimed at global operation and coupled with the rise in power of America it made room for its greater receptivity.

Let us now look at the difference in the two usages of the term English. In the first case English represents the Englishness of a group of people that makes them superior to the others. Thus Englishness becomes a mark of distinction for its people. In the second case, some flexibility is allowed but for a specific reason. As a language English made way for the expansion of imperial interests of first England and later America. Language became a way of becoming part of the myth we know as English. In other words, to be an extended part of the Englishness of the English community one was fortunate to get access to the language English. So where 'English' constructed a myth for a nation and included only a restricted group of people, as a language it had global appeal. As we have seen, the two factors were inter-related.

Where, then, can English literature be located? According to **Bergonzi** the third application of 'English' is situated between these strategies of restriction privileging the English people and strategies of extension that carry it beyond a given geographical boundary to which it belongs. **Bergonzi** sees this as an act of 'imperialistic appropriation'. Yet at the same time **Bergonzi** sees the liberating aspects of it as he says, "But if so, it is one that the objects have found convenient." He defines English literature as, "*The literature in English of the various peoples of British Isles*". However, the shift of this language from the Isles to other areas has led to a bursting forth of the concept of English literature making it an 'unstable' concept. This brings us to the implications of English as an academic discipline. This means that we are now going to focus on the institutionalisation of English studies. **Bergonzi** attributes the institutionalised development of English studies to the 'nationalistic, the religious, the ethical, the aesthetic and the rhetorical.' He sees the crystallisation of vernacular literature as an academic discipline as related to 'cultural nationalism'. **Bergonzi** sees the basis of this in **Henry Newbolt**'s 1921 report, *The Teaching of English in England.*

As has already been discussed in **Unit Two**, this report was the consequence of the patriotic fervour of World War I. The report had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, the report took national sentiment as its basis and displaced the privileged classics from their coveted position in the literary scenario. **Matthew Arnold**'s faith in poetry as providing a direction to the society helped the propagation of English studies in the twentieth century. The report looked at the teachers as missionaries with a purpose- the spread of English values. We can understand this clearly when we see the effect of these ideas on the literary and social scenario of the Indian colony. In India, the missionary zeal converted the Indians to Christianity and provided 'education' to these people. In short the report performed both functions- preserving the Englishness of a nation and spreading its values to its colonies as part of the larger imperialist programme. The teacher was supposed to instill in the reader the desire to study literature. Here when we use the term 'literature' we mean English literature. By extension this meant love for the values of its nation as represented in literature. The second job of the imperialists, was to teach the students the techniques for improving their reading and writing skills. The imperial supremacy of English was going to be replaced by the one in academics. We were being prepared for a power equation of a different kind. As **Bergonzi** says,

> *They are to be missionaries as well as ambassadors, and will need propaganda work, organization and the building up of a staff of assistant missionaries.*

The report precedes the canonisation of literature in America. It asks the English to tow the line of the French who have been able to evolve a sense of cultural unity.

This becomes a little problematic and a useful futuristic paradigm at that, as it seems that different kinds of literatures are going to be products of their respective well-defined nation. This means that the system of one nation is going to clash with that of another and each one is going to fight for supremacy in the global scenario. Literature would be structured in the context of a power frame privileging the literature of the developed countries as against the developing ones.

Bergonzi then explains the relationship between religion, imagination and literature. He points out that even as the **Newbolt** report uses words from the religious frame of reference it does not equate religion with imaginative literature. However, particularly people like **Arnold** and **I A Richards**, considered the two as synonymous. The literary journal of the time *Scrutiny* was able to capture the contradictions of the age, and the points of intersection between religion, imagination and literature. In the previous unit we have discussed how **Leavis** belonged to the lower stratum of society and in his writings expressed dissent but in a limited way. Poetry was to be the cross-section between religion and imagination. **Bergonzi** sees such connections as a product of Romanticism and the rise of the aesthetic function of literature. He explains that in the case of the classics literature performed a role that was essentially mimetic by which he means that it, represented certain moral values that were to be imitated by the people. Literature was expected to perform an ethical function and the relation between literature and imagination was direct. According to **Bergonzi**, after the emergence of Romantic thought the role accorded to literature was religious in nature. One of the chief reasons for this change was the degenerate effect of the Industrial revolution noted earlier. The **Newbolt** report was in **Bergonzi**'s opinion based on this 'Romantic-religious model'.

According to **Bergonzi** the aesthetic was a reaction to the empiricist and moral dicta of the eighteenth century. As he explains this is evident from **Schillers** letters that asserted that, the reaction indicated release "from all that might be called constraint, alike in the physical and moral sphere." But the aesthetic had to be defined and came to mean harmony of form. As **Bergonzi** says, "The literary text is a work of art, an aesthetic monad, a verbal icon or well-wrought urn for contemplation rather than instruction or impulsion to action". In the nineteenth century even as the imagination provided space for political rebellion it remain allied to aesthetic interests. **Bergonzi** finally describes the use of rhetoric to understand 'English'.

This for him is a technique that focuses on the verbal and structural elements of the text. Therefore, the use of rhetoric to understand English would mean an understanding of its linguistic elements or other structures of the text to make the process of teaching possible. Rhetoric has existed from the time of the classics and in fact was used as part of oral literature. This materialised into the work of **I A Richards**, *Practical Criticism*. This can be extended to written, visual and other modes. These are the different foundational categories in English that together help us understand the Englishness of the poem in particular. But the questions that can be asked is that do these categories not exist in relation to literature in other languages? The answer would be in the affirmative, but the specific moment in history at which the **Newbolt** report came up not only helped define 'English' but constructed the myth of English literature which we still carry within us due to the imperial aftermath.

4.3 LEAVIS OR LEWIS – WHICH WAY ARE WE GOING?

In this section we are going to study the relationship between the two most prestigious Universities – **Oxford** and **Cambridge** *vis-a-vie* their role in English Studies. What were the different formations that the academic discipline of English Literature assumed in the two Universities? Where do we stand in relation to these

attitudes and which is the line of thinking that has influenced us greatly? This section would help us understand the formation of the *canon* in institutionalised forms and a few possible ways of resisting the same.

The concept of University education was a consequence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The two major Universities that were able to establish themselves in the twentieth century were **Oxford** and **Cambridge**. In the context of English literature the two academic areas projected two different kinds of attitude to English studies. And in their respective ways they have contributed to the understanding of what academics could mean to the University going student. The Oxford honours course was established in a different way than before in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The **Oxford University** based its study in English literature under a strictly ordered programme. The idealism of poets like **Arnold** and the maker of the **Newbolt** report was lacking in this programme, as this was not to be their aim. The University introduced eminent positions such as the Merton Professorship of English Literature. **Sir Walter Raleigh** was appointed to this chair in 1904. In spite of the acknowledgement he received from the University, it is interesting to note, his reasons for taking up this profession were a far cry from the missionary enterprise of the **Newbolt** report.

Raleigh said, "I am a teacher by accident. I had not enough money for the Bar, or anything else, after graduating- second class". There is recognition of basic economic needs in his words and not the desire to conform to the role of the teacher of those days. **Raleigh**'s successor, **George Gordon** also attacked the ideas of the report. He said, "I observe, and not only in this report, the growth of a religious jargon about literature and literary genius, and I observe it with regret as an affront to life". The pioneers of the Oxford style of education kept the study of literature away from any association with religious terminology. The Arnoldian belief that poetry could save society was not the belief of these people who believed in an organised programme. **Bergonzi** also reveals that the study of English Literature was definitely not part of the mainstream initially.

In **Cambridge University** the study of English was part of the Modern Languages Tripos till mid twentieth century. It was only later that it was institutionalised and privileged in the form of King Edward VII Chair of English Literature in 1912. Sir Arthur Quiller Couch was the first to be appointed to this eminent position. According to **Bergonzi** the Golden Age of this University began with critical works such as *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Science and Poetry*, and *Practical Criticism* by **I A Richards**, *Seven Types of Ambiguities* by **William Empson** and works by **F R Leavis** and **Q D Leavis**. Unlike the well-defined course in English Literature at Oxford, the course at Cambridge was more flexible and was titled Literature, Life and Thought." As the name of the course suggests greater width and freedom was allowed. One of the reasons for this was that the pioneers of this University were not only from the field of English Literature alone but came from other areas of knowledge. As **Bergonzi** reveals **Forbes, Richards** and **Tillyard** were from History, Philosophy and the Classics. We are also told how **T S Eliot,** was able to influence the direction of the University course in English even as he was not part of the faculty. In the previous unit we have already discussed the reasons why **Eliot**'s way of thinking came to hold wide appeal. His attitude to the contemporary modernist situation captured the decadence of his times. In fact as **Bergonzi** mentions **T S Eliot**'s series of lectures titled *The Sacred Wood* was considered to be like a 'hymn-book' for the students. However, gradually, the increase in the number of students, lack of a central directive control and the loss of its early members like **Forbes** and **Richards** became instrumental in the exercise becoming focussed on literature.

This brings us to the discussion of one of the most eminent personalities of the Cambridge University- **F R Leavis**. According to **Bergonzi**, "**Leavis** himself was something of a double man, both historic and mythic". Can you relate this to what you have read of **Leavis** in the previous unit? **Bergonzi** gives biographical details to

explain the historical context of **Leavis**. We know, for instance, that **Leavis** did not receive any recognition from the faculty despite his competence. It was only in 1959 that he was appointed Reader in the University. **Leavis** continued his struggle at Cambridge unlike **L C Knights** who taught in the provincial universities. **Leavis'** acceptability outside the University created that 'mythic' side to his personality we know so much about. This contradiction in his person has continued **Leavis**'s appeal even today. In fact the Universities continue to show evidences of the Leavisian line of thinking till date. **Bergonzi** then discusses **Leavis**'s ideas as understood from his journal, *Scrutiny*.

In an analysis of **Terry Eagleton**'s essay we have tried to familarise ourselves with the implications of some important concepts used and propagated by the journal. Coming from the lower rungs of the society **Leavis** was able to cause some interventions in the *canon*ical attitudes created by thinkers like **Quiller - Couch**. As **Bergonzi** says, "Many diverse elements intersect in **Leavis**: Romanticism, the English Puritan tradition, Victorian cultural criticism, modernism and several strands of twentieth century anti-positivist and anti-scientific ideology".

Bergonzi notes that unlike **C S Lewis** who did not posit the Arnoldian faith in poetry, **Leavis** saw the survival of society and its system only through poetry. What could be the reason behind such a faith? This faith in English Literature according to **Bergonzi**, fitted well into the University programme of "Literature, Life and Thought." The connections between literature and religion existed but neither could subsume academic activity within its separate ideology. The two ideas need to be looked at together comprising aspects of both literature and religion. On one side, we can also ask: what is the idea of morality that exists in this intersection? What we mean to ask is that in the light of what we have studied, can literature be looked at as ethical or moral? **Bergonzi**'s guess is that for **Leavis** it was a question of 'moral choice' unlike the idea of ethical valuation.

According to him these ideas exist even today even as the points of reference are no longer Christian but are Marxist or Feminist. The *Scrutiny* was defined by a sense of moral urgency necessary to save civilisation and for Lewis unlike **Leavis,** this was possible through criticism. We have already discussed the formation of the literary *canon* in this unit. However, here we can see the birth of a new kind of *canon* formation that has far more serious consequences. The *Scrutiny* created an idea of 'Englishness', and strengthened it as a myth. At the same time, this was an idea alien to the American context. What we can ask is: how was the Third World affected by the spread of this mythical aspect of the idea of Englishness? The effect was contradictory as we were spurred to study this imposed and alien culture. On the one hand we received exposure to new ideas, yet paradoxically we were also taught that we could never learn them completely in the imperialist set-up. Further, we were saddled with an idea of Englishness that became a standard yardstick for measuring literary as well as cultural standards.

Whereas Cambridge produced **Leavis** and his myth of 'Englishness' one encountered a different attitude to English Literature and the idea of Englishness at Oxford University. This should be clear to you by now. Oxford English formed a polarity to the ideas of the **Newbolt** Report. The report had also posited faith in English Literature for saving the degenerate, industrialised England. However, an eminent scholar of the Oxford University, **C S Lewis** was against any such moral and cultural valuations of literature. **Bergonzi** traces points of commonality between the lives of **Leavis** and Lewis in the context of the Oxford-Cambridge rivalry. Still, there remained an important point of difference.

Lewis was open to discussions and debates about his ideological premises. **Leavis** resented the same. The reasons are obvious — **Leavis** believed in the existence of certain fixed moral choices in literature and its functioning. Lewis attacked such truth valuations. For **Lewis,** Literature was not to provide a kind of alternative to religion. In fact, it had to be kept away from such connections. In his work, *An Experiment in Criticism* the possibility that literature must provide answers to questions about life or be seen as a saviour of culture and civilisation was rejected. In short, the idealism of

the **Newbolt Report** had also been sidelined. The University was to be looked at as a centre for learning and not education, which was different from the former. This eliminated the missionary enterprise also which, was a part of the Leavisian way of thinking. In literature the poem had to be looked at for its own sake and not to provide a moral statement. Even though as **Bergonzi** points out, **Lewis** did believe in ethical valuations, his rejection of any moral attachment to literature can be seen as a point of intervention.

One of the ways in which the difference in thinking of the two scholars is evident is in their response to the ideas of fantasy and realism. **Leavis** and the *Scrutiny* group privileged realism over fantasy as the latter was equated with daydreaming. **Lewis** on the other hand did not understand these terms in such a simplistic manner. One of the reasons why **Lewis** is able to evolve a more holistic view of things is because he is able to resist value judgements with respect to literary concepts. According to **Lewis** realism exists at two levels — "realism of content and realism of presentation." Fantasy also exists at different levels of 'delusion of reality', as consolation' and as normal 'Castle-Building'. According to **Bergonzi**, "This third entity leads to fiction, motivating both the production and the reception of it".

What he means is that the last factor in the realm of fantasy influences the formative processes of the text as well as its reception. This is interesting as unlike most other critics he considers the idea of the 'production' of the text and the ways in which a reader can possibly respond to it. This is the reason why **Bergonzi** thinks that **Lewis'** ideas can be considered as part of what we call Reader-response criticism — one that is able to see that there can be a relationship between the reader and the text. This was different from New Critical theory that considered a poem only with respect to the author and later the text by itself or Russian Formalism that focussed on the literary aspects of the text. These were the '*fabula*' and the '*Syuzhet*'. The '*fabula*,' says **Bergonzi**, was the story that focussed on the events in a linear way whereas the '*Syuzhet*' focussed on the methodology of the narrative. **Lewis** sees the reader as important and the different positions and perspectives that he can take up in the process of reading. **Lewis** proposes literary and non-literary readings of the text. The former is attentive in nature whereas the latter is more technical like the reading of newspapers and office reports. If we extend this argument further, then we have an interesting situation where literature can actually be used to understand, resist and maybe change the social situation not passively but in an active manner. **Lewis** argues for distinct categories of books that are not to be looked at in terms of value judgements of the kind made by **Leavis**. This idea of literary reading allows for greater space and mobility but as **Bergonzi** explains **Lewis** does not provide us with an actual theoretical program to formulate the intentionality of approaching the text.

To make **Lewis'** theory function in a productive way the readers' vantage point has to be kept in mind. Further, a complete negation of what **Bergonzi** calls the 'intrinsic elements of the text makes his theory 'elite and egalitarian'. It becomes elite as a kind of literary readings set certain standards that are fulfilled only by a limited set of people. Further the literariness of a text becomes a quotient of the readers' response irrespective of whether or not it has that aspect. This brings us to dangers of enforced readings imposed on a text. However, in the context of our present discussion we have to look at **Lewis'** arguments as forming a dialectic of criticism with Leavisian thinking and not merely as a counter-attack on **Leavis'** idea of criticism. **Bergonzi** obviously shows greater sympathy and closeness towards **C S Lewis**. Let us see how **Bergonzi** compares the two attitudes and sorts out the question of moral in literature.

4.4 EXPLODING ENGLISH AND ENGLISHNESS

The two Universities — **Oxford** and **Cambridge** projected two different kinds of English and distinct ideas of what Englishness could signify. English Literature continued to be a distinct program of each University till the 1950s. However the

appointment in 1954 of **C S Lewis** to the chair at Cambridge had a symbolic significance. It presented a kind of synthesis of the two distinct responses to English within what **Bergonzi** terms a 'parliamentary system' that could accommodate both points of view. This brings us to another related point for discussion — what would be the link between literatures written in English but with no plea for Englishness with the larger audience? The decline in the imperialist powers of the English and the simultaneous development of national identity in other countries problematised the relation between English and Englishness. Would literature focussing on the American context project Englishness? This is an interesting issue.

Like a capitalist economy that always turns against itself, the English language was fragmenting from within. The language could now function against itself and the idea of Englishness. The myth had been de-mythified. The reason was that due to strategies of colonisation the English language had also become the language of other nations. As a result people were able to articulate their dissent against their situation as the colonised as people who were at the receiving end of imperialism. The **Newbolt Report** became in this context not only anachronistic but also redundant in the then contemporary situation. As **Bergonzi** says the relation between English, Englishness and the report, could be thus defined, "That union was still assumed in the anachronistic pieties of the **Newbolt Report**, but it was potentially called into question by the existence of a substantial body of literature that was written in English but made no claim to English identity". **Matthew Arnold** had pre-figured the situation and expressed his unease when he said," Are we going to have a primer of Canadian literature too, and a primer of Australian? We are all contributories to one great Literature- English Literature". **Arnold** wanted English to occupy globally the same position as the Latin language. This would have helped the English people enjoy a privileged place in the world. As **Bergonzi** says, we are not going to have primers but 'histories of Canadian and Australian literature, and, indeed, of Scottish literature too'. Therefore, we do have an English language but one that has now started making meaningful interventions in the *canon*. Earlier we had a mainstream English Literature that looked into the interests of the English and considered the others as outsiders. The development of American literature and works from other countries in the English language substituted English Literature with Literature in English. As **Bergonzi** says,

> *Taken together, the spatial and temporal expansion amounts to an explosion...the pioneers had no conception of the problems brought by exploding the canon.*

Bergonzi is also careful to point out that even as imperialism has withered and nationalism has continued, it in no way means that literature has to be looked at only in terms of cultural nationalism. Writers like **Conrad** and **Nabokov** choose to write in English and not in the language they had learnt. According to **Bergonzi** it is writers like **Sylvia Plath** belonging to both national and global literature create interventions and attack institutionalised culture. At the same time we must also be vary of statements made by writers about contexts they are familiar with in a superficial way. For example, the Trinidadian writer and Nobel Prize winner **V S Naipaul**'s writings about India offer a similar paradigm.

We also have to keep in mind **Ngugi Wa Thiongo**'s stand on writing in *Gikuyu*. His stance raises a significant issue- can the English language with its set of cultural signifiers express the interest of not just the literary elite but of the masses? It is to extend his writings to the masses that he first writes in *Gikuyu*. **Ngugi** feels that his works can always be translated in English. This seems to be a fair alternative as **Ngugi** is also able to contribute to literature in English. At a larger level, we must keep in mind that a conscious effort at exploding the signifiers associated with English language has to be made whether in translation or otherwise. **Bergonzi** finally asks as to how one could deal with so many different contexts and literatures. The answer for him lies in the idea of 'specialisation' as only this can allow for a better understanding of a specific context.

This has to be a collective exercise so that different inputs would allow for a better understanding of the concepts globally. This might never be realised completely but we would always be moving in the right direction. Also in the context of the Third World, we have to keep in mind the implications of the **Newbolt Report** and the myth of Englishness. We have to look for significant points of entry to disrupt *canon*ical concepts. One of the ways could be using the language to explode the *canon*. This prepares us to have a sharp critical look at the practice of Englishness under imperialism. This has reference to the site on which such a practise evolves itself: the academic world.

4.5 ENGLISH THEORISTS AND THEORY

In this section we shall study the changing attitude to theory in the academia of the English Universities. **Bergonzi** narrows his attention to the 'English' faculty and the origin of literary theory in England. He explains how the English have kept away from the terrain of theory as they consider themselves to be empiricists. However, from 1970 onwards the influence of the French theorists and translations (available from the American Universities) made this rigid faculty more receptive to theoretical inputs. Theoretical challenges are to be seen as a breakdown of the insular 'synthesis' fabricated in the English University. **Bergonzi** discusses the vast array of critics in the English literary scenario such as **Jonanthan Culler**'s *Structuralist Poetics*, **David Lodge**' *The Modes of Modern Writing*, **Catherine Belsey**'s *Critical Practice*, **Terence Hawles**' *Structuralism and Semiotics* and others like **Veronica Forrest-Thomson** and **Tony Bennett**. **Bergonzi** looks at these different theorists as part of what he calls a 'rainbow coalition'. He quotes **Belsey**'s *Critical Practice* where she says, "Only by closing the doors of the English Department against theoretical challenges from outside can we continue to ignore the "Copernican" revolution which is currently taking place and which is radically undermining traditional ways of perceiving both the world and the text".

The point that **Bergonzi** is trying to make is that the British intellectuals have probably understood the nuances of theory but not its application. **Bergonzi** says that there is a use of rhetorical devices in **Belsey**'s *Critical Practice* that distances literary theory from what he calls the 'human agency' and relegates important social concerns outside the parameters of theory. The relationship between literary theory, literature, and socio-historical structures has been erased. How can such theoretical concepts that focus on rhetoric alone take into cognisance the change in the implications of the signifier and signified with a change in context? What can be the connection between these theoretical concepts and those developed elsewhere say in the African or Latin American context? **Bergonzi** extends this argument to a study of **Hawkes'** *Structuralism and Semiotics*.

According to **Bergonzi**, **Hawkes'** idea of **New Critics** is quite similar to the earlier **New Critics**. Both focus on the text while ignoring the difference in 'contextual forms of life and conceptual foundation'. Another problem area with the English theorists, according to **Bergonzi**, is their unmindful pasting of the French theorists onto their context. The application is direct and ignores that the ideas have originated in response to a specific structure and cannot be implanted just anywhere. Methodological devices like wit, irony etc., are also not easily translatable. They can only be adapted to a specific context. The fact that the text is available in translation to the British theorists also causes a lot of contextual problems as mentioned in **Heath**'s appendix to **Barthes'** *Image-Music-Text*.
As **Bergonzi** says,

This raises the large question of the role of translation in the transmission of French ideas to English readers...other translations from modern French theorists are, one hears very inadequate.

Bergonzi acknowledges the present state of disorder of theory but sees it as symptomatic and not as a failure. At the end of the 'rainbow coalition' he discusses the point of view of the Marxists. **Bergonzi** appreciates early Marxism but sees problems in its contemporary state. In fact he says, "Globally, Marxism has run out of steam, persisting merely as sentiment and tradition...to employ Marxism against Thatcherism is to employ an obsolete weapon". He further adds, "It is not easy to engage in discussion with someone who regards other opinions as no more than symptomatic of the way a bourgeois intellectual thinks under late capitalism". For **Bergonzi** the traditional Marxist looks at the world-view from a perspective that can provide all the answers. At the other end is the new attitude that looks at the ideology operating within a text.

Let us analyse these charges systematically. **Bergonzi** considers Marxism as an ideology that is now dated. However in this one can sense the presumptuous response of a First world Theorist. How can he assume, for instance, that this body of thought is not valid 'globally'. As a theorist of the First World he is subsuming the ideas of the Third world within his privileged context. Can an ideology active a few years back become obsolete without any tangible reason now? Does it mean that for **Bergonzi** the context is no longer valid in the existing scheme of things? Isn't **Bergonzi** succumbing to the pressure of bourgeois intellectualism by referring to the Marxist ideology as a 'dogmatic assurance'? If the Marxist thought held sway in the early phase of capitalism it cannot degenerate in the present since capitalism has shown no signs of resurgence. In fact it will emerge in more active modified forms in this new era of capitalism.

For **Bergonzi** the solution lies in **Bakhtin**'s carnivalesque. **Bergonzi** suggests **Bakhtin**'s dialogic criticism as providing some interesting insights into the methodology of reading. The dialogic stresses a plurality of voices as against the 'monologic' that focuses on a single institutionalised voice. **Bergonzi** does not suggest how institutionalisation of the bourgeois kind can be fought without an alternative collective effort. However, unlike the deconstructionists this plurality is not meant to defy any notion of meaning. The theory of deconstruction negates meaning and the possibility of any concrete relation between literature and society. But, **Bakhtin**'s carnivalesque dislodges meaning from the hands of the privileged group. The dialogic mode helps make 'inter-subjective communication' possible.

Bergonzi has pointed towards the limitations of the British theorists who either get lost in the play between the signifier and signified or apply the French theorists unthinkingly to their own ideas. He has also pointed out some limitations of Marxist thought while privileging the early writings of **Marx**. He finally suggests dialogic communication as a probable solution. But this communication has to take place within a specific socio-historical milieu or else it will remain restricted in meaning.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have traced the beginnings of institutionalised English from the **Newbolt Report** onwards and seen how it combined literature with ideas from religious discourse. The Oxford-Cambridge rivalry influenced the study of English Literature in its own ways. Finally, we have seen how the *canon* turns against itself and makes space for subversion making the ideas of the report seem old and obsolete. Such techniques and methodologies help demystify the myth of Englishness to evolve a more humane outlook towards not only the elite but also the masses that would then also be part of literary discourse. The final section discusses the limitations of the

English theorists and suggests communication in the dialogic mode to resolve the existing disorder in the state of literary theory. However, even as **Bergonzi** realizes the limitations of the First World theorists his biases are also evident. He still possesses the complacence of the literary elite that is content to see only a certain section of society transformed. The situation of the majority has obviously been ignored.

4.7 QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term English?
2. What is the relation between English Literature and Englishness?
3. What is the difference between the position taken by Leavis and Lewis with respect to English Literature?
4. What do you understand by the phrase 'exploding the *canon*'?

4.8 GLOSSARY

Carnivalesque: A celebration, pageant, spectacle meant to generate a spirit of happiness

Ethics: A rational insight into a theory of standards of right or wrong as also a belief that different groups have different concepts of good or bad

Exploding: A bursting forth from within

Nationalism: The belief that people sharing similar language religion or culture within a given geographical area constitute a nation. It is indicated that their actions are determined by the nation and are to be in its best interests.

Russian Formalism: A literary theory developed in Russia in the 1920s. They focused on the way in which the literary text achieved their effects. one of the ways being - defamiliarisation.

UNIT 5 THE CRISIS IN ENGLISH STUDIES

Structure

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Literature As A Category
5.3 Criticism and Theory
5.4 *Canon* and Criticism
5.5 Marxism and Theory
5.6 How to Critique Widdowson?
5.7 Let Us Sum Up
5.8 Questions
5.9 Glossary

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit we discussed the institutionalisation of the English language in mainstream Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. We also focussed on the formulation of the myth of Englishness. In this unit we shall also look into the parameters that define literature as a category. We shall also look at how these boundaries are framed and whether they allow a degree of flexibility or not?

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the course of our discussion in this unit we will examine **Widdowson**'s idea of the relation between literature and criticism. According to him there exists a 'reciprocal relationship' between the two entities. We will also discuss **Marxist** theory and its assumed isolation by **Widdowson** from the implementation of theoretical strategies in academic institutions.

5.2 LITERATURE AS A CATEGORY

Widdowson's essay, *"The Crisis in English Studies"* is an introduction to the book *Re-Reading English* that he has edited himself. As the title suggests this book offers a reinterpretation of English studies. Our purpose here would be to see how far this re-look at English resists *canon*ical formations. Is **Widdowson** really offering another radical perspective for the study of English or is the new theoretical premise another manifestation of the already established *canon*? Such an analysis would then help us question the assumptions of both the *canon* and the strategies of reinterpretation adopted by today's academics. **Widdowson** identifies a 'crisis' in the field of English studies.

The term 'crisis' signifies the recognition of certain ruptures within theoretical studies pertaining to English literature. For **Widdowson** this theoretical upheaval is not based on a conflict between different critical approaches towards literature. The crisis in English studies according to him is a reflection on the breakdown of the insular category of English literature. As a result the index of identity formation of English is undergoing a change today. In the context of this argument we are going to study the direction in which English studies is headed. As **Widdowson** says

> *It is a question, posed from within, as to what English is, where it has got to, whether it has a future, whether it should have a future as a discrete discipline...the business of making ones own academic discipline itself the object of scrutiny of deconstructing and/or reconstructing it has not been commonly undertaken.*

According to **Widdowson**, to challenge the assumptions of the *canon* it is important to dismantle literature as a closed entity. Our focus therefore should be on the simultaneous formation of and resistance to the category English. At the same time we have to study the techniques employed for this process of "deconstructing and/or reconstructing" to see whether they evolve a new attitude towards English. **Widdowson** studies the relationship between the implications of the myth of 'Englishness' and the changing 'social and political needs' at a specific moment in history. This means that he recognizes a connection between literature and society where social transformations have some bearing on the literary set-up. **Widdowson** has contextualised this crisis in terms of the debate that was raging in the University of Cambridge in 1981. According to him, the journal *The Guardian* stresses the need for a politically conscious 'English syllabus'. However, this same journal quotes **Professor Ricks'** remark on the need for upholding the '*canon*'. This establishes the polarities towards the literary problematic– on the one hand is the view that looks at English as a category rigid in form and on the other hand is a perspective that takes into consideration socio-historic formations and their association with literature. A desire to maintain the *canon* is a marker of the threat posed to the dominant position of the canonical version of literature.

It should be clear to us that, the research and teaching faculty that supports canonical texts does so to maintain their superiority and to shun alternative readings of literature. Otherwise, how is research possible without an understanding of and experimentation with different theoretical stances? How can a faculty, favouring *status quo* bring about any change in the social set-up? This shows the connections between the Universities and the courses offered, as, the, outlines of the syllabus are determined by them. The Course in English Literature has to be formulated in a way that it brings about changes in the very structure of the literary frame. One of the ways of doing this according to **Widdowson** is by attacking value-based criticism.

Widdowson introduces us to the debate of the 'value' of literature. What does one mean by the 'value' of literature? He says,

> *In recent years in Britain there has been a growing debate among radical critics about the value of 'Literature'"; about the principles by which we evaluate different literary productions; and indeed, the category 'Literature' itself.*

The debate on whether or not literature is a value-laden construct can be attributed to an increased interest in inter-disciplinary activities with departments such as sociology or history. A shift in positioning based on the focus of a specific subject has introduced the possibility of other interpretations to the category, literature. Value implies the privileging of certain texts as important and others as part of genres regarded as 'low brow' such as popular culture. What is the basis of these demarcations that make certain texts part of the *canon* whilst sidelining the rest? According to **Widdowson** canonical interpretations are value-based. They look for a definite moral or ethical meaning in the text. Such an interpretation allows for the perpetuation of power structures in society. According to **Widdowson** a single critical premise will not offer the appropriate answer that can be located only when we question the 'received tradition' of literary works.

A discussion of the value of literature throws us back in time to the period of the pre-*New Critical Theorists* like **I A Richards** who asserted the need for value-based literature. As discussed in Unit III, the allocation of value to literature implicates the

Utilitarian model of the nineteenth century. In the contemporary situation we continue to look for 'value' in literature that will reinforce the moral codes in society. The value of literature implies that there is an intrinsic core to English that can be revealed in some way. This mystery can be understood through the tools of critical theory. It also reflects on the puzzles of human life that are difficult to understand and are best left in this incomprehensible state. According to **Widdowson** these associations stem from a bourgeois mode of thinking that project such thought processes as universally applicable. The interests of one particular class subsume within itself the contradictions of the other groups. This activity goes on in a subtle manner. We look at this phenomenon in the following section.

5.3 CRITICISM AND THEORY

Widdowson formulates the relation between literature and criticism in the form of a reciprocal equation. According to him literature has its own specific ideological space and criticism is usually understood as separate from it. Criticism is supposed to provide the methodological devices for understanding aspects of literature in their variety and particularity. The question that **Widdowson** raises is – Does literature constitute criticism or is it in turn determined by critical theory? As **Widdowson** says,

> *'Literature' is, in effect, being recognized as the construct of a criticism which, while assuming and proclaiming its 'descriptiveness', its 'disinterestedness', its ideological innocence, has so constituted literature as to reproduce and naturalize bourgeois ideology as 'literary value'.*

If as according to **Widdowson** criticism claims to be 'descriptive' and 'disinterested' it means that its devices describe the literary aspects of a text in an objective manner. In this sense criticism only extends the domain of literature making it more approachable. **Widdowson** explains the reciprocal relation in that criticism constitutes literature and literary value. According to him, the field of operation of critical theory is not ideologically innocent and employs certain devices for understanding a text. The category, 'literature' is formulated by the continual deployment of methodological strategies that slot certain texts as part of literature. According to **Widdowson** this is how criticism determines literature and brings about the formation of the *canon*. The implications of this are diverse. **Widdowson** notes that criticism by 'selecting' and 'evaluating' works of literature creates the idea of literary value – one that presents the interests of a specific group in society. These practices are bourgeois in nature and structure the *canon* in a way that makes these strategies seem natural. In fact, according to **Widdowson,** these values reflect the interests of the bourgeois group that believes in liberal individualism – the belief of a group of people who like to propagate a view of literature in consonance with the profit-making motive of a capitalist system.

You must be wondering what connection can possibly exist between literature and the economic system. We must understand that society has levels of power points that form an integrated structure. These power nodules influence literature even as it tries to resist them. However without an understanding of the connections between literature, society and power a fully formed resistance is not possible. In this context the powerful groups exercises control over the literary elite. This latter group continues to maintain its elitism by allying with the dominant groups even as it pretends to attack mainstream ideas. The bourgeois class regulates the ideological processes of the literary elite making literature reflect their interests. Critical theories, suggests **Widdowson,** are many and classify literature in their own various ways. However, our target is those methods that construct the *canon* in terms of value-laden statements. We have to caution the reader/writer against the deployment of such critical theories.

Widdowson argues that the bourgeois aspects of criticism have become an integral part of the British education system due to the simultaneous occurrence of certain socio-literary factors. In the previous chapters we have studied the reasons for the institutionalisation of English studies and the belief in the myth of Englishness. **Widdowson** also points towards **Arnold**'s conception of literature as an alternative to the religious ideology that had regulated the lives of the people in the past. This led to the emergence of the idea of culture – a substitute to religion that could save mankind. In terms of changes in economic structures this was the period when capitalism was establishing itself in Britain. This meant that the Utilitarian philosophy of the 'greatest good for the greatest number' had become the rule for life in the nineteenth century. However, for **Widdowson** even as these factors, they should not be overestimated.

Widdowson points towards two more significant factors in the establishment of the *canon* – one is the development of professional criticism and the other the introduction of English into the academic curriculum of the Universities. It is a conglomeration of these factors that defined the *canon*. This took place in terms of what has been explained as a 'reciprocal relationship'. As a result, English was established as a privileged literary and cultural signifier and English studies became synonymous with the area of criticism. In **Widdowson**'s words:

> *The reciprocal relationship between the construction of Literature by modern criticism, and the establishment of that 'English' as criticism in higher education is a nexus of great importance in the sustaining of liberal ideology.*

What **Widdowson** means in this quotation is that the constitution of English studies as criticism had serious consequences in the formation of a networking between the study of English and the field of Criticism. Here we would like to caution the reader. In saying that literature is constituted by criticism, **Widdowson** seems to be privileging the latter over the former. However, the two need to be seen in a dialectical relation where both literature and criticism contribute to the formation of each which in theory can be called a significant problematic. If, English is, constituted by its reciprocal relation to Criticism then, we have a specific kind of English that is projected as the index of literariness. We also have a set of rules as part of Critical theory that go on to project the *canon* of English literature. What we mean is that criticism provides the yardstick to determine English in its *canon* form. This makes the rules of conventional or bourgeois critical theory acceptable as English. This as **Widdowson** explains is part of the liberal policy of the dominant group that favours English studies by a particular group over the others.

The liberal radicals fight for the individual's rights of freedom. However, in this case there is no scope for the society to move in a collective manner. The space of one individual is bound to clash with that of another one. So are we not moving towards an anarchic world in which each individual is going to fight for his own specific interests? How can equality and harmony in society be visualised in such a case? What is the effect of this on the students specialising in English literature in the Universities? The *canon* has an active impact on the thinking power of the students whose minds are fed with fixed notions. They are manoeuvred into accepting the ideology of the literary elite. Research and study in literature is reduced to 'listening' to lectures framed by the people who have contributed to the *canon*. This prevents the students of English from making any valuable contribution to research or alternative areas in literature as we too often see.

According to **Widdowson** the spread of canonical tendencies in literature breeds two major assumptions. Firstly, the authorities that encourage canonical formations believe that there is an essential body of knowledge known as literature. This brings back the idea that literature has an inherent value of its own allowing space only for minor changes in the cultural field that surrounds it. The boundaries of the functional field of literature have been determined and all that exists outside it is non-literary.

Literature becomes text-centred and is not affected by changes in the social and historical formations. Secondly, another assumption that is circulated is that criticism is a holistic entity– a body of work that is undifferentiated in nature. As **Widdowson** says:

> *The other assumption is...criticism exists as a largely undifferentiated corpus of scholarship- undoubtedly representing many different individual 'views' of literary texts, but innocent of other ulterior design or motive.*

Mainstream methods advocate the existence of a 'universal and immanent' category 'literature' that has a specific literary value. Value-based Criticism ignores the different perspectives or critical theories within criticism. As **Widdowson** points out, criticism in the present state expresses the individual's perception of a text but without a specific point of view. Looking at the text from a specific point of reference would mean a definite ideological stance. However, canonical forms that look at both literature and criticism as singular in nature negate interpretations that do not have moral overtones. In the absence of 'ideological determinants' literature and criticism remain free-floating and meaningless. Canonical readings of literature and criticism rule out the possibility of a reinterpretation of literature. This means that literature cannot be used to understand the contradictions in society and changes in its base or different superstructures. Literature cannot function to formulate a cohesive and meaningful ideology and would be left within the bourgeois frame of society. It is therefore necessary, according to **Widdowson**, to question strategies that naturalise literature and criticism so that these concepts can be understood in terms of a dialectical form.

Widdowson expresses his unease with the fact that this debate on the value of literature has still not acquired momentum. According to him in the Universities of the First World resistance to the *canon* is still sporadic. As a result departments that are into theoretical research have still not been able to counter the *canon* effectively. The reason is that even progressive academic departments ignore the context of their research and focus on value-laden critical methods. **Widdowson** explains that the reasons for the perpetuation of *canon* studies, is a lack of proof to explain the disaster towards which we are heading. However, **Widdowson** is being too empiricist in demanding a proof to substantiate his argument. The catastrophe has already hit us even if we fail to realise its impact. We are now in the new phase of capitalism – one where even literature has become a commodity to be consumed. Colonialism has manifested itself in the form of neo-colonialism. Signs of literary and social degeneration are evident everywhere around us. It is surprising that **Widdowson** has written off the history- centred Marxist approach from any realisation of freedom in such a scenario.

5.4 *CANON* AND CRITICISM

Let us now take a look at the response of canonical works towards cogent critical theories. Important theoretical concepts like Marxism and Feminism have called to question the assumptions of the *canon*. However, the proponents of the *canon* consider ideas of history and theory merely a distraction. As **Widdowson** points out, "That this is so is confirmed by the reiteration, in the Cambridge English debate, of the centrality of the '*canon*' and the need ultimately to dispense with the distractions of history and theory in order to return to the unproblematic reality of the 'literary works themselves'". **Widdowson** cites the example of **Marjorie Boultons** book, *The Anatomy of Literary Studies* that has not really moved beyond the writings of a **Matthew Arnold** and the **Newbolt Report** of 1921. This supports our argument about the effect of the *canon* on students of the succeeding period. If the myth of English and Criticism is going to be circulated and not resisted then only works like **Boultons'** are going to be written and circulated. The *canon* looks at literature as a

well-defined body that formulates the rules for human behaviour. It lays down what **Widdowson** refers to as the 'universals' of life.

In this context another example of canonical blunders is the ignorance on the part of *canon* constructors of the association of **Joyce** and **Paul de Man** with the Nazis. This does not disturb those who construct the *canon* as they regard this as an aberration and learn lessons from it as also to make the academic world sufficiently conscious of the role those two may have played in the literary and cultural world. Literature is supposed to exercise a civilising influence on society. This is the claim constantly made. Those who adhere to this are considered as part of the *canon* and those who resist it are marginalised. This generates a structure of bourgeois morality that looks at literature in a biased way. What would happen if we extend this argument further to our own context in the Third World? The answer is clear. The *canon* of English studies generates universal human values. It is a rigid frame that cannot be questioned and altered. In this way the powerful sections of the developed countries set standards for the developing ones of the Third World. The languages put forth in the *canon* have a determining influence on the study of what then becomes the vernacular. The structures of power in our context are re-modelled on those of the powerful groups in the First World Academic Centres. Even the level of humanity and social awareness is to be determined by the privileged section of the First world. It is not a surprise that we take great pride in flaunting our acquired 'Englishness' without understanding its nuances in terms of our own cultural signifiers. **Widdowson** makes us partly aware of this and we should extend his argument further. Help in this regard is supposed to come in a major way from the Marxist Approach to literature.

5.5 MARXISM AND THEORY

Widdowson points towards the consequent need for questioning received traditions if one has to develop an active understanding of literature and literary theory. He says, "It is therefore imperative, if literature remains a massively consumed product in society, and if the study of it widely persists, that a criticism be mobilised which can positively engage with them". What does **Widdowson** consider as a sound theoretical premise for questioning the *canon*? He begins by saying that the last decade has created the space for the advent of a process of questioning. However, we can mention that the 1970s failed to make way for progressive ideas. What actually happened was that the 1970s definitely produced new manifestations of a conventional mode of thinking. What are these modified forms? Further to what extent is **Widdowson** complicit with these ideas even as he claims to resist them? According to him, "Such a criticism is predicated on empirical practice, on the study of 'texts', and is heavily reinforced by the publishing industry, both in its large investment in Literary Criticism– even, increasingly and significantly, versions of Marxist criticism- and in its publication of 'Libraries' of 'classic texts' and 'student editions'".

Conventional criticism for **Widdowson** is associated thus with the empirical practice of reading the text. This is particularly true in the case of theorists like **de Man** and **Derrida** who foreground the text and its nuances and ignore the context to which it is related. This is then another version of New Criticism that in an early phase of theory drew the readers' attention to the 'words on the page'. Theorists in the present day continue to focus on the text, only the coordinates have changed, they have become more 'de-centred' and archaic. It is true that the publishing industry has made available a large number of texts and has brought about a boom in the different branches of literature and social sciences. However, it is strange that **Widdowson** equates versions of Marxism with 'classic' texts and 'student editions'. Wherein does the connection lie? He is trying to suggest that the relationship of Marxism with society is the same as that between society and the classic texts. Against the

supposedly dated ideas of Marxism **Widdowson** privileges theory at a 'high level of abstraction' which has somehow lost its appeal. Even though **Widdowson** critiqued conventional criticism as the product of a bourgeois and capitalist ideology, he looks at theory as an abstract concept hidden somewhere in the pages of the text. He states clearly that he does not want to identify himself with what he calls 'crude new empiricism'. This new form of empiricism appears to be the relationship between theory and the formative influences in which it originates. The potentiality of theory energising literature to play a social role is largely lost on **Widdowson**.

These ideas become clear in **Widdowson**'s discussion of Marxist criticism, theory and literature. He recognizes Marxist thought as a sustained theoretical critique that focussed on the lacunae in the hegemonic state of dominant forces. It attacked the belief system of the bourgeois class that tried to regulate the economic and literary structure of society. However, according to **Widdowson** this has had an adverse effect on the problematic of theory. According to him this has led to a synonymy between Marxist criticism and critical theory. He says, "But the result has been in effect, that Marxist criticism now means critical theory". Contrary to what **Widdowson** thinks it is not as if Marxism has hindered the development of other theoretical points of view. In the past decades we have seen the consolidation of feminism as a sound theoretical premise. Has Marxist thought inhibited the expansion of feminist thought process or has it in some way contributed to it? Let us pose another question to answer this one. Can we think about equal status for women in a class-based society? The answer is that Marxism and feminism form the strongest allies that can together try to initiate a new social order.

However, **Widdowson** has written off Marxist thought as of no consequence for literature since he believes that Marxism has vacated the field of critical theory. According to him, "It becomes 'something else'; a 'different' autonomous self-generating intellectual field, tending to leave the empirical field of study clear for the continuing operations of literary critical practice". **Widdowson** is suggesting that the active applicability of Marxist thought is not possible anymore and that Marxism exists only as a passive category that can have no meaning for the society in which it is formed. How can a theoretical enterprise based on the existing living conditions of society not be active or relevant? This is the problem of the First World theorists who are quick to eliminate Marxism from their context without realising that the Marxist outlook is closely aligned with working masses. We have already analysed a similar problem in the case of **Bergonzi** who has relegated Marxism as an 'obsolete weapon' in the context of Thatcherite politics. Theorists like **Bergonzi** and **Widdowson** have 'naturalised' the idea of context in the process of resisting it. Also they discuss the validity of Marxism if at all with respect to their own world as if no other exists. They ignore the Third World where Marxism is seen as a powerful force to counter strategies of bourgeois thinking. One may apprehend that the next target of the First World thinkers is going to be feminism so that any possibility of change is ruled out. This is a fine example of wishing away common masses and women – the capitalist structure under which the former operate and patriarchy under which women get oppressed.

5.6 HOW TO CRITIQUE WIDDOWSON?

Widdowson studies the relationship between Marxism and the 'untransformed education system'. Just as he considers context as a singular construct, he also regards the education system only in terms of its canonical versions. The education system is one of the most active and vital institutions trying to wriggle out of the oppressive bond of the bourgeois class. And this has become possible only due to the active application of Marxist and Feminist methodology. But **Widdowson** assumes that the faculty of the English academic institutions regard with 'disdain' the ideology of the left. Assuming gradually becomes acceptance. He states the reason for this by referring to Marxists critical practice in these terms... "The wild young

persons of the Left striking despairingly at the immanent phenomena of Literature and Criticism, when we can all see that the texts are solidly there...to be understood and when understood to be valued". **Widdowson** regards the thinking of the Left as nothing more than a periodical fervour of youth. He considers all the thinkers of this theoretical enterprise as 'wild young persons' who express their academic frustration by ignoring the text. He overlooks the fact that the ideology of the Left never attempts to eliminate the text, literature or criticism. It only provides radical methodological devices to understand it. Underlining the socio-ideological role it may play in its environment. Marxism sees a vital connection between literature and society. One is surprised thus to know that **Widdowson**'s position has changed at the end of his essay.

Whereas he had initially decried the association of value with Literature as bourgeois, he now reinforces it as an essential category. Literature has an inherent core that the students can understand. This limits students' attitudes towards Literature and Criticism in a way that the larger cultural environment is left alone. They are conditioned into looking for essential meaning within a text instead of looking for a meaningful relation between literature and society. Isn't **Widdowson**'s understanding of the category 'student' somewhat narrow? Another charge that **Widdowson** levies against Marxist theory is that, "It allows little or no operational space to those who are not primarily theoreticians, but who wish to occupy the new spaces created by the theoretical work, and who are still teaching Literature in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities". That it appears **Widdowson** is trying to extend the study of literature to more and more people. But, for him, to educate the masses is another level of equality that Marxism strives for in society. If we examine closely, we shall find that its' thinking is in no way restricted to the literary elite. In fact Marxist thought speaks in a way that is easily understood by the youngest members of the educated community – both teachers and students. **Widdowson** is unable to see this. **Bergonzi** in his discussion of critical practice of one of the Marxists says that, "It regards the great literature and art of the past as a common human inheritance, which should be wrested from the exploiting classes and made available to the whole of humanity". However, he goes on to twist in a manner that the Marxist criticism ceases to be meaningful in the context of actual, concrete literary works. There are close parallels between **Bergonzi** and **Widdowsons'** thinking. Both attack Marxism for being a 'dying culture'. They do not see a re-structuring of society in Marxist terms. But where **Widdowson** attacks Marxism for limiting the operational space of theory, **Bergonzi** charges it for the utopian idea of spreading education to the masses.

These are some of the idiosyncrasies of the First World theorists. **Widdowson** discusses the conflicting forces at different levels of power in the academic institutions such as students' interpretation of literature, conflicts within theory and difficult theoretical concepts that make literary theory inaccessible to the student. The teachers and the students are then compelled to take to 'establishment criticism' or what he terms 'progressive criticism'. **Widdowson** does not comment on the use of the former. However, in the case of cultural studies, a part of progressive criticism, he feels that there is only a problematisation of the social forces but no solution. This, according to **Widdowson** leads to an 'intellectual schizophrenia' where the index of intellectual activity remains passive. The teachers and the students indulge in futile mental activity that has no application to the real world. **Widdowson** does not have a logical basis for the claims he is making. Even if one follows this argument it points towards the necessity of formulating a theory that would take into cognisance the literary and social needs of the masses. However, **Widdowson** sees Marxism as the germ of this entire problem. This reflects the unease of such theorists as **Widdowson** with a radical theoretical construct.

He believes that Marxism has hindered the progress of other theoretical enterprises. But what these other categories are he does not specify. He hints at the body of empirical thought that would enable the academia to arrive at interesting conclusions. He says,

What it does imply is the need for critical work to be produced which challenges the assumptions and practices of conventional criticism, not in the form of theory, but as a detailed rebuttal of them in practice and as a substantive replacement for them which teachers at all levels may draw on and refer to in their classes and courses.

Widdowson is formulating a connection between the University, its members – both teachers and students and the field of theory. This forms a closed triangle that does not take into consideration the co-ordinates in the space outside. He stresses the need for an empirical understanding of the forces in society. Despite his tirade against value-based criticism, **Widdowson**'s ideological agenda seems to privilege it, as he believes that criticism must address itself to the value of the literature being studied. He also believes that criticism must take into account the aim of criticism, the object or literary work being criticised and the 'conditions' in which this is taking place. He calls this materialist criticism. **Widdowson** is picking up ideas from Marxism but the limitations of his argument prevent him from declaring it in theory. This is because **Widdowson** is trying to work towards the benefit of only a specific group of teachers and students whose job is to appreciate concrete texts. He shies away from the idea of a complete social movement as visible in literature. Literature and Criticism have to be understood in terms of a theoretical construct without which their application would be sporadic and casual.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have examined the implications of studying literature as an essential category. **Widdowson** is seen as underlining the relationship between literature and criticism. According to him, criticism is not merely a tool to understand works of literature. It constitutes literature in the process of evaluating it. **Widdowson** enlists the problems associated with Marxist thinking and considers Marxism as a theory that has 'vacated' the domain of literary theory. However, there are problems with his argument. For one he sees Criticism as determining literature whereas the two need to be seen in a dialectical relation with each other and with society. Secondly, he identifies the cause of weakness in literary theory in Marxist thought. In this unit we have also seen a few inconsistencies the First World Theorists suffer from.

5.8 QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by Literature as an essential category?
2. What is the relationship between criticism and literature?
3. Do you think that Marxism has become outdated in literary criticism? Give reasons to support your answer.

5.9 GLOSSARY

Identity formation: To look at a construct in a specific way so as to determine its boundaries.

Value: The essential meaning of a word or text. It is supposed to be inherent in the text.

Naturalise: To subsume differences within universal assumptions. To make ideas easy and convenient,

Neo-colonialism: A phase in which the powerful countries over the globe exercise control over the developing ones through culture and literature.

UNIT 6 BASE, TEXT AND CONTEXT: ON THE TRIUMPH OF THEORY, THE RESISTANCE TO READING, AND THE QUESTION OF THE MATERIAL BASE

Structure

6.0 Objectives
6.1 Introduction
6.2 American and the Grain
6.3 Occulted Being, Radiant Gist, Cratylism and the Materiality of the Base
6.4 Resistance and Theory
6.5 Triumph of Theory?
6.6 Let Us Sum Up
6.7 Questions
6.8 Glossary

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit we have discussed the implications of the direction taken by English studies, and the necessity of questioning the *canon*. In the present unit we shall see how dominant strategies in literature operate and how they can be understood and countered effectively. This unit should take you to the point where you feel equipped to free yourself from the established First World centered *canon*. In this unit, we shall take a close look at **J. Hillis Miller**'s Presidential Address of 1986 to ascertain areas where a new *canon* is being evolved for our use. We shall see what we can make of it.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the wake of new perspectives and ideas like pluralism we have become conscious of certain 'vantage points' in literary theory. These different perspectives need to be articulated within a specific critical frame. What is the methodology required for understanding differing positions? For **Hillis Miller** one such method is reading. What does reading imply? Where does 'theory' stand in relation to the process of reading? The answer lies in understanding aspects of literary theory and the 'resistance' that it meets with to form certain connections between reading, theory and resistance. Our analyses have to take into consideration not only what we think but also the multiple impulses and their interactions.

6.2 AMERICA AND THE GRAIN

At the beginning of the address, mentioned above, **Miller** is careful to point out the specific socio-historical context – the West in the year 1986. This implicates an audience, one that belongs to a definite period in history. The immediate spectator is the educated New Yorker who is an active witness to this discussion. At another level it also involves the group of people who elsewhere in the world are the target readers of the MLA and are in some way concerned with the literary scenario. Today, the time period is different from that of the Address. The year is 2004 and we are discussing issues raised by **Miller** after a period of almost two decades. During this

period what progress has been made in the field of literary theory not only in the West but also in our context? In **Miller**'s essay the context is relevant and in this he does not leave anyone out except those who are not actively involved. The issues he is raising are meant for the interests of the literary community- those who want to probe the socially relevant thought processes. Further, America as the focal centre of his speech has significant implications for us. It allows us to position ourselves with respect to the mainstream and to compare the respective literary scenarios. It helps us to evaluate our attitudes with respect to what we understand as literary theory. We also have to keep in mind **Millers**' own biases, if any. What we mean is that we have to see how **Miller** uses the idea of context. Is he trying to manipulate the audience by subsuming plurality within an underlying agenda not easily visible to the reader?

Miller begins by discussing a section of **William Carlos Williams**'s novel titled *In the American Grain*. The novel appeared in the year 1925. He focuses on a specific section of the novel- 'The Destruction of Tenochtitlan'. **Miller** explains how **Williams** sees two different responses to the America that was not subject to the social, cultural and economic onslaught of the outsider. Of the two responses, one is that of Rasles, a Jesuit missionary and the other is of Cortez and the New England Puritans. A collision with the outsiders establishes differing equations for the 'Indian' group already living there. In the case of the Jesuit missionary, Rasles, we have the classic case of hybridity. In the wake of changes that affect the indigenous attitudes, Rasles is able to reconcile the value system of the settlers and missionaries with those of the Indian. According to William's, Rasles is able to understand the meaning of being an 'Indian' as he is able to evolve a syncretic view that leads to the formation of a new hybrid culture. In this case the unique characteristics of the community 'flower' under the influence of the missionary who shapes them in their own way. This is an example of a positive fusion of two worlds and ways of life.

On the other hand is the attitude of Cortez who is insensitive to the needs of the people already staying in America. There is no point of connection established between the two groups. Cortez, who represents another cultural system, imposes its dicta onto the indigenous groups left to grapple with an alien culture. The Indians were forced into accepting a new religion and a new value system to reformulate their society on the terms laid down by the others. This implicated a hierarchical order in which the invaders held control and the domestic groups were ousted from power. As **Miller** points out these are the 'bad guys' in American history. The 'Indian' can be released only by the method of operation of Rasles. According to **Miller**, Williams defines proper culture as one that is able to preserve the essence of a specific social system- "to create, to hybridize, to crosspollinize." How is the attitude of Rasles different from that of Cortez? As students of theory we should be able to respond to this question. In both the cases it is the outsider who is in a position of power. In one case the indigenous group on which new ideas are enacted is compelled to accept a re-definition of its own system and in the other it enjoys a few liberties. Williams seems to be complying with a version of culture that takes into account not the indigenous requirements but those of the outsider. He is equating creativity with hybridity, but we must ask whose creativity is really going to bloom in the hybrid context.

Millers concern in this example is mainly with the process of naming. The colonised comes into being only in a hybrid culture through the process of 'proper naming' that is considered as a performative act. Performativity is a term used in the context of speech acts. A performative utterance is one that does what it says it does. By extension it is not, however, strictly necessary that the words name or describe the act. The essential features are that the words are used to perform an act. Miller does not seem to be aware of this subversive dimension of naming. Performativity can also be made to function as a subversive act as in the case of a specific theoretical premise. However, his concern is with the performative act of naming that brings the hidden aspects or the 'radiant gist' of the indigenous culture to life. He terms this indigenity the 'American grain'. One can't help but wonder as to why **Miller** chooses this example and what is its significance in the context of literary theory? What is the

relationship between the cultural system we now understand as 'America' and the 'grain'? The question is significant. It indicates the coming into being of a system where one of provides basis for launching the idea of base and its materiality, something that literary theory in our world is concerned with. Let us now proceed further into this discussion.

6.3 OCCULTED BEING, RADIANT GIST, CRATYLISM AND THE MATERIALITY OF THE BASE

Miller uses concepts from linguistic theory for application to the example from **Williams** novel *In the American Grain* for a discussion of the materiality of the base. **Miller** explains how the term 'radiant gist' functions in the same way as the Hiedeggerian idea of the 'occulted being' divested of its critical rigour. **Martin Heidegger** was a German philosopher of the early twentieth century. In his book *Being and Time* he explored the idea of 'being'. He called this existence *Dasein* that would be manifest in our actual existence and experience. **Heidegger** considered *Dasein* not as a static entity, but one that comes into formation in different situations. This allows for a certain space of enactment to the idea of existence that however is regulated by the factor of mortality. This is **Heidegger**'s idea of 'Being'. 'Occult' indicates allowing a certain kind of mysticism that accompanies the idea of *Dasein*. Therefore even as the Being has a specific context **Miller** looks at it not as a social entity but more as a mystical one. **Miller** in the essay under discussion considers **Williams**'s idea of the radiant gist to be like the Heideggerian occulted being. In fact according to **Miller**, Williams is not able to retain the critical rigour that accompanies **Heidegger**'s philosophical idea. The question that **Miller** is raising is

> *What can one say, here and now, today, about this opposition between two kinds of culture and about the resulting narrative of American history to which it leads? In the case of America the gap between the American culture as understood by Cortez and the indigenous American grain exemplifies the process of forgetting the 'Being'. American history can therefore be understood as a continual movement away from the grain.*

It is difficult to distinguish whether **Miller** is attacking the basis of American history or the idea of history. This is best represented in technological developments of America in the context of which the lack of relation between the America as we see it and the American grain is more poignantly felt.

Miller then introduces another term from the field of linguistics to explain the lack of a concrete and meaningful relation between two entities such as the American grain and the new culture introduced therein – the idea of Cratylism. He asks, "Is Williams' radiant gist no more than a strange version of a now exploded Cratylism, the stubborn belief that the phenomenality of words somehow naturally corresponds to the essence of things? What **Miller** is suggesting is that Cratylism assumes a direct correspondence between words and the essence of things. Similarly, there is the inherent assumption of a direct relationship between the alien culture and the grain, even as it does not exist. However, the relationship between the cultural system and the indigenous group or grain is not merely one of direct correspondence. Instead, it has to do with the performative powers of the outsider who names or renames the ground and allows it to come into being. As **Paul de Man** says, "To the extent that Cratylism assumes a convergence of the phenomenal aspects of language, as sound, with its signifying function as referent, it is an aesthetically oriented conception. In the case of Williams also there is an aesthetically oriented conception behind the logic of the text". This is because in the present context performativity is not used to question the notion of identity but to determine the 'name' of one of the groups. It provides space only to the group performing this task. In *Paradise Lost* Adam's

naming of the differing species made his position dynamic and powerful, the species named remained within the stasis of the term conferred on them. It seems that in Williams's vision the ground exists outside language waiting to be named not by the native but by the outsider. There is also the interesting suggestion that the community had no name prior to the one given by the alien.

Miller extends this idea to focus on the nature of a probable relationship between the grain and the culture that exists 'on' it. We are not to concern ourselves with the nature of the radiant gist or the grain but on the possible nexus between the ground and the culture that towers over it. **Miller** points towards the necessity of a relationship with the base. **Miller** says, "All meanings have a material base– cultural meanings as well as meanings embodied in written or printed texts". **Miller** emphasizes the importance of the materiality of the base. In the context of America he is trying to evolve a relationship between the material base and the superstructure. According to **Miller** the example from *In the American Grain* suggests two possible connections between the material base and the cultural meaning. Like the two different responses of Cortez and Rasles, culture either emanates from the ground or it is imposed on the grain. Cortez' reaction towards the grain signifies how the base has been completely ignored. We can now arrive at an idea of what literary theory could mean and at the same time how it can be applied to the context of American history to attack its mainstream notions. According to **Miller,** when meaning emanates from the base there is a kind of 'magical correspondence' between the material base and the superstructure. But in the context of a performative speech act, does the meaning come into being by the name given by the base in which case the material base would determine the super structure? Further, does the superstructure in any way 'name' the base even as it is determined by it? Also, then would such an equation be desirable in the context of American history? These questions have to be kept in mind in understanding the base-superstructure equation.

The second possibility with respect to the situation in the novel, says **Miller**, is that the superstructure has no relation with the base and remains 'free-floating' as in the case of Cortez. This somehow means that culture becomes a term whose growth has no relation with the base. Thus, where the material has no connection with the cultural aspects, the latter becomes a static entity that will have no concrete foundation. It could then be pasted anywhere without being affected by the change in materiality of the situation. Thereafter change in the superstructure takes place arbitrarily making the system rigid and oppressive. This not only distorts the base-superstructure equation but empties culture of its meaning. For **Miller**, in terms of a social structure this phenomenon can be understood in the context of America. In this case the relationship between the base and superstructure can only be understood as an empty meaningless space that maintains the two entities as separate. This has also been the phantom haunting writers like **Hawthorne, James** and **Melville** who have tried very hard to fill the gaps to constitute some kind of a meaningful relation with the base. You would have noticed that **Miller** has already laid the foundation of a super structure that is fluid, rigid and independent at the same time. How does it relate to literary theory? This we shall discuss in the next part.

6.4 RESISTANCE AND THEORY

Miller discusses changes in literary studies and elucidates the factors that are going to affect the present as well as the future of literary studies. The rapidly moving demographic transitions involve change in the size of population, geographical factors, emigration, immigration, the relation between population and natural resources and an array of other related ideas. According to **Miller** an increase in emigrations has created cosmopolitan zones that are no longer regulated by any one specific group. The group ideology is that of money and there are multi-lingual and multi-racial groups. In the metropolitan pockets the culture is determined not by the

index of literariness but by the development of a new body– the mass media and electronic media. The media has brought the different zones closer creating global concepts. Universities are now collaborating on grounds of knowledge - exchange, research, and finance. This has made available a large number of texts and information, particularly to the under-privileged zones. Such collaborative efforts have foregrounded points of view or 'slants' that had earlier been ignored. This has made possible the coming up of new bodies of literature such as women studies or gender studies. These changes have revolutionized the way we look at the world, notions of history, formation of culture, and so on. The otherwise ignored areas of the world like the Third world, the African context have been able to articulate a voice that had been kept latent by the dominant influence of the *canon*. The *canon* has been broken into different *canons* and this has made us aware of the way in which power points are located in society today.

In the next part of his essay, **Miller** extends his ideas to the context of the 1986 listeners and readers. Literary theory, according to him, has now changed its course. Therefore language-based studies are no longer the focus of the attention of theorists. What occupies them is studies in history, formation of society and so on. Literature and society based theories have made the intellectual community conscious of its duty of spreading this awareness in the world. Even as **Miller** considers this transition sudden and abrupt, he correctly points out that it stems from 'our' own sense of responsibility. This seems to be a reason to rejoice. However, **Miller** raises an objection. He is critical of this shift in the field of theory, as according to him this has become an excuse to avoid reading the text. There is a tendency to look in the text for ideas pre-conditioned by the specific co-ordinates or vantage points one has in mind. **Miller** believes that theory's co-relation with the text is not there. As a result of which the base or the materiality of the text has once again been ignored. Meaning has no materiality and it continues to remain 'free-floating'. However, it seems that **Miller** is assuming that theories that lay emphasis on the context fix pre-determined coordinates and do not read the 'text'. His agenda seems to be to privilege linguistics over a theoretical stance that takes into cognisance specific historical formations and their implications.

At this stage, **Miller** introduces another concept used by **Paul de Man** in his essay, *The Resistance to Theory*. This essay was initially written at the request of the Modern Language Association for the Volume *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*. This will help us understand the two terms 'theory' and 'resistance'. According to **Miller** theory is the displacement in literary studies from a focus on the meaning of a text to a focus on the way meaning is conveyed. For **Miller,** meaning has to be understood through a specific methodology and literary theory provides us with the technique of conveying it as we locate it in a text. As **Miller** says, "Theory is the use of language to talk about language". At one level language is a way of conveying certain modes of meaning. But what we are interested in is not the essence delivered but the method of operation, of the modes employed. It is evident that for **Miller,** theoretical concepts have been restricted within the problematic of the text and cannot go beyond it to include the context. Another way in which **Miller** defines theory is through the idea of referentiality. What is referentiality? It is a term used to define phrases of forms in a specific manner unlike the attributive aspects that are used in a more generalised way. In the case of a referential utterance there is an assertion to indicate something particular. It forms an equation that establishes a relation between the referring expression and that to which it refers. According to **de Man** linguistic terminology designates reference prior to designating the referent. The referential function of language, "considers reference as a function of language and not necessarily as intuition." Therefore firstly, theory focuses not on the referred object but on the equation established. It raises the problems of formulating such connections. This **Miller** calls the problem of referentiality. In this context the referential equation is not to be looked at as a direct relation between the two ends – the reader and the society but of how such connections can be formulated. 'Intuition' has no relation to a material base and can

be considered part of a larger aesthetic idea. By ruling out intuition the aesthetic problematic that hitherto determined meaning has been displaced from its privileged position and replaced by a conscious "function of language". Let us see how resistance can be defined.

According to **Wlad Godzich:**

> *Resistance is a property of the referent, we would say today, which allows this referent to become the object of knowledge of the subject that we are. Without this resistance, we would never be able to ascertain whether the phenomenal or sensible is really "out there" and whether we have any knowledge of such an "out there".*

Resistance is therefore a property of the referent that makes it functional. Now we need to ask where and how is this resistance located? According to **de Man** this resistance is inherent in theory itself. He says,

> *The real debate of literary theory is not with its polemical opponents but rather with its own methodological assumptions and possibilities...the resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language. It is therefore a resistance to language itself or to the possibility that language contains factors and functions that cannot be reduced to intuition.*

Miller uses **de Man**'s term 'resistance' in discussing the polemical opponents of literary theory. These for **Miller** are the right and left wing groups. This is surprising as for some reason **Miller** has equated two distinct if not mutually antagonistic ideological frames of reference and subsumed them within the idea of resistance. For **Miller** the opposing factions of both the right and left believe that in the absence of any phenomenal approach, linguistic theory has made the terrain of literary theory "sterile". What is the nature of this sterility? Is it actually there or is it a deliberate attempt at disarming the theorists? Further, the use of the term sterile to describe the deficiencies in theory is deliberate. According to **Miller** this displaces power completely into the hands of the two groups. Sterility implies impotence and the idea is that theory is incapable of generating any cogent meaning whereas the other groups are fertile and their methodological assumptions carry the potential of producing comprehensive meaning. As **Miller** deals with the charges, he points out that theory is attacked by the left group for being elite, apolitical and reactionary. The left attacks the theorists for focusing too much on the concerns of language. The left assumes that this has no connection with the superstructure and its formations and that there is an increased stress on words and language and this can only lead to sterility. According to **Miller** the left- wing critics seem to forget that words too can be looked at within a specific context. But is **Miller** is invoking the context of 'words' or are they restricted to the text alone?

According to **Miller**, the group to the right believes that a concern with language and theory diverts the attention of the reader from the given value system to areas that have no concern with what is actually the dominant mode. The right wing group wants the world to be regulated by a fixed system whose rules are determined by them and can only be changed at their ideological whims. The explosive powers of language that can be used to subvert the system threaten their existence. Based on aesthetic assumptions the right group indulges in a series of value-based clichés. According to **Miller**, for the 'dispassionate spectator', one who manages to strike a balance in a scenario of utter confusion, it becomes difficult to understand the difference in ideological predilections of the two groups.

One wonders in this connection whether **Miller** has really been able to distinguish between the thought categories of the left and the right. **Miller** believes that both the right and left groups impose certain pre-conceived systems on to the text whereas the theorists allow it to emerge out of the text itself. According to **Miller** these factions have not even tried to understand the methodology of literary theory. **Miller** notes

with concern the present criticism's non-adherence to the text. He defends **de Man** or **Derrida** who he feels have not divorced themselves from history, politics or humanities. Instead, they are looking for proper methods of 'reading', which would definitely involve concerns of history. As we see, there are two problems with respect to **Miller**'s argument. Firstly, **Miller** has clubbed the ideological concepts of the left with those of the right without even understanding their differences. Secondly, the idea of resistance has been reduced to that between the finished text and the reader. By 'finished' text what we mean is the text, as it exists in the final printed stage on the pages of the book. The position of the reader is an outcome of an understanding of tools of linguistic theory. The text is considered at the final stage where it is available for the process of reading. But what would **Miller** say about the text in its formative stages and its production? There one would definitely have to take into consideration the 'material base' and "conditions of production, technology, distribution and consumption of 'cultural products'." The context also has to be 'read'. However, **Miller** has entirely ignored this important dimension.

Miller sees a connection between language teaching and the bureaucratic set-up. The State apparatuses encourage inter-disciplinary activities to further their own interests– the development of diplomatic relations. However, these activities are not supposed to perform a subversive role. Instead, they are expected to circulate the 'value systems' of the powerful groups– affirming the supremacy of the First world over the Third world, by circulating the myth that English' is the supreme language which makes global comprehensiveness possible. Sadly, this leads to the projection of English literature as the *canon* and people like us are compelled to judge our literatures in the context of their *canon*. This impedes the formation of literatures free of the dominant discourses. Translation studies are promoted but it is translation into English that is considered relevant. How many times do we hear of people reading the translation of **Shakespeare** into lets say Hindi in our case? Consequently America has become the seat of power, technological and economic. This systematic analysis of the idea of context and of power structures in society culminates in the present form of America as a super-power. **Miller** attacks the American set-up that has no connection with the base. **Miller** relates such strategies to the lack of any relation between the superstructure and the material base. This allows it to be transmitted anywhere and allows it to be projected as the ideal option for other material bases. This is good as far as it goes. **Miller** seems to be taking the wind out of the sails of those who criticize America's academic or cultural imperialism. This is an example of cosy criticism of a trend that is strongly entrenched and does not face a real threat. Therefore, what we need to be cautious of is that this attack on the First world should not function as a medium that makes space for a resistance to the left or other progressive thought categories.

6.5 TRIUMPH OF THEORY ?

Miller focuses on **de Mans** argument– that resistance to theory is actually a resistance to reading whose culminating point is the triumph of theory. The triumph of theory, for **Miller,** is not a consequence of change in literary fashion. Neither is it something that is derived straight out of the material base. It is, as **Miller** says, a response to 'complex motivations and forces' in the process of 'concrete' teaching. He considers resistance as an active element embedded in theory itself. To affirm his claim he cites the example of the mid-west MLA meet in Chicago that presented papers that were purely theoretical whatever their critical stance. The other important case in point according to **Miller** is that of feminist literary studies. The women's movement is not a universal category. It is conscious of the differing constructs of women situated in different social set-ups all over the world. As pointed out earlier this has unsettled the supremacy enjoyed by the white male – oriented *canon* formations. **Miller** relegates to a lower level the stance of earlier schools of thought

that focus purely on biography, mechanical historical research and editing. According to **Miller** groups that foreground these methods do so in a simplistic manner. However, the triumph of theory has been made possible as it incorporates these methods within a larger theoretical approach. For **Miller**, The triumph of theory is the resistance to reading, a resistance so successful as to be an erasure or forgetting the material base in question.

In fact, according to **Miller,** the greatest ambiguity is that people who denounce theory use strategies and methods that are themselves theoretical. The compelling powers of theory, the impossibility of avoiding it and the resistance within it constitutes the greatest triumph of theory. **Paul de Man** and **Miller** reveal that theory is not a historically and socially translatable entity. It is a 'human and linguistic universal'. Once again, **Miller** has undermined the importance of the context and its relation to theoretical concepts. It is misinterpretations like these that allow an unfiltered transmission of First world ideas into the Third World.

For **Miller**, the forces that we have just discussed shape concrete teaching. Does this imply that students have to be coerced into understanding the words in the text? According to **Miller**, The notion of the material – far from being a base, root, the ground of reality, something unambiguously opposed to the impalpability's of language play or theoretical abstraction – is itself an extremely problematical concept. Therefore, even though **Miller** tried to explain the significance of the 'grain', he has at this point relegated it to a minor position. He privileges the text with words, the text and its paper over such contextual formations. The dialectic we have in front of us is that between the words and the page and not that between the base and superstructure. To understand this idea clearly let us take a look into the idea of 'base' and 'superstructure as **Marx** understood it. In explaining the base **Marx** says,

> *In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production, which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which raises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social political and intellectual life processes in general.*

Whereas for **Marx**, the base is a complex and dynamic category, for **Miller** it is a simple 'material' entity outside of and away from the realm of meaning. For **Miller**, the 'material base' is nothing but the matter that is captured in the texts on theory. It is like the relation between an example and the concept it exemplifies. Even thought **Miller** has charged the left wing theorists with not reading the text, he himself ignores the context despite his defense of **Derrida** in this essay. In **Bergonzi**'s *Exploding English* we have already discussed the problems of ignoring the 'human agency'. The materiality of the base has to take into consideration the relations between the owners of the means of production and the workers. In short, the relations constituted by the means of production form what we understand as the base. The structures that are built over it i.e. structures of thought, sentiment, intellectual modes form the superstructure. As **Marx** says,

> *Upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiment illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations.*

What then is the relationship between the base and the superstructure? It cannot be understood in terms of direct or inverse relations. There is something else that constitutes the two, the dialectical mode. How does one arrive at the dialectical mode? From the two extracts discussed above one might feel inclined to think that since consciousness is derived from the materiality of a society, the base determines

the superstructure. However, that is not the case. Just as the base plays a meaningful role in the formation of the superstructure, similarly the latter asserts what is called a reciprocal influence on the former. One must take note that the ideas that puts premium on individual initiatives pertain to a capitalist set-up. In **Miller**s argument therefore the words hold the centre or should we say the text and not the context holds relevance for the reader. **Miller** explains his ideas in the form of an allegorical example of how the Orange County Performing Arts Center was built on what had earlier been a bean field and before that a semi-desert. The people who lived over there originally were called the 'Gabrielinos'- a name given to them by the Spanish mission. At one level, the allegory shows how the bean field and the Centre for performing arts is built artificially and does not take into account the requirement of the ground and the people staying there. At another level, it shows how the existing community has been given a name – Gabrielinos. The identity of the existing group is wiped out and they are brought into 'being' by the name conferred on them.

Miller also attacks the use of the material base with the help of Western metaphysics. According to **Miller**, western ideas with their stress on logocentrism or the idea of presence use the material base as a fixed and strictly defined entity. They are unable to see the contradictions within the base. Therefore, the action taken in the name of the base is only apparently performative. However, the claims it makes are constative in nature. Constatives state facts, performatives do not; constatives make true or false claims whereas performatives don't. What **Miller** seems to be saying is that in Western metaphysics, there is a tendency to apparently base ideas on performatives but the meaning is a constative, a static base projected as dynamic?

Miller advocates the necessity of the process of recovery- to revive what has been erased. This process is possible only in the act of reading. However he sees this as paradoxical. In the simple act of reading, as one focuses on the text the materiality gets evaded as "we do not see the paper for the words." In this sense reading is a process that makes the particular of the 'paper' in question into an abstraction. Reading is, therefore, always a theoretical task. The triumph of theory is then a resistance to reading as this inevitably performs an erasure. In fact the writer believes that we have to indulge in the act of retrieving what has been lost, as only that will maintain the archive. To allow a free interplay of opinions it is imperative that we focus on literary theory by directing attention to the text. The theoretical aspects of reading rest on paradoxes that can be understood in terms of rhetorical statements. For **Miller,** the answer lies in 'deconstruction' studies. **Miller** defines deconstruction as the current name for the multiple and heterogeneous strategies of overturning and displacement that will liberate your own enterprise from what disables it. Such a theoretical premise performs the subversive task of overturning only words on a page.

Miller tackles the charges levelled on the deconstructionists from the lobbies of the left and the right that are subsumed under the same ideological cover. The right wing group attacks strategies of deconstruction on aesthetic grounds saying that it distorts the 'organic form' of literature. What is this organicity and what is the use of focussing on this and not on anything else? The right front suggests **Miller**, believes that a crisis has come up in the literary scenario, because of techniques that violate the sanctity of the body of literature. **Miller** considers the mass media as allied with such factions to project the wrong message. In understanding the claims of the left he feels that a commitment to history and society should be attached with strategies of deconstruction for a problematisation of the base. In case they do not do so their ideas can always be manipulated by other groups who will then project this concern in a manner that would be detrimental to the ideological structure of the group. The basis of **Miller**'s argument is that left wing critics emphasise the context alone and do not allow a 'free play' of words on the page. However, this is only a distortion of the. Against this, **Miller** privileges the American Universities who allow such free interaction. Even as **Miller** attacks certain ideas of the American theorists he feels that the mark of the American Universities is a healthy exchange of impulses that can be channelled properly. He says, "The University can only live in an atmosphere of

open debate, maintaining that freedom of speech, thought and writing which is one of America's most precious heritages". According to **Miller** groups that focus on ideas of culture, and history actually ignore the nuances of the base. For **Miller** a connection with the base is possible only through the simple act of reading the text. The idea is to recover the performative powers of the text that allow the base to come into being.

One can see problems with **Miller**'s approach to literary theory as pointed out earlier. He seems to be implying that theory is non-historical and linguistic in nature. The thought processes of the right and left groups (considered the same by **Miller**) dilute the effect of theory by focussing on the context thus rendering it futile. Further according to **Miller** theory can be understood only through a working of words in a text and the interplay of words through linguistic structures. The text therefore, has been placed at the center of literary discourse. This means that the text regulates the context and social phenomenon can be understood only as it is crystallised in the text. **Miller** does not focus on how a given text would be received by a group of people. Finally, how would **Miller** understand the formation of history? What would be the text's relation to the makers of history? These questions are beyond the purview of **Miller**'s narrow argument as his concern is the text as a finished product and not it's making. The *canon* has been reformulated and is constituted by the materiality of the referent as understood through words. This restriction of literary theory to specific areas of linguistic theory indicates the present phase of imperialist thought in which literature ceases to be an expression of ordinary people's heroic aspirations and dreams.

6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have before us **Miller**'s attack on the theoretical attitudes of the West. At the same time he privileges what he considers the plurality of the American Universities. **Miller** groups the aesthetic ideas of the right with the historical and socially inclined theories of the left only to undermine the latter. For him, the base can only be understood through a working of words in the text. The slippery nature of the base, the individual's responses to the text and the rejection of the context reflect **Miller**'s notion of independent reading, and the meaning of literary theory is substituted with the dictates of linguistic theory.

6.8 QUESTIONS

1. Is there any relation between text and context? Which of the two would you emphasise and why? Give reasons.
2. What do you understand by the terms 'base' and 'superstructure'? Are they relevant in today's state of literary theory?
3. What kind of a *canon* does Miller's argument suggest? Or is it an attack of all *canons*? Discuss.

6.9 GLOSSARY

Indigenous: domestic, refers to the colonial masses of a country and carries the bias of the master race

Trope: a non-literal use of words at once suggestive of a pattern or figure

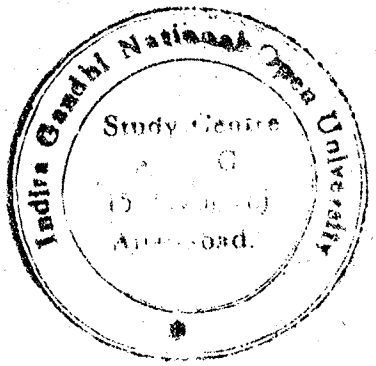
Logos: the idea of presence, it indicates meaning and essence.

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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA



Block

7

EVOLUTIONS OF CANONS IN INDIAN ENGLISH WRITING

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block entitled **Evolutions of Canons in Indian English Writing** consists of four units. The **First Unit** will look at how literary canons are formed under specific socio-political, socio-cultural and historical circumstances. It will also provide a brief analysis of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru and of socialism in the first half of the twentieth century.

Unit 2 will take up the issues of an Indian canon that evolved in the midst of the Indian National Movement. It will also shed light on how this canon was to eventually become the very foundation of not only Indian English Writing but of Indian Literature as a whole. It will also deal with a few significant texts to show the inspiring and challenging nature of this canon.

Unit 3 will look at the literary agenda of Feminism in order to determine what would qualify as a Feminist Canon of Indian English Writers. It will also discuss the problematic nature of evolving a feminist canon in India in the absence of a feminist aesthetic theory, while providing a brief survey of women writers who may qualify as feminist writers.

Unit 4 will define the concept of Dalit Literature and look at who the Dalits are and at what comprises Dalit Literature. It shall also try and formulate an aesthetics of Dalit Literature.

All four essays in this Block are an attempt at analysing the evolutions of canons in Indian English Writing.

UNIT 1 CANON-MAKING IN THE ERA OF GANDHI, NEHRU, SOCIALISM

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Role of Gandhi in the Making of A New Canon
1.3 Concrete Evolution of the Canon
1.4 Gandhi and the Idea of Mobilising Ordinary People
1.5 The Dialectics of Canon and Society
1.6 Nehru and Socialism
1.7 Linking Gandhi and Nehru
1.8 Let Us Sum Up
1.9 Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to make you realise that literary canons are formed in specific historical conditions and that ideas prevalent at a time play a significant role in canon making. This purpose will be linked up in this unit with a brief analysis of the ideas of Gandhi, Nehru and socialism in the first half of the twentieth century.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and **Jawaharlal Nehru** can be rightly termed the makers of modern India. It is through the political and intellectual leadership provided by them that India achieved its aim of winning freedom from the British yoke. The Indian National Movement in the first half of the twentieth century left no one in the country untouched and in fact inspired the workers, the peasants, middle class youth as well as the bourgeoisie to forge a meaningful unity against British imperialism. The energy generated by this movement was indeed immense. Perhaps for the first time in Indian writing, concerns of freedom, national identity, social equality and democracy came to be asserted in a strong way. Indian English writing, too, chose for itself the path of relevance and general appeal and gradually embraced the cause of the larger masses. In the process, the abstractions associated with nature, myth and tradition disappeared as Indian English writing came closer to the issues faced by rural, semi-urban and urban India. Becoming a part of the larger nationalist process, this writing also clearly grasped the significance of socialism that was sweeping the whole world at that time.

1.2 ROLE OF GANDHI IN THE MAKING OF A NEW CANON

What does **Gandhi** stand for in the Indian National Movement? In my opinion, he stands for an ever-growing involvement of the masses in the fight against British imperialism. Remember that before **Gandhi** came to India from South Africa in the second decade of the twentieth century, our resistance to the British was confined broadly to idealists, visionaries and thinkers who talked in terms of brain drain, unequal trade, atrocities and cruelties perpetrated by the British regime on the peaceful masses and the issue of exploitation. These thinkers felt a kind of moral

indignation that the imperialist rulers were not doing their job of managing a colony properly and that pressure had to be built on them to treat Indians humanely. The indignation erupted many a time in the form of social anger that identified its enemy as the alien political system, administration and the state. There is no doubt that this was an important development at the time and inspired a large number of people to seriously engage themselves with these issues. We have to keep in mind the sacrifices of revolutionaries of early twentieth century India many of whom had to leave their country of birth to organise an appropriate resistance to the forces of oppression back home. However, the resistance lacked a clear understanding of the reality of Indian life. **Gandhi**'s major contribution was in this area where he saw a great amount of obsolete ideas, norms and principles of tradition at work.

What is implied in this comment on the pre-Gandhian era in Modern India's history is that the National Movement at that time had only an ideological perspective. Only the enlightened and sensitive individuals in our midst, driven as they were by idealism of an extremely good kind, felt suffocated by the reality of imperialism in our country. As a consequence of that suffocation, they thought, they analysed and wrote. Their true purpose was to wake up others like themselves and induce them to feel one with what they considered to be the cause of the country. In their lives, at the place where they were active, at the meetings that they organised and which others like them attended, these individuals exhorted fellow citizens to join in the common struggle against imperialism. **Gandhi** sought to take such an attitude closer to the actual struggle needed to weld together one and all against the British. This according to **Gandhi** was not possible unless Indians looked towards themselves for weaknesses and faults that existed in their life and decided to remove them

To this end, **Gandhi** applied in his political practice some of the methods of social work and mobilisation that he had evolved in the course of his short stay in South Africa. For **Gandhi**, equality and commonalty started from nearer home and made appeal only when they were seen as the real part of the active individual's behaviour. That is how identifying oneself with the others in society became such an important canon of political life. Apparently, this was just an ethical principle. The Congress activist was soon able to merge himself with the cause of the humble folk. We have to bear in mind, however, that in the political movement unfolding itself, this ethical principle soon became an important instrument to establish rapport with the ordinary Indian. Such an orientation given by **Gandhi** to the Congress Party immediately attracted the poor lower middle class individuals and others lower down in the ladder. Thus, the Congress Party came to represent under **Gandhi** not just the ideology of the Colony but, the very human dignity of each individual in the country. How did the canons actually come to be evolved? The next section shall examine the evolution of an Indian canon in the first half of the twentieth century.

1.3 CONCRETE EVOLUTION OF THE CANON

It was also important at this stage to identify a social group that typified the ethos of the country. For **Gandhi**, such a social group was the Indian peasantry. This was no abstract principle but the reality of the country, since the sustenance of the country and its people depended entirely on the labour of the peasant. **Gandhi**'s famous saying that India lived in its villages signified this central truth. Secondly, the peasants in India constituted an economic group and were the warp and woof of the imperialist-feudal structure. It is they who provided an economic base to the imperialist machine and the indigenous bureaucratic hierarchy active in the villages. The Indian peasantry groaned under the weight of imperialist-feudal oppression and saw no future in their life since there was none who thought to articulate their pains, sufferings and grievances. **Gandhi**'s call to the peasants to join in the struggle against British imperialism gave them a hope and vision that in days to come, such a vision would reflect soon enough the growth and appeal of the Indian National Congress in

India's politics. In this way, the canon of honest identification with the masses received a concrete form by becoming the voice of the toughest segment of the Indian society. **Bipan Chandra** has correctly underlined in his book *India's Struggle for Independence* the truth of a social struggle by pointing out its linkage with the ordinary masses and which **Gandhiji** understood to the core. Thus, **Gandhiji**'s job at the time was to genuinely broad base the contemporary anti-British struggle. In the words of **Bipan Chandra**:

> *The goal of Congress was changed from the attainment of self-government by constitutional and legal means to the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means. The new constitution of the Congress, the handiwork of Gandhiji, introduced other important changes.... Gandhiji ... knew that the Congress could not guide a sustained movement unless it had a compact body that worked round the year. Provincial Congress Committees were now to be organised on a linguistic basis, so that they could keep in touch with people by using the local language. The Congress organisation was to reach down to the village and the mohalla level by the formation of village and mohalla or ward committees. The membership fee was reduced to four annas per year to enable the poor to become members. Mass involvement would also enable the Congress to have a regular source of income. In other ways, too, the organisation structure was both streamlined and democratised. The Congress was to use Hindi as far as possible (Penguin, 1989, 186-7).*

Let us examine **Gandhiji**'s role in mobilising the masses in the next section.

1.4 GANDHI AND THE IDEA OF MOBILISING ORDINARY PEOPLE

Gandhiji's perspective of mass mobilisation was indeed fraught with many and diverse possibilities. Involvement of the ordinary people in the struggle meant taking a position on important issues of the day. One such issue was the *Reform Act* on which opinion seemed to be vertically divided. Being a great strategist, **Gandhiji** knew that real political power rested in popular support for which the Congress had to work steadily and resolutely. This was no mean task in view of the fact that a sort of militant voice had begun emerging in the country. According to **Gandhiji**, the years following World War I did not occasion such a radical stand. He defined the question clearly and firmly by stating in *Young India* that:

> *The Reform Act coupled with the Proclamation is an earnest intention of the British people to do justice to India and it ought to remove suspicion on that score.... Our duty therefore is not to subject the Reforms to carping criticism, but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success" (1919, quoted in Palme Dutt's India Today, Manisha, 1970, 336-7).*

The stand has been critiqued by many a radical historian but **Gandhiji**'s use of words such as "settle down quietly to work" that points towards the specific policy shift we have emphasised above. The new visionaries of India had to define their stand keeping in view the new requirements of the struggle that was fast changing in the direction of protest. Was the time ripe for a nation-wide protest in the after years of the World War I? Still more important was the question of practicality in the given circumstances on which differences among the leaders of the Freedom Movement persisted. The choice was therefore either to "settle down quietly to work" or jump into the fray.

The other two projections of **Gandhi**'s thought – the cause of the untouchable and that of women – emanated from this concern for the peasant's condition. It is difficult to see the link between peasants on one side and untouchables as well as women on the other except that the three were at the receiving end of all social oppression. Still, one has to look at the vast multitude of untouchables at the time

under question to realise that they worked closest to the peasant in India in the field of agricultural production. Economically more deprived than the peasants and socially segregated, the so-called untouchables were in daily economic contact with the peasantry on the fields. Still more, they had seen suppression as *shudras* since times immemorial for no fault of theirs except that they suffered the accident of being born in a *shudra* family.

Gandhi had an extremely modern mind in that he had truly imbibed the principles of European social struggles fought to emancipate the common masses from the evil of inequality ever since the seventeenth century. The Cromwellian Revolution in England in the seventeenth century, the American War of Independence and French Revolution in the eighteenth century come to mind. During his time of study in England in the last decades of the nineteenth century, **Gandhi** had come in close association with the prevailing radical ideas that swore by equality and justice. This perhaps was the major reason behind **Gandhi**'s choice of the 'untouchables' and women as the two other sections in Indian society whom he would draw into the National struggle. In the next section we shall attempt an analysis of the dialectics of a canon and the society at large.

1.5 THE DIALECTICS OF CANON AND SOCIETY

When **Gandhi** became active in the Indian National Congress, the ideological perspective we have mentioned above took a back seat while the real task of involving the masses in the political process became the major emphasis. Added to this was the fact that **Gandhi** had chosen the three most oppressed sections of Indian society for involvement in the struggle against imperialism, which became a profound manifestation of the modern rationalist thought. Apart from becoming a political force to reckon with, it set in motion the process of self-questioning in Indian society itself. **Gandhi**'s rationalist attitude and humanist vision became as much a threat to the forces of obscurantism and blind tradition within India as to British imperialism. Thus, the true unity of spirit in the political arena came not from an ideology or theory propounded by a select band of committed individuals but from a vision that sought to combine modern thought and indigenous protest. The nationalism of the Indian National Congress was based on modern rationalist thought and not on any adherence to the Colony's psyche *per se*. People inspired by **Gandhi** would fight as much against the British as they would against the local interests of caste, privilege and creed. The social churning witnessed in the wake of this new and modern kind of struggle was proof that India would engage British imperialism in a different kind of fight.

Let me repeat that **Gandhi** performed during the freedom struggle in India the significant task of politicalising the masses and working through them in such a manner that the British were prevented from pursuing their colonialist agenda. This according to **Gandhi** would be possible only when the Indians adopted modern rational thought and developed the capability of questioning their own orthodoxy, stunted value system as well as belief patterns. We perceive that **Gandhi**'s ideas in the freedom struggle soon radicalised the social atmosphere. His attack on casteism and untouchability caused the latent forces of protest, idealism and change to emerge strongly in the country. Realisation seems to have dawned on the Indian masses as early as the nineteen twenties that the working of the imperialist state structure accompanied by policies of relentless exploitation could be critically examined and questioned. The interesting question we have to ask ourselves is: Who in our society would actually do the said examining and questioning? **Gandhi** found an answer to this question in the radical potentiality of the middle class intelligentsia who would fan out across the length and breadth of the country and let people know how they had to comprehend the world reality of the twentieth century unfolding itself before them. Soon enough, the middle class intelligentsia attracted towards them the youth

among the Indian peasantry and the landless agricultural labour hitherto known as 'untouchables' or *Harijans*. Link it up with the educational network in which colleges and schools became in the nineteen twenties true centres of change-oriented thought. Thus, **Gandhi** saw to it that peasants and labour in India under the broad guidance of the middle classes would offer a united challenge to British imperialism. From here, the emergence of socialist thought was not far behind. In the next section we shall look at **Jawaharlal Nehru**'s role in the evolution of the canon.

1.6 NEHRU AND SOCIALISM

Whereas **Gandhi** represented a consciousness characterised by mobilisation of the masses, **Jawaharlal Nehru** emerged as a visionary in his own right. He had a cogent view of history that placed the present in the larger perspective of human life across boundaries of both space and time. One discerned a combination of secularism, modernity and mysticism in **Gandhi**. On the other hand, **Nehru** believed in approaching the rationale behind a phenomenon and had the propensity to analyse and investigate trends. Also, society for **Nehru** was an entity that moved in history along progress to the extent it adhered to the creed of equality and justice. This made **Nehru** a role model for the emerging intelligentsia across the country. One could cal it individualism of a kind. Yet, for **Nehru** the socialist, individualism merged with the radical consciousness of an epoch. Around the mid-nineteen twenties, such an epoch had arrived. The new epoch made possible the rise of sharp and pointed response, ably represented by **Nehru** and **Subhash Chandra Bose**, to contemporary power structures. It immediately caught the attention of urban and semi-urban India that seethed with discontent because the post-War regime became increasingly intolerant of dissent. Freedom of speech became the new war cry of the middle class educated youth. This is amply borne out by representations of the educated rung in **Forster**'s *A Passage to India*, a novel written around the time the Indian masses began articulating their disenchantment and anger.

Jawaharlal Nehru gave a new orientation to the national movement led by **Gandhi** and brought it still closer to the hearts and minds of people. This particularly occurred in the early thirties. In the preceding period, the educated Indian youth had a great deal inspiring about Socialist Russia where a great historical experiment was under way. Socialism was a new humanist doctrine that swore by equality, freedom and social justice. According to socialism, birth had nothing to do with superiority or inferiority, merit or lack of it in an individual. Similarly, it did not matter whether the colour of the skin of a person was black, white or brown. Thirdly and most importantly, socialism stood for classness and fight against economic exploitation. Translated in the Indian context, socialism meant that the British enjoyed no superiority to the Indians and that their so-called superiority lay in their control over economic resources. Divested of it, the British would be as strong or weak as their Indian counterparts.

Socialism also let it be known to India's enlightened youth that the idea of control of economic resources applied equally to the Indians themselves. This was problematic. Whereas Indians would happily oppose the British interests as alien, they would think twice before examining social inequality within themselves. Socialism brought the sharp awareness that Indian industrialists and the landed classes could not be expected to adopt classness, since it entailed equality between them and the poor exploited masses. It is indeed painful to part with economic and social power. Isn't it? On their side, the weak and underprivileged in India found socialism to be a highly inspiring ideal. It was interesting thus to watch the new phenomenon of increased fervour among the common deprived masses and a rising uncertainty regarding social change. Can the idealism of **Gandhiji** and the socialism of **Nehru** be linked together? Let us examine whether a link can be forged between the ideologies of the Father of the Nation and the first Prime Minister of independent India in the next section.

1.7 LINKING GANDHI AND NEHRU

What were the links between **Gandhi**'s ideal of non-violent protest against the British regime and **Nehru**'s concept of socialist rejection of imperialism? We can understand the question only when we refer to the changes taking place in the Indian political spectrum in the post-World War I years. **Gandhi** and **Nehru**, were the pivot of Indian National Movement during these years when they constantly rallied against the British on the political plane as a result of which they went in and came out of the jails at regular intervals. Political activism brought these two great leaders of India in conflict with the mighty administrative machine. In consequence, there was little scope for the freedom movement to remain non-violent and peaceful. Whereas **Gandhi** wished to stick to his beloved doctrine of peace and harmony, **Nehru** looked ahead and saw the future of the country in the socialist ideal of equality. Both were driven by the urge to protect the dignity and integrity of the country and see that India moved in the direction of peace. The question was whether this was possible. It is at this point where **Gandhi** and **Nehru** parted company ideologically, their sticking together and remaining active in the Indian National Congress till the very end notwithstanding.

As suggested above, the ideas of both **Gandhi** and **Nehru** reflected the political situation in India at the grass root level in the sense that they emerged in response to the issues and problems the country faced at the time. The factors of imperialism, Indian nationalism, socialism in Russia that inspired the youth in our country to adopt the perspective of social change, modern consciousness in the third world countries and a threat of change in a number of societies across the globe had combined in the nineteen thirties to really create a situation of crisis. This was in fact the crisis of modern capitalism out to contain contradictions within and outside itself. One of the important manifestations of this crisis was the Great American Depression. India around this time became a kind of cauldron in which different ideas, attitudes and perspectives clashed and vied with each other to emerge stronger than others. Since the country could not be managed in the old traditional way any longer, the British regime was forced to give some democratic rights to the Indians. It became increasingly clear that the situation in the country could get out of hand any moment.

The point disturbing the minds of political leaders and the middle class intelligentsia was: which of the available attitudes – nationalism, harmonious existence with an alien ruling power, induction of political reforms or socialism could fit the bill satisfactorily? An important idea of the time was Gandhian socialism that envisaged the Indian owners of property looking after the interests of the indigenous masses in such a manner that problems of bread, shelter, education and freedom could be adequately addressed. This according to **Gandhi** was possible since the Indian capitalist class would behave as a trustee of national wealth and resources and be driven by the ideals of ethics, philanthropy and morality. **Gandhi** argued that the Indian propertied sections could be prevailed upon to play the role of reformers since they were capable of having a 'change of heart' that would make them responsible economic patrons.

This view of **Gandhi** did not find favour with the Indian youth in the new situation. They were witness to the ambiguous ways of property owners in India many of whom had begun to appreciate and imbibe the liberalism of a section of the English regime. The idea of liberalism in the nineteen thirties in India combined with modernity, new education and a kind of social role that adhered to the principle of reform. According to a section of the new elite who had roots in privilege, one was expected to emulate the western example of living meaningfully, pursuing refinement and culture, amidst inequality, injustice and poverty. For them, rights had to be earned by the multitude of people through a long and peaceful struggle for elegance and dignity. Needless to say that the majority of the educated middle classes of India did not buy this argument and were ever curious to find new answers to the problems

posed by imperialism. **Jawaharlal Nehru** interpreted the phenomenon of imperialism in the nineteen thirties thus:

> *The British government has long claimed that its rule in India was based on justice and the good of the people of India, and there is no doubt that in the past many of our countrymen believed that there was some little truth in this claim. But now that this rule is seriously challenged by a great popular movement, its real character appears in all its crudity and nakedness, and any one can see the reality of this imperialist exploitation resting on the bayonet. All the covering of gilded forms and soft words has been removed. Special ordinances and the suppression of the most ordinary rights of speech, meeting, the Press, become the ordinary laws and procedure of the country. The greater the challenge to existing authority, the more will this happen. So also when one class seriously threatens another. We can see this happening in our country today in the savage sentences given to the peasants and workers and those who work for them.*
>
> *(Glimpses of World History, OUP, 547)*

A lucid description of the phenomenon meant for his daughter, this passage by **Jawaharlal Nehru** brings out the character of the British regime (crude, naked and exploitative) in realistic terms. Here, our attention gets drawn to the practices of suppression of ordinary civic rights such as speech, meeting, etc. Let us not forget that **Nehru** refers here to the treatment meted out by the British rulers to the peaceful law-abiding citizens. Words such as 'bayonet' and 'savage sentences' only indicate the intolerance those who took upon themselves the responsibility of enlightening and modernising India.

However, such a 'practice' in the political arena needed theorisation. By 'theorisation' we mean a theoretical explanation of actual happenings and events, one that would give an insight into the workings of the prevailing system. Well-read in Marxism and socialist discussions of the period, **Nehru** linked the problem of imperialism and social inequality with what he called a 'system.' The following explanation by **Nehru** of the tangled aspects of social life makes good sense of the scene unfolding at the world level in the nineteen thirties:

> *If a person belonged to the dominant class, and as such exploited others, this was not a terrible sin for him. He was a part of a system, and it was absurd to call him unkind names. We are much too apt to forget this distinction between individuals and systems. India is under British imperialism, and we fight this imperialism with all our might. But the Englishmen who happen to support this system in India are not to blame. They are just little cogs in a huge machine, powerless to make any difference to its movement. In the same way, some of us may consider the zamindari system out of date and most harmful to the tenantry which is exploited terribly under it. But that again does not mean that the individual zamindar is to blame; so also the capitalists who are often blamed as exploiters. The fault always lies with the system, not with individuals.* *(Glimpses, 546-7)*

This passage lays stress on the role of a social system in human life and presents capitalism as the main culprit of the travails in the modern world, irrespective of where it is in operation. Thus, it is not the *zamindar* and capitalist who is to blame but the *zamindari* system and capitalism. This is no doubt different from the humanism we associate with the sensitive individual in the modern world. Think of the projected humanism of writers such as **E M Forster** who draw no distinction between people of one country and another but who swear by the virtues and accomplishments of an individual alone. We come across a sort of closed and inaccessible consciousness in **Forster** who maintains a clear distance between him and the rest of humanity. That is not how society and the individual were visualised in the first half of the twentieth century in India. In fact, we notice that according to **Nehru** in the above passage, both *zamindari* system and capitalism are characterised by injustice, both being inimical to the men and women who work within them. Trapped in the logic of a system, people become sufferers and victims. **Nehru**'s socialism sought to separate

the structure from those who were mere 'cogs' in the big machine. This is what the earlier phase of the Indian National Movement could not adequately comprehend, when harmony and forbearance received undue emphasis. In this sense, **Nehru**'s idea of socialism at once showed the social system in India and that prevailing in England as exploitative and therefore detrimental to our socio-economic and cultural needs. Intellectually, this was a leap forward that entirely changed the perspective of struggle against the British. It also made India's clash with the alien rule truly decisive.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

The Indian National Movement spearheaded by **Gandhi** and **Nehru** since the end of World War I had generated a great deal of excitement among the youth of India who craved for freedom and justice. This section of our society developed great reading habits and a curiosity to know about events and happenings in India and the world. They were inspired by the ideals of honesty, simplicity, courageous behaviour and self-respect. More than all these, they became committed to the change at the grass root level, taking their endeavour as close to the masses as possible. There is no wonder that the era of **Gandhi** and **Nehru** in the twentieth century changed the very concepts of morality, ethics and meaningful life and inspired people to interpret their existence in genuine secular terms. Whereas western life and thought were marked by despondency and stagnation in the first half of the twentieth century (phrases such as 'there is no water,' 'lack of certitude' and 'nothing to be done' come to mind), Indian masses in the corresponding period moved towards a future expected to meet their truly humanist aspirations. An unprecedented surge in literatures of the Indian languages bears ample testimony to this. This literature took off from where the realistic secular writing of England, France and America had left in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even the English Writing in India did not remain untouched by this phenomenon in which projections of life such as witnessed in **Mulk Raj Anand**'s novels vied for honours with their counterparts in Indian languages. Old definitions (orthodox, sectarian and irrational) of life and literature were discarded to give place to a number of new and challenging ideas that would excite and enthuse citizens of an independent country. This became possible because collective thought and practice in India increasingly assumed the nature of secular humanist protest against the forces of exploitation.

1.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the formation of a new canon in India.

2. Comment on the direction Jawaharlal Nehru gave to the idea of change in India's freedom struggle.

3. Bring out the specific emphases Gandhiji introduced in India's political life.

4. What is the relevance of socialism to a colony engaged in struggle against an imperial power? Discuss.

UNIT 2 TAGORE, PREMCHAND, MULK RAJ ANAND AND RAJA RAO

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Tagore and the Formulation of a New Canon
  2.2.1 Tagore's Radicalism in Literature
  2.2.2 A Closer Look at Ghore Bahire / The House and The World
  2.2.3 Ghore Bahire / The House and The World: The Country and its Politics
2.3 Contextualising Premchand
  2.3.1 Why did Premchand Write in Hindi
  2.3.2 Premchand and Cultural Activism
2.4 Mulk Raj Anand
  2.4.1 Mulk Raj Anand and His Choice of Language
  2.4.2 Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie
2.5 Raja Rao
  2.5.1 Raja Rao's Kanthapura
2.6 Let Us Sum Up
2.7 Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we take up the issue of an Indian canon that evolved in the midst of the Indian National Movement in the early twentieth century. India-centered, this canon had little to do with what was happening in the European cultural-literary world at the time. At the same time, this canon was not English-centered either in the way Indian English writing was in the nineteenth century or it has been in the closing decades of the twentieth century in the hands of writers such as **Amitav Ghosh** and **Vikram Seth**. India was struggling at the time of early National movement to find its own distinct voice that would resist the British imperialist ways and carve a path entirely its own. Later, this canon would become the bedrock upon which entire edifice of what is known as Indian literature would rest. We shall take a few significant examples from Indian writing to show the highly inspiring and challenging nature of this canon.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus upon the literary perspectives of **Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand** and **Raja Rao** to examine the way in which a distinct canon emerged in their works in the intricate process of the unfolding of the writer-society dialectic. In the beginning, let us have a look at the contribution of **Tagore** towards the forging of a new radical canon in Indian writing.

2.2 TAGORE AND THE FORMULATION OF A NEW CANON

Tagore is one of the very first modern writers in India. In fact, we can see modernity defining itself in **Tagore**'s works. In the eighteen eighties, for instance, it would have been rather difficult to think of such a thing as modernity, a concept helpful from then on to positively interpret situations in which people found themselves trapped. It

is in the case of **Tagore**'s writings alone that we come across a vision equally linked with the questions of the late nineteenth century India and the urge on the part of Indians to find answers to them. The trend started by **Tagore** immediately caught the imagination of writers in different Indian languages. In the preceding unit, we have seen how the social situation in India necessitated an attitude totally critical of tradition on the one side and the oppressive British regime on the other. Let us begin by examining **Tagore**'s Radicalism.

2.2.1 Tagore's Radicalism in Literature

Tagore is known for making a radical departure from the traditional ways of expression in literature and exploring new areas of life and culture in it. Most of the Indian writing before **Tagore**'s arrival on the scene devoted itself to depicting mythical aspects of love, morality and faith and fought shy of tackling secular issues such as marriage, social deprivation and misery. Little attention was paid at the time to the specific conditions the people of a colony faced. Add to this the fact that Indian writing in English in the nineteenth century had also concerned itself with nature, romanticism and abstract ethics rather than with the crisis faced by the Indian people. **Tagore** freed Indian writing from myth, legend and vague notions of heroism or valour of the kings and princes in India. He brought to centre-stage those men and women who had their roots in the ordinary ways of life – in villages, small towns and cities. To these men and women, he accorded the pride of place of decision-making, initiative and courage. This indeed was a big leap from the tales of mystery and wonder happenings in medieval forts and palaces that filled the pages of contemporary fiction in the Indian languages. **Tagore** showed the new way of coming to terms with a reality that stared in the face of each thinking individual in India and demanded from him / her a concrete resolution of problems. Of course, the resolution was seldom articulated in fiction or poetry since it required a specific working out on the cultural-political plane. In the next section we shall try and concretise this aspect with illustrations from **Tagore**'s novel, *Ghore Bahire / The Home and the World.*

2.2.2 A Closer Look At *Ghore Bahire / The Home and the World*

This novel has three characters, Bimala, Nikhil and Sandip, at the centre of it, each having a distinct opinion and voice. They constitute a triangle and interact with one another in a variety of ways. No romantic or love-triangle this. In fact, **Tagore** has introduced Bimala as an ordinary-looking woman, married to Nikhil and accustomed to what was called 'home' at the time. Happy in her situation and faithfully pursuing her homely ideals of loyalty to husband and family (it is a traditional landlord family with a well-charted code of conduct), Bimala sees her environs to be the world she is born to inhabit. The position in which **Tagore** has placed Bimala carries the reader right in the beginning of the novel into the heart of the matter – is it enough for a woman in India to be in the confines of the home or to look beyond it at the larger world for a different and bigger role. Imagine the scene of a family with the woman at the centre of it. Does it not appear in India to be the case after almost a century of when the novel was composed? **Tagore** raises the question of the role of the woman and her attitude towards the family structure in a manner that would have shocked the orthodox and the traditionalists in a big way in the early twentieth century India. In *The Home and the World*, **Tagore** seeks to redefine the woman, the husband-wife relationship and the family (the joint family structure) in such a way that the woman could be visualised as entering the political world, a male bastion. This brings us to the next important question of the country and its politics.

2.2.3 *Ghore Bahire / The Home and The World*: The Country and its Politics

In *The Home and the World*, the 'world,' or 'country' to be more precise, signifies the larger Indian space and society across ethnic, regional, cultural and linguistic

boundaries. In the early twentieth century, the multitude of the masses in India saw the country in regional terms. **Tagore** has the imaginative sweep to raise the country at the level of entire subcontinent called India engaged in a political battle with the British. This again is a new idea. Here, **Tagore**'s attitude is marked by not merely curiosity about a newly emerged phenomenon but the urge to explore the scope of what can be called a 'country.' Being a poet at heart and a visionary, **Tagore** had embraced the inspiring ideal of indivisible humanism that did not distinguish between societies and races. Also, **Tagore** looked at the individual in all societies to be the centre of interest – it was the 'individual' who carried within him the seeds of all-pervasive humanity. In **Tagore**'s writing, we come across the creative-experimenting individual innately endowed with the capacity to relate with humanity as a collective expression of his / her own aspirations. This notion of the creative individual is fully investigated in *The Home and the World* and found concretised in the character of Nikhil. A deeply understanding soul, Nikhil urges his wife Bimala to study and understand the contemporary world from a new angle. Bimala is homebound, secure and contented to begin with but has the longing to comprehend the phenomenon surrounding her. This brings her in contention with the idea of the 'country' or the 'nation.' The two mean more or less the same thing to **Tagore**. Isn't this a genuine issue facing India at the time **Tagore** composed *The Home and the World*?

In my opinion, **Tagore** found the issue of the country genuine but its grasp and comprehension by the thinkers of his age did not adequately match the genuineness. We see a creative strategy at work in *The Home and the World*. **Tagore** the writer and Nikhil the 'spokesperson' of the author place Bimala on the 'border' that separate, the home and the world. Sandip is the character that symbolises the sharp and unmistakable nationalism. Sandip is a nationalist to the core. The question is – to what extent is Sandip's nationalism marked by the requirements of the times in which he lives? For Sandip, the glory of India lives in its long heritage and tradition where the soul of the country thrives. He connects the concept of Shakti with Bimala. The latter according to him is capable of evolving into an idol that others in the country would look up to and worship.

Under the perspective of nationalism, Sandip designs for himself in *The Home and the World* the role of a dynamic and inspiring leader. He would lead India upfront and mould the masses as it were into an energy, a fire that would extinguish the enemy. He seethes with anger that an alien power has settled here to not merely exploit India's rich resources but to weaken its psyche and demoralise its people. As he wishes to put a stop to this, he would collect an army of ardent activists and make them fan around the length and breadth of the country. To further give an edge to his nationalist efforts, he has plans to introduce women's power in the struggle against imperialism. For the representation of Sandip in *The Home and the World*, **Tagore** uses rhetoric. The question is, why? In my opinion, the reason is that **Tagore** wishes to highlight through Sandip's behaviour a whole rational and humanist critique of the contemporary nationalism. What, is meant by this is that as far as **Tagore** is concerned, nationalism of an uncompromising kind would not do. Instead, Indians at the time had to understand their own ideological parameters and see whether those met the standards of modernity. In Sandip's self-assurance and vehemence lies couched arrogance and blind faith.

What does Bimala stand for in *The Home and the World* as well as India at the time? So far as her innocence goes, she represents the Indian masses. It was indeed true that ordinary Indians around the turn of the century stood more or less detached from the current political happenings. Not able to follow the implications of the nationalist effort aimed to throw out the British, Indians looked at the scene around them with mere wonder. When the same effort, however, plans to involve and connect the masses with it, problem of explaining and interpreting nationalism emerges. This is the crux. The times required not individual martyrdom but the act of the whole country rising in revolt against the foreign rule. Connected with this was the second issue of which we have talked above at some length – the role of the family with the woman at the centre of it. In the context, **Tagore** critiques the family, too which he sees, at one level at least, as inseparable from the woman in India. The interesting

thing, however, is that **Tagore**'s mouthpiece Nikhil in *The Home and the World* does not think so. There is the experiment of breaking the family and throwing in the woman into the national movement as the essential point on which *The Home and the World* is intellectually as well as artistically woven.

Let us draw a few inferences from this discussion of **Tagore**'s *The Home and the World*. The writer in the early twentieth century India, remember that the country was a colony and its writer was thus placed in a different position than his/her western counterpart, was forced to come to terms with socio-political as well as cultural issues. The writer of the time placed in a colony could not stand apart from one's environment and weave tales of magic and romance. This the nineteenth century Indian writer largely tended to do but as the century drew to a close, a social movement of distrust and disaffection had started gathering momentum. This transformed the very ideas and emphases that the cultural voices would take note of and articulate. The ideas we have mentioned include identity, women's role in society, nationalism, modernity and the nature of political struggle against the alien rule. We have also seen the process in which new ideas and questions take shape in a context different from the one existing previously. **Tagore** symbolises at the turn of the century a cultural temperament daring enough to investigate contentious issues at the same time evolving itself towards an enriched understanding of complex social scenario unfolding itself in various ways. In the next section let us examine the contribution of a great Hindi writer who was **Tagore**'s contemporary.

2.3 CONTEXTUALISING PREMCHAND

The Hindi writer **Premchand** was a young contemporary of **Tagore**. Junior to **Tagore** by more than two decades, **Premchand** appears to have looked at the Indian scene in the early twentieth century radically differently. Sharing the concern for India and the National Movement with his illustrious predecessor, **Premchand** visualised the change in his larger surroundings in the slow process of an evolving consciousness. **Premchand** was not an 'artist' at heart the way **Tagore** was. He scarcely thought of appreciating nature, the culture of the region he belonged to or glories of the human heart. His bent of mind derived from the late nineteenth century emergence of the *Arya Samaj* movement in north India, a movement given to reforming the rigid Hindu thought. *Arya Samaj* swore by education, modernity, rational discourse and difference of opinion. Its biggest and most profound protest was against *Sanatan Dharma* and idol worship. For *Arya Samaj* the intervening centuries between the early rise of knowledge in ancient India and the ethos of enlightenment in the nineteenth century were marked by blind faith, rituals and strict moral codes. The movement exhorted people to think for themselves, and have the courage to discard all that were obsolete and useless. As a movement, *Arya Samaj* believed in propaganda, discussion and debate. It sought to bring to the door of the masses its message of change in attitude and reforming the Hindu society. *Arya Samaj* also preferred to learn from any quarter irrespective of the place or direction from where knowledge emanated. The acronym *DAV* in the educational programme in the *Arya Samaj* movement stood for *Dayanand Anglo Vedic* that signified a meaningful merging of the western with the Indian. This is no wonder that the movement caught the imagination of the whole of north India giving it an orientation unprecedented in Indian thought.

In 1900, **Premchand** was all of nineteen years, a young man fired by the idealism of questioning, rejection and change. He had also evolved in himself around this time the capacity to correlate social reform with politics. He saw not only a close connection between the two but, an integration that was profoundly significant. Social reform by itself demanded that an individual think of playing a role in his environment moving around and engaging people in discussion. Politics required of the individual to grasp the nature of the ruling regime in its many ways, the strategies

the regime adopted to implement its policies at various levels. Combine this with the fact that **Premchand** knew Urdu, English and the main dialect of his region (eastern Uttar Pradesh) quite well. All these pointed towards an activist propensity in the socio-cultural world. These made **Premchand** a writer.

2.3.1 Why Did Premchand Write in Hindi?

Premchand is placed in Indian literature at a time when there was very little in the name of modern literary forms. Barring a few examples, fiction was nonexistent. Realising that religious myths and folk tales would not do in an era marked by upheavals, **Premchand** turned to dealing with secular issues in literary writing. Why did **Premchand** choose fiction to be the dominant mode of writing in his case? The answer is simple. He knew that fiction is by nature interesting. It absorbs the reader in its world of fantasy and puts him/her in touch with reality at a level different from that encountered in poetry. Still more precisely, fiction provides scope to the writer to explain, elaborate and dramatise important events of life. It also enabled the writer to share his/her perspective in a subtle imaginative way. Subtle and simple at the same time – subtle since the reader seldom realised that s/he was face to face with actual happenings and simple since the issues depicted in fiction were always 'actual.'

For **Premchand**, the choice of language also became an important aspect of cultural-social-political practice. Broadly speaking (not in the sense we use the term today) language was merely a 'vehicle' of expression to reach the wide variety of readers. Initially, **Premchand** thought of Urdu as the language through which he would confront his reader. This worked as far as it went. But **Premchand** realised in the course of his writing that one could reach the common reader better through Hindi. This was at a time when Hindi was struggling to come into its own, a medium capable of meeting the changing requirements of the unfolding cultural scenario. **Premchand**'s creativity was of a peculiar kind. It was seldom individual-centered or self-reflexive. At the same time, it was ever prepared to learn, understand and experiment. Communication being the central concern of **Premchand** in literature, it became soon clear to him that the kind of Hindi the contemporarity needed did not exist and that, therefore, it had to be forged anew. **Premchand** retained the Urdu sentence structure and brought into it an increasing number of words from spoken Hindi. What is 'spoken Hindi' if not an amalgam of ordinary dialect and an established sentence structure. Still further, the best Hindi for which **Premchand** is known as a stylist is found in the dialogues he gives to his characters. It is here that **Premchand** captures the true speech rhythms and cadences of the language he adopted for his writing.

To repeat, **Premchand** found his true vocation in 'communicating to his reader a point of view and a perspective at once Indian, radical and political'. He derived his strength solely from the commitment he had to the needs and requirements of his reader who would read literature to make sense of what s/he came across in contemporary life. In his writing, **Premchand** presented the dynamics, the process of growth through the clash of existing forces, of his time in such a manner that the potential and the actual appeared parts of an indivisible reality. Yet, he put across the feeling for the benefit of the reader that the India of the existing period awaited an interventionist attitude from the mass of ordinary people, the collectivity that bore the brunt of British imperialism and Indian orthodoxy simultaneously.

To be with **Premchand** is to be with a mind that enlightens all the vital aspects of early twentieth century Indian life, aspects such as dignity, moral strength and heroism of the ordinary masses. One has only to think of **Premchand**'s famous short story *Panch Parmeshwar* published in 1916 showing an old helpless widow taking cudgels against an ungrateful nephew and the village community structure of which he is a part. Here, **Premchand** comes down heavily on the relatively more influential sections in a village community and extends sympathy to a woman supported by none initially. At the same time, **Premchand** shows in the same environment the potentiality of humanist conduct, honesty and fair play. It is reported that both **Gandhiji** and **Tagore** found this short story to be of immense humanist value and

cultural significance. **Gandhiji** recommended this short story as a kind of model for the upcoming writers of the day. **Gandhiji** had noticed that most writers in Indian languages showed the inclination to adhere to a preconceived notion of desirability in writing or they kept entirely kept away from the demands of the times with respect to the issues meant to be raised in writing.

2.3.2 Premchand and Cultural Activism

Cultural activism is what I associate with **Premchand**. However, it is interesting to note that **Premchand** appealed tremendously to those who demanded literature to be realistic and humanistic. **Premchand**'s characters, for instance, would be clearly identified as representing typical tendences of the age to which they belonged. These characters in **Premchand**'s action stood for the same entrapment by social structures in the world they inhabited that existed in the actual world outside. One example would make it amply clear. In *Goddan* (*The Gift of the Cow*), the protagonist Hori is ruthlessly exploited by the prevailing economic and social structure. Firstly, he stands on the wrong side of the caste-ridden society around him. Secondly, he has internalised the value of his masters who on their part cynically take advantage of his innocence and simple-mindedness. Does he have a way out of the situation in which he finds himself placed? The question is indeed significant since a situation seemingly innocuous (that is how Hori views it) is oppressive rooted as it is in a class system benefiting only the rulers. That **Premchand** conceived *Godaan* primarily as tragic novel reflects his realistic as well as clearly political attitude.

Godaan belongs to the nineteen thirties, a period witnessing the Gandhian thought enter a phase of crisis. The Indian National Movement at the time had gone closer to the interests of what can be called the bourgeois class, a class realising gradually that their future was not secure in the hands of a radical India. On the other side, the Indian masses comprising the huge chunk of the peasantry and the other poor would forge ahead only if the National Movement evolved in the direction of egalitarianism and ownership of land. But if the ownership of land went to the peasantry, the landlords would lose all their economic power and social privileges. As the decisive phase of the movement approached, landlords in India began looking towards the Indian National Congress as their possible saviour. The Congress, too, on its part became wary of the emerging socialist trend that **Jawaharlal Nehru** of the thirties represented and became increasing suspicious of the doctrine of change it had so strongly espoused in the preceding period. The crisis I talk of in the context of **Premchand**'s *Godaan*. *Godaan* is bound to be thus a novel of the tragedy of the Indian peasant.

What we learn from the example of **Premchand** is that the writer in the Gandhian phase of the Indian National Movement had finally hit a road-block, so to say, beyond which the terrain of change was difficult. This phase in the last stages of its movement compelled the writer to rethink his/her role in a society struggling to break free from the shackles of imperialism. All of a sudden, as it were, **Premchand** finds the peasant in India to be helpless and tragic, a state from which it is not easy to move out. **Premchand** also realises that Gandhian idealism is not sufficient to tackle the socio-economic problems of the country since it leans too heavily on the active individual out to mobilise the masses and infuse in them the need to radicalise society. What is required perhaps is an entirely different perspective where the labouring masses themselves begin to grasp their condition and 'fate.' There are no examples in British or American fiction of this kind of concern in literature. The reason is that whereas European and American societies were to struggle against the 'enemy' forces from within, the colony called India had to contend with the social environment much more complex and daunting. Add to this the fact that the Indian writer found himself/herself tied to the reality of illiteracy, caste, orthodoxy, faith-based religion (a paradox indeed!) and other beliefs-systems – all unfriendly and impervious to rational analysis. In one sentence, **Premchand** stood for a writing committed to change in society at all levels that he perceived through his life with a

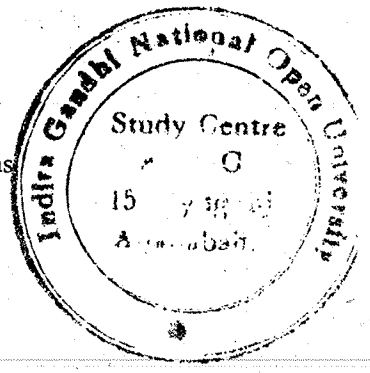
missionary zeal. In the next section we shall examine the role of another great writer **Mulk Raj Anand**.

2.4 MULK RAJ ANAND

Mulk Raj Anand's writing in English, particularly in the pre-Independence period, marks an important phase in English writing in India. It is an important chapter in the phenomenon of English writing in our country in that it broke totally free from the conventional mode in that writing. Rather than being an attempt to formulate individual responses, **Anand**'s writing in fact goes somewhat further than that of both of his predecessors – **Tagore** and **Premchand**. As we know, **Tagore** and **Premchand** shunned English for the purpose of literary writing. We have briefly considered in this unit why they did so and the use to which they put the particular Indian language they chose for expressing themselves. **Anand** *chose* to write in English. But he wrote as an Indian writer, a writer who merged his voice with that of the masses in India. This aspect is significant since it shows for the first time in India's history that English, the language of a few in the country, could be used for reform and change not merely in the realm of thought and politics but also literature.

2.4.1 Mulk Raj Anand and His Choice of Language

In the case of **Mulk Raj Anand**, it was clear from the beginning that he had decided to devote himself to the cause of India's independence and project a socio-political message for the benefit of the English-knowing in the country. From the point of view of perspective, **Anand** is not just 'committed,' but shows inclination to propagate an opinion. **Anand** would let it be known, for instance, that he was a 'socialist,' that, he adhered to the doctrine of humanism realising its goals in a man-made society. To repeat, society or the human world with its rules and principles was not a Godly creation but a phenomenon in the making of which people themselves had an important part to play. I call this the dominant perspective of the nineteenth century. In the previous unit of this block, we have dealt with this aspect in some detail. Let us now look at **Mulk Raj Anand**'s novel *Coolie* in the next section to illustrate what we have been talking about.



2.4.2 Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*

Anand's commitment to the Indian masses reflected itself in the selection of social groups he depicted and the issues he projected in his writing. In novel after novel, **Anand** took note of the plight of the ordinary people, be it coolies, 'untouchables,' poor peasants or workers. In his novel *Coolie*, for instance, **Anand** represented the life of the meanest of labourers in the country, a person who used his bare body to make a living, who had no shelter, no protection, no security. These were the people who had roots in India's villages but were forced to shift to the cities in view of hunger and deprivation rampant in their rural surroundings. In *Coolie*, **Anand** does not sentimentalise. Instead, he uses long descriptions as well as dialogues where he shows the manner in which people live and think and the manner in which they express their feelings as important responses to the prevailing circumstances. **Anand**'s characters are close to the earth – simple, straightforward and honest. They relate to the rest of their kind with ease and spontaneously form a group. This itself becomes a comment on the social structure existing at the time. It is interesting to see that a detailed account of the miseries of the labourers in the city starts pointing towards the behaviour of the upper echelons who indeed are callous and insensitive.

Anand's method is clinical – detached and concerned about the plight of the masses at the same time. There is also a sort of humour that reflects sympathy for the downtrodden. But the ending of the novel is tragic since the author sees no hope in the circumstances he has depicted. But there is indeed hope hidden in the authorial attitude. **Anand**'s sense of detachment, humour and indulgence towards the characters of the deprived sections reveals that the collectivity of the deprived in

India is to be recognised as a impressive potentiality for meaningful change. In another novel, *Untouchable*, written around the same time, **Anand** shows an anger assuming larger dimensions. The scavengers of the town deciding to strike against the comfort-loving upper classes is an indication in the novel that the Indian society of the nineteen thirties is anything but static. Deliberately perhaps, **Anand** in this novel extends the scope of Gandhian vision to encompass the possibility of revolt. According to the author, harmony and mutuality exist in society only when space is given to all as fellow human beings. Since that is not the case, it is imperative that a current of unease and anger would sooner or later flow through the atmosphere. So far we have discussed **Tagore, Premchand** and **Anand** in the light of their contributions to the establishment of new canons in Indian English Writing. Let us now look at yet another writer of the same period- **Raja Rao** in the next section.

2.5 RAJA RAO

Whereas **Mulk Raj Anand**'s writing preferred simple though sharply political aspects of life for representation, **Raja Rao** showed a penchant for ideological and philosophical issues in his fictional pieces. Yet around the time of Independence, he grappled with such important trends of thought as Gandhianism. The choice of the issue of Gandhianism necessitated that he move closer to the mundane reality of the time. His well-known novel *Kanthapura* is a case in point. Here, **Rao**'s concern is for the small happenings of a village caught in the process of the unfolding nationalist movement in India. The question that the ordinary people of the village confront is whether **Gandhi** is a human figure in flesh and blood or a political phenomenon. The village is face to face with a follower of **Gandhi**, a political activist and a member of the Congress Party. First looked at with awe and wonder, this figure is gradually accepted in the village as one of its own. People come forward to seek guidance from him as they find his presence in the village truly inspiring. The final outcome and result of the activities of this figure is that the village gets transformed into a hub of dynamic political struggle and becomes a symbol of protest against the workings of an alien rule.

What catches our attention in *Kanthapura* is its emphasis on the human urge to participate in collective life. This is what we clearly discern in the novel where individualities merge into a larger consciousness. The myths of humanity and country combine in the novel to assume gigantic proportions of a revolutionary struggle. The reader enters a trance-like state in which distinctions between ordinary human beings and epic heroes get blurred. In the novel, the language, too, becomes unusual with constant repetitions of phrase and expression as well as sentence patterns evoking the idea of a transcendental happening.

2.5.1 Tagore, Premchand, Anand and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

To what extent is *Kanthapura* a continuation of **Tagore, Premchand** and **Mulk Raj Anand** in Indian fiction? Further, do we see similarities between literary responses represented in the writing in Indigenous languages and English, a language of the colonial masters? In answer to the first question, one can say that all these writers are bound by the concern they have for their surroundings. They address actual issues of a colonial society irrespective of the language chosen by them to hold a dialogue with their readers. Yes, the spirit of writing of all these authors is of conversing, debating and discussing with their readers. This to a certain extent answers the second question also. The only difference is that when we consider the use of a specific language in a colony, problems crop up concerning the audience selected by the author. Both **Anand** and **Rao** wrote consciously for the English-knowing Indians as also for those sensitive souls among the British who looked at the phenomenon of confrontation between the ruling and subject nations in an objective and unprejudiced manner. On their part, the English-knowing Indians did not relate as closely with the surroundings

as those deeply rooted in an Indian ethos and a language. As a result of this, one notices a sort of abstraction in **Anand** and **Rao** who seem to be driven more by the 'purpose' of writing than the urge to narrate things in a normal realistic manner. This may partly be ascribed to the expectations of the English-knowing reader who may look for 'developed' techniques in the books s/he selects to read. The same can influence the overall outlook of an author engaged in depicting a reality from an avowedly cultural/ political position. Needless to say, the writer-reader relationship is anything but simple and straightforward.

In this unit so far, we have dealt with the question of difference between literature written in a native language and that in the language of the colonial master, in our case English. This question has profound significance in the Indian context since we can see in the comparison between the two kinds of writing a number of variations emanating from the language chosen. We have also noticed that the historical context has an overarching presence and thus leaves a strong impact on literary writing. It is indeed interesting to examine particular literary trends in a colonial context, more so when antagonisms between the colonial power and the colony have a decisive phase.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit, has discussed four major literary voices of India. **Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand** and **Raja Rao** who evolved as writers in the process of participation at the socio-cultural level. They learnt a great deal from the political environment they lived in. At the same time, they articulated in their own individual ways the perspectives that emerged in the different phases of the freedom struggle. They produced their own literary canons and redefined boundaries of ideological and creative worlds. The thread of intellectual growth seen in their writing reflects a movement from the humanist-rational to genuinely nationalistic and finally to committed socialist attitude. The human-centered segment of post-Independence writing in India owes immensely to these writers whose standards of literary expression are remarkably high. The canon developed by these writers is capable of fundamentally exposing the drawbacks and limitations of both modernist writing in the Indian languages and in English. The newly-emerged diaspora-oriented writing in Indian English where we notice a strong individualistic as well as anarchist streak has to look back at the genuinely humanist concerns in **Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand** and **Raja Rao** for enriching itself in appeal and relevance.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1) Write a critical note on Tagore's role as a writer in the early twentieth century Indian context.

2) How did Premchand meet the cultural demands made on him by the society of his time? In what respect does his fiction differ from that of his contemporaries?

3) Compare Premchand's writing with that of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao and investigate the way in which they come to terms with the problem of language and reader from their respective positions.

UNIT 3 FEMINISM: INDIAN ENGLISH WRITERS

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Feminist Movement and Feminist Literary Criticism
3.3 The Women's Movement in the Indian Context
3.4 Evolving the Canon: Issues and Problems
3.5 A Sample of Women's Writing
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall look at the literary agenda of Feminism in order to determine what would qualify as a feminist canon of Indian writers in English. We will begin by looking at Feminism as a political movement in the western world and the role of feminist literary theory and practice that grew around it. We will raise the question whether there is an Indian feminist literary theory around which there may be a body of writers and what is the scope and limitations of Indian feminist literary theory in the context of Indian writing in English. We will go on to discuss the problematic nature of evolving a feminist canon in India in the absence of a female aesthetic theory. As a first step towards evolving a canon, we will then undertake a brief survey of women writers who may qualify as feminist writers.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Feminism, like all social positions is highly self-conscious and works with an agenda. Thus it is important to say at first that feminism in literature should not be considered ahistorically. Clearly, we have to familiarise ourselves with the central tenets of Feminism. We need to see at what point in history it was born and why. The issue of process is also important. We have to understand how feminism becomes a movement, what particular tendencies it shows and how it is constantly evolving itself. In particular we need to see how feminism manifests itself in India and in Indian writing in English. In this attempt we will restrict ourselves to women and women's writing 1980 onwards. We will see if there is a feminist theory of literature in Indian English writing or whether Indian writers in English move towards a feminist agenda by virtue of their choice of subject and/or mode of expression. We have to point out here that mere cataloguing of women's lives and woes is not feminism. There is a tendency to lump all women's writing as feminist writing just as it is often mistakenly assumed that only women are feminists. It is important to emphasise here that it is not enough to be a woman writer to be a feminist writer. Though, most of you are already familiar with Feminist Studies and Feminist Criticism, having done it in the **MEG 05** Course: **Literary Theory and Criticism,** we shall none the less look at the feminist agenda in some detail in the next few sections of this unit.

In the next sections, we will examine feminism as a social movement and also consider it at the level of theory before we come to scrutinise Indian writing in English. In this scrutiny we will not consider male writers at all, or women writing before 1980 or the writing of the Indian 'diaspora'. Also we will only look at the genre of the novel and the short story.

3.2 THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

Feminism is a cultural- intellectual movement that recognises the fact of oppression of women and seeks ways to emancipate them. For centuries now, there has been a tradition of writing about the problem of women's unequal position in society and some of these have proposed solutions. Historically, there have been contributions from both men and women. As early as 1792, **Mary Wollstonecraft** wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which discusses writers like **Milton, Pope** and **Rousseau. John Stuart Mill** carried on the tradition with *On the Subjection of Women* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family* (1884). **Olive Screiner** wrote *Women and Labor* (1911) and **Virginia Woolf** in her essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), writes movingly about the unequal access to education and the lack of alternatives available to women who sought options other than marriage and motherhood. In 1949, **Simone De Beauvoir** writes the landmark treatise, *The Second Sex* that discusses among other things the representations of women in literary works and male attitudes towards them. She includes a significant discussion of women in the novels of **D H Lawrence**.

Thus we see that women have been writing about their experiences in a male - dominated society but it is in the 1960s in America that the feminist movement takes a concrete shape and widens its scope. Feminist thought thereafter, impacts not only the social sciences and humanities, but, every branch of academic study, including the study of the sciences. The feminist trend recognised very early that literature provides the role models that indicate to men and women, especially literate, educated and therefore, cultured men and women, of what is approved and acceptable as 'feminine' modes of conduct, feminine goals and aspirations. The 'literariness' of the Feminist Movement of the 1960s was a given, an achieved fact from the start because of it concern with the following:

- It examined the representations of women in literature and questioned the mode and manner of the construction of those representations
- It saw as crucial the necessity to question the circumstances and authority and purpose of the constructions
- It positioned itself to combat the ideology that existing images of women propagated in society
- It realised the importance of working through books, literature and other mass media circulation of images of women as the most pragmatic way of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes.

Let us find some connections within this complex of concerns. Patriarchy means the structures through which male domination over women is achieved. The central focus of feminist writing and thinking in the 1970s is the investigation and elaboration of patriarchal systems. Feminist writing seeks to expose the mindset in men and women that perpetuates gender inequality. Particular attention is paid to male writers constructing typical and influential images of women. Feminist criticism of the period is necessarily abrasive, polemical and combative. Add to this the fact that in the 1980s, feminist criticism began to be influenced by the development of other branches of literary theory. It also veered away from the critique of a male version of the world. It recognised that the history of civilisation has been constructed as the history of men, and women have been rendered invisible in that narrative. Feminism then seeks to recuperate women from the margins of history and make women's experience visible. In other words, it explores the nature of women's experiences and seeks to restore the lost or suppressed narratives of women's experience.

It is in this phase of the 1980s that the Anglo-American literary world goes about constructing the canon of women's writing. To do this it has to rewrite the history of the novel (the preferred and popular genre), and poetry to highlight the achievements of women writers who had been neglected. Radical Feminist literary theory qualifies

its agenda as moral and political criticism. It takes a stand, is ideological and revolutionary in that it brings in change. It is *praxis* and will effect genuine social improvement. The feminist critic identifies both a text's absences, its gaps and silences, and also its liberating tendencies, its ability to project a utopian vision where equality of gender is possible, as is resistance to patriarchy.

What then is Feminist literature? Because of its origin in the women's movement feminist criticism values literature that can serve the cause of the movement, that is, the emancipation of women. Viewed this way literature must in the words of **Cherie Register**, do one or more of the following:

> *It must serve as a forum for women; help to achieve cultural androgyny; provide role models; promote sisterhood and augment consciousness-raising.*

3.3 THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

There are a number of problems in defining the canon here. Firstly, the women's movement in India was a social movement that had to factor in the highly stratified nature of Indian society. Thus it dealt with variables not only of gender and class but also caste, region and religion. In India there is not one patriarchy. "Patriarchies" emerge because of their overlapping with feudalism, caste and with rural and urban experiences.

Secondly, the earliest feminists were men who had set out to introduce reforms in upper caste Hindu society addressing social evils like child marriage, dowry, female illiteracy and the practice of *sati*. This necessarily limited their goals and vision since they did not question patriarchy or its unequal distribution of property rights. Many latter day feminist scholars felt that this agenda overlapped or intersected the agenda of the National movement which was an upper caste, Hindu, male-dominated one, and that women had been used to further the nationalist agenda without any redressal of their true positions in society as unequal and oppressed beings on the basis of gender.

Thirdly, feminist readings of literature and society came out of the works of historians, sociologists, social workers, political theorists and not out of departments of English Literature. In fact, feminist writing in English in India is largely in the nature of critical responses to literature, history and society. In other words, literary production in English lacked a feminist perspective or a feminist literary theory that was culture - specific. It is clear that when we come to the Indian context, in order to evolve a feminist canon of Indian English writing, we need to depend on the definitions and perspectives provided by the Anglo- American tradition.

Finally and most importantly, all significant feminist writing by men and women, and there is a large corpus of it, was in the regional literatures as it continues to be even today. Though Indian writing in English has been singularly lacking in a feminist perspective. However, the female voice or figure or concern or world has registered to a considerable extent in Indian English Writing. But in evolving the canon of feminist Indian English Writing, we first need to evolve the theory of a female aesthetic. In the absence of any authoritative definition of a female aesthetic we need to consider very carefully, the many ways in which writing can be feminist. Let us see in what ways we can talk about a canon of Feminism among Indian English Writers. We can approach the evolution of a Feminist canon by asking in what ways a writer may be considered a feminist. We shall next discuss the issues involved in evolving such a canon.

3.4 EVOLVING THE CANON: ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The first issue that must be addressed in writing about Feminism in Indian English writers is, whether it exists at all. Many writers have stated that their gender is incidental and that they write, as sensitive human beings and that their subjects or the forms they choose are not dictated by their being female. Yet there are areas of experience that are available only to women or which are ignored by men or described by them in their male- centred terms. Women writers have considered such experiences worthy of exploration and female patterns of living and dealing with the world have produced a female perspective.

The female perspective is often problematised by the fact that patriarchy or male norms are so deeply embedded in the female consciousness that often the literature of revolt or protest uses the male voice and formulations to express ideas that are rooted in male experience. Patriarchy and its norms constitute the common cultural background of both men and women. Indian writing in English has produced successful women writers by masculine standards. We do not find either the innovations of form, a narrative technique that reproduces women's patterns of thought and speech, or selection of subjects that are decidedly feminist. Women writers in English have continued the tradition of social realism apparent in the vernacular works of their regions or others that they can access. However, the very issue of finding a narrative technique which will embody the patterns of thought and speech of women is fraught with problems in the choice of English as a medium of writing about women, unless of course, the social class or location of the women subjects are all adapted to the choice of English as the idiom of speech.

An important problem facing Indian feminism is that Indian English women writers have rarely reflected on their craft. Indeed there is little consciousness of either initiating or being part of a movement that develops its aesthetic. This leads us to assume that though women's experiences are important to these writers, there is no centrality of those experiences in a political way. They are not there because the writer wishes to bring about change in the ways in which women are thought about or perceived or treated, but to indicate how women perceive the world around them. The writer does not think of herself as an agent of change actively intervening to improve the lives of women, but as one *describing* the condition of women. There is no **C S Lakshmi** or **Mahasveta Devi** in Indian English writing.

Any survey of feminism in Indian English writing will be to some extent, subjective. As yet we have no particularly evolved canon or standards to judge this writing. Readers may disagree and supplement the writers discussed. But we can move towards evolving a canon and this is a first step. The women writers under consideration in the following section are those who have treated women's experience from *within* and have been successful in conveying their vision of that experience. The experience they describe and judge may be diverse and individual but is intrinsically the product of women's lives and not of masculine principles and values. We have deliberately avoided writers who have not written more than one book. We have also side- stepped the writing of the so-called 'diaspora'. Similarly, in keeping with the emergence of new identities of Indian womanhood, we have emphasised the writing of the last three decades with 1980 as a watershed. That is not to say that writers like **Kamala Markandaya**, **Anita Desai** and **Nayantara Sehgal** are dated, but that it is time to move on and foreground the new and exciting work of another generation of women. Here, we would also mention the excellent effort of **Eunice de Souza** and **Lindsay Pereira** to recuperate for us women's writings from nineteenth and early twentieth century in their anthology *Women's Voices* (2002). This is a truly feminist event in Indian Writing in English. In the next section we shall take a look at the writings of a new generation of women.

3.5 A SAMPLE OF WOMEN'S WRITING

The difficulty in evolving a feminist canon lies primarily in the absence of a theory of feminist literature and the absence of a female aesthetic in Indian English writing. Also no writer has claimed the feminist tag for their writing except **Suniti Namjoshi** who now resides in the UK and writes from there. Yet there are many women writers who have in their writing carried the markers of feminist literature. Undoubtedly **Namita Gokhale** is one of them. One of the finest writers in the genre of fiction, she writes as a woman with a profound understanding of love and loss but also of the network of relationships that females form to share memory and pass it on as a legacy. Her first book *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1982) was also the first to foreground the celebration of sexuality of the middle-class Indian woman. Unembarrassed and uninhibited expression of female desire ran through the book making it a milestone. Female sexual desire and women's awareness of it are issues that Indian society does not discuss. **Namita Gokhale** broke the silence. Her maturity as a writer, a woman writer, was evident with every book she wrote. Her milieu is her own beloved Kumaon, a place she is intimately familiar with and one whose whims and fancies, grandmothers, aunts and ghosts she knows at first hand. But it is also Delhi, equally her home and place of work, whose anonymity, grotesque balance of power and battle of survival all come together in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* (1994). Whether it is these or *Sojourn* or *A Himalayan Love Story* (1996), or *Mountain Echoes*, (1998) **Gokhale** successfully etches for us the dilemma, the anxieties, the violence of a female existence that walks the tightrope between the traditional and modern in our societies.

Love, bordering on lust, pain, actual physical pain and loss in death marks her complex novel, *The Book of Shadows* (1999), where every nuance of the disfigured woman protagonist's consciousness has found expression in a narrative style as distinct as the subject. The canvas is vast and densely peopled. The novel is conceived in *chiaroscuro*, a technique of the visual arts where the complex interplay of light and shade lend depth to the characters and situations. There are in the novel moments of intense lucidity that are suddenly obscured by mysterious shadows. The suicide of Rachita's fiancee over her infidelity and subsequent revenge by his sister, who throws acid on Rachita's face, suddenly transform Rachita from a complacent and self-assured teacher of English Literature into a confused and disfigured recluse. She moves into her childhood home in the Himalayas and retreats into her self, moving among several levels of reality, now a participant, now a voyeur, lurking in the nooks and crannies of the house. Lohaniju, the mysterious caretaker, is the anchor of Rachita's vulnerable sanity and the continuity of the past and present is maintained through a dog's name. *The Book of Shadows*, whose title is reminiscent of epic journeys to the underworld contained in 'The Book of the Dead', in the Greek epics, and echoes **Isabel Allende**'s *The House of the Spirits (1985)*, is a journey for the mutilated woman's sensibility where she learns to remember and forget, conscious that time is not structured or contained in a lifetime.

Anees Jung should be considered an important feminist writer for two reasons. One, that she enters into the world of ordinary Indian women in *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey* in 1987, to document the reality of their lives and metaphorically, unveils a world of deprivation, oppression, hope and faith and a sense of community and at the same time, recuperates new images of women. Secondly, she transforms what would be an ethnographic study of a social group located in time and space, into a poetic account of the lives of these women. She thus actually discovers a mode of narration that by the operations of the genre of fiction lends an epic quality to her subjects. Epic is probably an apt word for her efforts. In *Beyond the Courtyard: A Sequel to Unveiling India*, (2003), written almost two decades after the first, she retraces her steps into the very same households to find out what became of the daughters of the women of the earlier book. It is a fascinating account of

powerlessness and hopelessness as she finds that though India has moved into the 21st century, the lives of women have been largely untouched.

In the telling of the stories of other women, **Anees Jung**'s book becomes a sort of literary consciousness-raising. She literally gives the women a voice. In *Unveiling India,* she says:

> *Not long ago a woman who spoke about herself was considered a loose woman. To voice a pain, to divulge a secret, was considered sacrilege, a breach of family trust. Today, voices are raised without fear, and are heard outside the walls of homes that once kept a woman protected, also isolated. Some of the women who speak here have stepped out. Other's who have not, are beginning to be aware, eager to find expression. But let them speak for themselves [109].*

And saying this she lets loose the narrative while readers listen to unheard and half-remembered voices. The use of the form is original and masterly and facilitates what **Jung** sets out to do: to make those voices heard, angry, resentful and hopeful. Her own self overlaps those of the women she portrays or 'interviews' as she feels the 'connectedness' of empathy, arising from her own experience of growing up in the seclusion of the *purdah*, yet with her aspirations and independence realised in her own life.

In the book, **Jung** attempts to formulate a distinct view. She says about herself:

> *My reality no longer has one face. I have stepped out of an enclosed reality into one that is larger, more diverse, and mobile. . . . I continue to live out an experience for which I have yet to find a name [18].*

She presents her book, which begins with her own story and slowly blends into the story of other women as a "journey":

> *In the macrocosm of a vast land I find the microcosm of my own experience repeated and reaffirmed. . . . Coiled within the lives of these women I find myself transformed. The effort here is to probe the mystery of this experience and look beyond to another that is beginning to spell change and is centered in change. . . . It is the story of women who understand what survival is -- a story with grace [20].*

The most important contribution that **Anees Jung**'s vision of survival and grace makes to developing literary tradition is the refusal to take recourse to suffering and tolerating as the 'womanly' way of confronting life. This is how a 'voice' starts taking a shape.

In the sequel, **Jung** returns to investigate what, has altered for the daughters of the women of *Unveiling India*. Have the dramatic changes in society in the wake of liberalisation, cable TV and a general exposure to a larger scenario made a fundamental difference to their lives? Did these daughters possess the indomitable spirit of their mothers, or was this a generation of women so characteristically, trapped between two worlds, reined in by tradition, struggling to break free and yet lacking the wherewithal to do so. Again **Jung** finds stories of suffering and resilience, despair and hope:

> *Journeying across forgotten landscapes, both human and geographic, Anees Jung paints yet another unforgettable and, at times, harrowing portrait of women in India at the dawn of the new millennium. (jacket)*

Shashi Deshpande is another important writer to contribute to the corpus of feminist writing. The question that may be asked is: Is she conscious of the role she is performing as a trend- setter? **Deshpande** has declared that she is not a feminist, and that she writes of human experience. But again and again we find that human

experience moves around the figures of women and are most resonating in the silences that surround them:

> *I did not start writing as a feminist: I was a writer first. I wasn't very familiar even with the word feminism, this was in the 60s, I don't think it was very common in India as it is now. But I was writing about what I saw, what I felt, what I had begun thinking, and I was very uneasy about my own roles as wife and mother, which was all that I was supposed to be, and I knew I was not that. And so I think my writing came out of this, and that out of this articulation of ideas and thoughts that my feminism emerges.*

Indeed **Deshpande**'s stories are about conflicts in middle-class domestic situations that arise as a conflict between societal and traditional expectations of women, especially in their roles of wife and mother and her own aspirations, emotions and sensibilities. What has the practice of writing on **Deshpande**'s part meant for the evolution of a feminist angle?

Shashi Deshpande has written prolifically, both short stories and novels but her short story, *The Intrusion* (1997) can be read as a representative of her concerns as a woman writing. It is about marital rape. The young bride whose marriage is arranged by her family without a reference to her own wishes is the central figure of the story. Brought up like most women she internalises her roles as assigned to her by a male dominated society. Like most women she is often unaware of the ways in which she is exploited and equally often consents in her own oppression. In *The Intrusion*, the sexually un-awakened young bride is not mentally prepared for a sexual encounter with her husband. She wants to wait but her husband asserts his conjugal rights and takes her even as she sleeps. It is a violence done to her that she cannot find in herself to forgive. She feels violated, used and contaminated, as is the case after rape. But there would be none to recognise her plight as a victim of rape. As the wife she is bound by her role. **Shashi Deshpande** portrays the feeling of outrage that a sexually assaulted woman feels and asserts that marriage does not mitigate that feeling if she is not in possession of her body. This is something to which the community of males has remained insensitive.

Consciously or unconsciously concerned with the situation in which women find themselves placed, **Shashi Deshpande** feels that she has been able to touch the lives of many women. They write to her to tell her that they have found their feeling echoed in her stories that are graphic accounts of the site of the woman's body as possession and territory. Lifting the silence on rape as violence that threatens the women's integrity in unimaginable ways, she goes on to speak about marital rape, an event that does not exist for all practical purposes in Indian society. The very concept is alien, as the law would tell us. Yet it is through the violation of the unprepared, unwilling self of the woman by the male sexual act that **Deshpande** at once points to the general and the specific nature of the violence that is perpetrated on women. Whether this finally translates to theorising is the question.

Taking another example **Manju Kapur** is an important addition to the canon because she is one of the few women writers in English who writes on the theme of partition from the woman's point of view. Partition remains one of the most profound and disturbing events in modern India and a theme in much of contemporary literature written in the regional languages, particularly of the north of India and Bengal.

With **Bapsi Sidhwa**'s (Pakistani), *The Ice-Candy Man* (1988) and **Urvashi Butalia**'s recordings of the voices of Partition women entitled *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from The Partition of India* (2000), **Manju Kapur**'s *Difficult Daughters* (1998), relives the trauma and dislocation of the Partition. Equally, it evokes the indomitable spirit of women in love. **Manju Kapur** narrates the story of Virmati, the trials and tribulations of that age, the bloody battle waged between her loyalties to her family and her love. Amidst the unrest and upheaval which forms the backdrop of the novel, Virmati's tale is one of growing up caught in a vicious circle of longing, hate,

hesitant hopes and innocent aspirations. In love with a married professor with children, hers is a saga of revolt against deep-rooted family tradition, self-doubt, resolution and acceptance.

Manju Kapur's book is partly autobiographical, and is about laying ghosts to rest. It ends on a note of resolution:

> *This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more.*

But in the context of the experience of partition, the ghosts are yet to be laid to rest and the echoes are still haunting us from that past. Thus, the book is about difficult times, about difficult daughters, about difficult mothers. The book is also about difficult mothers who are alienated from their daughters, about daughters who are resentful and want to assert themselves. It begins with a daughter embarking on a quest to understand her mother, after the mother has died and becomes a novel of recuperation. The motif of the freedom movement assumes specific overtones when applied to the oppressive social arrangements in which Virmati finds herself. Her body, like that of the country is the site of conflict and India's fractured freedom is also Virmati's conditional liberation from sexual oppression.

Manju Kapur's second novel, *Married Women*, (2002), too is about the sense of displacement often felt by women in the traditional institution of marriage and the family. But it is perhaps more significant for the complexity of the communal situation of December 1992, the *Ayodhya Movement* which culminated in the destruction of the *Babri Masjid*, and riots that followed, which forms the background of the novel and on which we get a woman's perspective. The involvement of Astha and Aijaz which after the latter's death becomes a communion between Astha and Aijaz's wife Peepilika, opens possibilities which have not been examined in Indian writing in English, perhaps with the exception of **Suniti Naamjoshi**'s work. The novel thus works at several planes. The intimacy and comfort she receives from this affair, contrasts strongly with the distance she feels in her rigidly defined role as wife and mother. She ultimately must make a decision to either choose the radical, liberating option of following her lesbian lover or stay within the safe, strong bonds of her family. The time-honoured, celebrated, even feminist, practice of passing on the legacy from mother to daughter is treated with exquisite irony. Astha passes on the same self-limiting values that her mother had passed on to her:

> *Thus teaching her daughter how to devalue her work and passing on the tradition from woman to woman.*

Looking still further into the region of specificity of women's experience, we reach **Shobha De** who has used the epistolary form to continue this tradition and take it a step further in *Speed Post: Letters to my Children*, (1991), by adding the responsible upbringing of sons to the Indian feminist agenda. Again partly autobiographical, the letters from a mother of six children to her daughters and sons, encapsulate the challenges that contemporary society poses particularly for young men and women growing up in it. It also articulates the anxieties of a mother not only for the well - being of her children but also of casting herself as a role-model for them. It is in the cultural inversion of values that marks the rethinking on women and their roles that make the letters interesting. Here is no mother who preaches suffering silence to her daughters, or that the 'honor' of the family means her own annihilation or that a daughter must abnegate her self to uphold the interest of the males of the family and all the other stereotypical advice that is culturally acceptable. Instead, there is the instilling of a strong sense of values grounded in independence, mutual respect, integrity, love and trust.

We would include **Shobha De** in the canon. Many of **Shobha De**'s novels have annoyed and shocked the conservative domain of Indian literary criticism because they highlighted women in a milieu that was privileged by class. However, **Shobha De** still happens to be among the first women writing about the urban housewife/

aspiring career woman, her sexuality and sexual exploitation, her sexual frustration and her predatory instincts and how she has learnt to use her body in the struggle for upward mobility. Female sexuality, its awareness and its use as a weapon may disappoint a society that is wont to pay lip service to the *devi* in woman, but the fact remains that **De** writes about erotic experiences non-judgementally and from the inside as it were, if we remember that she has been the first female editor of *Stardust* and *Society* and a woman who moves in and is familiar with the upper echelons of society. Her writing were for a while discussed as 'popular fiction' in universities in India and the west, and she is a woman who lives life on her own terms. What we realise in this discussion of contemporary fiction of women in India is that a distinct feminist trend is in the process of evolution today. We have to see the direction it might take.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to familiarise ourselves with the Feminist movement in the west and understand the concept of Feminism. We then saw how literature with its myth making and iconographic function became an area of special interest for the feminist movement and the feminist literary theories that came out of it. We learnt that a feminist literature would need a female aesthetic and that this was still in the process of becoming, even in the west. Evolving a feminist canon in Indian English writing would be a formidable task in the absence of both a defined aesthetic and avowedly feminist writing. However, concentrating on fiction we found no dearth of women writers engaging with a female universe, its specific issues, its special modes of perception, its silences and its speech. As a first step towards evolving a canon we discussed some of the milestones in the domain of women's writing in English, in India.

3.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is the function of a feminist literary critic?
2. What kind of literature may be called feminist?
3. What are the issues and problems in the construction of a feminist canon of Indian English writing?
4. Using the works of any two writers discussed above say how they contribute to the body of women's literature in India.

UNIT 4 THE DALIT CANON

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Defining a Dalit Canon
4.3 Who Writes Dalit Literature?
4.4 What Is Dalit Literature?
4.5 Dalit Literature and the Dalit Movement
4.6 Evaluation of Dalit Literature by Mainstream and Dalit Critics
4.7 Towards Dalit Aesthetics
4.8 Let Us Sum Up
4.9 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall define the concept of Dalit Literature, and address crucial questions on who are the Dalits, who writes Dalit Literature, what is Dalit Literature and then examine the Dalit Movement in some detail. We shall also attempt an aesthetics of Dalit Literature.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Dalit literature is literature written by Dalits with the consciousness of being Dalit and that which deals with the experience of life as a Dalit. The term was first used in 1958 at the first ever conference of Dalit literature in Bombay. Its identity lies in its intrinsic 'dalitness' and its aim is clearly to make Dalit society aware of its servitude and to speak of its pain and anguish to the society ordered on the *varna system* (caste system actually based on the division of labour in ancient times). How does one begin to speak of a Dalit canon? For, in speaking of a canon we are in the presence of an authoritative corpus of work and writers who are valued. The question that emerges immediately is: The Dalit Canon - valued by whom and for what? Perhaps, it is possible for the moment to answer only the latter. Let us begin with a working definition of Dalit Literature.

4.2 DEFINING A DALIT CANON

The definition of a Dalit canon must wait for some time till we grasp a few general things. The reason is less to do with the literary value of Dalit writing than with the nature of the impulses that produce Dalit literature in the first place. It has also to do with the fact that this literature shows enough regional variation depending on the shape that the Dalit movement has taken in various regions to merit a region- by-region discussion about evaluation and canonisation. Further, as some scholars and critics have pointed out, the Dalit canon cannot claim to represent a single Dalit consciousness because many Dalit sub-groups and women's voices are missing from it. The task of evolving a canon is a mammoth one especially in a new strain of literature like this and certainly lies beyond the scope of this unit. As students of MA English, we face fundamental difficulties in accessing Dalit literature because very little of it is translated into English. Students who read regional languages will not necessarily be accessing the same works in the original and different linguistic abilities will offer different selections.

This unit shall for this reason deal with broad and general contours of Dalit writing without dwelling on the specific writers. It shall however, attempt to bring in the productions in English wherever required. Along with different anthologies of translations in English, the Dalits have produced a tremendous amount of literature in Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Punjabi and Gujarati. Having said that, it must be emphasised that these limitations should not deter us from taking the first steps to understand the fundamental qualities for which this still nascent but powerful and convulsive literature is valued.

In order to understand the above, we shall take you through the following steps: Firstly, who writes Dalit literature, or how is a Dalit writer defined? Second, what are the impulses that produce this movement in literature? In addition, does it have intellectual roots in traditional literature? Third, how has Dalit literature been evaluated by mainstream literary critics and Dalit critics? Fourth, what is the Dalit literary theory and aesthetic standards? Fifth, can we talk of authoritative voices within the literary and critical production of Dalit literature? Finally, is a "canon" possible or desirable at all? Dalit writers question the nature of any canon that does not apply Dalit aesthetics as the standard of evaluation of their writing. A canon is necessarily exclusionist by nature, evolved by a selected group of people who are entrusted with the selection for a host of reasons that are 'literary' but often political, social and historical. It is intrinsically reactionary, by virtue of the authority it seeks to impose, in order to encourage or contain cultural production. It is thus hegemonic in nature. It would indeed be ironical to organise a body of literature like that of the Dalits who defies every laid canon and indeed turns it upside down.

4.3 WHO WRITES DALIT LITERATURE?

It is important to ask this question and know how it has been answered because of the polemics that it has generated. Here I begin by referring to the now famous and oft-quoted anecdote, a proceeding in one of the various literary conferences on Dalit literature. The mainstream Hindi writer **Kashiram Singh** arguing against a Dalit identity for literary production says, "You don't have to be a horse to write about a horse!" To this, the Dalit writer **Omprakash Valmiki** replies:

> *Yes, you can write about the horse, his external contours, his canter and neighs but when at the end of the day the same horse, having done his share of laboring, exhausted and hungry, stands tied to a post in the stable, what can you write about how he feels or what emotions he harbours towards his master or about his inner pain.*

The issue here as you may see is not only one of authenticity but, indeed the articulation of a different order of experience and perception. That is why attention has often been drawn to the meaning of the word, 'dalit'. "Dalit" means crushed, ground, split, etc. and describes the living conditions for centuries of a large group of people in India. Metaphorically, it extends to the meaning of oppressed, exploited, hated, rejected, tortured, dejected, deprived and so on, and has been accepted and assimilated into the modern Dalit vocabulary in preference to the *Gandhian Harijan*.

The rejection of the *Gandhian Harijan* is indeed the beginning of our understanding of a Dalit identity. Gandhi thought of the untouchables as an intrinsic part of the Hindu community. The appellation of *Harijan* or people of *Hari*, gave them in his eyes, a special place as god's chosen people. He made several statements about how he himself was a *Harijan* by choice and opposed the demand for separate electorates for the Dalits with a fast unto death till the English and **Ambedkar** catapulted in the **Poona Pact of 1932**. The Dalits resent **Gandhi**'s pressure and the consequent denial of separate electorates for them that kept them out of political power for decades. They reject the Hindu pantheon and its exploitative and discriminating icons. The

appellation *Harijan* is an acknowledgement of a position and status that is meaningless to them and they want nothing to do with it since they cannot turn to the Hindu religion for solace or comfort or claim an ancient Hindu past with pride. The word Dalit became popular as a marker of identity in 1972 when the *Dalit Panthers of Bombay*, a group of young Dalit activists, popularised its use.

In this context the meaning of being a Dalit assumes special overtones and significance. The Dalit is one whose untouchability has been made a law; one who is forced to do hard and dirty tasks; whose education and entrepreneurship is prohibited by the law-givers; who has been pronounced socially unsuitable by the *savarnas*. The meaning has also been extended to include the Marxist meaning of dispossessed. Thus the meaning expands beyond untouchables, backward castes and classes, Buddhists, converts to include even women and all those who are situated in the bottommost rungs of society. Some Dalit writers have taken the definition of Dalit to include all those who are mentioned in the list in the **Indian Constitution, of Scheduled Castes and Tribes**, including nomadic peoples. People who have been notified criminals because they belong to a particular tribe, the **Adivasi**, who is exploited and forced to remain in the forest, the nomads who have no space to call their own, are all Dalits. The struggle, the indignities they suffer, the continual and continuing oppression even after 'independence' are all things that a *savarna* writer can never understand. So only a Dalit can articulate that experience, voice that pain and anguish, make his protest and explore the avenues of transcending that situation.

In the anecdote of the horse mentioned earlier, we can see literary opinion clearly divided into two categories regarding the definition of a Dalit writer. The first, coming from established canonical positions, traditional, *savarna* (a term we need to familiarise ourselves with) is that one does not need to be a Dalit to write about the Dalit experience. Sensitive and sensitised writers in the mainstream for decades have written about the oppressed and down - trodden untouchables. Indeed, they must be a presence in pastoral writing, in *grameen sahitya* as Dalits form a part of the village. So there is no need for a separate category of writing called Dalit literature.

Dalits overturn these assumptions. They assert that the untouchable is beyond the pale of *savarna* society in practice as well as in theory. Their living space is outside the village. Their humiliation, deprivation and degradation are sanctioned, indeed prescribed by the Hindu religion, its holy books and lawgivers. Thus, even while forging intellectual links with downtrodden peoples all over the world, (the Blacks, for instance), Dalits emphasise the space for social mobility that is available to those *Others*. Even the black slave has the possibility of buying his freedom and is not considered untouchable. The untouchables have never been allowed to know freedom nor given the opportunity to transcend their situation, a situation that is defined by the accident of birth. Even this latter is sought to be justified by the Hindu doctrine of *Karma* which says that people who have performed evil deeds in past lives are born as untouchables and condemned to a life of servitude, humiliation and deprivation. Only one who has lived that experience, one who has felt the physical and emotional violence of the daily torture of the Dalit can write Dalit literature.

4.4 WHAT IS DALIT LITERATURE?

Many critics have attempted to define Dalit Literature and a spectrum of opinion has emerged. Dalit literature is one in which the Dalit himself expresses his own anguish and depicts the essence of living life as one. It is not art for art's sake but the literature of lived experience. It has variously been called *Mass Literature* and *Literature of Action*.

It foregrounds human values and depicts resentment and the struggle born out of it against structures of power. It raises questions about the status and situation of the Dalits. Dalit literature is also considered to be a scientific, meaningful and sensitive intervention in the world of letters. One critic goes as far as to say that all that is

scientific, polemical and free of the givens of tradition may be called Dalit literature. It has been seen as the face of revolution, because it believes that one who has been, on counts of religion or other causes, economically, socially and culturally exploited is the only one who can bring about revolution. We see that regardless of how it has been defined, Dalit literature puts a human at its centre, registers a strong protest against the frames of caste, race and tribe and believes in human liberty.

There are many critics who trace a long history of Dalit literature. They see the seeds of a Dalit consciousness in the poetry and songs of saints and devotional poets. The poem of **Hira Dom**, the first Dalit piece of writing and **Swami Achyutanand's** social movement and writings are considered revealing a given oppressive social structure. After independence too, many Dalit poets wrote sensitively under the influence of **Gandhi. Harit, Mataprasad, Mansharam Vidrohi** among them, deserve special mention. Thinking traditionally of the intellectual roots of Dalit Literature, we can logically come up with the names of **Raidas** (a cobbler), **Kabir** (a weaver) and **Tukaram** (a tanner), among others. Appropriated by the regional canons, these names are associated with the *Bhakti Movement* that allowed for reforms at least in thought if not in social organisation. Further, these poets sought personal redemption in devotion to what are primarily Hindu gods and spirituality. The contemporary Dalit position towards these figures is however ambivalent On the one hand they are acknowledged as the first recorded voices of the lower castes, and on the other, they are seen to have been co-opted into the dominant -hegemonic vision of the prevailing religion that embrace Hindu deities.

It is really **Dr B R Amdbedkar, Jotirao Phule** and others who have shaped modern Dalit consciousness. The realm of the social and political in the case of Dalit literature is inextricably linked with its aesthetics, and by extension works towards the construction of a canon. Once the source of inspiration of Dalit literature is located in the vision of **Ambedkar**, its essence becomes self-explanatory. On 14 October 1956, **Dr B R Ambedkar** renounced the Hindu religion and converted to Buddhism. He took twenty-two vows on the occasion that has become the credo and cultural belief of Dalit literature today. Dalit consciousness derives its energy from **Dr Ambedkar's** world-view and philosophy. Dalit writers agree that their literature must reflect:

- *Acceptance of **Ambedkar's** philosophy on the issues of freedom and liberty*
- *Belief in the **Buddha's** atheism and non-belief in the soul, his rationalism and his opposition of hollow ritualism*
- *Opposition to the Varna system, Casteism and Communalism*
- *Support for Brotherhood and not Separatism*
- *Commitment to Freedom and Social Justice*
- *Commitment to Social Transformation*
- *Opposition to Capitalism*
- *Opposition to Feudalism and Brahmanism*
- *Opposition to Hegemony and Domination*
- *Diagreement with **Ramachandra Shukla's** definition of the epic*
- *Rejection of Traditional Aesthetic Standards*
- *Partisanship for a Varnaless and Classless Society*
- *Opposition to Linguistic Chauvinism and Sexism.*

4.5 DALIT LITERATURE AND THE DALIT MOVEMENT

Once we understand that Dalit literature is born out of a context, the description of the Dalit writer above ceases to be a wish fulfilment or a figment of Dalit fantasy. We understand that a discussion of Dalit literature is not possible unless we grasp the

broad parameters of the Dalit movement. This is so because the Dalit movement is not only a social movement but also a political one, with its sights set on revolution. Dalit issues in literature are thus not merely descriptive or reformative but revolutionary. The Dalit movement seeks a transformation of the structure of society and moves towards egalitarian existence, social justice and dignity, fraternity and economic progress for the Dalits. It produces a literature that reflects these aims. It must be stated here that the Dalit movement begins at different times in different parts of the country and shapes itself differently, depending on the leadership and historical and sociological parameters of the region. I would like to draw your attention to two regions here – Maharashtra and the Hindi belt. Marathi records the first movement in Dalit literature in the 1950s, and the Dalit movement begins as a revolutionary phenomenon in Maharashtra. The Hindi belt saw a relatively late Dalit awakening and its movement remained reformative in nature. A brief detailed study would demonstrate why it is not possible to make a 'one size fits all' evaluation of Dalit literature

The progressive ideas of **Jotirao Phule** and the intellectual leadership of **B R Ambedkar** inspired Dalit writing in Marathi. It was born out of a grassroots movement which touched the life of the village and was used as an instrument of transformation through folk tales, folk art, theatre, meetings and so on. The activist poet **Daya Pawar**, aware that the Dalits were illiterate, would take songs to the community to awaken it. The reality was that the Dalit leadership here sought systemic transformation and not merely social reforms. There are substantial reasons why the Dalit movement first took roots in Bombay. It is a fact that the education of the Dalits began with the British. Bombay then was the great prosperous, commercial centre. It was natural for it to become a hub of cultural exchange and crossovers of the ancient and the modern. The Dalit Literary Movement in Maharashtra made two historical contributions; Firstly, it fulfilled the cultural needs and aspirations of the Dalits by providing them with poems, folk songs and musical instruments, in other words, a cultural tradition. Then, it created a radical context for the workings of the emancipation movement under the leadership of **Baba Ambedkar** and those after him. The few literate and educated among the Dalits, under **Ambedkar**'s leadership took to writing and literature. Thus, the movement for Dalit consciousness in Maharashtra struck at the grassroots, and forged ahead with dignity to demand political participation. It did so on the strength of education, struggle, organisation and its literature.

In comparison with Maharashtra and Marathi literature, the Hindi belt was slow to develop a Dalit consciousness even though the Dalit here has been embedded in the most wretched conditions and exploitative machinery for centuries. Dalit consciousness was still caught in the process of reform. The voices in literature were few and far between, silenced often by fear and weak at other times by threats from the powers that be. In the hurry to establish a leader of the stature of **Ambedkar,** petty leaders from the Dalit communities, tied to the caste system emerged. Even their own communities did not support them. In fact, Dalits had internalised the caste system, in spite of the reformist movements in northern Uttar Pradesh of **Swami Dayanad Saraswati** and the 19th Century reformer, **Swami Achyutanand.** The latter had met **Ambedkar** in 1928 and acknowledged him as his leader and the representative of the entire community of Dalits. **Achyutanand** in 1927 had announced the demand for complete freedom for Dalits in India. He wrote volumes but his writings were prevented by the prevalent system from being either disseminated or published.

The lacuna in the movements in the Hindi belt was their reformist nature with roots in religion. They did not challenge the *varna system* itself but sought to end discrimination on the basis of caste, keeping the caste hierarchy intact. Thus it did not become a liberation movement. The Maharashtra experience was on the contrary, a revolutionary one. There, **Ambedkar** had hit out at *Manuvaad* and had consigned the *Manusmriti* to flames. His approach was scientific and transformational, using education, struggle and organisation as arms instead of religion. This made the crucial difference to literary production, and indeed to the movement in the two

regions. The Hindi belt remained terrorised under the shadow of feudal and religious power structures. Reform movements had only a limited success in a few areas. Others were untouched. But in the region of Agra as early as 1950 and through 1960, **Ambedkar**'s writings were translated and disseminated and they influenced literary production. Significant works were published and there have been many names, in spite of the fact that the literary establishment of Hindi largely ignored them. Creators of the Hindi canon, like **Ramchandra Shukla**, an undying fan of **Tulsidas**, would not touch them. There was no leadership or strong movement to force attention on Dalit literature.

Thus, we see that there is a connection between the Dalit Movement and Dalit literature. We see further, that the movement does not take shape in the same way in every region. We also see that it was **Ambedkar**'s writings, movement and life that made the modern Dalit consciousness and, consequently, its literature possible.

4.6 EVALUATION OF DALIT LITERATURE BY MAINSTREAM AND DALIT CRITICS

The act of evaluation of literature central to the construction of a canon. Yet we have seen how evaluation of Dalit literature cannot be an objective appraisal based on an established theory of aesthetics, in a situation that varies from literature to literature and region to region. We can begin to understand how culturally and politically loaded is the act of evaluation, especially, in the case of the cultural production of marginalised peoples. We have learnt that Dalit Literature is a highly self-conscious literature, written with specific aims and goals. Can it be evaluated with the touchstone of classical aesthetics? Are different yardsticks necessary? Is it in the interest of Art to have them? Dalit literature has proclaimed its benchmarks. Would it be fair not to admit those into the process of evaluation? And finally, who decides what to write and how to review? This last problematises the act of evaluation and creation of canons as nothing else does.

Let us see the ways in which Dalit literature has been received and consider its relationship to the dominant canons. The attempt to club Dalit literary production with *'grameen sahitya'* and reform literature of the *Bhakti Movement* has already been mentioned above. Thus the need of a separate identity for Dalit literature has been questioned. Having reluctantly granted the category of Dalit Literature, however, other kinds of challenges to it have emerged.

Ever since Dalit literature found acceptance in the 1950s it has been repeatedly attacked for using the mundane to produce pain. Dalit critics have argued that if pleasure can be the end of literature, why can pain not be so? As far as the mundaneness is concerned Dalit critics have raised the question of what is more important – form or content? If the content can cause pain then it must be said that the form becomes secondary, or that content itself is the literary value of that work of art. The locales of Dalit Literature have provoked critics to say that the life in the hovels of the untouchables or the lower castes cannot be worked into the grand narrative of novels. Dalit critics have demonstrated otherwise from works of both Dalits and non-dalit writers.

Some critics have stated that since Dalits have been deprived of all cultural development they lack both the language and the skills required to produce works of art. Dalits have replied that the corollary to that is that all non-Dalits produce works of art. Mainstream non-Dalit Critics have found the anger and resentment of Dalit Literature to be false and their laments grotesque and ridiculous. **Limbale** quotes **Ambedkar** to refute their impatience with Dalit anger and expression of resentment. He had said that the Dalits for centuries have been the most meek and humble of creatures and did not need lessons in humility. It's only when all else has failed that

they have been forced to struggle because they have not been permitted their basic human rights. Dalit writers have been advised to go beyond negativity, resentment and revenge.

How must Dalit Literature be evaluated? Opinion is divided even among non-Dalit critics. One group insists on applying canonical critical tools and rules of criticism arguing that Art must be evaluated as Art, and that everything else that is brought to bear upon it is extraneous and false. It is said that the values enshrined in Art are eternal and immutable. Dalit Literature too must be judged by the independent and autonomous touchstones of artistic evaluation. Further, the charge against Dalit literature from the dominant canons has been that it is propagandist in content, univocal in expression, resentful in tone and obscene and unformed in language. Also, that it concentrates on the autobiographical form as its mainstay. It is argued that an autobiography cannot be taken to be the voice of a people, or a shared experience.

Another group questions the judging of Dalit literature by so-called eternal values. This raises uncomfortable questions regarding the eternal nature of values. Who decides them to be so? How are literary benchmarks constituted? Are these indigenous to Indian literary traditions or an application of western, particularly English critical canons? Do these benchmarks change with cultural changes? If they do, then under what circumstances do changes occur? Is it possible for critics to have a prototype, a standard measure of values?

Dalit writers agree with the second voice. They find the dominant canon outdated and inadequately equipped to evaluate Dalit writing. They believe that the role of criticism is to analyse, differentiate, point out lacunae and indicate the trajectory of the work under consideration. Not one but many yardsticks must be applied to consider the work holistically and sensitively. Dalit writing is sociological and the perspectives and methodology of sociology must be applied in an appraisal of Dalit writing. Dalit writers feel that their writing has not been formally and correctly evaluated. To do so it would be necessary for critics to analyse the import of the social picture, the language, the idiom and oral and cultural traditions. Critics evaluate an ignorance of these factors and criticism is discussion around plot summaries, characters and consideration of the work as Art according to orthodox canons. There is no recognition of the fact that literature as a product of the Imagination is different from experiential writing.

Dalit critics also attack other successful Dalit writers who are ready to review for publishers, who attend seminars, chair discussions and speak in conferences about the works of upcoming writers, but are silent when their own fraternity produces a new book. They too have not contributed to the serious work of evaluation. Dalit writers must be wary of both, unqualified hostility and unqualified appreciation. Some Dalit writers and critics have objected to the baring of the Dalit soul and exposure in full public view of the daily indignities of a Dalit's life in Dalit writings. They have expressed apprehension that such revelations will further demean them in the eyes of society. They look for ways of co-option into the mainstream. This objection has been met with a sustained resistance from both Dalit and non-Dalit writers and critics.

In this scenario it is not surprising that the idea of a Dalit canon remains obscure and uncertain. What has evolved however, is an idea of Dalit aesthetics and a literary theory which articulates the central concerns and the destiny of Dalit Literature.

4.7 TOWARDS DALIT AESTHETICS

Dalit writers and critics have felt the need to educate their readership about the difference of Dalit writing and the definitive and decisive nature of its departure from traditional and mainstream literary concerns. Along with this is also the desire to

provide the benchmarks of Dalit writing to aspiring writers in the community. No one recognises better than the Dalit writer the complete absence of a written tradition of Dalit values. Serious critics like **Limbale** and **Valmiki** have helped to evolve what may be called a Dalit literary theory. In doing so, they have addressed the various ways in which Dalit literature has been denigrated by canonical criticism and only half understood by sympathetic readers. Dalit aesthetics articulates the ideological position of the Dalit writer, draws up the aims and goals of Dalit literature and defines its basic credo. Dalit theoreticians are aware that Dalit aesthetics will evolve only over a period of time as Dalit life and consciousness take stock of the realities of existence in time and space. The Dalit aesthetic is imbued with Dalit consciousness and a specific value system forms its basis. These values are reflected in Dalit literature. **Valmiki** catalogues them as:

- Equality, liberty, fraternity, the feeling of justice lived, the content rooted in feeling and given meaningful expression
- Negation of the efforts to cloak reality in the garb of religion and culture
- Rejection of imaginary allusions, for example *amrit*, as a symbol of a sweet drink which no one has tasted
- To recognise that the values of life are subject to the flux of time
- A free expression of authentic feelings anchored in empirical experience
- To see words as medium. Unable to construct pretentious rituals of words
- Privileging content. Expression and skilful construction are secondary. The content must be serious and meaningful and should be made so by basing it on the philosophy of **Dr Ambedkar**.

It is clear from the stated world-view and aesthetic position of Dalit writers, believing as they do in the changing nature of values in an ever-shifting reality, that they do not and cannot believe in canons. But there is awareness that Dalit aesthetics must grapple with some problems before it can evolve into a credo. **Limbale** examines these. He insists on the need to find ways to instrumentalise Dalit aesthetics, and use it as a weapon against reactionary and Brahmanical criticism. Where traditional aesthetics sees the end of aesthetic experience to be pleasure, in Dalit literature it is pain and anguish. Its effect on the reader is to make him restless and angry. How is the revolutionary consciousness of Dalit literature and aesthetic experience to be reconciled? Traditional aesthetics based on the *Rasa Theory* does not admit into its corpus the *Rasa* of Dalit Literature and thus remains inadequate to judge it. Can there be an expansion of the ambit of the *Rasas*? Dalit Literature is not artistic or entertaining, so its art cannot be judged by the standards of traditional criticism. Dalit aesthetics must debate what is beautiful and valuable in its literature. How can Beauty and Ugliness be differentiated?

First, Beauty has to be defined. Not through the imagination and rules which put Beauty in the realm of the mystical and spiritual but by a consideration of the materiality of the work of art. The excellence of a Dalit literary product will depend on how profoundly it impacts the reader, through a consideration of how well is **Ambedkar**'s vision woven into the content. In this context, **Limbale** insists that important as it is to understand that the reader is a protagonist of the text and has expectations from it which are fulfilled or disrupted, so is the creator. And Dalit literature cannot be understood or appreciated without some knowledge of the contex in which the work is produced. The Dalit writer gives precedence to issues of his/her society over his/her readership. S/he does not create with the casual reader in mind. S/he wants to make the aesthete travel with him/ her into the depths of his/her experience. Freedom is a greater virtue than pleasure and Beauty for the Dalit writer.

Limbale states that writers must be proved by their authenticity of feeling. These must be universalised. They should have the power to transcend local boundaries. The experience of the author must seem fresh and urgent across time. The 1990s onwards, there has been a widespread acknowledgement that Dalit Literature is a force to reckon with. The reticence and hostility that had prevailed in the early years

is relenting and that has opened up the possibility of a dialogue between Dalit and mainstream literature.

4.8 LET US SUM UP

Dalit literature can be assessed only in the context of a complex web of social, political and economic relationships. Dalit literature as a corpus grows out of the Dalit movement and that is an ongoing process that influences the contours of literary production. The writer has to be a Dalit for the work to qualify as Dalit literature. Only then can the Dalit consciousness be reflected authentically. **Ambedkar's** world-view, philosophy and life has shaped the modern Dalit consciousness and consequently, made its literature possible. Dalit literature is a highly self-conscious literature, written with specific aims and goals. Dalit writers question the nature of assessment that does not apply Dalit aesthetics as the standard of evaluation of their writing. The realm of the social and political, in the case of Dalit literature is inextricably linked with its aesthetics. Critics like **Limbale** and **Valmiki** have helped to proclaim what may be called a theory of Dalit aesthetics. Dalit aesthetics articulates the ideological position of the Dalit writer, draws up the aims and goals of Dalit literature and defines its basic credo. There is an acute awareness that Dalit aesthetics can be elaborated only over a period of time. It is premature to talk in terms of a Dalit canon. Dalit writers resist the notion of a canon in their belief that values are not immutable and eternal and are subject to social and cultural changes in time, all of which must be reflected in the work of art. Mention also needs to be made of some of the key figures in Dalit Literature. However, it is difficult to talk about key figures in Dalit literature because most writers in different regions are still writing path-breaking texts. Only a tentative list is presented below, it should be noted that this list is not an exhaustive one.

Dr B R Ambedkar
Jotiraos Phule
Daya Pawar
Kancha Ilaiah
D R Nagaraj
Dr Sharankumar Limbale
Omprakash Valmiki

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. How has the traditional mainstream critic evaluated Dalit literature? How have Dalit writers resisted this evaluation?

2. What are the salient features of Dalit writing? Do you agree that only a Dalit-born can write Dalit literature?

3. Dalit literature is a revolutionary movement that looks at social transformation. Examine this statement with reference to the text mentioned in the unit.

4. What is the importance of a 'Dalit consciousness' in the consideration of Dalit aesthetics?

5. Describe the Dalit literary theory as elaborated by Limbale and Valmiki.

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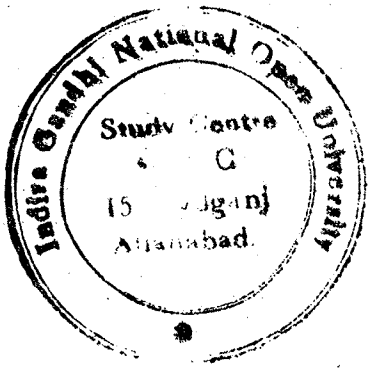
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8. Kapur, Manju., (1998), *Difficult Daughters,* (Penguin: New Delhi)
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3. Dangle, Arjun., (Ed), (1992), 'Introduction', In *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature,*(Orient Longman: Bombay)
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MAEN 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA



Block

8

DECOLONISING THE MIND

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block takes up the issue of cultural decolonisation as its title suggests – that is, decolonising the mind rather than socio-political structures. The field of Postcolonial Studies analyses, broadly, the ways in which colonialism functioned to establish and maintain domination, and the consequences of those practices even after decolonisation. One of the tools that colonialism used was cultural domination, or colonising the mind of the colonised in order to ensure acceptance and passivity. The resistance movements to colonial oppression resulted in independence and nationhood in the colonised countries. But the process of resisting cultural colonisation still continues; thus, the importance in Postcolonial Studies of interrogating the decolonising of the mind.

Unit One takes up **Edward Said**'s seminal work, *Orientalism*. **Said** was one of the first theorists to link politics and culture, colonisation and literature. In this process he has transgressed the boundaries between academics and politics, as well as the boundaries between different academic disciplines. The important contribution that **Said** makes is in insisting that the foregrounding of the politicisation of knowledge does not degrade it; rather, it opens out a multiplicity of possibilities for further research. **Edward Said** is rightly credited with opening out the field of Postcolonial Studies. **Unit Two** studies **Aijaz Ahmad**'s essay, *Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'* under the title of Literature and Nationalism. This essay, questions many of the categories into which the postcolonial world is divided. **Ahmad** argues against the very premises on which the Three World Theory is based, especially in **Frederic Jameson**'s essay, *Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital*. **Ahmad**'s major contribution to Postcolonial Studies through this essay is to deconstruct the First World/Third World binary and to show that global capitalism with its uneven distribution of wealth and the movements of resistance to capitalism that are spread throughout the world make us inhabit not three worlds but one world.

Unit Three looks at the concept of decolonisation of the mind and how it relates to the context of the cultural domain of colonialism. It looks at the manner in which culture dominates literature, language and history. It will also indicate the fact that decolonising the mind is a continuous process and how resistance may be organised against the forces of neo-colonialism. **Unit Four** deals with two texts that are illustrations of Civilisational Conflicts in Literaturre. These two texts are **Chinua Achebe**'s radical reading of the canonical novel, **Joseph Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* and **Abdul R JanMohamed**'s reading of **E M Forster**'s *A Passage to India*. **Achebe**'s essay, *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, relentlessly attacks the systematic racist ideology that shapes the novel. **Achebe** re-reads *Heart of Darkness* as a text that is invested in constructing Africa and Africans as the *Other* in order to assert the ascendancy of Europe. **Unit Five** takes up **Namvar Singh**'s essay *Decolonising the Indian Mind* as indicative of the need to Resist Colonisation and Re-colonisation and is roughly concerned with the issues that **Ngugi** has raised in his book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, **Said**'s theory of the West's Othering in *Orientalism* and **Ahmad**'s analysis of the Three World Theory and the category of Third World Literature.

All the essays in this Block share some crucial beliefs and attitudes. All five authors are actively engaged in critiquing the neo-imperialism fostered by global, multi-national capitalism. They all share in the belief that the legacy of cultural colonialism remains fundamentally unchallenged due to the cultural hegemony of the metropolitan centre. Even the voices of resistance to this hegemony are incorporated into the mainstream culture. They all strongly advocate the need to be alert to the dangers of these developments and to continuously fight against this cultural domination.

UNIT 1 ORIENTALISM AND AFTER

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Defining Orientalism
1.3 The Functioning of Orientalism
  1.3.1 Abstract Knowledge and Realistic Comprehension
1.4 Said's Methodology
  1.4.1 Said's Audiences
  1.4.2 Said's Palestinian Background
1.5 Critique of Orientalism
1.6 Said's Afterword to Orientalism
1.7 Let Us Sum Up
1.8 Questions
1.9 Glossary

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to examine the concept of Orientalism as propounded by **Edward Said.** In the process of examining the theory we shall define Orientalism, look at the way it operates and analyse the motivation behind this cultural- theoretical phenomenon. We will also trace **Said**'s line of argument in order to follow the links between how he shapes the disparate sectors that have contributed to Orientalism as a discourse. We will look at the methodology **Said** adopted, the audiences he wrote for and his own personal location that motivated him to evolve this theory. In conclusion we will attempt a critique of his theory, discuss the loopholes in his argument pointed out by critics in the last twenty years and also look at the *Afterword* to *Orientalism* that **Edward Said** added later to this book.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Edward Said's *Orientalism* has been credited with opening out the field of Postcolonial Studies / Colonial Discourse Analysis because of its persistent linking together of the colonial experience with the Empire, and of politics with culture. It has served as an agency to the formerly marginalised peoples and has allowed the Empire to write back. *Orientalism* was published in 1978. This work offered a critique of oriental studies or what is also, known as the construction of knowledge of the Orient by the West. **Said**'s book generated a lot of hostility among scholars of the Orient who accused **Said** of crossing the line between arts and politics. But many who found its iconoclastic violation of boundaries and conventions in unsettling received ideas of Orient and Occident liberating and enabling greeted it with immense enthusiasm.

1.2 DEFINING ORIENTALISM

What do we understand by Orientalism? **Said** gives us three definitions in the *Introduction* to his book. It would be appropriate that we examine each definition before we attempt an overall characterisation of Orientalism. **Said** states the initial meaning to be the following:

> *Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (p.2)*

What is notable in this definition is the number of disciplines that **Said** includes in the study of Orientalism, pointing to the fact that they are all interlinked rather than separate entities. Thus, the study of humankind, the study of the origin, development and structure of societies, the study of the past and the study of languages, obviously share a great deal of common ground, but construct different kinds of knowledge structures. **Said**'s attempt to define Orientalism begins by transgressing academically sanctified disciplinary boundaries by claiming that academic classifications should be disregarded when their subject matter is the Orient. This takes us into the next definition.

The second definition that **Said** gives is a more general one, though it still pertains to the academy; **Said** says:

> *Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". (p.2)*

With the second definition **Said** moves to a much broader area of the academy – the study of the very nature of knowledge, and the study of existence itself. The parameters of the study of Orientalism then become almost limitless, and open the floodgates for writers from a variety of disciplines:

> *Poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and imperial administrators". (p.2)*

We are now moving from the theoretical space of academics out into the political realm of administration. The scope of writers who can be brought into the purview of Orientalist writing extends to include creative artists and administrators as well. The internal academic boundaries that were transgressed in the first definition now take a step further to violate the boundary between academics and politics, opening up a number of possibilities for studying Orientalism. **Said** now moves out of the academy and its related disciplines into the world of power, authority and control in his third meaning. This definition is located in a historical, material context and articulates his thesis more clearly:

> *Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (p.3)*

A corporate institution, by definition, refers to a large group of people that perform multiple functions in different fields but act as a single entity. The academy that has thus, disseminated knowledge of the Orient is now replaced with a corporate institution whose function and powers are far more than the academy could ever have. Orientalism's main feature is that it is constituted of the West and it deals with domination of the Orient through every socio-political institution available to it.

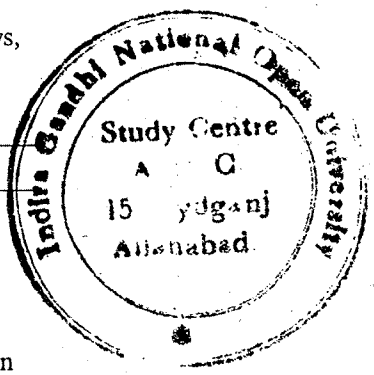
To structure the field of Orientalism, **Said** uses **Foucault**'s notion of a discourse, that is, of constituting a discursive field that is able to unite disparate materials as an area of study. **Said** argues that it is only by examining Orientalism as a systematic discipline that it is possible to understand that European culture has not just managed but also produced the Orient "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically,

scientifically, and imaginatively". *Orientalism* tries to show how the West achieved this, but more important than that, it also asserts that the reason this immense project was undertaken was because Europe "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self." (p.3) That is, the Occident needed to produce the Orient as a means of defining itself as a superior power.

Said makes one more attempt to define the enormous scope of Orientalism later in the *Introduction*. He does not consider the institutions or the areas of study/practice that can be seen as orientalist; he looks at the methods by which it is produced and established, or the modes through which it is expressed. He defines it as "a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness...an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interest'...a certain *will* or *intention* to understand...." (p.12 original emphasis) He concludes by clarifying his argument thus:

> *Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world. (p.12)*

Here, Orientalism is defined as a dimension of the modern culture of the West as manifest in its politics and academic disciplines, with the express aim to gain authority over the Orient. Having defined the scope of Orientalism in different ways, let us now examine how Orientalism works as a discursive field of study.



1.3 THE FUNCTIONING OF ORIENTALISM

We have to see how a large number of disciplines, interests, practices, and power groups function together in concert under Orientalism without a written contract. **Said** uses **Gramsci** and his idea of cultural hegemony to explain how Orientalism functions effectively. **Antonio Gramsci**'s analysis of society distinguished between civil and political society. **Gramsci** argued that civil society is made up of voluntary affiliation, in which he listed schools, families and unions. Membership to these units is voluntary and affiliation to the "influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons" is by consent, not domination or coercion. Culture operates within civil society and the cultural leadership that emerges through the process of some cultures dominating over others is what **Gramsci** calls 'hegemony'. **Said** points to the Gramscian notion of the cultural hegemony of the industrial West to show how Orientalism is produced and maintained in a historical, socio-political context.

The move from the last definition of Orientalism to **Gramsci**'s formulation of cultural hegemony is a smooth one. **Said** locates the central idea that defines the culture of Europe as "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures." (p.7) Orientalism arises out of Europe's need to identify the *Other* over whom it can assert its superiority in a neat binary of "us" against "them". The binary of *Self / Other* is not a static one; Orientalism's power and longevity is founded on what **Said** terms its strategy of "flexible *positional* superiority". (p.7 original emphasis) As a result of this strategy it is possible to have series of relationships and circumstances between the West and the Orient in which the West always emerges superior. **Said** points to the historical circumstances that facilitated this assertion of superiority of culture – that of Europe's extraordinary ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present. The economic and political situation of Europe and the Orient allowed diverse people to be present in the Orient and to speak about it – that is, to construct knowledge about it – with very little resistance from the Orient itself.

The linguistic appeal of *Orientalism* lies in the range of occupations, disciplines and institutions it is able to catalogue in its examination of the complex, multi-layered formation of this field: "the scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, [or] the soldier" (p.7), a list of people that includes scientific and intellectual pursuits, religion, business and the military, occupations that are not usually seen in relation with each other as sharing common grounds. While it is well known that the trader and the missionary were often followed by the soldier in the process of colonisation (as with the **East India Company**), or that religion and business were given safe entry by the army in colonised areas, the idea that they all worked towards the common goal of orientalising it is novel.

The emerging theories of mankind and the universe in anthropology, sociology, linguistics, race and history are catalogued and documented further by **Said**. Postcolonial theory has examined in detail how each of these disciplines and the theories that emerged from their 'academic research' functioned to support and justify colonisation while maintaining their sanctity as pure, apolitical scholarship. It is important to remember that all these theories of the Orient emerged from what **Gramsci** calls the civil society and thus illustrate "Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century". (p.7) **Said** is not concerned with the state institutions of the army, the police and the central bureaucracy, which form the political society and function through domination.

1.3.1 Abstract Knowledge and Realistic Comprehension

We discern a few gaps in **Said**'s theoretical mapping of divisions in the contemporary world. **Said** is able to bring in such an impressive array of socio-political institutions in his study of Orientalism because he shows scant respect for the self-preserving boundaries they have drawn around them in academic study and research. We noted in the second definition of Orientalism that **Said** has advanced from transgressing boundaries of academic disciplines to violating those drawn between academics and politics. While a quarter of a century later we are well aware that the nexus between politics and culture is one that is used to gain authority and establish hegemonic control over society, **Said** needed to labour the point to convince the academy that saw anything influenced by politics as tainted.

In **Said**, the distinction between pure and political knowledge is an extremely tenuous one. **Said** spends the time and effort on establishing this fact because he is defining Orientalism as a study of politics and culture, or imperialism and culture, of which culture belongs to the realm of pure, academic knowledge and politics to the world of power and administration, and the two were rarely seen as having anything in common. To argue that the Orient is a wilful, man made construct **Said** first needs to discuss how knowledge is constructed first.

Said outlines the distinction made in the academy between the humanities, and the ideological sciences such as economics, politics and sociology. In the case of the former / the humanities, this area of study is supposed to be completely divorced from politics, irrespective of the academician's political loyalties, whereas, in the case of the latter (i.e., the ideological sciences such as economics, politics and sociology), the ideology of the scholar/researcher is said to be woven into his/her material. However, both these streams are supposed to produce "true" scholarship that is untouched by his/her political beliefs or social, class position. **Said** explains it by saying that just as texts always exist in context with other texts – like the idea of inter-textuality – so too:

> *Political, institutional, and ideological constraints act in the same manner on the individual author." (p.13)*

This definition would imply that it is impossible for a European or even an American who is studying the Orient to be aware of the fact that he/she belongs to a power that

has vested interests in the Orient, and that however subconsciously, this will be the first reaction to the Orient. Thus, the individual response will be secondary. If this argument is, extended to the study of Orientalism itself, it would as **Said** says include the entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions as being governed by political imperialism to such an extent that it is impossible to bracket it off.

For **Said**, investigating the political ideology that shapes academic or creative writing is not demeaning but highly enabling. It helps us to understand "the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture" and to see how they enabled the production of writers and thinkers rather than inhibiting them. And by investigating the construction of Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between those writing about the Orient and the political concerns of the empire we are able to address a large number of questions that appear in the space opened up by yoking culture to imperialism:

> *What other sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one? How did philology, lexicography, history, biology, political and economic theory, novel writing, and lyric poetry come into the service of Orientalism's broadly imperialist view of the world? (p.15)*

The question now is not of finding which disciplines were complicit with empire. Once it is accepted that no pure knowledge is possible, the question can be reframed as one of investigating *how* individual authors and disciplines have worked towards constructing Orientalism. Being a theorist **Said** moves within well-defined parameters. Here, we can see what can be learnt from the critical tools and methods used by **Edward Said**.

1.4 SAID'S METHODOLOGY

A structure of knowledge or discourse, must first lay bare the tools it uses in gathering, formulating, and disseminating this knowledge. Up to this point **Said** has shown us how he has put together his material. He now turns his methodology, or how he formulates his material into a coherent theory. In the next section he will address the question of audiences.

Said limits his scope and material by temporal and spatial parameters; that is, according to a period of time and geographical spaces. Focussing on the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and Islam, **Said** says that he is interrogating the intellectual authority of the West over the Orient, and that as the study of authority is intrinsic to any description of the Orient it forms part of his methodology. Much of this study of Orientalism is describing the "historical authority in and personal authority of Orientalism" (p.20) because, according to **Said**, authority must be analysed. **Said** argues forcefully for the need to interrogate authority, for, as he says, there is nothing mysterious or natural about it. Authority is consciously formed, it is irradiated, that is, it is made intelligible, and then it is disseminated or distributed, spread. Furthermore, authority has status, and it is well known that the dominant power or authority also establishes canons of taste and value for society at large. The dominant power that holds authority also defines the dominant ideology so that it becomes difficult to distinguish it from what it dignifies as true. Thus it becomes essential to analyse this authority and to interrogate how it is formed and how it functions.

Said's methodological devices to study authority are what he calls *strategic location* and *strategic formation*. Strategic location is "a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about". (p.20) Any writer of the Orient must locate himself in relation to the Orient in order to represent it or speak on its behalf. This location is done in terms of the narrative voice,

structure, images, themes and motifs, all of which function...
Orient to the reader. It is important to note that each of these features is consciously chosen from numerous options. In addition to this, each text aligns itself strategically to a formation of texts: "it *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with the Orient itself." (p.20) Over time, these formations gain strength and authority through institutions and discourses. These formations can be analysed in terms of relationships between works, audiences, and particular aspects of the Orient. Some examples of these formations – sub-genres – are philological studies, travel books and oriental fantasies.

Said is not interested in analysing what lies hidden within the Oriental text but rather focuses on the exteriority of the text. **Said** is not concerned with a close reading of the text itself; he is interested in studying how the poet or scholar represents the Orient, how he describes it, how he makes it speak, for there are no "natural" descriptions of the Orient, no great original that needs to be studied to see how closely it has been depicted. As he had argued earlier, the emphasis is on the fact that all representations of the Orient need to be seen as representations, and evidence of this can be found in style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices and historical and social circumstances. The methodology of *Orientalism* is to study location and formation of the writer and the text, and to interrogate the evidence of how the Orient is constructed or represented in a particular text in order to align it to the larger body of Oriental writings. This brings us to the next section. Who was **Edward Said** actually aiming the text at? Who was he writing for? Let us try and analyse who, his readers were/ are.

1.4.1 Said's Audiences

Said has several audiences in mind while writing this book. The first is the literary community, students of literature and criticism, like himself. This study is relevant to this particular audience because it shows the interrelations between society, history, and textuality. It also exposes the connections between culture and politics throwing open questions of politics, ideology and the logic of power. The second audience is the contemporary student of the Orient, from the university scholar to the policy maker. This study will present to them their own genealogy and perhaps the critique will make the question the assumptions on which their work depends. Third comes the general reader who may be interested with the western conceptions and treatments of *Others*, and with the role played by western culture in global politics. And the last category is the Third World reader who needs to be aware of the strength of western cultural discourse.

In Orientalism, **Said** has felt the need to devote some space to the kinds of readers he is addressing and also to comment on how this work may be useful to them. Since he is setting out to interrogate Orientalism through its own texts and authors, he wants to ascertain that his readings of these texts will be received in a manner that serves to unsettle the received discourse of Orientalism, and not simply be added to the discourse itself. As a Professor of Literature and Criticism he is keen to guide the reader as to how his book should be read. All works of literature are affected both by the writer as well as his/ her personal experiences. Let us now grasp **Said**'s own background, the personal-intellectual biographical point from where he wrote *Orientalism* and whether this could affect his perception.

1.4.2 Said's Palestinian Background

The argument ends with **Said** turning his investigative gaze on himself to look at his own historical, socio-political, geographical, and national location, and to see how it effects his construction of knowledge of the Orient. He acknowledges that he has a personal investment in this study that arises from his awareness of being an "Oriental" as he grew up in Palestine and Egypt, both British colonies. The domination of the culture of the Orientals by the West has been a powerful factor in

their lives. **Said** gestures towards his Western education in the British colonies as well as in the United States to point to his persistent awareness of being an Oriental, but he only parenthetically locates the construction of this discourse of Orientalism as one that is enabled by this Western education, and more particularly through his own specialisation as a literary critic. His many invocations to literary critics such as **Foucault, Gramsci, Raymond Williams** which attest to his awareness of literary theory, and his immense knowledge of the High Canon of European literature have given him the tools with which to interrogate the cultural hegemony of the West in orientalising the Orient. The immediate experience that have in part given rise to the writing of this book come from the fact that he is an Arab Palestinian living in America, a life which is particularly disheartening:

> *The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny." (p.27)*

Critics have noted that Edward **Said** is no ordinary Arab Palestinian. Instead, he is a distinguished academician and thinker. His relevance is also unmistakeable, it is worth remembering that the hate crimes which appeared in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in the United States of America (US of A) immediately targeted all people who looked oriental. Let us now get back to our discussion and attempt a critique of Orientalism in the next section.

1.5 CRITIQUE OF *ORIENTALISM*

Iconoclastic violation of the boundaries between academic disciplines and between politics and culture is what we associate Orientalism with. Only Orientalism could dare to disturb the might of Postcolonial Studies that appeared in its wake. It opened a huge number of questions, innumerable spaces for interrogation that the academy had not ventured into before. However, in the last twenty odd years since the publication of *Orientalism* some relevant criticisms have been levelled against it.

Critics have said that **Said** is re-enforcing the strength and authority of the discourse of Orientalism by reifying the binary of the Occident and the Orient. He is treating the West as a unitary, homogenised space that functions as one cohesive body. Germany, Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and the United States of America all act of one will. This homogenisation is not only spatial, it is also temporal, going all the way back to **Aeschylus** and extending to the present. By representing only the apparatus of the all-powerful West and ignoring the resistance to this discourse of authority by the Orient, he is actually perpetuating this practice. He is depriving the Orient of all agencies representing it as completely submissive and passive. Finally, by making no attempt to study the ways in which this discourse was received by either the West or the Orient the study of Orientalism is deeply flawed.

It is perhaps important to remember that *Orientalism* was written in the late 1970s and while it is true that much of what it labours to prove – the intrinsic link between culture and politics, for instance – is self-evident to us today, indeed is one of the tools we use to read all literary and non-literary texts, it provoked hostile reactions from a large number of academicians and orientalists when it was first published because it was so radical. *Orientalism* is still an important beginning in studying the process of decolonisation.

1.6 SAID'S *AFTERWORD TO ORIENTALISM*

In the *Afterword to Orientalism,* (1995), **Said** tries to correct misreadings and "wilful misunderstandings", but he also rehearses his arguments from *Orientalism* and traces the intellectual developments that followed the publication of *Orientalism* and

acknowledged its influence. The first part of the *Afterword* deals in detail with misreadings, and the politics of those who have "willfully" misread and misconstrued **Said**'s argument. That section is not of much interest to us. But in the second section of the *Afterword* **Said** traces the political developments that have taken place globally and then looks at the scholarship and criticism that has followed in the wake of these changes. This section of the *Afterword* is of immense importance to our subject of postcolonial studies and decolonising the mind.

In the *Afterword,* **Said** focuses on the serious rift that he perceives in the public consciousness between the old ideas of Western hegemony and the newer ideas that have taken hold among subaltern and disadvantaged communities. **Said** points out that the disadvantaged communities, among whom he counts the formerly colonised, the enslaved and the suppressed, are no longer silent or unaccounted for by anyone except "senior European and American males". **Said** gestures towards the revolution in the consciousness of women, minorities and the marginalised that has been taking place worldwide, and says that this movement is so powerful that it has affected mainstream thinking worldwide.

After a brief discussion of postcolonialism and post modernism **Said** articulates the crucial difference that he perceives between them. Postcolonialism is motivated by urgent historical and political imperatives, while postmodernism is relatively detached. Consequently, their approaches and results are completely different even though there are some overlaps. Reviewing the enormous amount of postcolonial work that has been done since the early 1980s **Said** says that although this work does emphasise the local, regional and contingent, the connection comes from the concentration on a universal set of concerns, "all of them relating to emancipation, revisionist attitudes towards history and culture, a widespread use of recurring theoretical models and styles". Most of this work critiques Eurocentrism and patriarchy. **Said** singles out India's Subaltern Studies as the most remarkable in this field:

> *Perhaps the most brilliant revisionist work was done not in Middle East, but in the field of Indology with the advent of Subaltern Studies, a group of remarkable scholars and researchers led by Ranajit Guha. Their aim was nothing less than a revolution in historiography, the immediate goal being to rescue the writing of Indian history from the domination of the nationalist elite and restore to it the important role of the urban poor and the rural masses. (p. 352)*

Here, **Said** points out that one of the most interesting developments of postcolonial studies was re-reading of "canonical cultural works" in order to re-investigate their assumptions and to go beyond the master-slave binary that had stifled them up till then. **Said** sees this critical work of the postcolonial field as influential as the writing of radical literature by authors such as **Rushdie** and **Walcott.** *Orientalism* was based on a rethinking of what was perceived for centuries to be an unbridgeable chasm between the East and the West. **Said**'s most notable contribution was to "challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things".

1.7 LET US SUM UP

Using **Foucault**'s notion of a discourse to structure the field of Orientalism, **Said** has argued that it is only by examining Orientalism as a systematic discipline that it is possible to understand that European culture has not just managed but also produced the Orient "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively". *Orientalism* tries to show how the West achieved this, but more important than that, it also asserts that the reason this immense project was

undertaken was that because Europe "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self." The methodological devices that **Said** has used for studying the authority of Orientalism are what he calls *strategic location* and *strategic formation*. **Said** is not interested in analysing what lies hidden within the Oriental text but rather focuses on the exteriority of the text. Although there are several flaws in **Said**'s argument, it is important to remember that he was a pioneer in this field and is seen as the person who opened out the area of Postcolonial Studies.

1.8 QUESTIONS

1. How does Said define Orientalism? Why does he offer more than one definition?
2. How does Said distinguish between pure and political knowledge? What are the implications of blurring the line between the two?
3. What does Said mean by demystifying authority?
4. What are the salient features of Said's methodology?
5. Point out the flaws, or loopholes, in Said's argument. Do they seriously undermine his argument?

1.9 GLOSSARY

Discourse: To seriously speak or write on a topic, to speak or write about a subject in a formal context and at length

Disseminate: To distribute or spread something, especially information

Genealogy: Study of the history of families, and the line of descent from their ancestors

Homogenise: To make homogenous; of same kind, having the same kind of constituent elements

Iconoclastic: Challenging or overturning traditional beliefs, customs, and values

Ideology: system of social beliefs, a closely organised system of beliefs, values, and ideas forming the basis of a social philosophy or programme

Methodology: Organising system, the methods or organising principles underlying a particular area of study

Received ideas: Accepted notions

UNIT 2 LITERATURE AND NATIONALISM

Structure

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2.4.1 Third World Literature Defined by Time, Period or Geographic Location
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2.6 Location of Jameson's Text
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2.8 Questions
2.9 Glossary

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will take up **Aijaz Ahmad**'s essay *Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'*, which he wrote in response to **Frederic Jameson**'s *Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital* in an attempt to analyse the concept of literature and nationalism.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We will read through **Ahmad**'s argument and try to understand **Jameson**'s category of the *Third World* and the major flaws that **Ahmad** finds in **Jameson**'s reasoning. For this we need to first comprehend **Jameson**'s theory, then **Ahmad**'s disagreements with it, and finally to look at **Ahmad**'s premise of inhabiting a unitary world as an alternative to **Jameson**'s theory. We will then apply this theory to the category of *Third World Literature* as defined by **Jameson** and redefined by **Ahmad**. It is important to fully comprehend one section before moving on to the next in order to avoid being confused; it is also essential to distinguish between **Ahmad**'s discussion of **Jameson**'s theory and the counter-construction of his own, if we are to understand what we mean by literature and nationalism. Let us first grasp what we mean by literature and nationalism.

2.2 LITERATURE AND NATIONALISM

Before we begin discussing **Ahmed**'s essay let us examine the two terms: literature and nationalism. We should also see as to how these two entities are interlinked and how they fit into the concept of decolonising the mind. Colonial literature as we are aware by now proclaimed both the superiority and rightness in every aspect of colonial life. During the early years of the twentieth century colonialism and England's imperial authority over her colonies was on the decline. The English had lately been defeated in the Boer War. Moreover, across the empire various movements and groups that were resisting the empire began emerging in the form of cultural revivals or by raising hitherto, unheard voices against imperialism. At the same time even "white colonial nationalism" was as **Elleke Boehmer** calls it

"growing more assertive". What was happening was a complicated affair – an emerging nexus between various causes and circumstances. While writers like **D H Lawrence** were proclaiming London to be the heart of the world (*Kangaroo*, 1923), (Boehmer, p 99), other writers were busy expressing a pride in their own cultures in an effort to revive the feelings of nationalism however, nascent.

Politically, there was a lot of development in the colonies. Australia became a Federation in 1901, the Swadeshi Movement gathered momentum in Bengal in 1905-08, and there was a gradual upsurge in the influence of the Indian National Congress in the freedom struggle, and the call for the First Civil Disobedience Movement was made in 1921-22. Other colonies in Africa like Kenya, Nigeria and Southern Africa were experiencing civil unrest. The South African Native National Congress (to be later renamed the African National Congress) was formed in 1912. Moreover, the 1920s saw the rise of the black African Mass Movement under the inspirational guidance of **Marcus Darvey**, a Jamaican emigrant. The phenomenon was to be reflected in works of other Black Nationalists. Writers across the empire were validating their own experience by:

> *Producing anthropological studies, social history and journalism as well as poetry and fiction to promote their cause. (p. 100, Elleke Boehmer).*

It was in the form of a cultural revolution – a form where colonial history was being re-interpreted, where religion was being revived, and where elegiac and nostalgic poetry was being written. It was through such a cultural revolution that the feelings of strong nationalism, a pride in all that that was native was being mobilised. Literary traditions that were in fact inherited from the colonisers now came to be, not only, appropriated, and translated, but also indigenised to represent anti-colonial self-expression. Colonised writers were taking up a stance against colonial rule and doing so by utilising the very tools that were handed to them by the colonisers. They were taking western genres of the novel as well as short fiction as a means of expressing their own perceptions of culture, space and colonised experience.

Such writers included **Rabindranath Tagore** and **Raja Rao** from India, **Claude McKay** from Jamaica and **Solomon Plaatje** from South Africa. From what has been said so far, it may be discerned that the feelings of cultural pride, the going back to one's roots, looking for inspiration within one's own cultural sphere along with the various political movements were part and parcel of anti-colonialism and the growth of a sense of nationalism. Let us now move on to analysing **Ahmed**'s essay in the following section.

2.3 ABOUT JAMESON'S *RHETORIC OF OTHERNESS AND THE NATIONAL ALLEGORY*

In this essay, **Ahmad**'s analysis of the *Three World Theory* and of *Third World Literature* is done from a Marxist perspective. It is important to note, that within the field of Postcolonial Studies there are different kinds of theories, and very often theorists disagree vehemently with each other. In this essay we see **Ahmad** disagreeing with **Jameson** even though they both belong to the same ideological persuasion. There is one further point that we need to pay special attention to: the fact that **Ahmad** has a radical materialist position and does not either detract from or add to the relevance or credibility of his argument. As **Said** has shown us in Unit one; it is impossible for any individual to produce 'pure' knowledge; the foregrounding of one's politics instead of taking away from the argument opens out many other possibilities for discussion. While reading through this Unit you should be thinking of your own position in relation to **Ahmad**'s, and then analyse your own politics in relation to Marxism. As postcolonial subjects, all our readings of texts will be influenced by our postcoloniality, whether we are aware of it or not.

Aijaz Ahmad's *Jameson*'s *Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'* first appeared in 1987 in the Fall issue of *Social Text*, and was later reprinted in 1992 as a chapter in his book, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Here, **Ahmad** interrogates **Jameson**'s conception of the world as divided in three neat categories of the First World, Second World and the Third World, and then his construction of the binary opposition of the First World and the Third World. **Ahmad** argues that there is no such thing as a theoretical category of *Third World Literature*, that it is not possible to construct such a category without being reductive.

One of the examples that **Ahmad** gives for the impossibility of constructing a theoretical category of *Third World Literature* is that the vast majority of literature produced in Asia and Africa is not written in the languages of the metropolitan countries and is therefore unavailable to the literary theorist as s/he goes on to construct this category. Since it is only the rare literary theorist in the United States of America or Europe who has fluency in any Asian or African language there are major literary traditions from both these places that are completely unknown to the literary theorist.

However, the major difficulty, according to **Ahmad**, in creating a category of *Third World Literature* is the Three World theory itself, and **Ahmad** addresses this question at length before turning to the issue of literature. For **Ahmad**, **Jameson** defines the First World as 'the capitalist first world', the Second World as 'the socialist bloc' and the Third World comprises 'countries that have suffered colonialism and imperialism'. **Jameson** asserts that he is using these terms in 'as essentially descriptive way'. **Ahmad**'s rejoinder to this is worth quoting in some detail:

> *...when it comes to knowledge of the world, there is no such thing as a category of the 'essentially descriptive'; that 'description' is never ideologically or cognitively neutral; that to 'describe' is to specify a locus of meaning, to construct an object of knowledge, and to produce a knowledge that will be bound by that act of descriptive construction. (p.99)*

The point that **Ahmad** is making is that no description can be neutral, or innocent, and that any process of describing involves a construction of knowledge by the person who is describing, a construction of knowledge that is influenced by his/her own ideology. From the knowledge thus created by description, judgment of classification, generalisation and value can be made, thus the object of knowledge is bound by that act of descriptive construction. The central issue, however, is the manner in which these terms are defined. The first and second worlds are defined according to their production systems, that is, capitalism and socialism. But the third world is defined according to its experience of suffering under colonialism or imperialism.

This classification divides the world into those who make history and those others that are simply its objects. **Ahmad** asks, if the First World is capitalist and the Second World is socialist then what is the Third World? Is it pre-capitalist or is it in transition? And can all Third World countries be located in a homogenous category?

Ahmad points out that India has all the characteristics of a capitalist country:

> *...Generalized commodity production, vigorous and escalating exchanges not only between agriculture and industry but also between Departments I and II of industry itself and (a large number of) technical personnel." (p.100)*

It also has a bourgeois democracy and regional democratically elected communist parties in power. Does that put India in the First World or the Third? Countries on the Pacific rim from South Korea to Singapore constitute the fastest growing region within global capitalism, but these countries have also suffered colonialism and

imperialism. Does that make them First World countries or Third World? **Ahmad** contends that there are no real facts to support the theory of a binary opposition between a capitalist First World and a non- or pre-capitalist Third World.

Ahmad says that having created the Third World in terms of 'the experience of colonialism and imperialism' **Jameson** has gone on to assert that "all third-world texts are necessarily...*national allegories*" (original emphasis). **Ahmad** argues that if the Third World is to be defined only in terms of its experience of colonialism and imperialism, then of course the main ideological formation will be that of nationalism. He points to the opening paragraph of **Jameson**'s essay in which **Jameson** argues that the only choice available to the Third World is between its 'nationalisms' and a 'global American postmodernist culture'. **Ahmad** asks: Why is it that the socialist and/or communist culture are not a choice, a culture that is neither nationalist nor postmodernist? **Ahmad** also critiques **Jameson**'s homogenising of nationalism, arguing that there are a multiplicity of nationalisms in Asia and Africa today, and not all of them progressive, so that it is not necessary that they will all produce a progressive cultural practice in terms of the national allegory narrative that **Jameson** predicts.

It is also very difficult to predict with any certainty that the bourgeois Third World will not opt for postmodernism over nationalism; indeed, most of them want the American postmodern culture and have opted for it. Thus, to yoke together the Three Worlds Theory, the progressive nationalist ideology, and the assertion that the national allegory is the only form of narrativity that the Third World is capable of is theoretically unviable. This theory neither takes into consideration the relations of production in the case of the so-called Third World, nor the possibility of class formation or class struggle. By insisting on national oppression it suppresses the "multiplicities of intersecting conflicts based upon class, gender, nation, race, region, and so on...." (p.102) The Third World as defined by the Three World Theory is then left with no option but to narrate the same nationalist allegory for all time. In the next section, we shall examine the binary opposition between the Three Worlds and the Unitary World Theory.

2.4 THREE WORLD THEORY OR UNITARY WORLD

In place of the *Three Worlds Theory* **Ahmad** makes the radical proposition that we live not in three worlds but in one. This is the world in which both sides of **Jameson**'s binary opposition experience colonialism and imperialism, for **Ahmad** points out that imperialism is experienced within the United States of America as well. Today we live in a world in which societies are constituted by the division of class in the countries of backward capitalism as well as advanced capitalism. Also the most important aspect is that this is the world that is saturated by capitalism. **Jameson**'s definition is contained only within the First World, and the resistance to capitalism that is in his view restricted only to the socialism of the Second World. According to **Ahmed**, the different parts of capitalist system that pervade the world are not to be seen as binary opposites but as a contradictory unity when we break down the Three World Theory and think of ourselves all as inhabiting one world.

What would be the implications for literary theory of replacing the Three World Theory with one world? First, there would be no need to search for 'a cognitive aesthetics for third-world literature'; second, the idea of a meta-narrative, a master narrative, that encompasses the rich multiplicity of real narratives in the Third World would have to be abandoned; and third, it may turn out that many of the questions asked about the Urdu or Bengali literary traditions of literature are the same as those asked about Anglo-American literature and that a real knowledge of these traditions may force literary theorists in the United States to ask questions of their tradition that they had not asked before. **Ahmed** points out that **Jameson**, has already dismissed the idea of proceeding from the premise of a unitary world because according to him

beginning from that premise would necessitate 'falling back into some general liberal humanistic universalism'. That is, **Jameson** is afraid that the danger of considering a real unity of the world would be that this could only be done through the process of homogenisation of all cultures and peoples, and would thus negate the specificity of cultural differences. **Ahmad** counters this objection with two arguments.

First, that rather than viewing the world as being united by a liberalist ideology of humanism, a Marxist critic such as **Jameson** should be able to see that the world is united "by the global operation of a single mode of production, namely the capitalist one, and the global resistance to this mode, a resistance which is itself unevenly developed in different parts of the globe". (p.103) The world is thus perceived as a unity because of the capitalist mode of production that controls/determines it and the resistance to capitalism through socialism. **Ahmad** points out that socialism is spread out over Asia, Africa, and Latin America and also exists within the US in groups and individuals. The world is united, then, through the "ferocious struggle between capital and labour" which is now global in character.

Second, **Ahmad** argues, it is **Jameson**'s theory of the world neatly divided into a binarised opposition that erases the specificity of cultural differences and thus ends up homogenising the world. The cultural heterogeneity within the Third World is suppressed because it is defined only in terms of its 'experience'. **Ahmad** illustrates through several examples that Asia, Africa and Latin America do not have a common history, and do not even have a singular experience of colonialism and imperialism, which varied vastly from one culture to another, from one continent to another.

The circuits of exchange that exist among the advanced capitalist countries do not exist between the Third World countries so that cultural complexes that bind the advanced capitalist countries are not present here. Capitalism in the Third World countries only has the power to homogenise the urban bourgeoisie through the culture that it is able to create, but does not affect the majority of the population. However, the countries of Western Europe and North America have been tied together for about two hundred years. Capitalism here is much older and the cultural logic of capitalism operates much more powerfully in these metropolitan formations. The circuits of exchange among these countries are very well established so that the products of culture circulate immediately and briskly among them, thus creating a certain amount of cultural homogeneity. **Ahmad**'s point here is not to reverse **Jameson**'s classification, but to:

> *...define the material basis for a fair degree of cultural homogenisation among the advanced capitalist countries and the lack of that kind of homogenisation in the rest of the capitalist world." (p.105)*

Jameson then, according to **Ahmad** not only homogenises the spaces within the First and the Third World, he also insists on the absolute difference between the two and the relation of Otherness between them. His theory freezes the global space where struggles between the motivating forces of capitalism and socialism, capital and labour, take place. By forcing the heterogeneities and productivities of the world into a single oppositional binary, the Third World is reduced to narrate itself through the only form available in the position that it occupies by virtue of its experience of colonialism and imperialism. Thus, if all Third World texts are necessarily national allegories, then any text that is not a national allegory is not a true Third World text.

Ahmad thus demolishes **Jameson**'s Three World Theory and its attendant corollaries by concluding that the category of the Third World which is constituted by the experience of colonialism and imperialism and whose difference from the First World is in its choice of nationalism over postmodernism, which is therefore capable of narrating itself only through the metatext of the national allegory is "epistemologically an impossible category". (p.105) This brings us to the next

question. How is third world literature defined? Let us take a look at the question of time and space as used in the definition of First and Third World literatures.

2.4.1 Third World Literatures Defined By Time, Period or Geographic Location?

Ahmad turns his attention to the question of time and space in defining First and Third World texts next. The use of the terms of the First and Third World as defined by **Jameson**, poses a problem because there is a great deal of slippage in the way that he deploys the terms in constructing these analytic categories. **Ahmed** shows that in different places in his essay **Jameson** has located the specificity of the First World in (i) the postmodernist moment, (ii) capitalist mode of production, and (iii) as co-terminus with 'Western civilisation', 'Graeco-Judaic'.

While the first location is of recent origin, the second is older, and the third would date back to antiquity. **Ahmad** asks:

> *When did this First World become First -in the pre-Christian centuries, or after World War II?" (p.106)*

Similarly, at what point in time do texts produced in countries that have 'experienced colonialism and imperialism' become Third World texts? According to **Jameson**'s definition, should it not be from the historical point in those countries *after* colonisation? But **Jameson** sets up binaries between the First and Third World that are not restricted to the advent or experience of colonisation. He selects **Lu Xun**, an Asian writer, and **Sambene**, an African writer as 'the West's Other' on the basis of the tribal/tributary and the Asiatic modes. Likewise, **Jameson** sets in opposition **Freud**'s theory as Western against ten centuries of Chinese distributions of libidinal energies in reading **Lu Xun**. **Jameson** thus suggests that the difference between the First and Third Worlds is a basic and essential one, a primordial one, one whose roots are far older than capitalism itself.

Apart from the question of time, or historical period, there is also the question of space, of location, that categorises texts as Third World. **Ahmad** asks:

> *Do all texts produced in countries with 'experience of colonialism and imperialism' become, by virtue of geographical origin, 'third-world texts'?" (p.106)*

Ahmad points out that he is aware of so many texts from his part of the world that do not fit the description of 'national allegory'. Why, then, does **Jameson** insist on *'all'* texts belonging to the third-world as being national allegories? **Ahmad** locates his answer to this query in **Jameson**'s need to produce a single, unitary theory of Third World literature, and a unitary theory needs a unified category in which to force *all* Third World literature. **Ahmad** wonders if this means that only those texts that have national allegories are to be admitted as authentic Third World texts while the host of other texts that do not deal with national allegory are automatically excluded? **Ahmad** goes back to his disagreement with **Jameson**'s categorisation of the Third World outside the modern systems of production, as pre- or non-capitalist, to focus on one of the confusions that occur in his attempt to construct a category of Third World literature as the *Other*, or binary opposite, of First World literature.

For **Jameson,** one of the determinants of the capitalist culture that produces the western realist and modernist novel is that there "is a radical split between the private and the public". He classifies the private and poetic, the domain of sexuality, the unconscious. The public is the political, the economic, and the world of classes. **Jameson** has argued that the relations between the private and the public are wholly different in first and third world cultures. Again **Ahmad** underlines the fact that in the First World the radical split between the private and the public is located in the

capitalist system, but the absence of this split in the Third World is not located in any mode of production.

To develop this point **Ahmad** goes back to another essay by **Jameson** on **Lukacs** in *Marxism and Form*, where **Jameson** distinguishes between the literature of pre-industrial societies and the literature of the industrial era. **Jameson** argued in that essay that the agricultural or tribal culture knows no history and therefore each generation repeats the same experiences as though for the first time. **Ahmad** points to the correspondence between this idea and that of the necessity of the Third World to narrate its experiences only, always, through the national allegory. **Jameson** also theorises the difference between the pre-industrialised and industrialised societies using the same terms that he now deploys for the First and Third World – the unity of the public and the private in the pre-industrialised/Third World, and the separation of the two in the industrial/First World. The major flaw of this theoretical category, **Ahmad** emphasises again, is that of suspending the Third World outside the modes of production – capitalism and socialism – and imposing on it a unity based on its experience of colonialism and imperialism.

Just as there is a slippage in **Jameson**'s definition of the First World and the Third World, his usage of the term 'nation', too, keeps slipping into wider, less precise vocabulary. He uses the terms 'culture', 'society', 'collectivity' etc as interchangeable with 'nation'. To illustrate, **Ahmad** quotes two sentences from the essay: "All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*..." and "...the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole labourious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself." **Ahmad** asks if these two sentences mean the same thing? There are two important points that **Ahmad** makes in this context. First, it is entirely possible to connect one's personal experience to a 'collectivity'. This could be done in terms of class, gender, caste, religious community, trade union, political party, village or prison – any group or formation of people within society. This combining of the private and the public need not involve the category of the nation or refer back to the experience of colonialism and imperialism even if it allegorises the individual experience. If we use the term collectivity rather than nation then **Jameson**'s theory would apply to a larger body of texts with greater accuracy.

Second, when we use the term 'collectivity' and widen its application to texts, then the difference between First and Third World texts becomes much less radical. **Ahmad** points out that the history of realism in the European novel has been associated with ideas of 'the social'. Even today, a majority of the texts produced in the First World make a fundamental connection between the individual story and some larger experience. Once the idea of the 'nation' is replaced with that of 'collectivity' and we can think of the process of allegorisation as not simply between individual and nation but as a relation between the private and the public, between person and community then a whole host of texts written within the postmodernist United States of America are automatically included within this category. American writers, along with Asian and African writers must connect their private imaginations with experiences of collectivity. From here on, **Ahmad** shifts his focus to the idea of constructing canons in literature. The next section will examine this in detail.

2.5 CANONISATION OF THIRD WORLD LITERATURE

Jameson's plea for syllabus reform argues for the need to include 'non-canonical' 'third-world literature'. **Ahmad** now turns his attention to the idea of canon construction. What are the mechanisms of construction? Some of the considerations would be (i) being considered major literary figures by the American academy, (ii) receiving prestigious awards, (iii) being taught routinely in Literature courses, just as

other European writers are, (iv) being reviewed favourably by major literary journals and newspapers in the United States and Britain. **Ahmad** gives us an exhaustive list of Asian, African and Latin-American writers who fulfill all these criteria of canonisation: **Neruda, Vallejo, Octavio Paz, Borges, Fuentes, Marquez, Achebe, Soyinka, Said, Naipaul, Rushdie. Ahmad** comments:

> *...the representation of this body of work in Jameson's discourse as simply 'non-canonical' – that is, as something that has been altogether excluded from the contemporary practices of high textuality in the US academy – does appear to overstate the case considerably. (p.112)*

In his discussion of 'non-canonical' third-world literature **Jameson** further distinguishes between the form used by the First and Third World literatures, arguing that the latter still uses the kind of realism that the First World writers have now outgrown, the kind used by writers like **Dreiser** and **Sherwood. Ahmad** points to other highly regarded contemporary North American (US), fictionists such as **Bellow, Malamud, Grace Paley** and **Rober Stone** who still use the realist mode. At the same time there are several very well known 'third-world' fictionists who have been so well received in the United States/British literary circles precisely because they do not write like **Dreiser** and **Sherwood**: **Rushdie, Marquez, Neruda, Borges,** and **Cesaire. Ahmad** now changes the direction of the issue that **Jameson** raises of syllabus reform to include 'non-canonical' 'third-world' texts. **Ahmad**'s analysis conclusively proves that it is incorrect to say that the canon does not admit Third World writers. He argues that bourgeois culture works through selective admission and selective canonisation, so that certain 'Third World' writers are now a part of the literary discourse in the United States of America. The more useful question to be asked now is: How does this principle of selective incorporation work in relation to texts produced outside the metropolitan countries? What are the determining factors that select some writers, some texts, into the canon while rejecting others? Not only does **Ahmad** explain **Jameson**'s argument and counter it, but he also tries and locates it in time and place. We shall see how he does this in the next section.

2.6 LOCATION OF JAMESON'S TEXT

At the beginning of this essay **Ahmad** foregrounds his own political ideology as well as **Jameson**'s:

> *And because I am a Marxist, I had always thought of us, Jameson and myself, as birds of the same feather..." (p.96)*

At the end of the essay **Ahmad** takes **Jameson** to task for having taken recourse to pre-Marxist ideas. The essay focuses on the unviability of constructing the *Third World* as a singular category, of placing the *Third World* outside the modes of production, of denying it the agency or dynamism to be part of the struggle between the First World and the Second, between capitalism and socialism. **Ahmad** gives us his understanding of the Marxist dialectic, which he says comprises a tension. The tension lies between "the problematic of a final determination and the utter historicity of multiple, interpenetrating determinations." (120) The outcome of this struggle is never easily predictable, because it hardly ever corresponds to the will of any of the parties/historical agents who are struggling over that outcome. The essence of the Marxist dialectic is precisely the tension that is created by the struggle of different wills and intentions, of a multiplicity of historic forces, the tension that forms the site for the possibility of dynamic struggle.

Ahmad illustrates this theory of the Marxist dialectic by taking his own theory of the one world united by the global capitalist mode of production and the socialist resistance to that mode. He shows how this theory, or constitutive fact operates

differently in different countries of Asia and Africa. The outcome in every country is vastly different according to the specific conditions – historic, social, political, economic – of each country, even though the problematic of a 'final determination' is the same. It follows then, that in each case literary production will be varied and multiple as well.

The issue of a unitary, single literary production whether of First or Third World is even more complicated. Literary texts are produced in the context of competing ideological and cultural clusters, and in analysing the guiding force behind the production of the text it will first have to be placed in the context of the cluster that gives it energy and form. If one has sufficient knowledge of the constitution of the field from which the text emerges it would be possible to specify its principle ideological formations and narrative forms. But this does not mean that one can take the few texts that become available to the metropolitan literary critic because of issues pertaining to language and canonicity, and then "to posit a complete singularisation and transparency in the process of determinacy, so that all ideological complexity is reduced to a single ideological formation and all narratives are read as local expressions of a metatext". (p.121) That is, to take a few texts and through them impose a single factor that determines what the major concerns of all such texts should be, and of how they should be narrated, is to reduce all the ideological complexity that goes into the production of a literary text.

To demonstrate what he means by "multiple determinations at work in any text of considerable complexity" **Ahmad** now turns his analytic gaze on **Jameson's** own text to interrogate its cultural location. As is to be expected, **Ahmad** finds that **Jameson** inhabits multiple, complex spaces:

- Jameson's text is a First World text because he identifies himself as a US intellectual. But he is not the typical US intellectual because he is able to juxtapose non-European texts with literary criticism so well. Also he debunks 'the global American culture of postmodernism' which he defines as *the* culture of his country.
- His text belongs to the Second World because the theoretical framework is Marxist and his political identification is socialist.
- His text goes deep into the Third World in terms of its thematics and in relation with the other texts which give it its meaning. He valorises the Third World, and affiliates himself with it.

Ahmad's solution to the problem of where to locate this text is one that emerges from his own theory of our inhabiting one world: he places the text primarily in **Jameson**'s Second World, **Ahmad**'s own name for a global resistance. But **Ahmad** emphasises that he places him in the Second World not by suppressing his other affiliations, but:

> *...by identifying that which has been central to all his theoretical undertakings for many years. (p.122)*

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this essay, **Aijaz Ahmad** joins issue with **Frederic Jameson**'s construction of the *Third World* in terms of 'the experience of colonialism and imperialism' and then applies this definition to the category of *Third World Literature*, asserting that "all third-world texts are necessarily...*national allegories*" (original emphasis). **Ahmad** foregrounds the flaws in **Jameson**'s *Three Worlds Theory* and offers an alternative beginning with the premise that we all inhabit one world. From there **Ahmad** attacks **Jameson**'s homogenisation of *Third World Literature*, showing the impossibility of making such a theoretical category. He then questions **Jameson**'s assertion that all

Third World literatures are national allegories, pointing to the fact that the boundaries drawn by colonial powers that define postcolonial nations cannot be unquestioningly accepted as unitary identities for all its peoples. **Ahmad** offers innumerable Third World writers who write texts that are not straightforwardly realist, and are not national allegories, while at the same time pointing out texts from the First World that are national allegories.

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. Why does Ahmad consider it impossible to construct Third World Literature as a theoretical category?
2. What are Ahmad's arguments against the Three Worlds Theory?
3. What alternative does Ahmad offer to the Three Worlds Theory?
4. What are the arguments that Ahmad makes against Jameson's assertion that "all third-world texts are necessarily...*national allegories*"?
5. Do you agree with Ahmad's contention that 'Third World' literature is now very much a part of the canon?

2.9 GLOSSARY

Aesthetics: How something looks; especially when considered in terms of how pleasing it is.

Allegory: Symbolic work; a work in which the characters and events are to be understood as representing other things and symbolically expressing a deeper, often spiritual, moral, or political meaning.

Bourgeois: Capitalist; relating to the social class that owns most of the wealth and is regarded as exploiting the working class

Cognitive: Concerned with acquisition of knowledge; relating to the process of acquiring knowledge by the use of reasoning, intuition, or perception.

Conventional: Typical of affluent middleclass people; who are often characterised as conventional or conservative in outlook.

Postmodern: After modernism; relating to art, architecture, literature, or thinking developed after and usually in reaction to modernism.

UNIT 3 DECOLONISING THE MIND

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Colonising the Mind
3.3 Literature As A Site Of Cultural Domination: Said's Orientalism
3.4 Decolonising the Mind: The Question of Language
3.4.1 The Writing of History
3.5 'Decolonising the Indian Mind': Resisting Neo-Colonialism
3.6 Saying An "Impossible 'No'"
3.7 Decolonising the Western Mind
3.8 Let Us Sum Up
3.9 Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit attempts to introduce the concept of 'decolonisation' of the mind and how it relates to the context of the cultural domain of colonialism. It will discuss how cultural domination is realised in the three sites of literature, language and history and how critical perspectives of postcolonial theory equip us with the tools to examine the manner in which cultural domination is organised and to evolve strategies of resistance to it.(A more detailed analysis of postcolonial theory appears in other units of this Block). It will indicate how decolonising the mind is a continuous process and how resistance may be organised against the forces of neo-colonialism. Finally, it will consider the many ways in which the practice of decolonisation of the European mind can be affected.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us first understand the term 'decolonisation'. Naturally, there has to be first colonisation, in order to talk of decolonisation. We all know that colonisation is the process of converting a country (other than your own), into a producer of raw material for your industry and a market for your finished goods. So colonisation involves the twin processes of destroying or marginalising local economies and other administrative and political structures, and the erection of new ones that facilitate the coloniser's goals. Decolonisation then becomes the opposite process: that of dismantling the colonial structures, once the imperial powers leave.

We must stop here to sound a note of caution. We have cited above the imperialist motive of colonisation. There can be others motives. For instance in the Americas and Australia, the colonisers went as settlers while in India they came as traders. Africa was brutalised and plundered in a different way. All these places experienced decolonisation differently. Thus, we need to be very careful in our analysis of the different kinds of colonisations in different countries, since different experiences of colonisation gave rise to very different kinds of resistance movements ranging from **Gandhi**'s non-violence to **Fanon**'s blueprint for violent struggle. So there are three very crucial elements to keep in mind while discussing decolonisation: the manner of colonisation, the nature of the resistance movement, and the grounds on which decolonisation is granted. This must be kept in mind in order to avoid easy generalities.

We must also understand that the erection of new structures by imperial powers is not always and in all places a one-way violent imposition of the conqueror's will. It functions in many ways, often entering into a dialogue with local populations and institutions and is facilitated almost always with the help of a collaborating elite. In the process of colonisation, if trade is to carry on successfully and profits are to be made, it is crucial for the imperial power to have an efficient political structure in which to function and it is necessary to have the co-operation, either voluntary or forced, of local peoples. As mentioned earlier, before we begin to talk about decolonising the mind, we need to see how he mind was colonised in the first place. This we shall do so in the next section.

3.2 COLONISING THE MIND

It is erroneous to assume that people receive foreign domination passively. Since the use of force has the unpleasant fall-out of political turmoil, it is important to establish to the local population that the changes they see around them, and which they sometimes try to resist are actually in their favour, and profitable to them, and that they are active players in the arrangement. As a strategy to co-opt the colonised people and rule over them with their consent therefore, the process of colonisation of the mind becomes an important project of the imperial power. This strategy takes overt and covert forms, sometimes functioning as state policy and at other times insidiously, creeping up on the colonised subject to suggest that s/he is inferior, that his/her language, culture, religion, history, his/her looks and colour are all inferior to that of the representation of the imperial power. There emerges a master-slave relationship internalised by the colonised subject. This wears down resistance to the imperial power or at least, is expected to do so. This process is referred to as cultural domination or colonisation of the mind.

Colonisation of the mind is a process slower than the economic and political takeover of power because of the traditions and history of particular populations that make them resist actively or passively this mental takeover. Thus there are sites identified through which cultural hegemony is organised. Most commonly, these are rewritten histories, language and education policies and cultural texts that may be literary, cinematic and so on. The superiority of the 'master' is however, internalised, especially, with the systematic erosion of the agency of the subject in the economic, political and social domains, more effective in contexts where colonisation is over a long period of time.

The trappings of power magnify the oppressor into one better than the oppressed. When the imperial power exits and a politically free nation takes down the structures created by the colonial power, it is a rapid and victorious wave of decolonisation. But the decolonisation of the mind remains a continuous and slow process because of the internalisation of cultural domination of the imperial power.

To this may be added the fact that the centres of power relocate and function in new forms reincarnated as trans-national capital and global mass media with all the links between the two. These are termed the forces of neo-colonialism and their new centres are called 'metropolitan centres'. They are located in the financial and cultural capitals of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, including in universities, academies and other institutions of higher learning. The debates and opinions that emanate from these centres are hegemonic and dominate the discourse of colonisation. In this context, one of the prime strategies of decolonisation for formerly colonised peoples would be to resist the categories offered by these very debates even as one engages with them.

There is a cultural flip side to this that cannot be ignored, as it would leave the discussion of decolonisation incomplete. Just as the colonial subject internalises his cultural subjugation, the imperial subject too does so. In the domain of culture,

therefore, it constructs allegories of masterhood and interprets the colonial experience through constructions of false histories, exotic and esoteric locales and cultures populated by simplistically drawn peoples. In the sections that follow we will look at all these in greater detail.

3.3 LITERATURE AS A SITE OF CULTURAL DOMINATION: SAID'S *ORIENTALISM*

If we were to consider much of the literature about India and other colonies of Britain that was produced during the period of British colonisation we would find that these writings abound in the creation of cultural stereotypes which propagate racial superiority of the white to the 'blacks' or 'natives' and religious superiority of Christianity to all other religions and religious practices. Even as this literature encapsulates the colonial experience of a different and remote land or peoples or culture, ostensibly in innocent acts of description or creation of characters, a hierarchy of power is established. The west rules over the east, the white over the black and the latter with its easy collapse of symbolic boundaries translates into the triumph of Good over Evil. One common example of cultural stereotyping is the image of India as the land of snake-charmers, fire-walking naked fakirs, maharajas and elephants. The complexity of an entire region is reduced to simplistic categories. These literary and cultural constructs are not only circulated in the west but come back to the colonies to constantly batter at the self-esteem of the colonised people and make them seem ridiculous to themselves. It is not difficult to understand that, people with low levels of confidence will lend themselves to being ruled over with greater ease than if that did not take place.

Postcolonial scholars have examined the literatures of colonisation to expose how cultural domination takes place at the site of literary production. Who is writing? What is the target readership? Who is publishing and where? What are the political beliefs of the writer? When is the text produced? It becomes important to ask these questions. The answers lead us to see how literary production maintains the status quo of existing power structures. In other words, literature is ideological.

Edward Said in 1978 in *Orientalism* lays bare both the strategies of cultural domination of the Occident over the Orient and provided the methodology for recognising and resisting these strategies in our readings of texts. The salient features of **Said**'s argument are that the world is divided into two unequal halves, the 'superior' Occident and the inferior and subordinated Orient and that thus there occurs an invisible suppressive dimension to it. In the realm of knowledge, given the historical fact of European colonisation with its imperative to maintain its power structures, all knowledge of the Orient becomes a construct. In other words, the Orient is an ideological creation, glorified or demonised as the case may be, with an end to prove the superiority of the European and thus continue and justify the logic of European domination. This project of the 'producers' of the Orient in the realm of culture **Said** calls Orientalism and its motive is to label the Orient as Europe's *Other* - all that it is not. He shows how this is a false construct, limited at the best of times, driven by the urge of cultural hegemony which is so important in order to rule by consent of the oppressed. He advocates the urgency of the need to expose the power structures that form the context of cultural production. No narration or description is 'obvious' or 'innocent' any more. The possibility of 'pure' knowledge does not exist. All knowledge is ideologically produced and therefore, ideologically inscribed. Using **Said**'s methodology **Chinua Achebe** reads **Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* to show how in the novel, Africa is constructed as the racial, cultural and political *Other* of Europe and its perceived superiority. It is an iconic model for future analysis of canonical western texts. Despite the flaws in **Said**'s argument as recorded by critics, his remains a pioneering study, empowering the process of decolonisation of the mind.

3.4 DECOLONISING THE MIND: THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

Language is one of the prime sites of cultural domination. The postcolonial critic **Aijaz Ahmad** talks about how any attempt to form a category of third world literature is defied by the fact that these writers write in their own language and their works are simply not available to a metropolitan canon constructed without access to those languages. Thus only writers writing in the languages of the metropolitan centres or translated into them would be considered for inclusion in the canon. We can already understand how such languages are privileged even in a postcolonial world. We must however, remember that though all colonies do not experience the same pattern of language imposition, the language issue is a crucial one in colonised nations. In India particularly, the English language continues to define power structures and class positions. English as a language was formally introduced in India in accordance with **Thomas Macaulay**'s *Minute on Education* in 1834. The stated purpose was to:

> *...form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions that we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and color but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.*

This was based on two premises: one was the perceived superiority of English over other languages (for example, Sanskrit or Arabic): the other was the use of language as a political instrument in the hands of the colonisers - language was to be put into use not only as a means of communication, but was to come as a social and cultural package with the intention of creating a class of Indians who would identify and align themselves with the British. This was how cultural imperialism was to function. However, this policy was directed at a numerically small number of Indians and the diffusion of the English language did not percolate through Indian society. What did happen was that **Macauly**'s class of Indians empowered with the English language and aligned with a western world view became the natural inheritors of power after the British left India, and the role and function of the English language assumed different dimensions creating a huge divide between English speaking and non-English speaking Indians with the social and educational opportunities available to either.

Interestingly, the gap between policy and practice also yielded results quite different from what the British intended. It was utilised by Indian writers to turn the tables on the English-speaking world by using the English language as a medium for their own cultural, social, political and philosophical articulations. Indian English writing has evolved through many stages of imitation, revolt and quest for identity to become an autonomous entity, with its own set of distinct forms, styles and idiomatic expression. With the advent of postcolonial writing, there have been several debates over the use of English by Indian authors – debates regarding the status of English as a pan-Indian phenomenon and its co-existence with the official language, Hindi. Using the English language has often been seen as elitist, un-Indian and therefore anti-national. But there have been counter-arguments stressing the linguistic plurality of India, on the cultural relativity and the diversity of linguistic patterning. The truth is that English has been incorporated and is now firmly entrenched in the Indian cultural milieu. A peculiar brand of Indian English has emerged as a result of several years of "experimentation" by postcolonial Indian English writers, many of them located in the metropolitan centres.

The experience of English in India has been different from the experience of the coloniser's language in other colonies, primarily because of the existence of strong local cultures and because the education policy of the British touched the lives of very few Indians. Caste-defined India with its many religions had a number of structural fortifications to insulate itself against any alien intrusion. This was not the case with other colonies where proselytising activity worked in tandem with the imperialist agenda.

Ngugi Wa Thiong' O's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, published in 1986, examines almost a hundred years of colonialism and neo-colonialism to explore the internalisation and institutionalisation of cultural imperialism through language. In the book, the Kenyan **Ngugi** formally declares his farewell to English and embraces thenceforth only *Kiswahili* and *Gikuyu* as the languages in which he will write. **Ngugi** establishes the intrinsic link between language, culture and ideology. To take on the coloniser's language is not just a choice of medium: it involves the internalising of the culture, logic and ideology of colonisation itself. **Ngugi** asks whether writing in English really qualifies as African literature, with its corollaries of the domination of African cultures and languages by Europe, and language/literature and audiences at the level of class and nation. He points out how it was taken for granted that English (or French or Portuguese) was the natural language for literary production, for political mediation between Africans at the national, continental and international levels. Literary debates even among African writers "accepted the fatalistic logic" of communicating in the language of the colonisers. The question was how to make these European languages carry the weight of the African experiences of the writers? **Ngugi** asks, "Why...should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? ... We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages?" (p.8) **Ngugi** finds his answer in the policy of the colonial powers of following "the sword and the bullet" with "the chalk and the blackboard". That is, of buttressing the physical violence with psychological violence. In this phase, language became the means to subjugate the spirit.

Control was imposed through military conquest and political dictatorship. But colonisation's most important area of domination was mental control through culture to affect how the colonised perceived themselves in relation to others. **Ngugi** says:

> *"To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others." (p.16)*

The main tool used for this domination was the domination of language – the systematic undervaluing of the colonised's culture and language and the elevation of the language and culture of the coloniser.

Ngugi shows us how important the language question is to Postcolonial Studies. Today the elite in the postcolonial countries still use the colonial language as the medium of instruction in their education. Fluency in European languages, especially in English, confers great advantages in finding higher paying jobs. Through the continued use of the colonial language neo-imperialism strengthens its hold on post-colonial countries. The very important point that **Ngugi** makes in this essay is that the use of the coloniser's language implies the internalisation of the coloniser's culture, and a setting up of a hierarchy between the culture of the coloniser and the colonised. In the next section we shall look at how history and historical narratives are prime sites of cultural colonisation and the perpetuation of hegemony.

3.4.1 The Writing of History

This is a discussion that properly belongs to the realm of historical theory but with the collapse of boundaries that make literature and the social sciences discrete domains of study, it is important to examine this, especially in relation to the project of decolonisation of the mind. History and historical narratives are prime sites of cultural colonisation and perpetuation of hegemony. The writing or re-writing of the history of a colonised people is one of the cultural projects of imperialism. One of the things that the colonial power can hegemonically impose is for instance, the reading of pre-colonial culture, as one of blank darkness and barbarity. It can cause the all-important erasure of memory, identity and roots, a state that becomes fundamental to the business of empire as it creates willing subjects who consent in their own oppression and are co-opted into the imperialist agenda. Contemporary

historiographers have contested the periodisation of history of colonised peoples as pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial. By defining the history of a people in this way the point of historical reference remains the experience of colonialism. By insisting on national oppression it suppresses in **Ahmed**'s words, the "multiplicities of intersecting conflicts based upon class, gender, nation, race, region, and so on....". In other words, history is made at various levels in the life of a people and it is made simultaneously, out of a number of disparate and similar events, linked or disjunct. So historiography must be approached in a way that colonialism becomes one fact, one event among many that has shaped the consciousness of a people, their history, their harmonies and their conflicts.

What is the implication for the process of decolonisation of the mind? The reference point of all that a people is, is no longer the event of colonisation. The national histories constructed as a movement against colonisation, as in India, then stop to look at all the residual areas of conflict in Indian society. This is an important activity because it serves to recuperate not only the disrupted memories, myths, traditions and narratives from the interstices of colonisation, but also starts looking at the writing of history from a non-hegemonical position. This will promote a more profound understanding of social and historical complexities than what is permitted by the easy generalisations that narratives of national oppression permit. We must remember that in a certain sense, the categories of postcoloniality apply to all the peoples of the world in turn. The danger is that this homogeneous category mitigates the particular experiences of a people and the ruptures that colonisation may have caused in particular histories, for instance of social groups or religious formations. So there must be a reorientation in the approach to history. The subaltern school of historiography in India is the prime mover in this direction.

3.5 'DECOLONISING THE INDIAN MIND': RESISTING NEO-COLONIALISM

The forces of neo-colonialism are those powerful western nations that seek to subordinate, and exploit and hegemonise without engaging in military conquest. The agenda is furthered by the activity of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation to facilitate the movement of trans-national capital. The open market policy of the new world order fails to ensure a level playing field for all the players in a global economy. The economically weaker nations often have to submit to the demands of the powerful European -American combines. This facilitates a global interface that has tremendous cultural consequences for the developing and underdeveloped economies of the world. The spectacular growth of mass media and communication technology as well as information technology has posed new threats of cultural domination whose consequences are already apparent, not only in impact studies but also in the resistance methods that may be adopted. **Namvar Singh** in his essay *Decolonising the Indian Mind*, identifies decolonisation as the single most significant event of the 20th century. Importantly, he goes on to express his anxiety about the "new onslaught" of colonisation and explores the ways in which neo-colonialism can be resisted. He rejects the easy solutions of turning to tradition, to nationalism or to an anti-West sentiment. Singh suggests setting up of a global network of resistance along with the many anti-imperialist individuals and groups who have actively expressed their disagreement with colonialism and imperialism. The West is seen as a complex, multi-dimensional entity with which we need to negotiate with care, and not to dismiss out of hand.

Singh maintains that there is no one simple given tradition in India. Any tradition that is used to oppose the onslaught of colonisation will have to be reconstructed as "the rediscovery of the past by the present as desired". This means that the tradition that will be constructed as the past of the country will be according to the needs of the present. This will thus be a biased version of tradition. Whose tradition is it to be? The two examples **Singh** gives are those of the imperial powers of today who still

have a vested interest in their previous colonies, and who need to see India and the Third World as a backward and primitive place. The imperial forces pick out of India's past only those things that help consolidate the image of primitiveness and backwardness. The second example is that of the one-dimensional and narrow tradition presented by Hindu fundamentalists as India's 'real' past. Both these groups create a tradition with a motive that is either political or commercial or both.

Singh also rejects the option of resisting neo-colonialism through the 'nationalist allegory'. "Whose nation?", he asks. The poor, the backward, the *Dalit* do not according to him, identify with the nation as it currently obtains. He points out that the nationalism that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century has done its job and spent its energies; there is no point in trying to revive it, or invoke it once again. Instead, **Singh** argues that resistance can be organised by taking into account the realities of the present. In the realm of culture, **Singh** argues, though a small percentage of society has been culturally colonised, and that too superficially, it is important to realise that this colonisation is hegemonic. That is, the colonisation of the small percentage of Indians is one that constitutes cultural control and exerts power. It is important, also to remember that this small percentage of culturally colonised people belong to the class that claims to having changed and developed literature in the post-Independence period. **Singh**'s cynicism against this class is evident, and he ironically points out that this is the class that claims to have effected decolonisation, even though it was a "pseudo-decolonisation."

Namvar Singh recommends that we should not dissociate ourselves from the progressive elements in the west in search of a distinctive identity for Third World literature. The model for "Third World Literature" could be the literature of the socialist bloc of the Second World. Although the Second World is beginning to disintegrate, its literature is not. Singh asserts that the literature of the Second World is more liberated and exciting than that of the Third World. **Namvar Singh**'s resistance to neo-colonialism leads him to find alternative models for a 'Third World Literature'. Clearly, he accepts the division of the world into three, a position **Aijaz Ahmed** so strongly refuted from the postcolonial standpoint.

3.6 SAYING AN "IMPOSSIBLE 'NO' "

Namvar Sings acceptance of the three-world theory (Appearing elsewhere in this Block), even as he devises strategies to resist neo-colonialism is a typical condition of the postcolonial intellectual. **Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak** articulates both the frustration of the efforts to decolonise as well as the compelling urgency to do so when she writes that postcolonial resistance consists in saying an "impossible 'no' to a structure, which one critiques, yet inhabits intimately". Any engagement with decolonisation implies involvement with the colonial project: with its policies, institutions and vocabulary. It is in a sense impossible to decolonise fully. **Spivak** advances the idea of 'catechresis' as a strategy to critique colonial assumptions. This consists in "reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value-coding".

In modern and democratic India, the Constitution, the Parliament, the Judiciary, the Civil service, the missionary schools, and indeed the very idea of resisting oppression in an organised manner, are all products of colonialism and lessons of the English language. Decolonisation would mean dismantling every institution, without anything to be put up in its stead. In the Indian context therefore, the evaluation of colonisation is very important and it is necessary to explain what decolonisation would specifically imply. It is crucial to repeat that the pattern of colonisation determines the process of decolonisation, and it differs from place to place. Scholars and activists engaged in the discourses of postcolonialism have thus highlighted different issues. These are important to know if only to assess the strategies of colonisation and decolonisation. The various academic bodies that facilitate research and enquiry in

the area through scholarships and grants are products of a vicious imperialism. The Rhodes scholarship comes immediately to mind. **Namvar Singh** touches upon this aspect of neo-colonialism when he talks about the activities of the Ford Foundation in India and other Asian countries and the kind of studies it is known to fund. He also warns against a breed of local neo-colonialists who facilitate this effort. However, it is difficult to find people who have refused these grants and scholarships on the basis of convictions.

3.7 DECOLONISING THE WESTERN MIND

The process of decolonisation of the mind would be incomplete without the decolonisation of the western mind. We have mentioned above that colonisers too internalise the colonial hierarchies of power to construct allegories of masterhood for themselves. However, it is important to remember that even as those allegories are constructed, even as histories are rewritten, languages imposed, cultural domination sought, and battles of resistance fought, there have been liberals and humanitarian groups in Europe who were not just sympathising but also actively fighting colonial power structures at home. There were groups of scholars and intellectuals from Europe who were exploring, documenting and exposing the rich, sophisticated and complex histories and cultures of the 'barbarian' 'undeveloped' societies. Even with the reservations that **Said**'s *Orientalism* has taught us to harbour, these studies have contributed enormously to the European understanding of the colonies.

The decolonising of literary studies in the metropolitan academies offered the possibility of the development of postcolonial theory. The works of postcolonial critics were first published in journals coming out of the Anglo-American academy. These facts do not in any way undermine the radical, path-breaking scholarship of the authors or their essays; rather, it shows that they have created the space for anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist scholarship and politics in the bastion of power. The fact that their essays are seminal also to Postcolonial Studies in the metropolitan academy reveals a great deal about the complex balance of power between the American/European scholar and the one from the postcolonial countries, for Postcolonial Studies cannot ignore the inputs of the latter. The process of decolonisation of the European mind was also carried forward by the migrant populations of previously colonised people who surged into European countries for better prospects after the colonies were liberated and continue to do so. Thus, today the presence of immigrants in Europe and United States is bringing changes in culture, arts and literature. A vital and exciting literature is coming out of the previously colonised countries as the 'Empire Writes Back'. One of the consequences of the decolonising of mind in literary studies in India is the canon reform we have been witnessing in the last few years so that literature other than the one projected by the British canon that we inherited from the British Raj is also studied.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have focused on the idea of decolonisation of the mind. We have examined some of the sites of cultural colonisation and seen how the perspectives of postcolonial criticism can help us formulate strategies of reading and resisting cultural texts. It is important to remember that patterns of colonialism have varied from place to place and people to people and these determine the nature and process of decolonisation. We have also seen how the forces of neo-colonialism pose new threats in an unequal world order. We have then gone on to suggest as critics have done that though it is impossible to decolonise minds completely, resistance in every new form must continue.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by decolonisation of the mind?
2. How is the literary theory of decolonising the mind put into practice? Mention the arguments used in this theory?
3. How does language play a role in cultural colonisation?
4. What are the sites across which cultural domination is organised?
5. What are the forces of neo-colonialism and how can they be resisted?

UNIT 4 CIVILISATIONAL CONFLICTS IN LITERATURE

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Civilisational Conflicts in Literature
4.3 Conrad's Othering of Africa
4.4 Racist Representation of Africa
4.5 Veracity of Representations
4.6 Colonialist Representation in A Passage to India
4.7 Let Us Sum Up
4.8 Questions
4.9 Glossary

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In Units 1,2 and 3 we have read theories of how colonisation functioned through cultural colonialism as well as political and administrative domination, and how neo-imperialism continues this project by constructing the previously colonised, the *Third World*, as the *Other*. In this Unit we will take up readings of two canonical texts: one by one of the foremost writer of postcolonial literature, **Chinua Achebe**, and the other by a prominent postcolonial critic, **Abdul R JanMohamed**. They re-read **Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* and **Forster**'s *A Passage to* India respectively. From a close textual analysis of the *Heart of Darkness,* **Achebe** moves to formulating a theory about the methods used by the West in systematically representing *Other* cultures in a racist manner as does **JanMohamed** in his reading of **E M Forster**'s *A Passage to India*. In this Unit we will put the theory we have been reading in the last three units to practical use. It is useful to think of how you can use Postcolonial theory to read other texts.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Achebe, born in 1930, is a Nigerian acclaimed as a novelist, poet and essayist. He is credited with articulating a pre-colonial past for Africa, a continent that was pronounced by the colonial powers as having no history. **Achebe** begins his essay, *An Image of Africa: Racism in* ***Conrad****'s Heart of Darkness*, (1977) with two personal anecdotes. Both these accounts foreground the stereotypes of Africa that exist in the imagination of the West. The first stereotype is that Africa has no history; the second is the association of tribal rituals and superstitions with the African culture. The reason these Western stereotypes of Africa are important to interrogate is that they point to a systematic construction of Africa through the shorthand they provide, and that even in an age of information technology these stereotypes remain unshaken. **Achebe** diagnoses the problem at the very outset:

> *If there is something in these utterances more than youthful inexperience, more than a lack of factual knowledge, what is it? Quite simply it is the desire – one might indeed say the need – in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest. (138)*

Unlike **Said, Achebe**'s intention is not to interrogate the need of the West to prove its superiority through the negation of other cultures. In this essay **Achebe** endeavours to use his own expertise as a novelist to scrutinise the ideological framework of *Heart of Darkness*. **Achebe** gives several reasons for picking this particular text. According to him, this text more than any other that he knows displays the Western desire to set up Africa as a foil to Europe. Although there are vast numbers of other books that do the same thing, **Conrad** is worth examining because he is considered one of the great stylists of modern fiction. His fiction thus falls into the category of 'permanent' fiction. The most important reason for analysing *Heart of Darkness* is that it is constantly read and taught by serious academics and is then able to seamlessly reinforce all the stereotypes of Africa through the academy itself. **Abdul R JanMohamed**'s concern on the other hand lies in the knowledge that most of the critical material on colonialist literature does not take into account the political context of culture and history. He posits that in order to understand colonialist discourse we have to map the ideological function of this discourse with the actual imperial practice. To elucidate his concern, **JanMohamed** has re-read several canonised texts like the *Heart of Darkness* and *Kim*. We shall however, examine his reading of *A Passage to India*. We shall begin with what has been often perceived by critics as Civilisational Conflicts in Literature by examining **Achebe**'s reading of **Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness*.

4.2 CIVILISATIONAL CONFLICTS IN LITERATURE

In Unit 1 we studied **Edward Said**'s theory of Orientalism that locates the need of the West, or Europe, to assert its superiority through the *Othering* of a different culture as the primary motive behind orientalising a segment of the world. This Unit will look at readings of two texts that use this theory. **Chinua Achebe,** the eminent African author, whose novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is an essential part of the canon of postcolonial fiction. His re-reading of **Joseph Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* as a text that is invested in constructing Africa and Africans as the *Other* in order to assert the ascendancy of Europe, and **Abdul R Jan Mohamed,** the well-known postcolonial critic's, reading of **E M Forster**'s *A Passage to India* as a text that attempts to forge a synthesis between the *Self* and the *Other* but ultimately falls back on the colonialist discourse to show the inevitable failure of this exercise. In the present phase of neo-colonialism, particularly that crystallised in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the division between the colonised world and the colonising power has assumed the dimensions of what can be called civilisational antagonism. A deeply prejudiced paradigm between 'civilisations' divides humanity between two irreconcilable parts and bears the stamp of racism. A number of important critical voices have drawn our attention to this fact. It is important to take note of the rigorous discipline with which both critics use tools of critical analysis in unearthing the latent racism in these novels.

4.3 CONRAD'S *OTHERING* OF AFRICA

Before we turn to **Achebe**'s reading of *Heart of Darkness* it would be useful to refer back to Unit 1 to remind ourselves, of the methodology put in place by **Said** in *Orientalism:*

> *...all representations of the Orient need to be seen as representations, and evidence of this can be found in style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices and historical and social circumstances. The methodology of Orientalism is to study location and formation of the writer and the text, and to interrogate the evidence of how the Orient is constructed or represented in a particular text in order to align it to the larger body of Oriental writings. (Unit 1)*

It is important to note, however, that while *Orientalism* was first published in 1978, **Achebe**'s *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness* first appeared in *The Massachusetts Review* in 1977, and was actually presented as a paper at the University of Massachusetts on February 18th, 1975. **Achebe** is then not indebted to **Said** for his methodology of reading *Heart of Darkness*. It is significant that both these literary critics arrived independently at very similar strategies of reading 'great' literature, and used their findings from these readings to articulate a larger theory about the ways in which the West systematically constructs Africa or the East to serve its own needs. **Achebe** uses all the tools available to him as a novelist and a literary critic to interrogate the text through its style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices and historical and social circumstances. **Achebe**'s premise is that *Heart of Darkness* projects Africa as "the other world", as the antithesis of Europe, and constructs a binary of civilisation versus bestiality. You have already studied the *Heart of Darkness* in your **British Novel** Course. However, for our analysis we will need to go into some detail on the novel at this juncture. It would also be of help if you could re-read the block on the *Heart of Darkness*. The novel opens on the banks of the River Thames, but it uses this setting only to more effectively *Other* the River Congo, which is the actual setting of the story. While the River Thames is tranquil and peaceful, enjoying an old age pension for the service it has rendered to the people inhabiting its banks, the River Congo has rendered no service and does not merit an old age pension. It is a pathway to "the earliest beginning of the world" (p.139), that is, a pre-civilisational period, a pre-human world.

While it is true that **Conrad** differentiates between the two rivers and portrays one as good and the other as bad, **Achebe** asserts that that is not the real point. As in any Self/Other binary, what disturbs **Conrad** is not the difference but the "lurking hint of kinship", the fear of acknowledging the similarities between this civilised world and the primordial one. This fear arises out of the risk posed by re-visiting the darkness that the West has conquered and forgotten; the risk of "falling victim to an avenging recrudescence of the mindless frenzy of the first beginnings." (p.139) The peace and tranquility of the civilised world then has its foundations in the "triumphant bestiality" that it now defines itself against, the darkness that belongs to the *Other*. **Conrad** is worried about the temptations of submitting to the darkness that the West believes it has successfully suppressed.

Achebe analyses **Conrad**'s style of writing in the creation of an Africa whose main characteristics are an inscrutable silence and mindless frenzy. He draws attention to **Conrad**'s repetition of words such as 'implacable', 'inscrutable', 'incomprehensible' and 'mysterious'. He quotes **F R Leavis** who had discovered this use of repetition long ago: **Leavis** comments on **Conrad**'s "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery." (p.140) Most critics of **Conrad** see this repetition as a stylistic flaw, but **Achebe**'s theoretical framework allows him to make conclusions that have much more serious implications than the weakness of writing style. **Achebe** accuses **Conrad** of artistic bad faith in trying to induce a hypnotic stupor in his readers by bombarding them with emotive words. But how is the intelligent reader deceived by **Conrad**'s trickery? **Achebe** is aware that the normal reader is usually able to detect such "underhand trickery" and resist it. However, **Achebe** asserts, **Conrad**'s choice of subject is such that he need not fear a conflict with the psychological predisposition of his readers. **Conrad** chooses the "role of the purveyor of comforting myths." (p.140) Thus, the Western readership that is responsible for canonising this text is only too eager to accept Africa as the land of the myths of their distant past, a past on account of which they can comfort themselves that they do not need to worry about any more.

After the setting and style of the novel, **Achebe** turns to a critical analysis of the characterisation in it. He quotes a lengthy passage that is self-evident and needs no commentary to prove his point. The passage describes the inhabitants of the banks of River Congo in terms that are dehumanising, dissecting the people into different body parts rather than recognisable humans, and coalescing them with the jungle from which they emerge:

> *A burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. (p.140)*

He describes them as monstrous and ugly. However, as with the River Thames and the River Congo, the primary point is not that the inhabitants of Africa are the opposite of the civilised Westerner; the reason for the interest of the European in the African is the "dim suspicion" that there could be some remote, distant, common ground that could render the monstrous African comprehensible to his civilised *Other*. When **Conrad** actually looks at an individual African who has a recognisable human form his racism does not fare much better. **Achebe** picks out two descriptions of individual Africans: Marlow's helmsman and the African mistress of Kurtz. The African helmsman is described as "a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat walking on his hind legs". (p.141) **Conrad**'s discomfort seems to stem from seeing an African performing a task that requires Western knowledge and education and puts him on parity with the other Europeans on the boat, albeit in a hierarchical structure. **Achebe** underlines the fact that **Conrad** places a great deal of importance on things being in their right place; a cannibal needs no excuse to be swaying and clapping in the jungle, but when he steps out of the place that **Conrad** has designated as appropriate for him then **Conrad** is uncomfortable. To construct a binary of the West as Africa's civilisational *Other* it is important that both the entities have stable, unchanging identities. There can be no space for an individual to cross over – no matter how marginally – from one side of the boundary to the other because that unsettles the logic of the binary.

Towards the end of the story **Conrad** sets up another opposing set of characters; the African Amazonian woman and the refined European Intended. **Achebe** comments that the difference in the novelist's attitude to these two women is conveyed in many ways, but the most important one for him is the power of speech – human expression – that is given to the one and withheld from the other. The African woman is equated with the wilderness and her purpose is "inscrutable". The European woman is in mourning, **Conrad** tells us, and her character is definable in human terms:

> *She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering (p.143),*

- all attributes of a civilised people. But more than that, she is allowed to speak.

Achebe emphasises the role of speech in this novel. Africans are not allowed any comprehensible speech. They make "a violent babble of uncouth sounds", and the problem does not seem to be that the Europeans are incapable of understanding their language, because even among themselves they "exchange short grunting phrases". There are, however, two exceptions to this norm and **Achebe** discusses both at some length to underline the implications. The first is the cannibal's monosyllabic "Catch 'im" and "Eat 'im", and the second is the now famous pronouncement, "Mistah Kurtz – he dead". **Achebe** sees the conferring of speech on the Africans in these two cases as his best assault on them. If **Conrad** wants to communicate the unspeakable craving in their heart to eat each other he has to give them some modicum of speech because grunts will not suffice. The grunts convey a vague and ambiguous impression of bestiality and monstrosity, but only the clarity of speech issuing out of their own mouths, voicing their cannibalistic desire can confirm the impression. The "insolent black head" that announces the death of Kurtz is seen by **Achebe** as the perfect stylistic device to write an appropriate ending to the horror story of Kurtz's succumbing to the powers of darkness. What better way of ending his story than by "the proclamation of his physical death by the forces he had joined?" asks **Achebe** (p.144) In the following section we shall look at **Achebe**'s critical analysis of **Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* which makes him conclude that "**Joseph Conrad** was a thoroughgoing racist."

4.4 RACIST REPRESENTATION OF AFRICA

The reason that most critics make no mention of this fact is that white racism against Africa is the norm and invites no comment or criticism when evidence of this is found. The excuses made for not focusing on the patent racism in the text are mostly that the text is about the deterioration of one European mind and that **Conrad**'s critique and ridicule of Europe is far greater than that of Africa, or that Africa is only a setting, a backdrop, for the story of Kurtz. **Achebe**'s objection to the representation of Africa in the text is exactly this: Africa is used as a "metaphysical battlefield" and Africans are of no importance in this setting. The metaphysical dimension needs to clear the battlefield of all people recognisable as humans, and what better place than Africa where human beings do not count in the white racist worldview? **Achebe** indignantly asks:

> *Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?" (p.146)*

Achebe then questions the inclusion of *Heart of Darkness* in the canon of great literature when it so obviously celebrates the dehumanisation of Africa, the dehumanisation that has been fostered in the world by the white racism that uncritically accepts it and successfully perpetuates it. Can a racist novel be called a great work of art? **Achebe** emphatically answers in the negative. He does not argue with **Conrad**'s great talents, or his insight in the exploration of European minds, but he points out that these things have already been discussed for the last fifty years, whereas his racism has not been addressed until now. To explore the reasons for **Conrad**'s overt racism **Achebe** turns to form tools of textual analysis that interrogate the style, figure of speech, setting and narrative devices an examination of the exteriority of the text, that is the social and historical location of the text and its author. So **Achebe** links the year of **Conrad**'s birth, 1857, to the very year when Anglican missionaries started arriving in Nigeria. Historically, **Conrad** grew up in a period when the reputation of the African people was very low, and this perhaps accounts, to some extent, for his own racism. But socio-historical factors cannot explain **Conrad**'s obsession with the blackness of what he repeatedly calls "niggers". **Achebe** relates this antipathy to the black people to **Conrad**'s own psychology. In support of his psychological analysis of **Conrad, Achebe** quotes two passages from **Conrad**'s own life. **Conrad**'s first encounter with a "buck nigger" created a permanent, unshakeable impression of black people as representing "blind, furious, unreasoning rage". (p.147) The impact of this encounter on him cannot be underestimated as he tells us that "of that nigger I used to dream for years afterwards." (p.147)

The fixation with blackness, we know by now, must have an opposite obsession with whiteness. And sure enough, **Conrad** has a companion piece to that of the "buck nigger" of the first Englishman that he encountered, whom he calls "my unforgettable Englishman". As with the "buck nigger" a great deal of the description focuses on the physical whiteness of the Englishman – his exposed calves, marble like condition, tone of young ivory, etc. But just as the blackness of the "buck nigger" was accompanied by "unreasoning rage", so the whiteness of the Englishman is personified by "a glance of kindly curiosity and a friendly gleam of big, sound, shiny teeth". (p,147) **Achebe** comments, "Irrational love and irrational hate jostling together in the heart of that talented, tormented man." (p.148) **Achebe**'s methodology of examining **Conrad**'s racism in *Heart of Darkness* has been two-pronged: one is to scrutinise the form and theme of the actual text itself and to place it in a socio-historical context, and the other is to interrogate the psyche of the author himself. While the first method uses cultural materialism, that is, it investigates the material facts that surround the text and the author to deconstruct its ideology, the second method of psychoanalysis perceives the author as an individual whose psychology cannot entirely be rationalised in terms of his location – socially and historically.

Conrad's obsession with blackness is influenced to some degree by the period in which he is living, but ultimately **Achebe** diagnoses it as "irrational", arising from his "tormented" mind. However, **Conrad**'s case is not that of a prejudiced mind out to downgrade the *other*. We, therefore, need to probe deeper into his fictional representation. This is what we will attempt in the following discussion.

4.5 VERACITY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Why is it important to speak out against the racism of a work of fiction that is not meant to please the people about whom it is written? Does the author of a fictional story have to be responsible in his/her representations of peoples and places? **Achebe** firmly believes that the writer does bear the burden of responsibility because Africans have undergone untold sufferings precisely due to the kinds of prejudices and insults that this novel portrays. More important than the agonies suffered in the past is the fact that these atrocities continue into the present in many ways and many places even today. Thus, for this representation of Africa to go unchallenged means to abet the injustices to the black people that history has witnessed and that now continue to be present due to the stereotypes of the Africans that are perpetuated through 'great' fiction. The other issue that **Achebe** raises is: how does one question the veracity of the representation of one who has actually, physically, experienced the places and peoples he is representing, specially when one has no first hand experience of those places and peoples oneself? **Achebe** has two responses to this. The first is that a traveller's representations need not be trusted simply because he saw those things with his own eyes. It is well known that perspectivism, the point of view from which one views anything, fundamentally influences the manner in which it is perceived. And as **Aijaz Ahmad** emphasises:

> *...when it comes to knowledge of the world, there is no such thing as a category of the 'essentially descriptive'; that 'description' is never ideologically or cognitively neutral; that to 'describe' is to specify a locus of meaning, to construct an object of knowledge, and to produce a knowledge that will be bound by that act of descriptive construction.*

Conrad's 'description' of Africa is an excellent illustration of **Ahmad**'s argument. **Conrad**'s 'description' emerges out of his own ideological beliefs and can never be the product of a 'neutral' standpoint. The danger of this description lies precisely in the fact that once **Conrad** has constructed Africa as an object of knowledge through its 'cannibalistic', 'monstrous' people and its primordial, bestial state, the Africa that is thus created is bound by this description and becomes the site for judgments, values, perceptions in the future. **Conrad**'s Africa then blends seamlessly into the already existing stereotype of Africa and strengthens the negative values attributed to it through its prejudiced descriptions.

Achebe's second response to the viability of questioning a first-hand traveller's representation of a people and a place is that of exploring other sources for information and then doing a comparative study. He thus turns to the account of a British art historian, **Frank Willett**, to see how his view of Africa compares with **Conrad**'s and finds that the differences between the two are irreconcilable. **Willett**'s account is about the impact of African art on the great European painters. He even identifies a mask that stunned **Derain** when he saw it and who was affected enough by it to show it to **Matisse** and **Picasso**. African art in the early part of the nineteen hundreds was responsible for ushering in a revolution in the tradition of the painting of Europe. It seems inconceivable that **Conrad**'s savages who fade in and out of the wilderness could be deemed capable of producing great art, or any art, for that matter. **Achebe** identifies the people who made the mask that **Willett** refers to as the *Fang* people, and tells us that they are "without doubt among the world's greatest masters

of sculptured form." (p.149) The discovery of their work by European artists was responsible for the beginning of *cubism* and for infusing life into European art.

At the end of the essay **Achebe** reiterates the hypothesis with which he began: namely that **Conrad**'s racism is just a reflection of the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination. The reason for the entirely negative construction of Africa, **Achebe** says is that "the West seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilisation and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa". (p.150) This was echoed a year later by **Edward Said**. Thus the construction of the polarised binaries of the River Thames/River Congo, the African mistress/the Intended, European civilisation/masses of swaying bodies in the jungles. But as **Achebe** has been at pains to underline, the main point is not that the binary puts in permanent opposition good/bad; the main point is the need to avoid the *Other* because of the risk that it may invade the *Self* and claim it in the name of shared ancestry, just as the darkness claimed Kurtz. **Achebe** finds that there is no easy way out of this dehumanising of Africa by the West that can come about by simply telling them about the 'real' Africa which is not the opposite of that which is portrayed by the West but is simply a human Africa with all the attributes of human beings anywhere in the world. But this demystification is not possible because the counter knowledge of the prevalent stereotype of Africa is disseminated through every institution of the West – its media, its schools and its churches. The work of undoing these systematically taught stereotypes is daunting, but must be done nevertheless. Of crucial importance in the work of redressing this issue is to be aware of the integral link between stereotyping and politics. Thus, while **Conrad** was aware of the evil of imperial exploitation and he condemned it in his writing, he did not make the connection between imperialism and the racist ideology, grounded in the assumed superiority of the West and the inherent inferiority of the non-West, which gave it legitimacy. On the other hand, there has never been a time when the victims of racism have not been aware of the connection between the two, even if they are not part of the educated elite who have the language and tools to read and critique **Conrad**, to internalise and raise his/her voice against this racism.

4.6 COLONIALIST REPRESENTATIONS IN *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

Abdul R JanMohamed's essay, *The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature* was published in the well-known scholarly journal *Critical Inquiry* in the Autumn of 1985 in a special volume entitled '"Race," Writing and Difference'. **JanMohamed** starts his essay by voicing his concern with the fact that most of the critical material on colonialist literature does not take into account the political context of culture and history. Due to this, there is a systematic avoidance of any analysis of domination, manipulation, exploitation and disenfranchisement that forms part of any relationship. However, it certainly is part of all colonial relations. He posits that to understand colonialist discourse we have to map the ideological function of this discourse with the actual imperialist practices. When we study colonialist fiction, we will find that the ideological functions can be understood, indeed *must* be analysed, in terms of the politics and culture of the European and the colonialist, not in terms of the colonised and their land in which this fiction is set.

In order to enable the postcolonial critic to analyse colonialist literature by examining the politics of culture and history **JanMohamed** gives us his model of the Manichean allegory:

> *Just as imperialists "administer" the resources of the conquered country, so colonialist discourse "commodifies" the native subject into a stereotyped object and uses him as a "resource" for colonialist fiction. The European writer commodifies the native by negating his individuality, his subjectivity,*

> *so that he is now perceived as a generic being that can be exchanged for any other native (they all look alike, act alike, and so on). Once reduced to his exchange-value in the colonialist signifying system, he is fed into the Manichean allegory, which functions as the currency, the medium of exchange, for the entire colonialist discursive system. The exchange function of the allegory remains constant, while the generic attributes themselves can be substituted infinitely (and even contradictorily) for one another. As Said points out in his study of Orientalism, such strategies depend on a "flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand." Within such a representational economy, the writer's task is to "administer" the relatively scarce resources of the Manichean opposition in order to reproduce the native in a potentially infinite variety of images, the apparent diversity of which is determined by the simple machinery of Manichean allegory. (p.64)*

In colonial societies, **JanMohamed** argues, the dominant model of power is the Manichean opposition between the supposed superiority of the European and the alleged inferiority of the native. In colonialist literary representation this gives rise to diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between "black and white, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilisation and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, *Self* and *Other*, subject and object." The power of this Manichean opposition is so great that even those writers who are reluctant to acknowledge it, and are critical of imperialist exploitation, are sucked into it.

To illustrate his point **JanMohamed** re-reads some canonical novels, including *Heart of Darkness* and **Rudyard Kipling**'s *Kim*. For our work we shall focus on his reading of **E M Forster**'s *A Passage to India*. **JanMohamed** begins his analysis of **Forster** by observing that in *A Passage to India* **Forster** very consciously and deliberately brackets the values and basis of his own culture so that he can look beyond them, so that he can perceive other cultures without being biased by his own. He does this in order to appreciate the common ground between *Self* and *Other*, or the term that **JanMohamed** uses, an alterity. Thus, **Forster** is harsh in his satirisation of the stereotypes of colonialist racism and is able to present accurately and concretely differences between Muslim and Hindu beliefs, or the differences between Anglo-Indian and English values.

Forster makes a sincere attempt to examine the possibilities of cultural and racial rapprochement – a coming together, or union – of the two races, of the East and the West, the coloniser and the colonised. However, the very devices he uses for this eventually guarantee their failure. **JanMohamed**'s analysis of **Forster**'s use of the landscape of India – the Marabar caves – the spirituality and religion that symbolises Indians, and the ambiguity of the metaphysical and mystical experiences of the British in India expose the inevitability of failure in forging a union between the two cultures at even the minutest level. He points out that India is characterised as a land of pathos, of an ontological homesickness that is embodied in the Marabar Hills and caves. He further shows that **Forster** stresses on the ambiguity of the caves, the Jain religion that has for its goal the absolute Nothing, and more important, on the Indian mind which is so steeped in ambiguity that it confuses a branch with a snake. Thus, metaphysical difference is embodied in the very landscape, religion and mentality of India. The implication of **Forster**'s use of the metaphysical difference can be seen in the end when Fielding asks Aziz why they cannot be friends. **Forster** portrays the friendship of Fielding and Aziz as the only one that bears the potential of transcending racial barriers.

Fielding is rational, lacks racial prejudice and is humane. Aziz has matured through his experiences with the British Raj. Both want to be friends, but the negative reply does not come from either of them, or from any of the political, social, historical and cultural structures that have so painstakingly been examined and analysed in the

novel; rather, they come from the many inanimate objects that form India, the objects both "ridiculous and august", the objects that had said "Come" with their many mouths earlier in the novel. **JanMohamed** comments:

> *In the final analysis, racial difference is once again supported and justified by metaphysical difference. ...The narrative decision to turn India into a metaphysical protagonist inherently antithetical to Western liberal humanism probably stems from a sense of larger cultural differences, the machinery of which is similar to that of the Manichean allegory.*

JanMohamed's conclusion, then, like **Achebe**'s, is that it is impossible for **Forster** to completely put aside his own cultural values and perspectives, and that is why he finds it difficult to end his novel with a union, a rapprochment, between his own supposedly superior European protagonist and his *Other*, the allegedly inferior colonised native. What makes **JanMohamed**'s reading of *A Passage to India* so much more complex than **Achebe**'s reading of *Heart of Darkness* is his ability to use the tools of the postcolonial critic to expose the colonialist discourse of a novel that is valorised as being different from other colonialist fiction, a novel that is seen as representing India from within and not with the usual racist bias that is inherent in other colonial works. **JanMohamed** shows that even when a writer belonging to the colonial power deliberately and consciously sets out to expose the stereotypes that his countrymen have indulged in, and to move towards a breaking down of the barrier between *Self* and *Other*, he cannot move out of his own cultural background completely.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

Achebe selects **Joseph Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* in his plan to question racist constructions of Africa because he feels that this text more than any other displays the Western desire to set up Africa as a foil to Europe. **Conrad** is particularly worth examining because he is accepted as one of the great stylists of modern fiction. His fiction thus belongs to the category of 'permanent' fiction. The reason for analysing *Heart of Darkness* is that it is read constantly by serious academics. **Achebe** uses all the tools available to him as a novelist and a literary critic to examine the text through its style, figures of speech, setting, etc. **Achebe**'s critical analysis of **Conrad**'s *Heart of Darkness* makes him remark, that, "**Joseph Conrad** was a thoroughgoing racist." (p.145) The reason that most critics make no mention of this fact is that white racism against Africa is the norm and invites no comment or criticism when evidence of it is found. At the end of the essay **Achebe** reiterates the hypothesis with which he began: namely that **Conrad**'s racism is just a reflection of the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination. **Abdul R JanMohamed** started his essay by voicing his concern with the fact that most of the critical material available on colonialist literature does not acknowledge the influence of the political context of culture and history. He suggests that in order to understand the colonialist discourse one would need to trace the ideological function of this discourse with what was the actual imperialist practice of that time. He then goes on to re-read **E M Forster**'s *A Passage to India.* Through his re- reading of *A Passage to India,* he manages to show that even though **Forster** tried very hard to expose the stereotypes that his countrymen have indulged in, and to move towards a breaking down of the barrier between the *Self* and the *other,* he cannot move out of his own cultural background completely as is evident from his ending of *A Passage to India.*

4.8 QUESTIONS

1. Why does Chinua Achebe select Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to analyse Western representations of Africa in racist terms?
2. What tools does Achebe use in his analysis of *Heart of Darkness?*

3. Do you agree with Achebe's conclusion that "Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist"?
4. What theory does Achebe formulate from his reading of *Heart of Darkness*? Why do Western critics not discuss the racist representation of Africa in this novel?
5. What according to JanMohamed is necessary for a study of colonialist literature/ fiction?
6. What strategy should be adopted to analyse colonialist literature in postcolonial terms?
7. Do you agree with JanMohamed's conclusion that it is impossible for Forster to completely put aside his own cultural values and perspectives in *A Passage to India*?

4.9 GLOSSARY

Ascendancy: Powerful position, a position of power or domination over others

Primordial: Existing first, existing at the beginning of time

Inscrutable: Mysterious, hard to interpret because not expressing anything obviously

Demystification: Make less mysterious, to remove the mystery surrounding something, for example, by explaining it in simple language

Rapprochement: Renewal of friendly relations, the establishment or renewal of friendly relations between people or nations that were previously hostile or unsympathetic toward each other (*formal*)

UNIT 5 RESISTING COLONISATION AND RE-COLONISATION

Structure

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Resisting Colonisation and Re- colonisation
5.3 Decolonising the Indian Mind
5.4 Nationalism in *Gora* and *Samskar*
5.5 Singh's Critique of Post Independence Indian Literature
5.6 Third World Versus First World
5.7 Struggle against Neo Colonialism
5.8 Let Us Sum Up
5.9 Questions
5.10 Glossary

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In Units 1, 2, and 3 we have studied theories of Postcoloniality, and in Unit 4 we have studied the practical application of these theories to the reading of two texts– *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*. The reference point in Unit 4 was the 'civilisational' clash supposed to have emerged in the closing decades of the twentieth century. In this Unit we will look at the concept of resisting colonisation and re-colonisation by examining an essay by an eminent Hindi critic **Namvar Singh**. This essay is at once somewhat problematic and explanatory as it also does a number of things: it responds to Postcolonial theories, uses them in formulating ideas, and also does a comparative reading of two texts.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we begin a discussion of this essay a word of caution is necessary. We need to be alert to two things while reading this essay: the first is **Namvar Singh**'s main theme in this piece – that neo-colonialism must be detected and resisted, and the second is the form, that is, the construction and methodology of the argument itself. By now we have already read four essays and analysed the different methods and approaches used in Postcolonial theory. We should therefore, be ready to critique essays using the theories that we have studied to find the flaws or merits of the argument presented. In this unit, we shall also try to show how an argument can be subjected to critical examination.

5.2 RESISTING COLONISATION AND RE-COLONISATION

The block to which the present unit belongs is about the various types of writing about what used to be the British Empire till World War II. In the previous four units we have tried to examine the nature of colonial literature and how postcolonial critics have tried to understand it or even deconstruct it. Before we proceed, any further, it would be pertinent to look at the various literary terms that we have been using through this block. When we talk of imperialism/ imperial, what is meant is the

political authority with which a state assumed control and power over another state/ nation/ country. Imperialism would therefore, mean the British Empire assuming complete control over India or her other colonies. Imperialism is normally reflected through the use of symbols and symbolism and pageantry, which once again is indicative of another dominant culture. For example, England was an imperial power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Colonialism is a result of imperialism. A consolidated imperial power involves capturing of territories, settlement, very often the exploitation of resources of the conquered territory and an attempt to rule the native inhabitants of a newly colonised land (e.g., India and Australia were both colonised by the British).

From colonialism comes the word colonial literature. Since we are students of English literature, colonial literature could be used to mean / include writings that are concerned with the colonial experience and colonial preoccupations written during colonial times. Postcolonial literature, on the other hand is, apart from being simply the writing that came after the empire also that which examines the colonial relationship between coloniser and the colonised critically. It is also a literature that resists the colonial perspective. Also refereed to as decolonisation. Such writing demands a re- look, and a re-structuring of established meanings and power equations. Postcolonialism / postcolonial writers and critics are largely engaged in the act of undercutting those discourses that supported colonisation, those images of power and race. This in turn gives rise to another term – postcoloniality, a state of being in which the formerly colonised, seek their own place in the global scenario.

Sometimes, neo-colonialism is also used in place of postcolonialism. It must be remembered that though both these terms refer to the post independence period they mean different things. Neo-colonialism is a term borrowed from economic theory which signifies/ means the economic control still being exercised by the west on their former colonies, in spite of the fact that the former colonies are now independent nations. Whereas former colonies have gained political independence and the proverbial sun has set on the British Empire, we are still trapped in colonialism of another kind. Despite the fact that there has been a development in anti- imperialism and in critiquing established orders of the empire, colonialism still exists in a new form under newer imperial powers. The essay that we will be discussing in this unit will show us how we should resist both colonialisation, as well as re-colonisation.

5.3 DECOLONISING THE INDIAN MIND

In this section we shall look at **Namvar Singh**'s essay, *Decolonising the Indian Mind* that was written in 1991. **Namvar Singh**, an eminent Hindi critic, starts the essay *Decolonising the Indian Mind* by stating that the greatest event of world history in the twentieth century is decolonisation. He links the end of colonisation to the end of the cultural control of European and American literature in the academy. According to **Singh**, the most "creatively exciting and stimulating" (p.75) literature is now emerging from Latin America, Africa and Asia. These literatures are mounting a challenge to the literatures of Europe and America and are thus hastening the process of decolonisation. **Singh** argues that since the literary creativity of Latin America, Africa and Asia are now occupying center-stage, the literary theorists of Europe and America, have tried to fit them into easily categorised formulations such as *Commonwealth Literature*, *New Literatures in English* and *Postcolonial Literature*. The newest such formulation, he says, is *Third World Literature*.

Singh observes that the term *Third World Literature* is a form of "neo-'orientalism' of the post-colonial age" (p.76). Loosely using **Edward Said**'s theory of *Orientalism* **Singh** comments that Europe and America still need to define themselves in opposition to an entity *other* than themselves. The West thinks that the Third World, too, needs to use some *other* to define itself, and they can think of no other entity than

themselves to form that *Other*. **Singh** asserts that this is the true perspective from which the Indian Literature of the twentieth century should be evaluated. Let us briefly examine a few aspects of his argument in this regard and see if they indicate any difficulties.

Some of the loopholes in the perspective used by **Singh** to evaluate Indian Literature appear as follows:

1. Using **Said**'s *Orientalism,* **Singh** homogenises the West – Europe and America – as a single, undifferentiated entity that acts cohesively, with complete internal unity. The construction of the West as a unitary body is one of the problems with **Said**'s *Orientalism* that many critics have pointed out in the last twenty years since its first publication. **Singh** shows no awareness of this problem.

2. **Said**'s *Orientalism* describes specific socio-historical, geo-political conditions that gave rise to the Orientalism of the 18th century. As far as **Namvar Singh** is concerned, he does not address in any disciplined, academic manner the reasons for the West's needing an *Other* in a postcolonial world. There is no attempt in **Namvar Singh**'s essay to locate postcolonial *Othering* in the field of literature in a materialist context.

3. The last part of **Singh**'s formulation that according to the approach of the West the *Third World* needs an *Other* and that, that *Other* can only be the West is not substantiated in any way by references to either critics or creative writing. How **Singh** arrives at this conclusion is not demonstrated in the essay. These have to be kept in mind in order to assess the worth of **Namvar Singh**'s argument.

Singh proceeds to link his opening statement of decolonisation being the greatest world event of the twentieth century to the issue of Indian Literature. He states that it is not possible to find a resolution to issues such as those of tradition and modernity, regional and national identity, etc., through any perspective except that of decolonisation. The awareness of Indian writers to the issues emerging from decolonisation relates, according to **Singh**, directly to the release of their creative energies. He attributes the "feeble and slack" attitude towards decolonisation in the post-Independence writers to the fact that India has not produced literary phenomena such as **Marquez, Achebe** or **Ngugi Wa Thiong'O** in this period.

What we may conclude at this stage is the consequences of having a feeble attitude to decolonisation. What normally happens is that nationalist sentiments grow weaker with the passage of time. On the other hand **Singh** has argued that nationalism is essential in fighting imperialism which is still prevalent in the postcolonial world. One of the reasons that Singh locates for the "silent compromise with imperialism" (p.77) is the fact that rather than gaining Independence India was granted Independence. He asks: "Were it a matter of gaining independence, would we have gained the independence of a partitioned country?" (p.77) India's acceptance of partition resulted in the shattering of the Indian identity. The idea of considering the event of colonisation and the process of decolonisation as the central governing phenomenon from which to perceive a multiplicity of issues is somewhat problematic. We have already read in earlier units, **Aijaz Ahmad**'s critique of **Frederic Jameson** in which he points out that there were many crucial negotiations made in determining identities between different groups within India that were not influenced by colonialism. **Ahmad** has argued that to accept colonisation as the central experience influencing Indian literature is to unquestioningly accept the binarised power structure created by the West as the only available one. Before we go any further we should take a look at the meaning of nationalism as represented in earlier works of fiction. In the next section we shall examine the meaning of nationalism as reflected in two important twentieth century Indian novels- namely, *Gora* and *Samskar*. We can understand **Namvar Singh**'s simplistic notions only if

we examine a few of his emphases. Here is how we shall define **Singh**'s ideas with respect to their application in Literature.

5.4 NATIONALISM IN *GORA* AND *SAMSKAR*

To analyse the consequences of the fragmentation of identity caused by the Partition, **Singh** does a reading of two Indian novels: **Rabindranath Tagore**'s *Gora* which was published in 1910 and **U R Anantha Murthy**'s *Samskar,* published in 1965. In **Singh**'s opinion, these two novels are comparable because they share a central theme, that of a search for identity and a crisis of identity. The central characters of the two novels, Gaur Mohan and Praneshacharya, emerge at the end as human beings rather than singular, unidimensional persons. **Singh**'s critique of the two novels is made from the perspective of nationalism, which according to him was missing in the Indian writers of the post-Independence generation. **Tagore**'s character Gaur Mohan celebrates his identity as one that belongs to India as a whole with no conflict between religions, castes, or communities. On the other hand, in *Samskar,* Praneshacharya's new identity does not relate back to India at all – it is based on unlearning all that the world of caste, religion and community has taught, and on allowing the heart to flow freely like a child's. **Singh**'s argument is that Gora's identity instils pride in him while Praneshacharya becomes meek in his newfound freedom.

As we can see **Singh**'s character analysis of Gora and Praneshacharya does not use any specific tools of literary criticism; rather, it is based on assertion, buttressed by phrases such as "unless I am, of course, imagining it". (p.79) The quotations that **Singh** gives from both texts illustrate a similar 'feeling' of freedom in the two characters. The freedom, or liberation, is from the taboos that enclose the daily life of an upper caste Hindu. **Singh** locates Gora's new identity, or loss of the old identity, in terms of the nation that is losing the specificity of one unified identity to one that encompasses all of India because it has broken free of the boundaries of religion and caste. Praneshacharya, while going through exactly the same kind of crisis of identity, and coming to the same conclusion, the realisation that he is not a Brahmin but a human being, expresses this new identity not in terms of the nation but in terms of the heart. **Singh** finds undertones of existentialism as opposed to nationalism in Praneshacharya's speech. However, the lines that he quotes to support his argument show that Praneshacharya has discovered a profound new meaning in life after unlearning his old identity unlike the existential hero for whom loss of the old identity results in finding out that life has no meaning at all.

From here, **Singh** goes on to compare the 'Indianness' (a term that he has used rather uncritically) of each novel. He finds that *Samskar* constructs life in the Indian village through stereotypes that the West enjoys seeing, whereas **Tagore** in *Gora* does not feel the need to contrive such Indianness. **Singh** says that this is the reason why western scholars consider *Samskar* a more 'Indian' novel while *Gora* goes unregarded. According to **Singh, Anantha Murthy** is writing *Samskar* with an eye on what the West wants to see of India as *Other*, while **Tagore** is unconcerned with the West. Strangely however, in the next paragraph, **Singh** quotes a lengthy passage from *Gora* in which **Tagore** is clearly concerned about the West and asserts an Indianness that should exist without influence from the West: "...We shall not compare ourselves point by point with some Western ideal...We shall not feel embarrassed in the least before others or ourselves for the customs, faith, scriptures or society of the country we have been born in..." (P.80) **Singh** praises the *swadeshi* tone of this passage and holds it up as a model to those writers who need to offer proofs of their Indianness to western critics. Interestingly, what **Singh** does not consider in his analysis is that **Tagore** shows his awareness of the gaze of the West and actually addresses it straightforwardly in his novel. If **Anantha Murthy** is being accused of pandering to the stereotypes of India that the West cherishes, then this

passage shows **Tagore** asserting an Indianness that is constructed against the West as the superior Other, even if it does so in the process of rejecting the West. On the basis of the passages quoted by **Singh** it is difficult to prove that the position of the imperial West was more important in the creative process for **Anantha Murthy** than it was for **Tagore**. From an analysis of two Indian novels, **Singh** turns his attention to the defining characteristics of post-Independence Indian literature. Let us now take a look at post-independence Indian literature in the next section.

5.5 SINGH'S CRITIQUE OF POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN LITERATURE

We notice that, **Namvar Singh** limits his area of enquiry severely by stating that only Indian writers in English can be seen as representative of India: "If truth be told, it is these Indian writers in English alone who are the representative writers of 'Indian literature', while the literature of any other Indian language such as Hindi, Bengali, or Tamil must remain 'regional literature'". (p.80) At the obvious level, **Singh** has used irony here. However, this formulation should alert us to the fact that **Singh** has indirectly asserted that the representative Indian writer can only be the one who has had a colonial education giving him/her the requisite proficiency in English to use that language as the medium of the creative process. It is with this basic assumption in mind that **Singh** seems to have critiqued Indian literature.

Singh implies that the construction of the category of the Indian novel, or the Third World novel, has become something of an academic-commercial enterprise because it gives Indian writers in English and Indian professors of English an excuse to hold/attend seminars and create work for themselves. He carries this implication a step forward to charge these writers and professors with endeavouring to impose one definition of Indian literature in English rather than trying to explore the rich and complex area of Indian creativity. According to **Singh**, the attempt in these seminars is to prove that the realistic European novel no longer influences Indian literature; rather, it is turning to indigenous Indian themes and forms to construct a new Indian novel. **Singh** levels his accusation against these writers and professors quite strongly:

> *There is an attempt to incorporate within the process such myths, customs and beliefs of Indian life as are exotic for the West and therefore the objects of its special curiosity." (p.80)*

He makes the charge that because these writers and professors would have difficulty in backing their argument with actual texts, the English language novelists are "putting their heart and soul" into writing such novels. The charge is that all English language novelists are shaping their creative work to meet the requirements of the West.

It is important to note that **Singh** claims that those who endeavour to show that the Indian novel uses indigenous Indian material in its construction have no proof to back their argument. On his side, however, **Singh** himself is not able to name any novel that backs his assertion that such novels are being produced on a large scale. Who, specifically, are the writers that he is referring to? Which are the novels? What is their marketing history that proves their success in the West? A few references would have strengthened his argument. Because of the lack of these references, the assertion that **Singh** makes is very tenuous and, therefore, unconvincing.

Singh ends his expose of these suspect Indian writers in English by asking:

> *If we were to go by the results, the Indian novel in English today would seem to be rather more 'Indian' than the so called 'regional language' novels." (p.81)*

One is not sure what to make of this statement, for Singh starts this section by clearly demarcating English language novels as 'Indian' and the others as 'regional'. How are these 'Indian' and 'regional' identities to be reconciled? Is a cockfight among tribals an 'Indian' characteristic or a 'regional' one? Are only those features that apply uniformly to all of India 'Indian' while those that are confined to certain communities, religions or geographical areas 'regional'? Or are there some dominant characteristics that are 'Indian' while there may be others that are more widespread but less visible 'regional'? These are crucial issues that need to be dealt with before one uses the neat categories of 'Indian' and 'regional' in reference to either literature or identity.

Namvar Singh does refute the argument that for the English speaking/writing Indian writer or scholar, the journey back to the East has to be through the West. **Singh** shows awareness of the fact that Indian writers in English are against colonisation in literature and that the helplessness of those writers who lived in the colonial phase as well as those who travel to the West in the postcolonial phase is understandable. But he asks a question similar to the one he asked a few lines above:

> *But how can one accept this as the destiny of the whole of Indian literature?" (p.81)*

The problems in the rhetorical answer to this question again arise from the terms of inquiry that **Singh** has put into place: namely, that 'Indian' literature is literature written in English. To answer his question with some academic rigour and to include in this inquiry literatures other than those written in English, **Singh** must change his terms of reference or at least use the existing ones explicitly and consistently. He cannot move arbitrarily between different definitions of 'Indian' literature. After his analysis of Indian literature **Singh** returns to the construction of the category of *Third World Literature* and links the creation of this category to the conception of the *Third World* itself in the period after World War II. We shall take up this part of the argument in the next section of our unit.

5.6 THIRD WORLD VERSUS FIRST WORLD

Singh had stated earlier in the essay that the creation of the category of *Third World Literature* was motivated by the West's need to define itself through an *Other*. He comes back to this argument now from a slightly different perspective: that of the post-modernist idea of "difference". As we have seen earlier in this block, the categories of *First World* and *Third World* are problematic and need to be deconstructed with close attention to all the implications that they carry. **Singh**, however, dismisses the conception of *Third World Literature* as "a figment of the fertile imagination of the 'First World'". (p.83) **Singh** argues that while in the period of colonisation the West aimed at the Europeanisation and Americanisation of the colonised, in the postcolonial era the ultimate value of the East for the West is in its preservation of its 'difference', presumably so that it can continue to function as the West's *Other*.

One of the reasons that **Singh** identifies for our not being alert to this "deviousness of colonisation" (p.84) is that Indians in general and Indian writers in particular have internalised cultural colonisation. We now use the coloniser's language and concepts in defining our own identity. This lack of awareness of the dangers of cultural colonisation is the reason that **Singh** gives for post-Independence writers' ambivalent attitude towards colonialism. **Singh** alleges that this ambivalence towards colonialism is accepted as a characteristic of modernism. Ambivalence towards colonialism is considered "a desirable value of modern poetic and aesthetics." (p.84) The consequences of this ambivalence are again far-reaching and can be seen in the way our native prose is now changing from the direct robust indigenous prose of the

nineteenth century. **Singh** relates the attitude of ambivalence towards colonialism to the question of language that every Indian writer faces.

Singh's framework of analysing Indian literature through the perspective of decolonisation – and therefore colonisation – raises some problems here. Earlier **Singh** had referred to the imperialism that is still prevalent in the postcolonial world. Although **Singh** does not give details, the concept of neo-imperialism/ neo-colonialism through global capitalism is one we are all familiar with. But in this section **Singh** refers only to colonialism, which is associated with political and administrative control along with economic domination. Why does colonialism have to be the central event on which every Indian writer should focus? In response to this, **Singh** says that we use the language and concepts of the colonisers to define ourselves because we have internalised cultural colonisation. But by insisting on the centrality of colonisation and decolonisation in the experience of the Indian nation, **Singh** is not allowing space and agency for the multiplicity of other voices and identities that make up the socio-historic experiences of India. **Singh** is forcing the Indian identity into the binary of coloniser/colonised while at the same time urging us to forge an Indianness that is not influenced by the desires of the West. **Namvar Singh** makes a forceful case in his movement towards this conclusion. We shall examine this in the following section.

5.7 STRUGGLE AGAINST NEO-COLONIALISM

Singh asks in the essay: "How should we oppose the new onslaught of colonisation?" (p.84) Here **Singh** specifies that he is referring to the "new onslaught" of colonisation and therefore distinguishes between this and the earlier process of colonisation and decolonisation. One answer to this question is to go to the past, to our traditions. But **Singh** very pertinently argues that there is no simple given tradition that already exists. Any tradition that is used to oppose the onslaught of colonisation will be the one that is reconstructed. This reconstruction will be "the rediscovery of the past by the present as desired". (p.84) That is, the tradition that will be created as the past of the country will be according to the needs of the present, and will thus be a biased version of tradition. The question remains as to which tradition should we use? The two examples **Singh** gives are those of the imperial powers of today who still have a vested interest in their previous colonies, and who need to see India and the Third World as a backward and primitive place, and so pick out of India's past only those things that help consolidate the image of primitiveness and backwardness. The second relates to the unidimensional and narrow tradition presented by the Hindu fundamentalists as India's 'real' past. Both these groups create a tradition with a motive that is either political or commercial or both.

The second answer to the question of how to oppose the new onslaught of colonialism is through 'nationalist allegory', but **Singh** rightly rejects this option too. Just as he had asked earlier whose tradition, so he asks again, whose nation? Is it the nation of those in power? What kind of nationalism would the poverty-stricken identify with? What kind of nationalism would the dalits identify with? **Singh** pertinently points out that the nationalism that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century has done its job and spent its energies; there is no point in trying to revive it, or invoking it once again.

If we are to find a solution to the problem of how to oppose the new onslaught of colonialism, **Singh** argues, it would have to be done by taking into account the realities of the present. We must realise that even though a small percentage of society has been culturally colonised, and that too superficially, it is important to realise that this colonisation is hegemonic. That is, the colonisation of the small percentage of Indians is one that constitutes cultural control and exerts power. It is important, also, to remember that this small percentage of culturally colonised people belong to the class that claims to having changed and developed literature in the post-

Independence period. **Singh**'s cynicism against this class is evident, and he ironically points out that this is the class that claims to have effected decolonisation, even though it was a "pseudo-decolonisation." (p.85)

The solution to opposing the new onslaught of colonialism is not a complete rejection of the West either, states **Singh**. For the first time in this essay, **Singh** does not refer to the West as a single, homogenised, unitary entity. He acknowledges that even within the imperial West there are many anti-imperialist individuals and groups who have actively expressed their disagreement with colonialism and imperialism. He asserts that we should not dissociate ourselves from them in search of a distinctive identity for *Third World literature*. The West, in this very short paragraph, is seen as a complex, multi-dimensional entity with which we need to negotiate with care, and not to dismiss out of hand. The model that '*Third World Literature*' can look up to is that of the '*Second World Literature*' of socialist countries. Although the *Second World* is beginning to disintegrate, its literature is not. **Singh** asserts that the literature of the *Second World* is more liberated and exciting than that of the *Third World*. Since **Singh** had earlier rejected the category of '*Third World Literature*' as a figment of the fertile imagination of the *First World*, one is not sure how to define these three worlds and what characteristics to assign to them before moving on to the important task of defining their literatures.

Singh concludes by looking at the future of the postcolonial world that is still under the domination of neo-imperialism as the US-Iraq war proves. By the 1990s socialism could no longer be seen as the future towards which the world was moving. **Singh** then concludes on a positive note by referring to the concept of progress that will inexorably propel us into the future even while our face is turned towards the past. We do not have the time to right past wrongs since progress is propelling us into the future. One of the reasons that this essay is so loosely argued is that it was originally a speech that was later transcribed and translated. It is difficult for a speech to be as rigorous in its argument as a written essay. A speaker has to rely on the memory and attention of its audience when making an argument because the time for absorption and comprehension is brief. There is no possibility to go back and clarify a point or to read it once again to understand the links in the argument. Further, translations inevitably change the meaning of the original, even if very slightly. Thus the use of closely related, often interchangeable words such as 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' could be an insertion of the translator rather than the speaker.

However, while all these factors are true, this speech comes to us, students of Postcolonial Studies, as a printed essay, one that has been canonised to the degree that it forms part of the syllabus. As literary critics we must engage with this essay as we would with any other piece of writing. As we have been pointing out through this unit, part of the problems with this essay arises from vague and sweeping generalisations that are not substantiated by any references. Statements are asserted rather than argued. But the more fundamental problem arises from loose and arbitrary definitions of the crucial categories of the *First World* and the *Third World*, and of Indian literature. Since these are the very categories that the essay has adopted, it was essential to have coherent, defined ideas about them.

There is also one further problem. This essay was written in 1991, and it refers to several of the literary theorists and to literary theories that form the debate about *Third World Literature* as well as the binary between the *Third* and *First Worlds*. Among these are **Edward Said** and **Frederic Jameson**. But there is no evidence of any awareness of the complexity of the debate around these theorists. We have studied in Unit 2 **Aijaz Ahmad**'s response to **Frederic Jameson**'s argument that all *Third World* texts are necessarily national allegories. **Ahmad** deconstructs **Jameson**'s position with academic rigour, and then offers an alternative position of his own. Similarly, we have studied parts of **Edward Said**'s *Orientalism*, and discussed the problems of homogenising the West that several critics of Said have focused on. **Singh**'s use of these critics and their theories has been done in a

simplistic manner without considering the contentious nature of the positions he is adopting.

Thus, **Singh**'s methodology does not measure up to his intentions. The need to fight neo-imperialism in India as well as Indian literature is an urgent one, especially in view of the developments in Indian writing in English in the thirteen years since this essay was written. Print global capitalism and huge global markets for books, efficient industries of translations and distribution have resulted in enormous money advances being made to writers even before their book is completed. The uneven balance of power and money between Indian writers in English and Indian writers in other languages has pushed Indian writers in English on to the centre-stage as being the representative Indian writers. These problems **Singh** is alert to and cautions us against. However, he relies more on simple statements than on critical analyses to advance his argument.

5.8 LET US SUM UP

Namvar **Singh**'s essay, *Decolonising the Indian Mind*, attempts to do several things: it questions the creation of the category of '*Third World Literature*', to define Indian Literature, to critique neo-imperialist forces at work in influencing the creative abilities of Indian writers, and to issue a warning against the deviousness of neo-colonialism and the need to resist its pressure. Most of these issues are those we have already encountered in the earlier four units. In this essay, however, there are a few problems at the level of the argument. Add to this the fact that the arbitrariness of defining categories undermine its main thrust. **Singh**'s main contribution in this essay is his exploration into the ways in which neo-colonialism can be resisted.

5.9 QUESTIONS

1. What, according to Singh, is the main global event of the twentieth century and why? Do you agree with his position?
2. Why does Singh validate Tagore's Gora over Anantha Murthy's Samskar? Do you accept his reading of the two texts?
3. What is Singh's argument against contemporary Indian Literature in English? How does he define Indian Literature?
4. How does Singh think neo-colonialism can be resisted?

5.10 GLOSSARY

Cohesive: Unified; sticking, holding, or working together to form a unified whole. Sometimes, the word is used in a theoretical sense and gathers an oppressive, threatening dimension.

Indigenous: Belonging to a place; originating in and typical of a region or country. It is used as the opposite of the general and broad – humanistic, international, etc.,

SUGGESTED READINGS

UNIT 1

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UNIT 2

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UNIT 4

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6. Quayson, Ato., (1994). "Realism, Criticism, and the Disguises of Both: A Reading of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart with an Evaluation of the Criticism Relating To It", *Research in African Literatures,* Vol.25 (4), 117-139.

UNIT 5

1. Singh, Namvar., (1991), Decolonising the Indian Mind, Translated by Harish Trivedi,

SUPPLEMENTARY READING MATERIAL

1. *NGUGI WA THING' O:* DECOLONISING THE MIND: THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE
2. PROBLEMS OF RESISTING COLONISATION: CONCLUSION

1. NGUGI WA THING' O: *DECOLONISING THE MIND: THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE*

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Objectives
Introduction
Ngugi's Colonial Education; Three Aspects of Language as Communication: Language of Real Life; Language of Speech; Language of Written Signs
Three Aspects of Language as Culture; Culture as a Product and Reflection of History; Language as Culture: Performing the Function of Forming Mental Images; Spoken and Written Language As A Means of Communicating These Images; Language and Colonisation;
Colonisation, Language and African Literature
Summing Up

OBJECTIVES

In this essay we will read one section of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, published in 1986. An attempt will also be made to focus on the use of language by colonial powers for the purpose of cultural colonisation. We need to first comprehend how language originates and develops along with the culture of a community and how it is used for communication and cultural interaction. We then need to analyse the effect of the adoption of the coloniser's language on the culture and self-definition of the colonised people. Finally, we will consider Ngugi's analysis of African literature, its politics and its audiences.

INTRODUCTION

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in 1938 in Kenya. He wrote his first play, The Rebels in 1961 and has written several plays after that, including The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, (1976), and Petals of Blood, (1977). His novels include Weep Not Child, (1964), and A Grain of Wheat, (1967). Ngugi has also written many volumes of literary criticism and autobiographical works. Detained: A Prisoner's Diary came out of his experience in jail for a year. One of his most influential tracts is Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature that was published in 1986. In 1969 the University College at Nairobi, Kenya, where Ngugi was teaching, introduced a new syllabus in the Department of English that sidestepped from the colonial English syllabus they had been following. Ngugi was an active participant in this move. Ngugi's commitment to Marxist and socialist ideology is the basic premise of all his fictional and non-fictional work.

Ngugi begins Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature with a statement in which he declares:

> *In 1977 I published Petals of Blood and said farewell to the English language as a vehicle of my writing of plays, novels and short stories. All my subsequent creative writing has been written directly in Gikuyu language. ...However, I continued writing explanatory prose in English. ...This book, Decolonising the Mind, is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way. However, I hope that through the age old medium of translation I shall be able to continue dialogue with all. (xiv)*

It is significant that Ngugi begins the book with this statement as the essays in the book argue forcefully for the need to decolonise the mind by eschewing the

coloniser's language. Ngugi had already begun this process in his own fictional writings, and he now decides to turn completely to the African languages for all his written work. This statement, and decision, is the culmination of many years of thinking and writing on the subject of language. In his Introduction to *Decolonising the Mind* Ngugi says:

> *This book is a summary of some of the issues in which I have been passionately involved for the last twenty years of my practice in fiction, theatre, criticism and in teaching literature. (1)*

The first section of this book is entitled 'The Language of African Literature', and in this section Ngugi establishes the intrinsic link between language, culture and ideology. To take on the coloniser's language is not an innocent act: it involves the internalising of the culture, logic and ideology of colonisation itself.

Ngugi studies the language of African literature – and by extension the use of language in writing and speaking *per se* – in a material socio-political context. He asserts that one cannot study the use of language outside its social context. In the case of the languages used in Africa – the colonisers' European languages and the indigenous African ones – the material context is that of imperialism and neo-imperialism. However, along with the history of the oppression of colonisation and the current reality of the control of the economy, politics and cultures of Africa through neo-imperialism, Ngugi also portrays the ceaseless struggles of the African people against these forces. The picture that emerges, then, is one of an ever-continuing struggle between Euro-American based neo-imperialism and the people of Africa to control not just the wealth but also the means of "communal self-definition in time and space". (p.4) Language plays a central role in this struggle for self-definition in relation to nature and social environment.

Ngugi traces the language issue back in the colonial history of Africa, when in 1884 Africa was carved out by the capitalist powers of Europe into colonies. While the basis of the division into colonies was in economics and politics, Ngugi asserts that it was in culture as well. In 1884 Africa was also divided into the different languages of the European powers, a division it is living under even today when the different countries are identified as English-speaking, French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking. Thus, cultural imperialism went hand-in-hand with economic and political colonisation from its very inception. From 1884 Ngugi moves ahead almost a hundred years to interrogate the internalisation and institutionalisation of this cultural imperialism through language in the era of neo-imperialism. In 1962 Makerere University College in Uganda held a conference entitled 'A Conference of African Writers of English Expression'. This conference automatically excluded those authors who wrote in African languages, with the result that Ngugi, who had at that time only one book to his credit, was invited whereas some of the greatest living African poets and writers were not. The debate at the conference centered round the subject matter of the racial origins and geographical habitation of the writer. The most crucial question was never raised: did writing in English really qualify as African literature, with its corollaries of the domination of African cultures and languages by Europe, and language/literature and audiences at the level of class and nation.

It was taken for granted that English (or French or Portuguese) was the natural language for literary production, for political mediation between Africans at the national, continental and international levels. All the participants at the conference – those who opted for European languages and the generation that came after them – "accepted the fatalistic logic" of communicating in the language of the colonisers. The question that guided the discussion at the conference was: how to make these European languages carry the weight of the African experiences of the writers? Ngugi asks:

Why...should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? ... We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages?" (p.8)

Ngugi finds his answer in the policy of the colonial powers of following "the sword and the bullet" with "the chalk and the blackboard". That is, of buttressing the physical violence with psychological violence. In this phase, language became the means to subjugate the spirit. To demonstrate how this happens, Ngugi takes us into his own childhood and process of education.

NGUGI'S COLONIAL EDUCATION

Ngugi's process of education is important because it traces the journey from African peasant community to colonial urban centre, a journey emblematic of the process of education that rejects African traditions and culture and embraces the power structures of colonisation. Ngugi's father had four wives and twenty-eight children, a veritable community in itself, but Ngugi emphasises that "as we all did in those days", (p.10) he belonged to a wider extended family and also to the community as a whole. In his pre-school days Ngugi spoke Gikuyu, heard stories in the same language, stories that were imbued with the culture to which the language was intrinsically bound, stories that "reflected real-life struggles in the human world". (p.10) The use of Gikuyu at every level of life – evening teach-ins, community, work in the field – gave a sense of unity and harmony. Ngugi's initial school education was in Gikuyu too, thus ensuring that the harmony between formal education and the Limuru peasant community was maintained.

In 1952 a state of emergency was declared in Kenya and the colonial regime took over the schools. English was imposed as the language of formal education. But Ngugi shows that English became more than just a language: "In Kenya, English became more than a language; it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference." (p.11) The use of Gikuyu was now a punishable offence in school, equated with stupidity. The mastery of English, on the other hand, was rewarded with all sorts of rewards: prizes, prestige, and applause. All exams were to be written in English. If a student failed in English he/she failed the entire exam. Obtaining a credit in English put the student in the topmost bracket. "English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom", (p.12) writes Ngugi.

The domination of the English language also reinforced the domination of the British culture. It rendered inaccessible the oral tradition of story telling that is part of the culture of storytelling in Gikuyu. Thus, traditional stories and folk tales did not form part of the growing imagination of Ngugi the schoolboy. Instead, he now read the canonised British authors who became the daily companions to his imagination. The canon available to him now, which guided his growing sensibilities, was that of Chaucer to T S Eliot. Ngugi sees this movement away from his traditional language and literature as a movement away from his self, from his world. To understand the full import of this movement from one world to another, it is important to understand how language functions in relation to culture.

THREE ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

Ngugi makes the vital connection between language and culture. It is well known that language is a means of communication. Ngugi shows how language is also a carrier of culture. According to him, language as communication has three important aspects.

Language of Real Life

Language of real life as Karl Marx termed it. This aspect goes back to the origins, the development of language itself. A society or culture develops its language through

the relations its people enter into with one another in the interaction of labour while producing wealth or other means of life such as food, clothing and housing. A group of human beings become a community when they start co-operating with each other in production through division of labour. The simplest unit of the community based on division of labour is the family of the man, woman and child within the domestic space of the household. The more complex form of community is when there is co-operation between different branches of production. This form can be seen when people who are only hunters co-operate with those who are only gatherers of fruit with those who only make metal products. And finally there are the most complex divisions such as those in the modern factory's assembly line products where many minds and hands work together in accord with each other to make a single product like a shirt or a shoe. Language originates and develops through the necessity of human beings to communicate with each other in the process of co-operation for production. Ngugi says that this language is an "expression of a relation between human beings and it is specifically human." (p.13)

Language of Speech

This second aspect of language imitates the first, that is, the language of real life. Ngugi defines speech as "verbal signposts". Just as the hand uses tools to mediate between human beings and nature, so spoken words mediate between one human being and another. The mediation of the hand between human beings and nature forms the language of real life, while the spoken word mediates between humans to form the language of speech. Language as speech is then the system of verbal signposts that makes production possible. Speech both reflects and aids communication or the relations that form between human beings in the production of the means of life.

Language of Written Signs

This third aspect of language imitates the second, that is, the language of speech. Historically, the first two aspects of language through the hand and the word evolve more or less together. The written word comes much later in history. Writing uses visual symbols to represent sounds. The simplest visual symbol may have been that known among shepherds to tell the number in a herd. In most societies, the language that its members grow up speaking is the same language they learn to write and there is thus a broad harmony for the child between the three aspects of language as communication. The child's sensibility is formed with the language of his/her experience of life since spoken and written language are not only a reflection of real life but also a product of the interaction with real life. Ngugi had alerted us at the outset to the fact that language has a double role; the one discussed up to now is that of communicating, and the second one is functioning as a carrier of culture. He says, "communication between human beings is also the basis and process of evolving culture." (p.14) A society's culture evolves through the process of performing the same action over and over under similar circumstances (eg, sowing, ploughing, reaping in Indian climatic conditions is bound to be different from African conditions thus giving rise to different cultural practices arising out of cultivation. (This can be seen even within India in the differing cultures of places that are prone to drought Vs flood or have arid land Vs fertile land).

Even the variations in these actions are similar, from which emerge certain patterns, moves, rhythms, habits, attitudes, experiences and knowledge. All this is passed down to the next generation and forms the foundation of their interactions with nature and each other. From these complex interactions that are repeated for generations emerge values that soon acquire the status of self-evident truths. The value system that is established through these 'truths' governs the conception of what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, etc. Over a period of time a way of life emerges which is different from other ways of life and then becomes the distinctive culture and history of that particular society. These values are the basis on which people form their identities as a society. And these values are carried by language. Ngugi emphasises

this fundamental connection between language and culture: "Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next." (p.15)

THREE ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE AS CULTURE

Ngugi lists the three important aspects of language as culture.

Culture As A Product And Reflection Of History

Culture is a product of history and culture is also a reflection of history. Culture is produced through the very struggle to create wealth and control it, but culture also reflects that process. Culture is not an innocent reflection of history. It reflects history by forming images of the world of nature and nurture. It is important to keep in mind that images influence the perception of what they symbolise.

Language As Culture Performing The Part Of Forming Mental Images

Language as culture performs the function of image -forming in the mind of the child. Ngugi makes two very important points in this connection. The first is that we conceive of ourselves as a people, or we define ourselves as individuals or collectively based on these pictures and images. The second point is that these images may or may not exactly relate to the reality of the struggle that produced them. The important thing is not whether those images correspond exactly or not. The production of those images reflects the way that we confront the world creatively, how we make sense of the struggle between ourselves and nature, and the distortion or clarification of reality that the images produce is what distinguishes one culture from another in its definition of self. Thus, Ngugi says, "Language as culture is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature. Language is mediating in my very being." (p.15) Through the production of images language does more than simply reflect culture; it influences the way culture is constructed.

Spoken And Written Language As A Means Of Communicating These Mental Images

Spoken and written language is used to impart culture through these images to the rest of the world. Here Ngugi distinguishes between the universality of language and the specificity of language. The capacity for speech, for ordering sounds that make for mutual comprehension, is universal, and it reflects the universality of the struggle between human beings and nature. But every culture has a specific language, that is, a particular way of using sounds to form words and of ordering words to make phrases and sentences. When language is used to transmit culture it is used in its specificity. That is, a specific culture is transmitted in a specific language and that language evolves out of its particular history and culture.

"Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication", (p.15-16) writes Ngugi. Why is the connection between language and culture of such profound importance? Through the body of values that language and culture carry we come to perceive/define ourselves in terms of our own community/society, and in relation to the world. Language is thus inseparable from the way we think of ourselves as a community of human beings, from the way we view our history and perceive our place in it, and the way that we define our relationship with the rest of the world. Language as a carrier of culture becomes the main tool with which we define and contextualise ourselves.

LANGUAGE AND COLONISATION

Ngugi spends so much time on establishing the role of language as communication and carrier of culture in order to show how colonisation used language to subjugate

the colonised mentally and spiritually. Ngugi points out that colonisation's main aim was to control the wealth of the people. It aimed at controlling what was produced, how it was produced and how the wealth was distributed, what Marx calls the language of real life. This control was imposed through military conquest and political dictatorship. But colonisation's most important area of domination was mental control through culture to affect how the colonised perceived themselves in relation to others. Ngugi says, "To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others." (p.16) The main tool used for this domination was the domination of language – the systematic undervaluing of the colonised's culture and language and the elevation of the language and culture of the coloniser.

Ngugi first demonstrates how language as communication is affected by colonisation. The imposition of a foreign language and suppression of the native language breaks the harmony between the African child and the three aspects of language. Since the foreign language reflects the real language of the life of another community it is divorced from the child's immediately felt experiences. Then the formal education of the child is foreign, the books read are foreign and even the subjects taught in school take bourgeois Europe as the centre of the universe. All this results in colonial alienation, a disassociation of the sensibility of the child from the natural and social environment.

The effects of a colonial education for the African child (or the child of any colonised country) are far-reaching and long lasting. The books and literature the child is made to read are not only the products of a world external to him, they also implant in his mind images of racism, class, sex and politics that portray his culture as always essentially inferior to that of the coloniser. Ngugi comments:

> *The colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition." (p.17)*

The point is not whether this literature is considered great literature or not; what is important in this context is that the location of this literature is necessarily Europe and the implications of this are twofold: one, that the history and culture portrayed are of an external environment from the point of view of the African child, and two, the representation of the rest of the universe is made from the ideological perspective of Europe as the centre. In a socio-political world where the balance of power is so uneven, when the perspective of the imperial powers is imposed through formal education to the colonised, the damage cannot be underestimated.

The damaging effects of the colonial policy to subjugate the spirit through domination of language and culture can be seen in the words of great African writers such as Achebe and Senghor. These writers, along with many other African writers, embrace with gratitude the language of the colonisers as the natural choice for their work. Going back to the conference at Makerere that he had started this section with, Ngugi writes that all the years of colonial education had made them unquestioningly accept 'the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature': The logic was embodied deep in imperialism; and it was:

> *...imperialism and its effects that we did not examine at Makerere. It is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its virtues. (p.20)*

COLONISATION, LANGUAGE, AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

If the major writers of African literature turned to European languages as their medium of expression, what were the implications of this for African literature, its audiences, its politics, and its future? Ngugi now traces the history of postcolonial African literature/authors and its politics. He interrogates the location of the major

authors who formed the tradition of post-colonial African literature. These authors were all part of the petty bourgeoisie who had been educated in the colonial schools and universities, and this was precisely why they were able to write in the language of the colonisers to form the canon of African literature. After the colonial powers left it was this petty bourgeoisie that rose to political power and economic dominance.

Ngugi divides the petty bourgeoisie in two groups: the comprador bourgeoisie that wanted to make a permanent alliance with the imperial powers and played the role of intermediary between the Western metropolis and the people of the colonies, and the nationalistic or patriotic bourgeoisie which saw a future in terms of an independent national economy in African capitalism or some form of socialism. The literature that formed the tradition of postcolonial African writing came from the national bourgeoisie. This literature by the national bourgeoisie played a twofold role: one, it explained Africa to the world as a continent that had a past and a culture of dignity and human complexity; and two, it gave an internal cohesiveness to the tradition of African literature and a common literary frame of reference. The frame of reference was essential to this tradition of literature because the national bourgeoisie neither had its roots in the culture of the African peasantry, nor did it have affiliations with the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Thus it could refer to neither of these literatures. In the initial phase this literature drew its stamina and form from the peasantry and was anti-colonial and anti-imperial.

However, as the comprador bourgeoisie rose to power and strengthened rather than weakened its links with imperialism to usher in a phase of neo-colonialism, the optimism that had marked the earlier phase was now replaced with a tone that was more critical, cynical, disillusioned, bitter and denunciatory. It portrayed the betrayal of hope. But, asks Ngugi, who was the audience that this literature was aimed at with its list of complaints? It could not appeal to the imperial bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie that was now in power, or to the military that formed part of the ruling class. The audience it sought was mainly what it saw as the people, that is, the peasantry and the working class. This change in audience was reflected in the change in form, which became simpler, with a change in tone that became more direct and also in a direct call for action. It attempted to analyse and evaluate the neo-colonial African society. The problem with the change in tone, audience and direction was that all this was still done in the medium of the languages of Europe. This literature could not reach the people, the peasantry and the working class, because it was hampered by its choice of language. It could only reach the students, teachers, secretaries etc. And it was forced to settle there, trapped within its own colonial inheritance. The damage that the literature of the petty bourgeoisie did to the field of what is recognised as African literature is that the literature it produced was given the identity of African literature, completely suppressing literature in African languages. Ngugi comments on the irony of this situation: "In fact, if it had been left entirely to this class, African languages would have ceased to exist – with independence!" (p.22)

Ngugi shows us how important the language question is to Postcolonial Studies. Today the elite in the postcolonial countries still use the colonial language as the medium of instruction in their education. Fluency in European languages, especially in English, confers great advantages in finding higher paying jobs. Through the continued use of the colonial language neo-imperialism strengthens its hold on post-colonial countries. The very important point that Ngugi makes in this essay is that the use of the coloniser's language implies the internalisation of the coloniser's culture, and a setting up of a hierarchy between the culture of the coloniser and the colonised. While it is true that now English is being moulded to the new needs of postcolonial cultures so that we have American-English, Australian-English, pidgin-English and our own Hinglish, Ngugi rightly points out that all these new variations maintain a close link to a universally comprehensible English and are therefore more conformist than radical.

SUMMING UP

Ngugi wa Thiong'o establishes an intrinsic link between language, culture and ideology. He argues that to take on the coloniser's language is not an innocent act: it involves internalisation of the culture, logic and ideology of colonisation itself. To establish his point that language is also a carrier of culture, Ngugi outlines the three aspects of language as communication: language as real life, language as speech and language as writing. Next, Ngugi discusses how language and culture function, and shows the intrinsic link between language as communication and language as culture. Finally Ngugi moves to analysing the effects of cultural colonisation in the postcolonial era where African literature is only the literature written in the coloniser's language.

2. PROBLEMS OF RESISTING COLONISATION: CONCLUSION

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Objectives
Introduction
Contextualising Resistance Through Culture; Questioning and Defining Culture; Mestizage or Racial Intermingling; The Case of Latin American Countries; Decolinisation of the Coloniser
Summing Up

OBJECTIVES

As you know the eighth block of this course is entitled *Decolonising the Mind*, and the essays that we have studied in each unit of Block 8, provides us with theories or readings of the consequences of colonisation in the postcolonial age. Although we have concentrated more on literary studies, the consequences of colonialism, as we have seen, are cultural, economic, social and political. It is important to study the effects of colonisation even in a postcolonial era because, as several of the authors note, neo-imperialism has neatly replaced colonialism in many of the previous colonies. Thus, although this block is meant to deal with decolonisation, we need to take into account the process of colonisation, then the struggle and resistance movements leading to decolonisation, and finally interrogate the prevalence of imperialism in what we call the postcolonial world. Some of the issues that emerge from this exercise are those of the categorisation of countries in the postcolonial world as First, Second and Third World, or undeveloped/underdeveloped and advanced countries.

INTRODUCTION

In any study of colonisation and decolonisation it is essential to avoid easy generalities and a simple homogenisation of the colonial experience. It is crucial to remember that colonialism functioned very differently in different countries, shaping its practices in accordance with the socio-political conditions of the country that it colonised. So, for instance, India never suffered the absolute brutality that Africa did under colonial rule, nor did the colonisers ever attempt to wipe out entire indigenous populations in the Arab countries or in Asia the way they did in Latin America, Australia and the Caribbean Islands. Since the practices of colonisation were so diverse, the natures of resistances to colonisation were equally different. Thus, decolonisation in different countries was widely divergent. It is then obvious that the practices of colonialism and its consequent nature of resistance in decolonisation would result in shaping the economic, political, social and cultural character of different newly independent, postcolonial countries in entirely dissimilar ways. The nature of colonisation and decolonisation also determines the relations between previous coloniser and colonised, as well as the relation between the postcolonial country and the rest of the world. The point is not that no generalities can be made or that there is no commonality of experience; rather, what needs to be emphasised is that any study of postcolonialism must be extremely alert to the specificity of each experience and not attempt to impose one theory on all.

CONTEXTUALISING RESISTANCE THROUGH CULTURE

First, we would like you to study a part of the speech that the Algerian freedom fighter Frantz Fanon made at the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers, Rome in 1959:

> *Thus we have followed the break up of the old strata of culture, a shattering which becomes increasingly fundamental; and we have noticed, on the eve o*

the decisive conflict for national freedom, the renewing of forms of expression and the rebirth of the imagination. There remains one essential question: what are the relations between the struggle – whether political or military – and culture? Is there a suspension of culture during the conflict? Is the national struggle an expression of a culture? Finally, ought one to say that the battle for freedom however fertile a posteriori with regard to culture is in itself a negation of culture? In short, is the struggle for liberation a cultural phenomenon or not?

We believe that the conscious and organised undertaking by a colonised people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. It is not alone the success of the struggle that afterward gives validity and vigour to culture; culture is not put into cold storage during the conflict. The struggle itself in its development and in its internal progression sends culture along different paths and traces out entirely new ones for it. The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonised man.

This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and for others. It is prefigured in the objectives and methods of the conflict. A struggle which mobilises all classes of the people and which expresses their aims and their impatience, which is not afraid to count almost exclusively on the people's support, will of necessity triumph. The value of this type of conflict is that it supplies the maximum of conditions necessary for the development and aims of culture. After national freedom has been obtained in these conditions, there is no such painful cultural indecision that is found in certain countries that are newly independent, because the nation by its manner of coming into being and in the terms of its existence exerts a fundamental influence over culture. A nation which is born of the people's concerted action and which embodies the real aspirations of the people while changing the state cannot exist save in the expression of exceptionally rich form of culture.

(Statement made at the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers, Rome, 1959)

Fanon is arguing here that the nature of the struggle against colonisation must be seen as the ultimate manifestation of the culture of the people. Further, the struggle itself sends this culture on to new paths and causes it to develop internally. And finally, the "struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men" results in a radical change in the form and the content of the people's culture. But Fanon warns that the vital connection between decolonisation and culture, the culture of resistance and the postcolonial national culture, can only be harmonious if the resistance movement is a people's movement, emerging from their impatience with oppression and expressing their aims. This passage from Fanon emphasises the point that the specificity of each country's experience of colonialism, the nature of the resistance struggle that results in decolonisation is one that emerges from the culture of the colonised, oppressed people. This culture is created through the interaction of the existing pre-colonial culture and the experience of colonisation. The resulting postcolonial culture is thus determined to a large extent by the politics of the struggle for decolonisation itself. Several postcolonial theorists have emphasised the importance of interrogating the internal politics of the freedom struggle along with the experience of colonisation when analysing postcolonial culture. In India, for example, the communal nature of the political parties fighting for freedom needs to be interrogated when analysing postcolonial communal riots.

QUESTIONING AND DEFINING CULTURE

Of the five essays we have studied in this block two are from Africa, two from India and one from the Middle East. We are aware of the differences in the kinds of colonisation these three cultures were subject to. Africa's population was decimated and displaced through the slave trade and Africans were forced to leave their homeland and move to places as diverse as the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe. In India, colonisation came through trading companies and involved negotiations with a complex system of political rule and administrative structure. In the Middle East, colonisation battled the Arab culture and Islamic religion along with a multiplicity of local socio-historic factors. But the similarity between these three areas is that the colonisers did not come to settle. They came to take the profits of the land back to their home country and to retire there with the riches of their exploits. However, there were other areas that were colonised by Europeans who came to stay, and to intermingle with the people and negotiate with their history and culture in order to carve a permanent space for themselves in their midst. These are the settler colonies, of which North America is a prime example, as are Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America.

In this block we have not read any essays that deal specifically with the colonial experience of a settler colony. The Latin America situation is one that is important to look at since it is a postcolonial society that is still reeling under the effects of colonisation even though it was one of the first places to be decolonised. Its process of decolonisation is complicated hugely due to the fact that a large number of the colonisers intermarried and settled down there. Thus, even after decolonisation, the power structure remained unchanged. To demonstrate how colonisation functioned in widely divergent ways through the world I would like you to read an excerpt from an article by Roberto Fernandez Retamar, a Cuban national, written in 1971. It is titled 'Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America'. Pay special attention in this article to the use of the term mestizo, and to the search of identity in a society that is inextricably racially mixed and can find no easy racial 'Other'.

A European journalist, and moreover a leftist, asked me a few days ago, "Does a Latin American culture exist?" We were discussing, naturally enough, the recent polemic regarding Cuba which ended by confronting, on the one hand, certain bourgeois European intellectuals (or aspirants to that state) with a visible colonialist nostalgia; and on the other, the body of Latin American writers and artists who reject open or veiled forms of cultural and political colonialism. The question seemed to me to reveal one of the roots of the polemic, and could also be expressed another way: "Do you exist?" For to question our culture is to question our very existence, our human reality itself, and thus to be willing to take a stand in favor of our irremediable colonial condition, since it suggests that we would be but a distorted echo of what occurs elsewhere. This "elsewhere" is of course the metropolis; the colonising centers, whose "right wings" have exploited us and whose supposed "left wings" pretend to guide us with pious solicitude; in both cases, with the assistance of local intermediaries of varying persuasions.

MESTIZAJE OR RACIAL INTERMINGLING

While this fate is to some extent suffered by all countries emerging from colonialism – those countries of ours which enterprising metropolitan intellectuals have ineptly and successively termed 'barbarians', 'peoples of colour', 'underdeveloped countries', 'third world' – I think the phenomenon achieves a singular crudeness with respect to what Marti called "our mestizo America." Although the unquestionable thesis that every man and even every culture is mestizo could easily be defended, and although this seems especially valid in the case of colonies, it is nevertheless apparent that in both the ethnic as well as the cultural aspects, capitalist countries long ago achieved a relative homogeneity. Almost before our eyes certain readjustments have been made. The white population of the United States (diverse, but of common European origin) exterminated the aboriginal population and thrust the black population aside, thereby affording itself homogeneity in spite of diversity, and

offering a coherent model which its Nazi disciples attempted to apply even to other European conglomerates – an unforgivable sin that led some members of the bourgeoisie to stigmatise in Hitler what they applaud as a healthy Sunday diversion in Westerns and Tarzan films. Those movies proposed to the world – and even to those of us who rejoiced in the evocation of our own extermination – the monstrous racial criteria which has accompanied the United States from its beginnings to the genocide in Indochina. Less apparent (and in some cases perhaps less cruel) is the process by which other capitalist countries have also achieved relative racial and cultural homogeneity at the expense of internal diversity.

Nor can any necessary relationship be established between mestizaje (racial intermingling; racial mixture and the colonial world. The latter is highly complex despite basic structural affinities. It has included countries with well-defined millennial cultures, some of which (India, Vietnam) have suffered (or are presently suffering) direct occupation, and others, such as China, which have suffered indirect occupation. It also comprehends countries with rich cultures, but less political homogeneity, which have been subjected to extremely diverse forms of colonialism (the Arab world). There are other countries, finally, whose fundamental structures were savagely dislocated by the political-military activity of the European (the peoples of black Africa), despite which they continue to preserve a certain ethnic and cultural homogeneity. (Indeed, the latter occurred despite the colonialists' criminal and unsuccessful attempts to prohibit it.) In these countries, mestizaje naturally exists to a greater or lesser degree, but it is always accidental and always on the fringe of its central line of development.

But within the colonial world, there exists a case unique to the entire planet: a vast zone for which mestizaje is not an accident, but rather the essence, the central line: ourselves, "our mestizo America." Marti, with his excellent knowledge of the language, employed this specific adjective as the distinctive sign of our culture – a culture of descendants, both ethnically and culturally speaking, of aborigines, Africans, and Europeans. In his "Letter from Jamaica" (1815), the Liberator Simon Bolivar had proclaimed: "We are a small human species: we possess a world encircled by vast seas, new in almost all its arts and sciences." In his message to the Congress of Angostura (1819), he added:

> *Let us bear in mind that our people is neither European nor North American, but a composite of Africa and America, rather than an emanation of Europe; for even Spain fails as a European people because of her African blood, her institutions and her character. It is impossible to assign us with any exactitude to a specific human family. The greater part of the native peoples have been annihilated; the European has mingled with the American and with the African, and the latter has mingled with the Indian and with the European. Born from the womb of a common mother, our fathers, different in origin and blood, are foreigners; all differ visibly in the epidermis, and this dissimilarity leaves marks of the greatest transcendence.*

The term mestizo is defined in the dictionary as "somebody who has parents or ancestors of different racial origins, especially somebody in Latin America of both Native American and European ancestry." The quotation by Simon Bolivar shows that this mixing of races is not confined to Europeans and Native Americans: it includes the Africans who were brought into Latin America to provide slave labour. As Retamar points out, every country that has suffered colonisation has a fringe population of mestizo – some of it due to inter-marriage and some due to the rapes of the colonised women by the white men. However, in Latin America the mestizo form the majority of the populations. Retamar's own country, Cuba, has a fifty one percent mixed population.

THE CASE OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

How does the process of decolonising the mind work in a country where the colonisers' blood is inextricably mixed with that of the colonised? What are the

themes and forms of culture that emerge from this highly complex society? Retamar's article shows that the domination of imperialism on the economy and of the metropolitan center on the literature and arts is similar to the situation existing in most postcolonial countries. But amidst this similarity there are very major differences: most of the Latin American countries have no other language but that of the coloniser in which to articulate their anti-imperialism. A quick look at the Latin American countries shows that Spanish is the official language spoken in all of them. They do not have the possibilities of upholding Hindi, Bengali, Tamil as Namvar Singh does, or Gikuyu as Ngugi does, in opposition to the language imposed by the coloniser. Second, most of their original populations and cultures were so systematically decimated or adulterated that there are only very small pockets of pre-colonial culture left intact, and those are by and large marginalised from the mainstream. Thus, there is very little continuity from pre-colonial to postcolonial, unlike India.

We have spent some time on the case of Latin America because it offers so many similarities and differences to that of the other cultures we have studied in this block. In the case of other settler colonies such as North America, Australia and New Zealand, as Retamar points out, the original populations were almost completely wiped out through genocide and the white European culture now exists unchanged by contact with these other cultures, and unchallenged. The Native Americans and aborigines in these countries are confined to reservations. But in Latin America the process of racial intermingling created an entirely different population structure of mestizos in the majority and whites and blacks as minorities. The highly complex composition of this entire continent distinguishes it from other colonised areas and demonstrates how different colonial policies result in enormous differences in postcolonial culture.

DECOLINISATION OF THE COLONISER

There is one aspect that we have not glanced at yet, and that is the decolonisation of Europe, of the coloniser. It would be pertinent to remember that while the resistance movements were being fought in the colonised countries there were simultaneously liberals and humanitarian groups in Europe who were not just sympathising but also actively fighting colonial power structures at home. This is not to shift the arena of action to Europe in the battle for decolonisation; rather, it is simply to interrogate the area of the decolonising of the mind of the coloniser. Second, we must also remember that while the colonial powers were rewriting and obliterating the history and culture of the colonised people in an attempt to make them internalise the colonial culture and to justify their colonial oppression, there were groups of scholars and intellectuals from Europe who were exploring, documenting and exposing the rich, sophisticated and complex histories and cultures of the 'barbarian' 'undeveloped' societies. We must be alert to the incorporation of this scholarship into the project of colonialism as Said has shown us in Orientalism, but the Indologists and Orientalists, as well as the scholars who studied the past glory of the Aztecs, for instance, did provide an alternate reading of the pre-colonial culture to that of blank darkness and barbarity which the colonial power tried to hegemonically impose.

In his Preface to Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth, Jean-Paul Sartre addresses his fellow Europeans and exhorts them to decolonise their mind and accept their complicity in the atrocities of colonisation, for their time is up. Read the extract given below carefully:

> *This book had not the slightest need of a preface, all the less because it is not addressed to us. Yet I have written one, in order to bring the argument to its conclusion; for we in Europe too are being decolonised: that is to say that the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out. Let us look at ourselves, if we can bear to, and see what is becoming of us. First, we must face that unexpected revelation, the strip tease of our humanism. There*