PGEG S3 04

Indian English Literature

SEMESTER III

ENGLISH

BLOCK 1

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SEMESTER 3
MA IN ENGLISH
COURSE 1: INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE
BLOCK 1: HISTORY AND CONTEXTS

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the last Course of Semester 3. In this Course, the learners will be introduced to Indian English Literature which has emerged both as a literary genre and as a small literary industry. Various terms have been used to address English Writings from Indian authors or from authors of Indian origin, in its 200 years of intellectual history. Some of them are – Indian English Writing, Anglo-Indian Writing, and Indian Writing in English and so on. At the same time, the answer to the question—if India exists only in the narratives 'imagined' abroad—is also to be explored by critically examining if imagining an Indian nation becomes a compulsion or a compensation for the 'loss', the diasporic Indian English writers often experience while writing about India.

The use of the term Indian English Literature is thought to be best suited to the purpose of addressing the different aspects of experimental writings that have emerged in the Post-independence period. Such a form of writing looks markedly different from the realist and historical form of writing that emerged during the pre-independence period. Salman Rushdie's adoption of a kind of writing that challenged many of the taken-for-granted views in Anglo-Indian Writings, inaugurated a new 'construction' of the notion of Indianness and opened up new possibilities for discussing an Indian text. Subsequently, the use of English by such writers is to be seen as a deviation from a literary language invented mostly by Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan.

This Course shall start with a discussion of the history of Indian English Writing, Indian English poetry, drama and fiction then it will touch upon individual authors. Divided into three Blocks, this Course seeks to investigate the politics and problems of literary production and cultural practice within the both pre-colonial and post-colonial Indian context. To have a better idea of Indian English Literature you are advised to read a few books like M. K. Naik's *A History of Indian English Literature,* K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English,* Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest,* Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Twice Born Fiction* and *The Perishable Empire*: *Essays on Indian Writing in English,* A. K. Mehrotra's *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English.*

BLOCK 1: INTRODUCTION

Block 1 is dedicated to the history of Indian English literature. It contains a total five units, the details of which are as the following:

Unit 1 This unit shall familiarise you with some of the important aspects of the social and intellectual contexts of English writing in India and its deep-rooted influence on Indian minds. Though the British government introduced modern education in India with their particular motives, this move entirely changed the social and intellectual set up of India. Enlightened by modern education, a few literate Indians of the period reacted with the characteristic vivacity and adulation. The most important aspects of modern English education was observed in the novelistic genres. New to the Indian literary scene, novel, along with other literary genres, gained immediate popularity amongst the educated Indians of the period. This unit thus helps to form an idea of the history of Indian Writing in English before the Independence.

Unit 2 This unit discusses the history of Indian English Literature in Post Independence India, which saw the emergence of many Indian writers in English. Moreover, the two decades after the Independence changed the Indian political and cultural ethos that facilitated the growth of Rushdie generation in 1980s and 1990s. This unit also deals with how following the inadvertent introduction of English literature in India through the Charter Act 1813, Indian Writing in English started to develop, and gradually it received worldwide recognition till the later part of the 20th century.

Unit 3 This unit shall deal exclusively with Indian English literature of the modern times, especially during the last three decades of the 20th century. In order to discuss the same, we shall try to read the "Introduction" of Salman Rushdie to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* 1947-1997 edited by Rushdie and Elizabeth West. This 'Introduction' should give you a panoramic picture of the development of Modern Indian English prose and fiction with reference to its various thematic aspects of Indian English Literature as seen by Salman Rushdie.

Unit 4 This unit shall deal with Gauri Viswanathan's essay "The Beginnings of English Literary Study" from her seminal book *Masks of Conquest.* This book is about the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies introduced in India under the British colonial rule. The prescribed essay bears multifarious significance as it traces the development of English literature in India and its various upshots. It is assumed that the learners will gain important perspectives on the emergence of English literature in India from a reading of this unit.

Unit 5 This is the last unit of the Block. In this unit, a discussion shall be provided on the life and works of the influential Indian poet-critic A. K. Ramanujan as well as his literary essay “Is there an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay” This essay will help you to discuss what makes Indian thoughts different from its Western counterpart, and how one is supposed to form an idea of Indian literature in general.

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in “LET US KNOW” along with the text. We have kept “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We strongly advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the “FURTHER READING” which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know the world of literature and criticism is too big, we strongly advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you read the original texts of the authors prescribed as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (1857-1920, 1920-1947)

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 The Social Context

1.4 Intellectual Context (The Role of English)

1.5 Indian English Prose

1.6 Indian English Drama

1.7 Indian English Poetry

1.8 Indian English Novel

1.9 Let us Sum up

1.10 Further Reading

1.11 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

1.12 Possible Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- trace the social and intellectual contexts in which English language was introduced in India.
- discuss the early development of Indian English prose, poetry, novel and drama.
- gain some ideas on Indian nationalism against the British colonialism.
- discuss the impact of Gandhi and India's struggle for Independence on the early 20th century Indian English literature.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit, which is also the first unit of the course, will familiarise you with some of the important aspects of the social and intellectual contexts of English writing in India and its deep- rooted influence on Indian minds.

Though the British government introduced modern education in India with their particular motives, this move entirely changed the social set up of India. Enlightened by modern education, the Indians of the period reacted with the characteristic vivacity and adulation. Poets like Derozio and Toru Dutt imitated but at the same time showed glimpses of originality. In prose writing, social and political prose thronged the arena with reformative and nationalistic agendas. However, the most important aspects of modern English education was observed in the novelistic genres. New to Indian literary scene, novel gained immediate popularity amongst the educated Indians of the period. Various social, political and national themes got expressed through the novels of the period. In this regard, novelists like M. R. Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao took the most emphatic role. As a whole, the advent of English education in India brought about a new entrant in Indian literature- Indian English literature, which made its presence felt in the most formidable way possible. This unit should help you to form an idea of the history of the emergence of Indian Writing in English before the Independence.

1.3 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Modern education was made available to the people of India in the colonial regime under the British. Some Christian missionaries, British government and some western educated liberal Indians were responsible for the spreading of modern education in India. The principal aim of the institutions established by the Christian missionaries was religions, but they also played a vital role in spreading modern education in India.

However, the dissemination of modern education in India was made by British government for the fulfilment of its own political, economic and administrative needs. Lord Dalhousie took the initial move. At that time, British were able to conquer most parts of the Indian Territory and they established ever-growing numbers of industries in the conquered land. To rule such a vast area of land, they needed strong administrative machinery. It was almost impossible for the British government to supply such a mammoth requirement of educated people with the knowledge of English to work in the administrative offices, industrial establishments, courts and

other government institutions. Therefore, the British government, established schools and colleges in India to produce educated Indians catering to the needs of government and commercial establishments. However, it is important to note that the educated Indians were primarily given subordinate posts like clerks, managers and agents.

The British had other motives behind their policy of providing modern education to the Indian masses. Some British statesmen and prominent thinkers believed that British education would prove to be most enlightening in the world and when imported to the native Indians, this would attach them closely to the British rule. Mountstuart Elphinstone considered English education a political necessity. On the other hand, the British statesman like Macaulay, Cecil Rhodes regarded English culture as the most liberal and considered it the means of Anglicising the empire culturally. They envisaged a united Anglicised empire connecting its people with English education and culture under the British leadership.

Some liberal-minded Indians also advocated for modern education in India. For example, Chiplunkar Agarkar, Maganbhai Karamchand, Karve, Tilak, Gokhale, Malaviya were some of the prominent Indians who supported modern education throughout India. Raja Rammohun Roy pioneered the demand for modern education and he thought that English education would help in inculcating the scientific and democratic thinking in the minds of the Indian people. Roy was against the indigenous system of education in Tols and Madrassas because such education only worked for the perpetuation of prejudice, superstition and the hierarchy of the society. Every educated Indian of the period supported modern education because it was anti-authoritarian and liberal, it put stress on individual liberty, and it rejected blind faith and superstition and propagated rational thinking. English education and culture brought about a respite of incomprehensive magnitude to the Indians. It was the Charter of 1813, according to which, the East India Company took up the responsibility of education for the Indians. There was debate on the kind of education, which was to be provided for the Indian people. Raja Rammohan Roy supported this policy of modern education through the medium of English language itself.

In 1854, with Wood's Education Despatch, the modern education system had its formal beginning. Woods Despatch had three objectives for the Indian education system

- First, it wanted to spread western culture.
- Second, it wanted trained educated personnels for the public administration.
- Third, it wanted to prepare the Indians for various duties under the British government.

The Despatch also stated the responsibility of the government for imparting education to the Indian masses and to women. In 1904, the British government passed Indian Universities Act paving the way for affiliation rules for the colleges. They introduced modern English education in India to produce a mass of English speaking Indian people for their establishments.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who was responsible for the introduction of Modern English education in India?

Q 2: What was the need of modern education through English in India?

Q 3: Why did the educated Indians ask for modern education in India?

1.4 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT (THE ROLE OF ENGLISH)

Modern education imparted through the medium of English by the British Government had a role to play in shaping the minds of the Indian people. The Government also intended to control the public education so that it could strengthen their political authority in India. In the colonial India, English language played a very significant role in creating uniformity of viewpoint and interest in the minds of the educated Indians. Due to the English language modern ideas of the western civilization became accessible to a large number of Indians. It was largely because of modern

English education that they could imbibe a democratic, rational, secular and nationalistic outlook. Contemporary European movements also created political awareness in their minds. The western political thinkers like Thomas Paine, Rousseau, Mill etc. became known to them through this English education, which, in the long run, enhanced their understanding of the political situation of India. They were the first to have felt and understood the evil effects of British rule and the consequent exploitation. An independent, modern and prosperous India was their dream. In addition, to achieve it, they wholeheartedly joined India's struggle for the Independence. Apart from these, English also acted as the medium of communication and exchange of ideas among the educated Indians of various language communities of India.

Creative literature, which was written by the Indians in English, necessarily belonged to the Indian literature. The Indian people have been writing and speaking English as medium of expression or they have used this language to achieve artistic expression in the literature they have produced. There was initial doubt whether the Indians could produce creative writing of high value in English. Sri Aurobindo amply nullified that doubt when he stated that many Indian writers such as Nehru, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu etc. already produced such literature, which had been termed excellent by good English critics. There was time when questions arose during India's freedom struggle regarding the acceptance of English as a language of the land. But, there were writers like Rammohun Roy, Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozeshah, Surendranath, Bepin Pal, Sankaran Nair, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Tilak. Gokhale, Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Aurobindo, Jawaharlal Nehru, M.K. Gandhi and many other who effectively used their language for the benefit of their motherland. Indian literature in English is the creative self-expression of those Indians who received English education.

K. R. Srinivisa Iyengar termed English language as the Suez Canal, which connected the intellectual contact between India and England. His line of argument is emphatic because prominent English educated Indians like Rammohun Roy, Keshab Chunder Sen, Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan etc. defied various limitations to achieve

success in this field and contributed profoundly to the world stream of Knowledge as well as to the construction of modern India. Most importantly, it is created in the Indian climate by the Indians. So, the literature that they produced must be regarded as national literature. This particular literary phenomenon called Indian English literature emerged when an Indian writer tried to express his emotions in English. In such writings, the most important aspects are the artistic sensibility and the mode of expression. M.K. Naik remarked that Henry Derozio, Aubrey Menen and Ruskin Bond etc. were distinctively Indian. While on the other hand, there were writers like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala who were not Indians by birth, but they carried the Indian sensibility and ethos into their writing with due sincerity.

There are many appellations given to this body of literature—Indo-Anglian literature, Indo-English literature, Indian writing in English and Indian English literature. Indo-Anglian and Indo-English—both the terms were considered inadequate with the passage of time. Indian Writing in English was used by K.R. Srinivas Iyengar for his book *Indian Writing in English* which is a comprehensive study on the subject under discussion. David McCutchion and M.K. Naik also used the same term in their edited books. However, it is also true that the term has a sense of circumlocution within it. Indian English literature is the most suitable term to define this body of literature. This appellation bears the sense that it is one of the languages in India, which is capable of expressing the Indian sensibilities and ethos like the other Indian languages. The Sahitya Akademi also accepted the term.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: How did the educated Indians feel the influence of Western political thinkers?

Q 5: Can we regard Indian English literature as an important component of India's national literature?

Q 6: Do you think "Indian English literature" as the proper appellation to represent the literature written in English by Indians?

1.5 INDIAN ENGLISH PROSE

The first Indian English prose was written by C.V. Boriah in 1803. His "Account of the Jains" was a twenty eight-page essay about the views of a Jain priest. Though the essay was not so important content wise, it's significance rested on its historical value as the first ever essay attempted by an Indian to write in English. However, Raja Rammohun Roy's "A Defence of Hindu Theism" was basically regarded as the first original prose writing in English by an Indian.

Rammohun Roy edited an English periodical—*The Brahummunical Magazine* from 1821 to 1823. He wrote thirty-two original English essays on diverse subjects. His *An Abridgement of the Vedant* (1816) and *Kena and Isa Upanishads* (1816) were translated work on religion. *A Defence of Hindu Theism* was actually a response to the attack on the *An Abridgement of the Vedant*. He supported monotheism. He also wrote a second defence in support of monotheistic system of the Vedas. His vast learning on Christian theology took the form of a compilation *Precepts of Jesus* in 1820. He added three rejoinders to *The Precepts* in 1820, 1821 and in 1823. He was a social reformer of great stature. He worked strenuously for the rights of women and worked vehemently against suttee or widow burning. Some of his original writings in English about the issue were—"A Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice of burning Widows alive"(1818), "A Second Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice of burning Widows alive"(1820), "Abstract of the Arguments regarding the burning of Widows considered as a religious Rite"(1830), "Address to Lord William Bentick" (1830) and "Anti-Suttee Petition to the House of Commons"(1832). His attack on polygamy and dispossessing women from right to inheritance got expression in "Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance" (1822). However, his "Letter On English Education" (1823) could well be regarded as a masterpiece of its kind which actually set the tone for English education in India. This was also regarded as the manifesto of the Indian renaissance.

His "Petitions Against the Press Regulations" (1823) was against Government move to suppress the freedom of the press. This regulation was popularly known as Adam's gag. He protested against the exploitation of the peasantry and the siphoning of India's wealth through his "Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue System of India" (1832). Along with these writings, he also wrote a short autobiographical sketch of himself at the behest of one of his friends. This was important because such an attempt would be later enriched by the writings of Nehru and Nirad C. Choudhuri. Some other contemporary writers of Rammohun Roy in English prose were Krishna Mohan Banerji (1813-85), Ram Gopal Ghose (1815-68), Hurish Chunder Ghosh etc. Their social awareness prompted them to write their hearts out in support of India and her people. Their prose style was highly acclaimed by contemporary periodicals like *The Times* and *Indian Field.*

Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-46) was a Sanskrit Pundit and English writer of repute. He founded *The Darpan (1832)*- the first English and Marathi journal published in Maharashtra. The journal aimed to create interest in the Indians regarding English literature and to offer platform for public discussion on such issues. Dadoba Pandurang's *A Hindu Gentleman's Reflections respecting the works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (1878) was an illuminating study of religious thoughts. Cavelly Venkata Ramaswami (1765-1840), the elder brother of C.V. Boriah wrote *Biographical Sketches of the Dekkan Poets* (1829). This was the first book to be written on this subject in Indian English literature. The book comprehensively described the lives of many ancient and modern Sansrit, Tamil, Telegu and Marathi poets. Though the style of writing was lacking in standard and critical insight, it was regarded a mammoth task to be accomplished in the early 19th century. Lutufullah, a tutor to British officers in Persian, Arabic and Hindustani, tried his hands in writing his autobiography cum travel diary-*Autobiogrphy of Lutufullah: A Mohamedan Gentleman and His transactions with his fellow creatures: Interspersed with remarks on the habits, customs and character of the people with whom he had to deal* (1857). Lutufullah's *Autobiography* is the first full-length autobiography in Indian English literature.

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917)—a prominent freedom fighter, member of London Indian Society, and member British House of Commons, wrote *Poverty of India* (1873) and *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India*. Both the books were the seminal texts where he exposed the lacks of British administrative and economic policies. He was a moderate and liberal at the beginning of his political career but later on he vehemently criticised the British rule in India. At the twenty-second session of Indian National Congress held in 1906 in Calcutta, his address was clearly against the British rule in India.

Mahadev Gobind Ranade (1842-1901), hailed as Rishi Ranade and Father of Indian Economics was a scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge, religious and social reformer, ardent patriot and thinker. *Rise of Maratha Power* (1900) was his noted historical writing where he unfurled Maratha chronicle. His delineation of the 15th and 16th century Maharashtra was linked with the rise of the Marathas and the resultant social and religious resuscitation. Another book that was published during his lifetime was *Essays in Indian Economics* (1898). His speeches and writings were published posthumously in *Religious and Social Reform* (1902), *Miscellaneous Writings* (1915) and *The Wisdom of a Modern Rishi* (1942).

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, regarded as the father of the Indian unrest, was aggressive and rugged in his National Congress activities. His speeches delivered in English were collected in *Writings and Speeches* (1922) and in *Towards Independence: Samagra Lokamanya Tilak* (1975). He was an eminent Indologist, which was aptly revealed in such works as *The Orion: Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas* (1893) and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (1903).

Next to Tilak was Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915) who was a fiery leader of Indian National Congress. His sense of dedication and honesty is reflected in his published works- *Speeches* (1908) and in *Speeches and Writings* (3 Vols, 1962). Along with Tilak and Gokhle, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) was also famous as a novelist in Bengali and English. He defended Hinduism in his *Letters on Hinduism.* He also wrote many essays in English- “On the origin of Hindu Festivals” (1873), “Bengali

Literature" (1871), "The Study of Hindu Philosophy" (1873), and "Vedic Literature" (1894).

Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) was an experienced administrator who understood the social, economic and political problems of India. His *The Peasantry of Bengal* (1875), *A History of Civilization in Ancient India* (three Vols. 1889), *Famine and Land Assessment in India* (1900) and *The Economic History of India* (two vols. 1902 and 1904) were often regarded masterpieces of the class. They were also hailed as the inside narrative of the colonial regime from the perspective of a colonised native. It was later termed as the economics of colonisation. His *Three Years in Europe: 1869-187* was regarded as a pioneering literature of travel distinguished by detailed picturesque description. *The Literature of Bengal* (1879) was a literary survey but it also contained his assessment on the impact of western thought on India and her people.

Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925) was one of the founding fathers of Indian National Congress. Apart from that, he was one of the most formidable orators in English. His speeches were published as Anthologies— *Speeches 1880-1908* (6 vols. 1890-1908), *The Trumpet Voice of India: Speeches of Babu Surendranath Banerjea, delivered in England in 1909* (1919). He also wrote an autobiography— *A Nation in Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* (1925). *A Nation in Making* is more of a public document than an autobiography. Here, he gave emphasis to the rise of nationalism from the nascent stage to its development.

Rabindranath Tagore's prose in English was basically his speeches delivered as lectures in different parts of the world. The lectures, which he delivered at Harvard University, were anthologised in *Sadhana* (1913). His speeches encompassed various issues related to life and soul, problem of evil, realization of love and beauty, and about non-dualistic faith. Two other collections of speeches came out after he toured U.S.A. in 1916- *Personality* (1917), and *Nationalism* (1917). In *Personality*, his speeches were related to various issues concerning man and his relationship with God, Art, Nature and woman. In these lectures, he also kept intact his non-dualistic position. *Nationalism* speeches were delivered on the topics such as imperialistic

nationalism of the west and the resultant threat it created for India and Japan. His observation was that western civilization stressed on material power rather than on the moral one. He also envisaged the imminent catastrophe looming large on Japan due to her dealings with the west. The lectures in *Creative Unity* (1922) concerned with the dichotomy between the East-West relationships. He opined that the West's too much insistence on the use of machine made schism more prominent. The Hibbert lectures that he delivered at Manchester College were collected in *The Religion of man* (1930). Successfully reflecting the title of the collection, these lectures mainly focussed on man's essential humanity and how such humanity could reach the stature of godliness. At the same time, these lectures highlighted the development of Tagore's religious views, which were regarded as "a poet's religion". Two lectures that Tagore presented at Andhra University were collectively published in *Man* (1937). In these lectures, he deliberated on man's dual nature, similarity of values in religions, on the doctrine of advaita, and his hope for a golden future for the mankind. On the basis of his speeches, it is fairly easy to term him a humanist unrestricted by caste, creed and national boundary. He preached for a symphony of man, nature and divine to arrive at universal harmony. Closely tied to Indian tradition, Tagore nurtured himself from his learning from the *Upanishads, The Gita,* Buddhism and Vaishnavism. His prose is characterised by ardent poetic statement.

Sri Aurobindo was one of the most prolific prose writers of the period. He wrote on vast range of subject matters such as literary, metaphysical, religious, cultural, political, social, occult etc. *Essays on the Gita* (1928), *The Life Divine* (1939-40), *Heraclitus* (1941), and *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948) were his works related to religion and metaphysics. In *Essays on the Gita,* Aurobindo discussed the living messages of *the Gita,* which are considered essential to understand life better. *The Life Divine* was a work of encyclopaedic nature dealing with man's life, which could be made divine while living on this mortal world. Men possessed divine-self within and it becomes intrinsic to manifest the divinity to the outer-self. In *Heraclitus,*Aurobindo made a comparative study of the *Vedic-Upanishadic*

thought and Greek philosophy. *The Synthesis of Yoga* stressed on "Integral Yoga" which would help man to acquire the "Supermind" leading to the salvation of the human race. *The Renaissance in India* (1920), *The foundations of Indian Culture* (1953), *The Human Cycle* (1949), *The Ideal of Human unity* (1919) and *War and Self-Determination* (1920) were collections of essays on art, literature, poetry and literary criticism. The significant aspect of Aurobindo's literary criticism is his reliance on Indian literary and aesthetic tradition. As a whole, it can be said that his prose style is of varied nature and it has the capacity to assume different tones and effects.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) wrote his first major work *Hind Swaraj* in 1909, which initially appeared in the columns of *The Indian Opinion* (1903-14). Though it was published in Gujrati, later it was translated into English by Gandhi himself. The book was written in dialogue form regarding the problem of India's Independence. His autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* was later translated into English from original Gujrati by Mahadev Desai in two volumes. Gandhi's other works include *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1928), *Discourses on the Gita* (1930) and *From Yervada Mandir* (1932) which were translated by V.G. Desai. However, it is a matter to decide whether Gandhi's works can be included in Indian English prose because apart from *Hind Swaraj,* all other works are translated into English by other writers.

In comparison to M.K. Gandhi, his political heir Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was a prolific writer. *Soviet Russia* (1928) was Nehru's first work where he delineated his impression of Russia. *Letters from a father to his Daughter* (1930) was an anthology of thirtyone letters, which he wrote to his daughter about the early history of the world. *Glimpses of World History* was also written to his daughter in letterform during 1930-33. Here, he narrated the world history from the earliest period to the nineteen thirties. However, his most outstanding work was *An Autobiography* (1936) where he offered a vivid description of himself and his social milieu. Of course, Nehru's account of his life was selective and tinged with his characteristic detachment. *The Discovery of India* (1946) contained the history of India

from the Indus valley civilization to his contemporary period of nineteen forties. Like *Glimpses of World History,* this work was also written from the perspective of Nehru's lively historical sense interspersed with the currents of World history.

Another prolific writer of Indian English prose before the Independence was Sarvepally Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) who later became the second President of India. His prose was basically concerned with religion and philosophy. *The Ethics of the Vedanta* (1908), his M.A. dissertation, was written as a reply to the western attack on *Vedanta*. In *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (1918), Radhakrishnan probed into the poetry of Tagore to reach out the doctrine of Maya and Hindu ethics. *The Reign of religion in Contemporary Philosophy* (1920) was an examination of Western philosophical thought where he traced the influence of religion. Radhakrishnan's magnum opus was *Indian Philosophy* (Vols. I-II, 1923 and 1927) where he comprehensively dealt with Indian philosophical thought. *The Hindu View of Life* (1932), *East and West in Religion* (1933) were some distinguished works of Radhakrishnan.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Discuss Raja Rammohun Roy's contribution to Indian English prose.

Q 8: In what way, did Nehru express his knowledge of history through his prose writings?

1.6 INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

Indian English drama had its genesis with Krishna Mohan Banerji's *The Persecuted or Dramatic scenes illustrative of the Present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* (1831). Banerji attempted to present the blackness and inconsistencies of the Hindu community through his dramatic art. Influenced by the liberal values of Western education, he could easily perceive the orthodox religious traditions present in the contemporary social set up. After him, Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated his three Bengali

plays into English—*Ratnavali* (1859), *Sermista* (1859) and *Is this Called Civilization*? (1871).

Sri Aurobindo began his dramatic writing with *The Witch of Ilni: A dream of the Woodlands*. His love for Elizabethan drama is quite evident in *The witch of Ilni*. *The Viziers of Bassora-A Dramatic Romance* was about two young lovers' trials and tribulations. The story was taken from *The Arabian Nights*. The drama highlighted the conflict between the good and evil. In conception and structure, *The Viziers of Bassora* clearly resembled Shakespearean comedy. *Perseus the Deliverer* was about the Greek legend of Perseus and Andromeda. The influence of Elizabethan drama was persistent throughout the drama. *Rodogune* was the only tragedy of Aurobindo. A striking feature of Aurobindo's play was his emphasis on love as a benevolent force to destroy evil.

Rabindranath Tagore was a prolific dramatist of Indian English drama. He translated most of his Bengali plays into English. His plays could be divided into two groups—thesis plays and psychological plays. *Sanyasi, The Cycle of Spring, Chitra, Malini, Sacrifice, Natir Puja* and *Red Oleanders* were considered thesis plays whereas *The King and the queen, Kacha and Devayani, Karna and Kunti* and *The Mother's Prayer* were included in psychological plays. The subject of matter of the two plays *Sanyasi* and *The cycle of Spring* was the glorification of life. In *Chitra*, the emphasis was on the essence of true love. *Malini, Sacrifice* and *Natir Puja* were the three plays written on the theme of religious fanaticism. Tagore's psychological plays revealed his capacity to understand feminine mind. In *The King and the Queen,* Queen Sumitra took the centre stage in the handling state of the affair in the kingdom. *Kacha and Devayani* was about Devayani's love for Kacha, which remains unreciprocated. *Karna and Kunti*, and *The Mother's Prayer* were based on the epic *Mahabharata*. Kunti and Gandhari exhibit their affection for their sons in contrasting ways. These dramas, though translated from original Bengali, had their flavour intact due to Tagore's mastery in rendering them a compact and neat structure. The themes and characters of his dramas authentically carry Indian ethos.

After Sri Aurobindo and Tagore, another major dramatist of the period was Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. *Abu Hassan* (1918) was his first play

written in prose and verse. He wrote seven verse dramas on the lives of seven Indian saints—Pundalik, Jayadeva, Ekanath, Tukaram, Raidas, Chokha Mela and Saku Bai. These verse dramas were significant for their poetic qualities. *The Five Plays* (1920) contain *The Widow, The Parrot, The Coffin, The Evening Lamp* and *The Sentry's Lantern*. These plays were marked by the simultaneous use of realism and symbolism.

A.S. Panchapakesa (1899-1963) wrote six plays which prominently carry his reformist message. In *Sita's Choice*, the young widow Sita was bold enough to go for a remarriage at a period, which was purely conservative. *The Slave of Idea* was a melodrama imbued with ethical and social purpose. In *The Clutch of the Devil*, he highlighted the witchcraft and ritualistic malpractices present in the rural south India. *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* contains allegorical significance.

Thyagaraja Paramsiva Kailasam (1885-1946) was a dramatist of considerable talent. Only four plays were ascribed to be written by him in his lifetime, but the actual output was bigger than that. *Little Lays and Plays* (1933) was a collection of three plays—*The Burden, Fulfilment* and *A Monologue: Don't Cry. The Burden* and *Fulfilment* were one-act plays having subjects from the epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. *A Monologue* was an allegory on the subject of the condition of woman in India. *Karna or The Brahmin's Curse* (1946) with the subtitle, "An impression of Sophocles in five acts" was on the tragedy of Karna who suffered from the fatal curse of Parashuram the warrior sage. Kailasam was attributed with some other dramas, which were said to be recited by him to his friends.

Bharati Sarabhai's *The well of the People* (1943) was a verse drama based on a true story. The play dramatises the benevolent act of an old widow who spent her money in digging a well for the untouchables of her village. The story was at first published in Mahatma Gandhi's *Harijan*. Her use of symbolic characters placed her alongside the dramatic masters of the period like Maeterlinck, Yeats, and Tagore. Another dramatist of considerable importance Joseph Mathias Lobo-Prabhu's two dramas were published before the Independence—*Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945). *Apes in the*

Parlour reflected the sophisticated life of modern man. His language was fascinating but in character portrayal, he failed distinctly.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: How was Sri Aurobindo influenced by English drama?

Q 10: Discuss Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to Indian English drama.

1.7 INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31) is considered the first Indian English poet. *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828) are his published volumes of poetry. Derozio was influenced by the British romantic poets in theme, imagery, diction and sentiment in his shorter poems. At the same time, a little bit of influence of the neo-classical poets like Alexander Pope was also evident in his poems. On the other hand, influence of Byron was visible in his satirical verse and long narrative verse. *The Fakeer of Jungheera* is a long narrative poem written on the plight of a young Hindu widow Nuleeni. On the verge of her jump into the funeral pyre, she was rescued by a young leader of a robber group. Her rescuer who became her lover soon lost his life in the battle fought by her relatives to reclaim her. Nuleeni breathed her last in sorrow. The striking feature of the poem is its use of different metres for various occasions. Another noteworthy feature of Derozio as a poet is his burning nationalistic zeal. "To-India-My Native Land", "The Harp of India", "To the Pupils of Hindu College" etc. are some such poems where we can observe unmistakeable authenticity of patriotic utterances.

Indian English poetry came to the mature phase with Toru Dutt (1856-1877). Her *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) is a translation of 165 French lyrics into English. Even her sister Aru Dutt also translated a few lyrics. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) was published posthumously. The poems of this volume carry discernible influence of

Keats. Ballads of Sita and Savitri—two most prominent archetypal figure of Indian woman are included in the collection. Toru Dutt was the first Indian English poet who extensively used Indian myths and legends in her poetry. It was remarkable that her poetry was virtually free from imitation.

Rabindranath Tagore's fame as an Indian English poet certainly lies on *Gitanjali* (1912)—a collection of songs which were translated from Bengali into English and for which he got the Nobel Prize for literature. It is true that his fame and reputation declined after the initial applause, but he produced eight more collections of poems—*The Gardener* (1913), *The Crescent Moon* (1913), *Fruit Gathering* (1916), *Stray Birds* (1916), *Lovers Gift and Crossing* (1918), *The Fugitive* (1921), *Fireflies* (1928) and *Poems* (1942). The last one was published posthumously. The central theme of the songs in *Gitanjali* is devotion. The songs were rooted in the Indian tradition carrying forward the poet's search for the divine grace. Different approaches and moods were adopted to deal with the songs. For Tagore, God was an "Unbroken perfection" who endowed him with "infinite gifts". However, at the same time, he also envisaged the angry aspect of God as the "King of the fearful night". Tagore's conviction is that God is omnipresent and to find God, one must seek him in the actions of the world.

In all the lyrics, there is evidence of verbal control, precision of imagery and guarded rhythm. In *The Gardener*, Tagore is at his best as a love poet. His close resemblance with Browning in these poems is also very significant. Tagore showed his mastery in the adoption of subjective and objective approaches, and also in presenting the male and female points of view regarding love. In fact, Tagore presented the multifaceted aspects of love in *The Gardener*. *The Crescent Moon* contains poems, which are basically about childhood. Tagore, in these poems presents both the adult view of the child and the child's own view of himself/herself. In evoking the child's consciousness, he was overwhelmingly successful. Other poetical collections such as *Fruit Gathering*, *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, and *The Fugitive* were his later works, which lacked diversity, concord of theme, verbal control and order in rhythm. "The Child" is the only lengthy poem of Tagore, which he wrote directly in English with effortless symbolism, vibrant

colours and verbosity. So, "The Child" was unable to surpass the pleasant loveliness of *Gitanjali.* It is evident that Tagore's English verse is essentially lyrical. With his simplicity, passion and sensuousness, he treated his varied subjects like God, love, nature, life and death and the child.

Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghosh, 1872-1950) began his poetic career with *Short Poems* (1890-1900). The themes of these poems were love, sorrow, death and liberty. He introduced Greek names in these poems, which rendered classical touch. In *The Short Poems 1895-1908,* a note of mystic awareness is discernible. *The Poems in New Metres* comprised some mystical lyrics distinguished by verbal cheerfulness, emotional ecstasy and technical innovation. "Urvasie", "Love and Death" and "Baji Probhou" are three long poems written in blank verse. In "Urvasie", he abundantly used epic similes, Miltonic diction and set descriptions. "Love and Death" contained Miltonic similes, Latinised diction and inversions. Though the poem was written on Indian theme, it lacked Indian idea, tradition and Hindu sensibility. "Baji Probhou" is a poem about military heroism. The description of Deccan landscape was done with rhetorical embellishment. Sri Aurobindo attempted to compose an epic *Ilion* in Homeric pattern but could not complete it. *Ahana* was a long poem about Divine Dawn who descended to the earth to bliss the mankind. His magnum opus is *Savitri* with the sub-title, "A legend and a symbol". There are twelve books, 49 nine cantos and 23,813 lines in the epic. The epic was based on the legend of Satyavan and Savitri of the *Mahabharata.* The story was about Savitri's endeavour to bring back the life of her husband Satyavan from the clutches of death. Sri Aurobindo divided the twelve books of his epic into three parts. The epic began in Medias res. Savitri was an unconventional and philosophical Hindu epic with bold experimentation. There was very little action in it and most of the action took place on the inner reality. The epic contained a few characters in comparison to other epics. Savitri could be regarded as an inner epic which emphasised on man's future evolution to a higher position.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) received much encouragement from Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse to write poems with Indian sensibility, when she was in England for study purposes. *The Golden Threshold* (1905)

was her first volume of poetry. *The Birch of Time* (1912), *The Broken Wing* (1917), *The Sceptred Flute* (1946), *Feather of the Dawn* (1961) were her poetical collections. Her lyric had manifold influencing factors—British romanticism of 'fin de siècle' variety and opulence of Persian and Urdu poetic modes. Her folk songs were rooted in the Indian setting where Indian folks engaged themselves in their conventional occupations in poems like "Indian Weavers", "Palanquin-Bearers", "Wandering Singers" etc. Love was one of her favourite subjects in her poetry, which she handled with variety of mood, approach and technique. Her penchant for nature was marked by her joy in beauty which she evoked by portraying the Indian landscape with its tropical magnificence. Her imagery was drawn from the Indian scene, which ushered in feeling of apparent freshness. Sarojini Naidu's significance as an Indian English poet rested on her portrayal of traditional Indian life with all the Indian ethos and the resplendent Indian scene.

Armando Menezes (1902-1983) and Manjeri S. Isvaran (1910-1968) were two other significant Indian poets before the Independence. *The Fund* (1923) and *The Emigrant* (1933) were his mock epics and satire respectively. *Chords and Discords* (1936), *Chaos and Dancing Star* (1946) and *The Ancestral Face* (1951) were his lyrical poetry collections. In his poetry, he maintained unerring rhythm. Manjeri Isvaran had ten collections of verse to his name. *Saffron and Gold and other Poems* (1932) and *The Neem is a Lady* (1957) are two of his verse collections. According to him, the inspiration to write poetry was in his blood. However, modern poetry was intricate for him and he was reluctant to come to terms with it, which ultimately brought about the closure to his poetic career.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: How was Derozio influenced by the British romantic poets?

Q 12: Discuss Tagore's achievements as an Indian English poet.

Q 13: How did Sri Aurobindo's success as a poet rest on *Savitri*?

1.8 INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

In the Indian literary scenario, novel was a new entrant during the middle part of the 19th century. This literary phenomenon was directly related to the beginning of English education in India. Before Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, various writings of pre-novel forms were extant in India. In this regard, Kylas Chunder Dutt's imaginary historical tract "A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours 1945" can be mentioned. The tract was published in 1835 in *Calcutta Literary Gazette*. Shoshee chunder Dutt's "The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the 20th Century" was another imaginary historical tract published in the Saturday Evening Harakuru in the year 1845. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's two other novels *The Young Zamindar* (1883) and *Shunkur* (1885) were delineation of difficult relationship between the ruler and the ruled i.e., the British and the Indians.

K.K. Sinha in his *Sanjogita* or *The Princess of Aryavarta* (1930) delineated the tragic defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan at the hands of Mohammad Ghori. Sarath Kumar Ghosh wrote *Prince of destiny: The New Krishna* (1909) where English culture was shown victorious against the Indian culture. These early novelists of Indian writing in English had a predilection for showing their familiarity with best of the English writers like Shakespeare, Cooper, Coleridge, Byron, Scott etc. Whenever occasion arose, they referred to them or quoted passages from their texts. The possible reason was to parade their felicity with the best-known western classics in the eyes of British readers. Along with such direct influences, indirect influence of English literature was also noticeable in the early Indian novels written in English.

The earliest novel that was written in India was Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Rajmohan's Wife* which was published in 1864 in serialised mode in a weekly journal named *The Indian Field.* Then, he shifted his interest to Bengali and wrote many well known Bengali novels including *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani. Rajmohan's Wife* is about the middle class life of a Bengal village—a tragic story of an unhappy marriage between Matangini and Rajmohan. Bankimchandra evoked the trauma and passion

of Matangini in lyrical prose, which was not readily comprehensible for the English readers because domestic life of the Indian village was much a covert affair at that time. Along with Bankimchandra, other early novelists who tried their hands in novel writing in English were Raj Lakshmi Devi, Toru Dutt, Kali Krishna Lahiri, H. Dutt and Khetrapal Chakravarti.

Lal Behari Dey made an ethnographic attempt of documenting 19th century village life in Bengal in his *Govinda Samanta,* or *The History of a Bengal Raiyat* (1874). The novel encompassed the ups and downs of Govinda Samanta's life in between the years of 1820 to 1870. Krupabai Satthianadhan wrote two novels–*Kamala, A story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian life* published posthumously in 1895. Both these two novels represented the progressive women of the period through the eponymous protagonists Kamala and Saguna.

The period that followed this earliest attempt of novel writing was a turbulent one. That was the period of the growth of Indian nationalism, which encompassed the social fabric of India. Almost all the novelists who tried their hands in writing novels in English had contributed directly or indirectly to this aspect. While dealing with Indian nationalism, they also took up some of the other important issues prevalent in the period such as poverty, caste and class, industrialisation, problems of the peasants etc. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Ahmed Ali, K. A. Abbas, Bhabani Bhattacharya were some of the important novelists of this period. Some of these novelists also had the experience of living abroad which contributed to their broad cosmopolitan outlook.



LET US KNOW

The nationalistic fervour in Indian novels in English was mostly expressed through "Gandhi" theme. Gandhi's immense contribution to Indian National movement against the British made him a living legend. Began with the non-co-operation movement to the Civil disobedience movement leading to India's independence in 1947, Gandhi was the pivotal figure around whom all the activities of India's nationalistic movement and freedom movement were moving.

K. S. Venkataramani's *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927), and *Kandan the Patriot* (1932) were devoted to the themes of Gandhian economics and politics. *Kandan the Patriot,* which was published serially in a daily paper *Swarajya,* projected a comprehensive picture of a mass movement in national perspective. K. Nagarajan's *Athawar House* (1937) was the delineation of a family chronicle with Gandhian national movement as its background. Nagarajan's second novel *Chronicle of Kedaram* (1961) had Gandhi as a character whose arrival was necessary to defuse the feud between the two sects of Iyengars. Khwaja Ahmed Abbas' *Inquilab* was a comprehensive portrayal of Gandhian revolutionary age starting from Rowlatt Bill and the massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh. Along with Gandhi, many other notable leaders of the period were portrayed in the novel. Bhabani Bhattacharya, another important novelist of the period realistically portrayed the tragedy and trauma of 1942-43 famine in Bengal as well as the impact of Quit India movement in *So Many Hungers*. The novelist poignantly painted the sufferings of men, women and children due to famine in Bengal.

Raja Rao, one of the triumvirates of the novelists of the period along with R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand, is best known for his novel *Kanthapura* (1938). The 'forward' to this book is generally acknowledged as the manifesto of Indian writing in English. Here, Raja Rao stressed the importance of the "systematic indigenisation of English". It was done by incorporating epic narrative technique of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In his novel, the activities of Indian national movement under the leadership of Gandhi became a fascinating subject which could also be termed as Gandhi Purana. Raja Rao's other novels *The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The cat and Shakespeare (1965), Comrade Kirillov* (1976) and *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988) were published much later after the Independence.

R. K. Narayan began his illustrious literary journey with *Swami and Friends*-a novel with a child protagonist in the famously fictitious town of Malgudi. Before Independence, he wrote three other novels *Bachelor of Arts (1963), The Dark Room (1938),* and *The English Teacher (1945)* where he presented the society of Malgudi from the perspective of a detached

observer. In *Waiting for Mahatma* published after independence in 1955, Narayan took Indian freedom movement as the background. Here in this novel, Narayan occasionally strayed away from the secure setting of Malgudi. Other novels of Narayan–*Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, The Guide, The Man-eater of Malgudi* and *The Vendor of Sweets* were the portrayal of an exotic world located in Malgudi. Though contemporary to Raja Rao and Anand, Narayan took a different path and went on portraying the Indian society with all its idiosyncrasies in the exotic and fabulous Malgudi.

Nearly all the novels by Mulk Raj Anand are testament to his uncompromising love for the lowest dregs of the society. Anand began his novel writing with *Untouchable* (1935). Then, he wrote two novels one after another about the sufferings of the coolies in *Coolie* (1936) and in *Two Leaves And a Bud* (1937). In *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) are the poignant tales of the condition of the Indian peasants with Lal Singh as the protagonist of all the novels. Anand's last novel before the Independence was *The Big Heart* (1945). After Independence also, Anand continued writing fiction one after another. *Seven Summers* (1951), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), *The Road* (1963), *The Death of a Hero* (1964), *Morning Face* (1970), and *Confession of a Lover* (1976) were the novels that he wrote after the Independence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 14: How was "Gandhi" an important theme in Indian English novel before the Independence?

Q 15: Discuss the contribution of Raja Rao to the development of Indian English novel.



1.9 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that English language was introduced into the Indian education system by the British Government to create a

bunch of educated Indians who could help them in ruling this country effectively. You also learnt how the English language created a broad platform for the educated Indians to share their viewpoints through various modes communication. Along with this, there was tremendous upheaval in the Indian literary scene due to the emergence of new modes of prose, poetry, drama and novel in English. Many leaders of Indian National Congress published their speeches in English and brought about strong nationalistic fervour amongst the Indians. In poetry, Rabindranath Tagore glorified the literary scene of India in front of the world by achieving the Nobel Prize for literature with his immortal poetry in *Gitaljali.* Novel, a clear endowment of the modern education, also gained immense popularity with the writings of Anand, Raja Rao and Narayan during the 1930s, which was another important aspect of Indian English literature before the Independence. Thus, this unit must have acquainted you with the emergence of Indian English literature with all its major forms-prose, poetry, drama and novel and their practitioners preceding India's Independence.



1.10 FURTHER READING

Iyengar, K.R.S. (1962). *Indian Writing in English.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Mehrotra,A.K. (2014). *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English.* Delhi: Permanent Black.

Singh, A. et al. (Eds.).(1980). *Indian Literature in English: An Information Guide.* Michigan: Gale Research Co.

1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Modern education was available to the Indian people… by the Christian missionaries, British government… …Principal aim of spreading modern education in India.

Ans to Q 2: British government for the fulfilment… …the initial move was taken by Lord Dalhousie… …British was able to conquer most parts of Indian Territory.. …rule such a vast area of land.

Ans to Q 3: Some liberal Indians… …Chiplunkar Agarkar, Maganbhai Karamchand, Karve… …Raja Rammohun Roy pioneered the demand for modern education…it was anti-authoritarian and liberal… …propagated rational thinking.

Ans to Q 4: Western political thinkers… …became known to them through this English education… …enhanced their understanding of the political situation… …understood the evil effects of British rule… …joined India's struggle for the independence.

Ans to Q 5: Creative literature written by Indians in English… …Indian people have been writing and speaking English… …achieve artistic expression in the literature they have produced.

Ans to Q 6: Indian English literature is the most suitable term… …it is one of the languages in India… …Indian sensibilities and ethos… …Sahitya Akademi also accepted the term.

Ans to Q 7: Raja Rammohun Roy's "A Defence of Hindu Theism"… …first original prose writing in English… …wrote thirty two original English essays… … *A Defence of Hindu Theism*… …he supported monotheism… …learning on Christian theology… …worked strenuously for the rights of women… …attack on polygamy and dispossessing women… …wrote a short autobiographical sketch.

Ans to Q 8: Jawaharlal Nehru was a prolific writer… …*Letters from a father to his Daughter…* …early history of the world… …*Glimpses of World History… …*he narrated the world history… …*The Discovery of India* contained the history of India.

Ans to Q 9: Sri Aurobindo began his dramatic writing… …love for Elizabethan drama… …his emphasis on love as a benevolent force to destroy evil.

Ans to Q 10: Rabindranath Tagore was a prolific dramatist… …divided into two groups- thesis dramas and psychological dramas. *Sanyasi, The Cycle of Spring… …*were considered thesis dramas… …*The Mother's Prayer* were included in psychological dramas… …though

translated from original Bengali… …themes and characters of his dramas authentically carry Indian ethos.

Ans to Q 11: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio the first Indian English poet… …*Poems*, *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828) were his published volumes of poetry… …British romantic poets.

Ans to Q 12: Rabindranath Tagore's fame… …lies on *Gitanjali*… …he got Nobel Prize for literature… …*The Gardener* (1913), *The Crescent Moon* (1913), *Fruit Gathering* (1916), *Stray Birds* (1916), *Lovers Gift and Crossing* (1918), *The Fugitive* (1921), *Fireflies* (1928) and *Poems*(1942)… …central theme of the songs in *Gitanjali* is devotion… …his simplicity, passion and sensuousness… …profoundly Indian in spirit.

Ans to Q 13: Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus is *Savitri* … …twelve books, forty nine cantos and 23,813 lines… …based on the legend of Satyavan and Savitri of the *Mahabharata…*began with in medias res…unconventional and philosophical Hindu epic… …man's future evolution to a higher position.

Ans to Q 14: The nationalistic fervour in Indian novel in English was mostly got expressed through "Gandhi" theme… …made him a living legend… …the pivotal figure around whom all the activities of India's nationalistic movement and freedom movement moved.

Ans to Q 15: Raja Rao is best known for his novel *Kanthapura*… …'forward' to this book … …acknowledged as the manifesto of Indian writing in English… …epic narrative technique of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata…* …Gandhi became a fascinating subject… … Gandhi Purana.



1.12 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1. Discuss the social conditions, which laid the foundation for the advent of modern education in India.

Q 2. Why did the earliest of the educated Indians stress the imparting of modern education through the English language?

Q 3. Discuss the contribution of early Indian English prose to the emergence of nationalistic spirit amongst the Indians.

Q 4. Trace the development of early Indian English poetry with reference to Derozio and Toru Dutt.

Q 5. How did the growth of Indian nationalism get expressed in the early Indian English novels?

Q 6. Write a note on the history of the emergence of Indian English literature before India's Independence.

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UNIT 2: HISTORICALBACKGROUND (INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER)

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 The Social and Intellectual Contexts

2.4 Major Literary Forms and Their Exponents

- 2.4.1 Poetry
- 2.4.2 Drama
- 2.4.3 Prose
- 2.4.4 Fiction

2.5 Let us Sum up

2.6 Further Reading

2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

2.8 Possible Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the social and intellectual contexts that shaped the Post-Independence Indian English literature.
- identify the major literary forms that maturated in the Post-Independence Indian English literature.
- name the important writers in the field of poetry, drama, prose and fiction
- locate the important works in the gamut of Post-Independence Indian English literature.
- explain how important politics is to the proliferation of Post-Independence Indian English literature.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have got a glimpse of Indian English literature before the Independence. This unit shall help you to discuss the course of Indian English Literature after the Independence. Following the inadvertent introduction of English literature in India through the Charter Act 1813, Indian writing in English gradually started to develop and took time to receive worldwide recognition. The writers started writing in English in the mid 19th century had to face initial problems, as they had to run from pillar to post for getting their works published. However, resolute minds never break down to difficulties and ultimately it was the win of human endeavours. Gradually, they received publishers thanks to the initial interest and recognition that foreign writers shower on Indian writers. For example, the playwright Asif Currimbhoy became famous only when he was extolled by The Asian Theatre scholar Faubion Bowers who declared him in New York's "The Village Voice" that he was emerging "more and more clearly as a playwright of international stature." Despite getting plenty of such difficulties, the Indian writers continued to write in English with two basic reasons: firstly, writers writing in English received wider attention, they found readers in India and abroad; and secondly, the luxury of an elitist tendency that flaunted their western education. However, the second tendency that emboldened many writers had various convolutions and ramifications as the South Indian poet R. Parthasarathy was galvanised by the conflict of a foreign language and his native language as he learned English at a tender age and got the English-speaking environment. His knowledge of English language and literature mollified to believe that he belonged more to Britain than to India, and his belief forced him to take sojourn unsuccessfully in England and returned to India with an expressive realization that he belonged more to India as his Indianness cannot be deliberately uprooted, and his *Rough Passage* portrays the theme of identity exposed to Indian and Western cultures. As you finish reading this unit, you will be able to have some ideas on Post Independence India, which saw the emergence of many Indian writers in English as the social environment turned out to be more advantageous for writers as it

provided a liberty of thought. Moreover, the two decades after the Independence reoriented the Indian political and cultural ethos that facilitated the growth of Rushdie generation in 1980s and 1990s.

2.3 THE SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

The Social Context :

In the social sphere, India had to encounter various problems after the Independence. The incoherent and hasty Independence brought a sea of problems and the first among them was the communal violence between Hindus and Muslims. The ethnic violence was the owner of mischief that caused countless deaths and left many casualties. It was a slur on the dreams of people like M. K. Gandhi among others, whose deliberate and desperate attempts fructified a free nation but the eruption of shocking and unacceptable ethnic violence caused him to think differently. M. K. Gandhi's deliberate but innocent 'ploy' succeeded that diminished the communal violence for a while and Jawaharlal Nehru declared India a secular nation. Besides the communal violence, many princely states denied to be a part of free India, and the political thinkers of India were sensing trouble as it created a ruckus and immediately worked for evading the problem, and stalwarts like Sardar Patel was successful to amalgamate those states to Indian democracy largely by coercion and if needed by intimidation. Moreover, India involved in three brief but fierce battles with neighbouring countries in 1962, 1965 and 1971 respectively with China and Pakistan that dismantled Indian economy and distraught the social setup of India.

In the economic sphere, various economic reforms fructified the growth of GDP in India and the introduction of the Five Years' Plan brought efficacious remedies to the flip side of Indian economy. The establishments and proliferations of large industrial projects in the public sector accelerated the growth of Indian economy along with the multi-purpose river schemes brought changes to India. However, it needs to be mentioned that the implementations of various schemes did not heal the rift between the rich and the poor. Moreover, widespread corruption caused riots in the Indian

society and many litterateurs of the time addressed such negative developments as burning issues in their writings.

Changes in the political and economic spheres brought effective and notable developments in the social scene. The rise of literacy rate is one of the indicators of the development in India as education moulds the conscience of a human being. 'The Untouchability Offence Act' was introduced in India with an eye to dilute dogmatic social inequalities, but in reality, the act remained in paper than in practice. Various schemes were introduced for the advancement of the Backward Castes and Scheduled tribes and the rise of literacy rate was one of the positive changes after Independence that earmarked the evident changes that such schemes brought for the people of India after the Independence. However, the most sensitive issue that disturbed the well-wishers of India was the gradual dilution of the ideologies of the freedom struggle. The dream of a free India having equity with amity and solidarity at its driver's seat was gradually fading away. In addition, corruption spread every nook and corner of the society, communal violence went shoulder to shoulder with bureaucratic inefficiency. In addition, in such a social context Indian English literature thrived earnestly that explored such social developments either positive or negative.

Intellectual Context (The Role of English) :

One of the major developments after the Independence that has multifarious significance was the decision of the Indian government to become a frugal partner and a member of the British Commonwealth. The decision was expressively triumphant for those who wanted to continue the cultural heritage of the English and desired to continue the cultural bondage with the British despite expressively snapping political bondage. In fact, the decision to be a part of the British commonwealth, fructified a more stronger cultural bonding with the British that might paved the way for creating another cultural domination is matter of debate, but it had efficacious meanings in the development and proliferation of English studies in India. The unprecedented interest in the English language and literature actually

paved the way for the Indian writers in English, as they received not only Indian readers but also foreign readers and it really accelerated the growth of Indian English literature. Moreover, *Sahitya Akademi* started recognising the contributions of the Indian English writers to the rich heritage of Indian literature by conferring *Sahitya Akademi* awards to the Indian English writers.

The impact of English education and language on the Indian English writers can be best summed in the words of K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger, "Western education was as yet carrying all before it. It was the 'open sesame' to knowledge, freedom, power; it cut the old bonds of convention and tradition; it let in light into the old darks rooms of an obscurantist faith; and it made a new world and a new life possible for its beneficiaries." Several magazines like *The Illustrated Weekly of India* endeavoured to encourage the publication of Indian English verse and fiction and the attempt to give impetus to Indian English writers can be called a new possibility to the Indian English literature.



LET US KNOW

The Notion of 'Indianness' in Indian English Writing:

Indian literature in English moved along with addressing various fundamental questions like what evidently is Indianness. Whose Indianness wreathes India globally distinguishable? Such questions emerged in the Post Colonial India as it tried to create a new force in the global world. To answer to such questions are difficult for its multifarious ramifications. Raja Rao believed, "India is not a country(*desa*), it is a perspective (*darsana*): it is not a climate but a mood (*rasa*) in the play of the Absolute-it is not the Indian who makes India but "India" makes the Indian, and this India is in all."

Similar connotation can be found in the commentary of K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger, when he states, "What makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian literature and not just a ramshackle outhouse of English literature is the quality of its 'Indianness' in the choice of its subjects,

in the texture of thought and play of sentiment, in the organisation of material and in the creative use of language."

Various political developments like the dissection of India and creation of two nations lead to the horrible communal violence that distraught Indian sensibility, the declaration of secularism in India and its subsequent circumstances were matters of profound interest for the post-Independence Indian English writers. Moreover, many writers rightly assumed that politics can easily penetrate into creative imagination and mould the narratives of a text. Such an assumption is enormously evident in the works of postcolonial Indian writers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Discuss the challenges and changes that India faced after the attainment of Independence?

Q 2: "Indianness is the cultural part of the mind that apprises and shapes the interests, activities and anxieties of the day-to-day life of a sizeable number of Indians." Explain.

2.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS AND THEIR EXPONENTS

The following is an attempt at exploring the major literary forms in Indian English literature following the Independence.

2.4.1 Poetry

Although the inheritance of the English language went through many stages of modifications in India, the most subtle impact of the British colony in India was the English language. Indian English poets in the late 1940s started to adopt a post-Romantic legacy that exchanged a received stylistic collection to local elements. And, it continued for several decades without any radical breaking of European tradition. The Indian English poets came from various

backgrounds and they were united through the use of the English language. Many of them read English as an academic subject, some worked in journalism or media, but few of them had professional experience like Keki N. Daruwalla, a police officer by profession, Gieve Patel was a doctor, and Jayanta Mahapatra was a Physics teacher. The Indian poets of the period had two motives that wreathed them together as Indian poets that their self-imposed compulsion to write in English and the notion that nobody would write in any language except their own language. The poets inspired by the second motive strived to make the English language as their own and gradually elements of Indianness started to make its presence felt in Indian poetry.

The shift from the romantic tradition to a verse more about the postcolonial present that expressively addressed the sentiments, ethos and anxieties of people of India, earmarked the post Independence Indian English poetry. English and American modernist poets like T. S. Eliot became standard inspirations for the Indian English poets. One of the exponents of 'new' poetry in the post- Independence was Nissim Ezekeil, a Bene-Israel original migrated to India, who was an admirer of T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden and who expressively writes about the search for identity and alienation, which are also the major shaping forces of his poetry. Moreover, the post Independence Indian English writers felt the need of sharing their thoughts to one another and that necessitated the creation of 'groups' that facilitates the poets to discuss new trend and developments in poetry in Europe. The notable contributor to the group formation was P. Lal whose coherent efforts fructified the formation of Writers' Workshop in Calcutta that really ushered the beginning of 'new poetry' in India. The practitioners of the new poetry unanimously believed that the English language was a boon for the nation as the nation is fortified intellectually by the English language that has given a new lease of life to the practitioners of creative literature. The group of modernist anthology actively worked by P.

Lal voiced for the need of a private voice in postcolonial present as, "we live in an age that tends so easily to demonstrations of mass-approval and hysteria."

The chief motive that inspired the Indian English poets to embrace the foreign language was the scope and ranges that the language facilitated them. The new language enabled them to get wider audiences that in reality brought modernity to India. In due course of time, the Indian English poets intended to clothe new intensions in poetry. Moreover, they also endeavoured to discover themselves in that process. One of the early Indian poets to receive universal recognition was Dom Moares. He was the winner of Hawthornden Prize in 1958 and was the first Indian poet to receive such a global recognition. He represented the 'new' Indian English poets who lived in England for many years and candidly proclaimed himself to be more a British poet than an Indian poet, but *The Penguin Companion to Literature* expressively named him to be an Indian poet because of his considerable and indicative contribution to Indian poetry. His sensuous imagery like "the curds/of sea" is a testimony of his poetic roots in India despite his repeated protestations. Some of his well-known works are "A Beginning" (1957), Poems (1960) and "John Nobody".

The Post Independence period saw the rise of many Indian poets in English with international repute and among them are Nissim Ezekeil, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Jayanta Mahapatra, Kamala Das are prominent but they are different from each other from their outlook and experience. Nissim Ezekeil's deliberate and desperate attempts to become a part of Indian culture did not provide him efficacious remedies to his incongruous identity formations that tried to address through his poems but his success lies in his minor poems leaving behind traumas of alienation. His "Night of the Scorpion" is one of the finest poems in Indian writing in English that poignantly explored the cultural ethos of the Indian society behind the sting and tried to learn the Indian views of evil,

superstition and suffering. His poetry is a testimony of his mastery skills and he is technically sound that he wrote his poetry in comprehensibly tight structure.

A. K. Ramanujan was one of the doyens of post Independence Indian poetry and a versatile scholar, decided against returning to India and continued teaching in the University of Chicago although he was born and brought up in India. His thirty years of stay in India and his assimilation with Indian culture moulded his Indianness. His analytical study of the Indian cultural ethos forms the structure of the poetry, and his prolonged stay in England caused a note of assimilation of traditional Indian Culture with the modern social outlook of Europe. "An outsider's" portrayal of Hindu culture interspersed with critical dissection of sensitive religious issues make him truly a contemporary postcolonial Indian poet. Such an approach is all-pervasive in some of his major poems like "The Hindoo: The Only Risk", "The Hindoo: he doesn't Hurt a Fly or spider either", "Some Indian uses of History on a Rainy Day". His Contribution to Indian English literature was recognised by Sahitya Akademi and was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award after his death in 1999 for his poetic collection *The Selected Poems.*

Jayanta Mahapatra was the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award, he started his poetic career with the publication of "Close the Sky, Ten by Ten" and continued publishing various poetic volumes in English like "A Rain of rites", "Waiting", "Relationship" etc. His colloquial style with striking images won the hearts of many readers. He frequently portrayed the Jagannathan Temple with vivid imagery and extended his poetic forte to reflect psychological conflicts in love and sensuality.

The rise of Indian Women English poets becomes synonymous with the Indian Independence as the Post-Independence Indian English poetry saw the emergence of many female poets and Kamala Das became the doyen among them. Sexual frankness, expressive sensual longing are some of the

important traits of her poetry that made her truly a post Independence Indian English poet. Her longing for physically intimate relationship is expressively evident in her poetic line like "the musk of sweat between my breasts." A deeper study of her poems reveals that she did not attempt cheap popularity but it portrays that she is 'beloved and betrayed'. Her traumatic frustration in love and marriage is evident in her autobiography "My Story". She wrote three poetic volumes, "Summer in Calcutta", "The Descendants" and "The Old Playhouse and Other Poems".

R. Parthasarathy was also an important Post Independence poet who initially believed the superiority of western culture and believed that he belonged more to England than to India, but such a belief received a setback when he realised that his Indianness could not be willingly diluted. His *Rough Passage* portrays the theme of identity formation based to Indian and western cultures.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What are the changes do you perceive in the Post Independence Indian Poetry?

Q 4: Discuss the shifts in Post Independence Indian poetry from the Romantic tradition to a verse more about the postcolonial present.

2.4.2 Drama

Indian drama has a rich tradition and its origin can be traced back to the Vedic Period. Indian plays were very simple in the Vedic Period and Sanskrit drama continued to flourish till the 15th century, but its progress was hammered by the various nasty invasions. However, a new lease of creative ingenuity was grown up after the British arrived in India as K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes that the English education was the 'open sesame' to knowledge that encouraged freedom and power. It effectively dilutes the old bonds of traditions and conventions. Thus, it shed a new light into the dark

rooms of bizarre faith, and transformed it to a new world with new possibilities. However, Indian drama saw the comprehensive development after the Independence as the dramatists before Independence did not give enough density to reliability and 'stage-worthiness' of their plays. Indian drama received a fresh start when Kendriya Natak Sangeet Akademi got under way in January 1953. The setting up of Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1959 was another stimulus to the Indian drama. By 1960s, Indian English drama saw the concoction of various fitting styles and techniques from Sanskrit and western theatre. By the 1970s, Indian English drama fully flourished in the hands of Badal Sincar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani. They were instrumental to the modernisation of Indian theatre. Bold metamorphosis and efficacious experiments in terms of thematic concerns and technical virtuosity accelerated the *modernization* of Indian theatre. Moreover, their use of legends, myths, folklores, history fructified imposing results. They do, however, exhibited Indian drama at national level as they dramatically intellectualised human life in India coupled with its particulars and ingredients.

Modern secular plays were introduced in India by the British in the 19th Century. Since then modern Indian theatre underwent several stages of changes with many convolutions. Basically, in the 19th Century, two streams of drama were presented–one was Shakespearean plays and classical Sanskrit plays. Shakespearean plays were translated into various regional languages to cater to the needs of the Indian audiences, as they preferred more to enjoy plays in their native language. The British's arrival in India and the consolidation of imperial power in India brought many contradictions and conflicts that the first Indian playwright in English. Krishna Mohan Banerjea addressed these convolutions in his plays. His "The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta" (1831) is a testimony of his eagerness to represent the contradictions and conflicts of Indians with the British

cultural ethos. The most unique playwright of the mid 19th century was Tyagaraja Paramasive Kailasam (1885-1946) who wrote in English and Kanada and his English plays were different from Kanada plays. He believed that, "delineation of ideal characters requires a language which should not be very near to us." His English plays are based on myths of the *Mahabharata* with a Shakespearean historical method, but his plays were severely scrutinised by the drama pundits for his use of extravagant and bombastic Victorian language.

Most of the playwrights of the mid 19th Century to mid 20th Century, followed classical Indian myths and Shakespearean dramaturgy and Sri Arobindo, H. Chatopadhyay and T.P. Kailasam were some of the major exponents in that period. In addition, the playwrights of post Independence followed the similar trend and wrote on ethical and moral issues. Dilip Kumar Roy wrote "Rama Rajya" (1952) in collaboration with Indira Devi and the play used the epic story of the *Mahabharata* with an attempt to put a modern touch in it. Swami Avyaktananda was another post Independence Indian playwright chiefly known for his play "All Prophets Day". The play addressed convolutions related to national integration and secularism. However, the plays written by Asif Currimbhoy (1928-94) made a new beginning in Post Independence Indian drama. His plays are rich in theatrical devices. He dexterously used dramatic devices like monologues, choruses, songs, sound effects that accelerated theatrical impacts. His notable plays are *Inquilab* (1970) and *Sonar Bangla* (1972) that have substantial impact on Indian politics in postcolonial India. *His Hungry Ones* (1965) is known for his comment on human predicament that all human beings are in chains and none is free that captivity comes from external forces or it could be family, religion, country and society.

With the treatment of epic stories to Shakespearean adoption, Indian English plays moved along with Asis Currimbhiy's

theatrical experimentations. Indian English plays of 1970s started addressing contemporary political and social situations through unique dramatic presentation by Gurucharan Das. His "Larins Sahib" (1970) is a clear indication of his application of historical past the play is straightforward attempt to entertain audiences instead of a supposed assumption to relate past with the present.

The most enduring impact on post Independence Indian English drama was Ebrahim Alkazi. He was first director of National School of Drama, and he was trained in London at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He dexterously wreathed costume, music, light design with acting and speech accelerated the beginning of a language that was unique to the city audience. His fourteen years of stay in Bombay not only resulted in presentation of notable English playwrights but also influenced many Indians to follow his footsteps. Such an encouragement was capitalised by Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel. Nissim Ezekiel's "Nalini" is considered to be the most successful play. His other notable works are "Sleepwalkers" and "Marriage-Poem". Gieve Patel was one of the followers of Ebrahim Alkazi who believed that language has a special role to play in theatre. In addition, his dexterous use of the English language is expressive in all his plays and each play is so minutely constructed that he achieved the desired specific end.

Therefore, Indian English drama developed gradually along with playful experimentation of the English language in the hands of Gieve Patel. He intentionally modified the English syntax and grammar that fructified a unique rhythm of speech. As he says, "I attempt to create a speech that perhaps does not exist in real life, but which never the less appears perfectly natural on the stage when spoken with understanding by actors."



LET US KNOW

Theatre Groups until 1968 endeavoured to introduce the Indians to the rich European and Western dramatic skills. However, in 1970s, a strong impetus of back-to-village movement was grown up that represented the Indian cultural scenarios as well as restructured Indian dreams. Moreover, the announcement of Sultan Padmasee Award for Indian plays in English provided the much-needed fire to Indian plays that had set the healthy atmosphere of competition among the Indian playwrights.

The plays of Asif Curimbhoy, Nissim Ezekeil and Gieve Patel among others emboldened the later Indian English playwrights to consolidate its position in the world. Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Badal Sircar are some of the most famous Post Independence playwrights who became popular in the latter half of 20th century. Vijay Tendulkar is primarily a social analyst and his social commentary on the Indian social set up from a journalist point of view is all-pervasive in his works. He never claimed to be a champion liberator of women, but he raised voice against the negligible position accorded to women. His preoccupation that women are the victims of the institutional body of power constituted his major plays like—*Kamala* (1981) and *Fifth Woman*. He was awarded *Saraswati Samman* for his play *Kanyadan* (1983), and the play exhibits male chauvinism and hypocrisy.

Mahesh Dattani is one of the renowned Indian English playwrights whose penetrating insight into Indian urban society is widely extolled. His “Bravely Fought the Queen”, “Dance Like a Man”, “On a Muggy Night in Mumbai” are esoteric to some extent, but the vogue for socio-economic plays is well explored with subtle effects. These plays testify his predilection for exploring a perverse relationship between postmodern urban society and individuals. Pseudo work ethics, facades of honesty and an antipathy towards

the society and the world at large have precipitated the ethical standards of the Indian urban society. Home has become an eyesore where people fight and clash to create their own space and time. A perverse refusal to follow family bonding coupled with lack of adaptability and preposterously narcissist attitude, have precluded from strengthening family relationship.

Badal Sircar's forte as a dramatist lies in delineating middle-class society, his projection of modern life from the existential standpoint designed him as a truly postmodern Indian dramatist. He is commonly known as the "barefoot playwright" who stands in the vanguard of new theatrical movement in India. His *Procession* (1972) is a quest for a real home in a so-called equal society. His other important plays like *Bhoma* (1974) and *State News* (1979) are situated on his concept of the Third Theatre.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Do you think that Indian drama was comprehensibly developed after Independence?

Q 6: Try to draw the contribution of Ebrahim Alkezi in the development of Post- Independence Indian drama.

Q 7: Would you agree that bold metamorphosis and efficacious experiments in terms of thematic concerns and technical virtuosity brought the modernisation of Indian theatre?

2.4.3 Prose

To wield the English language for the explication of Indian views fructified new gateways of the elucidation of Indian scenario. As you have read in the previous unit, Raja Rammohan Roy was an ardent advocate of English education in India and he happened to be the first Indian to write prose. In addition, Indian English prose never showed signs of enervation. From the simple, pointed style

of M. K. Gandhi's prose to Jawaharlal Nehru's panoramic display of world history and then to the agile prose with political sensitive issues constitute the major prose works following the Independence. Apart from political prose, autobiography, travelogue, religious writing, historical writings as well as social criticism continue to thrive in the context of postcolonial Indian prose.

One of the exponents of non-fictional prose in the postcolonial India was Nirad C. Choudhuri who ventures to explore political and religious development in India. His first attempt at literary prose was a meticulous commentary on the quintessence of the colonial Indian army. He highlights the unjust recruitment policy of the colonial Indian army and its pernicious impact on society. Another remarkable contribution of N. Choudhuri to Indian prose is "A Passage to India"; it was a result of his short visit to England in 1955. He admired the British ethos and eulogised its rich cultural heritage, but critics often say that his adulation was a result of observing British culture with a rose-tinted spectacle. He redeemed his reputation with his more balanced work "*The Intellectual in India"* (1967). He surveyed various intellectual traditions in India and underlines the reformist zeal of the modern Hindu intellectuals and dogmatism of the Muslim counterparts that diluted social reforms.

Apart from the non-fictional prose, Indian English literature saw the phenomenal development of literary criticism. Various factors are accountable for the remarkable development, the opening of many different universities with Post graduate courses have accelerated the proliferation of critical activities. Krishna Chaitanya is first among the notable postcolonial Indian prose writer whose "A New History of Sanskrit Literature" ventures to draw a balanced literary evaluation of the Sanskrit studies in India. Other notable contributor was S. C. Sen Gupta who wrote *Shakespearean Comedy* and *Shakespeare's Historical Plays.* K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar is also a notable contributor to post Independence literary criticism and his *Shakespeare: His World and His Art* exhibits his proficiency as a literary critic.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Try to find out the political convolutions of the Post Independence Indian Prose.

2.4.4 Fiction

In the previous unit, you have read about Indian English fiction preceding India's Independence. The two decades just before the Independence were momentous for the rise of nationalism and the Indian novels in English. The prominent fiction writers of 1930s and 1940s are Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Aubery Menen and G.V. Desani, and some others continued writing even after the Independence. Their nationalism was coloured and sometimes tempered by expressive cosmopolitanism of outlook as most of these writers spent a considerable period of their lives in Europe. Their writings are often accentuated by a sense of cultural derangement that has also become the characteristic feature of the postcolonial Indian fiction. Two major developments are expressive in the fiction of this period. Firstly, the socio-political upheavals of the 'Gandhian whirlwind', and secondly, the era of late modernism in European countries had considerable impact on the development of fiction of this period. The Gandhian philosophy and ideologies were so popular and dominant that the fiction writers of this period capitalised his philosophy and ideologies to produce popular fiction with a message in it. Moreover, the fiction writers considered it a moral obligation to spread nationalism in India and they successfully attained their end through their fiction.

Indian fiction in English did not produce substantially important novels immediately after the Independence because "many writers felt there was something unpatriotic about writing in the language of recently departed". Many Pre-Independence Indian writers continued writing fiction but the recognition of R. K. Narayan's

creative prowess by Sahitya Akademi provided the much-needed fillip to Indian fiction. He was awarded Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960 for his "The Guide". The Post Independent Indian fiction saw the rise of character development and psychological depth, depth wise developments of narrative than lengthwise development became the hallmark of Post Independence Indian fiction. The writers were also haunted by a sense of alienation and were largely discontented from modern lives. Moreover, the advantageous social condition was capitalised by the women writers and the theme of alienation came to "a special edge in the numerous novels published by women in the period." The most prominent post-Independence women writers are—Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.

Perhaps the most prominent novelist to immerse in the upshots of Indian Independence was Khuswant Singh. Various political developments after the ethnic violence caused by the partition found its apt expression in his *Train to Pakistan* that was published in United States under the title *Mano Majra.* The novel is an expressive representation of the ramifications of partition. Simple villagers were living peacefully before the Partition irrespective caste, creed and religion, but the situation was altered after Independence when a mob became ferment to kill Muslims travelling through the village on a train to Pakistan. Many innocent lives were saved at the cost of a generous and 'impulsive Sikh peasant' who died when attempting to stop the attack. The novel become a critique of corrupt officials, policy makers and politicians who fermented the whole situation in the name of liberty. His other notable works are—*I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) and *Delhi: A Novel* (1989).

The emergence of psychological novelist provided a different colour to postcolonial India fiction. Anita Desai was one of the post Independence novelist who has a pertaining insight into the characters' psyche that is praiseworthy. She fabulously made her characters face success and agony through aesthetic experiences

in their lives, and she added a feather more to her cap by dexterously blending nature, experience, myth, and cultural formation of an artist. Her notable fictional works are *Cry, the Peackock; Fasting, Feasting; The Artist of Disappearance;* and *In Custody*. Another women novelist of considerable repute is Nayantara Sahgal, the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru. Her novels are critique of hypocrisy and shallow values of the upper class people of the society. Her important works are—*A time to Be Happy* (1958), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969).



LET US KNOW

The first two decades immediately after the Independence witnessed that many writers refrained from writing in English, as they believed it unpatriotic to write in a language of a race that subjugated Indian for many years. Nevertheless, the doyens of the Post Independence Indian fiction like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan continued writing in English. Moreover, leaders of Indian national congress were also puzzled at the status of English in the Post-Independent India although C. Rajagopalachari proclaimed that English is the gift of Saraswati to India. The issue was resolved when Gandhi responded to queries of Mulk Raj Anand. He said, "The purpose of writing is to communicate, isn't it? If so, say your say in any language that comes to hand."

M. Anantanarayana was the only fiction writer in the Post Independent India who wrote in English but did not follow the western narrative forms in his novels. His *The Silver Pilgrimage* is a testimony of his renunciation of western narrative and adaptation of Indian narratives. The novel portraits the adventure of Jayasurya, a prince of 16th century Sri Lanka and his subsequent hardships. M. Anantanarayana's whole purpose of his rejection of western narrative in evident in the epigraph as he warned Indians to refrain from selling own cleverness, as it will fetch on convolutions, "Sell your cleverness and buy Bewilderment."

Most of the Post Independent Indian fiction writers were dissatisfied with the metropolis and modernity. Arun Joshi and M. Anantanarayana were expressive in their dissatisfaction with the metropolitan Indian culture. In his "The Apprentice" (1974), Arun Joshi portrays the adaptation of a corrupt means by the government official to survive in the post-Independent corrupt society and provided low quality materials in the Sino-Indian war 1962, and the victim was one of his childhood friends. His other major works are *The Strange case of Billy Biswas, The Foreigner, The Last Labyrinth and The City and the River.*



Check Your Progress

Q 9: Discuss the impact of Gandhian philosophy on the Post Independence Indian fiction.



2.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit made an attempt to give you an overview of social and intellectual developments and its diverse upshots in the post Independence India. It has also familiarised you with the intellectual advancements like the assertion of western scientific education as an 'open sesame' to knowledge and liberty. In addition, an unprecedented interest in the English language and literature by the Indian writers in English ushered a new beginning as they received not only Indian readers but also foreign readers that accelerated the growth of Indian literature in English. Moreover, the unit attempted to show the growth and proliferations of major literary forms in Indian Writing in English and its major exponents. The primary concern in this unit has been to acquaint you with the miscellaneous developments and shaping forces on the Post-Independence Indian English literature. You must have by now been well acquainted about the formative influences on the Post-Independence Indian English literature. By now, you should be able to understand the 'Indianness' of Indian English literature and the role of the English language with the help of which a great number of Indian

writers, moved by the earnest desire to exhibit before the western readers, strived for authentic depiction of India through their writings.



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2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The immediate change in India brought by the ill-prepared Independence was the ethnic violence between Hindus and Muslims… …Partition rocked the nation and political thinkers took the challenge to find out efficacious remedies to the intricate problem… …Subsequent declaration of India as a secular country had far-reaching repercussions… …abolition of societal ills, effective

economic schemes and amalgamation of princely states to Grater India.

Ans to Q 2: Indianness is reflected in the choice of its subjects… …also presents the texture of thought and play of sentiment inherited in India… …sometimes, the cultures of particular caste, class and family can expressively alter the civilization heritage but the intrinsic awareness of an Indian identity keeps going on.

Ans to Q 3: The western scientific education brought significant changes in the Indian society… …it attempted to abolish social ills… …it was a storehouse of knowledge that emanated freedom and power.

Ans to Q 4: The Post Independence Indian Poetry turned away from the romantic tradition… …engrossed in addressing the sentiments, ethos and anxieties of contemporary India.

Ans to Q 5: The Post Independence drama gave enough density to reliability and 'stage-worthiness' of their plays… …post-Independence drama profited by the enduring demand abroad in Indian English drama.

Ans to Q 6: He was first director of National School of Drama, and he was trained in London at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He dexterously wreathed costume, music, light design with acting and speech accelerated the beginning of a language that was unique to the city audience.

Ans to Q 7: The establishment of National School of Drama in the first Five Year Plan was an encouraging development in Indian drama… …that facilitated many experiments… …Girish Karnad's *Hayavandana* is a testimony of the daring experiment in the wield of folk motifs… …The use of ghost by Mahesh Dattani in *Where there's a Will* is an indication of effectual experiment that correlates thematic concerns and technical virtuosity that implicates the modernization of Indian theatre.

Ans to Q 8: In his "A History of Indian English Literature", M. K. Naik indicated that 'fresh political thinking' remained dominant in post Independence prose… …Nirad C. Chaudhuri addressed different political and religious intricacies of the post-Independence India… …M. N. Roy,

Jayaprakash Narayan and R. M. Lohia were notable contributors to subtle political debates in the post-Independence India.

Ans to Q No 9: Gandhian philosophy and ideologies were so popular and dominant that the fiction writers of this period capitalised his philosophy and ideologies to produce popular fiction with a message in it. Moreover, fiction writers considered it a moral obligation to spread nationalism in India and they successfully attained their end through their fiction.



2.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How did the continuity and growth of Indian literature in English remain assured after Independence? Give an illustrative answer.

Q 2: How did the recognition of national identity help the Indian English writers?

Q 3: In the fifties arose a school of poets who tried to turn their backs on the romantic tradition and write a verse more in tune with the age, its general temper and its literary ethos. Discuss.

Q 4: Do you think Post-Independence Drama was profited by the growing interest abroad in Indian English literature? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 5: Elucidate the factors responsible for the growth of literary criticism in the Post Independence India.

Q 6: Trace the shift from Pre-Independent 'Gandhian whirlwind' to psychological depth in the Post Independence Indian English fiction.

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UNIT 3: MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE ["INTRODUCTION" TO *THE VINTAGE BOOK OF INDIAN WRITING* 1947-1997]

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Excerpts from "Introduction" to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* 1947-1997
3.4 Important Issues raised in the Essay
3.5 Let us Sum up
3.6 Further Reading
3.7 Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the major aspects modern English Indian literature
- discuss the contributions of the major Indian English writers who shaped Indian Writing in English (IWE)
- trace the major social and intellectual concerns in IWE especially in the field of fiction and non-fictional prose
- explain the major developments in modern Indian English fiction

3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is an integral part of your reading of the history of Indian English literature. As the title suggests, this unit shall deal exclusively with Indian English literature of the modern times, especially during the last three decades of the 20th century. In order to discuss the same, we shall try to read the "Introduction" of Salman Rushdie to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* 1947-1997 edited by Rushdie and Elizabeth West. This 'Introduction' shall give you a panoramic picture of the development of Modern Indian English fiction with reference to its various thematic aspects as seen by

Salman Rushdie who through his fictional and nonfictional works informed the entire world about the beauty of Indian English Writings. Therefore, you are supposed to carefully go through the text of the essay, as we believe that this will help you to discuss many important aspects of modern Indian English Literature one of which is the representation of India in an alien language.

3.3 EXCERPTS FROM "INTRODUCTION" TO *THE VINTAGE BOOK OF INDIAN WRITING* 1947-1997

I once gave a reading to a gathering of university students in Delhi and when I'd finished a young woman put up her hand. 'Mr. Rushdie, I read through your novel, *Midnight's Children*,' she said. 'It is a very long book, but never mind, I read it through. And the question I want to ask you is this: fundamentally what's your point?'

Before I could attempt your answer, she spoke again. 'Oh, I know what you're going to say. You're going to say that the whole effort—from cover to cover—that is the point of the exercise. Isn't that what you were going to say?'

'Something like that, perhaps…'I got out.

She snorted. 'I won't do.'

'Please,' I begged, 'do I have to have just one point?'

'Fundamentally,' she said, with impressive firmness 'yes.'

So, here, once again, is a very long book; and though it is not a novel, but an anthology selected from the best Indian writing of the half century since the country's independence, still one could easily say of the work contained in these pages that the whole collective effort, from cover to cover, is the point of the exercise. Fifty years of work, by four generations of writers, is impossible to summarise, especially when it hails from that huge crowd of a country (close to a bill on people at the last count), that vast, metamorphic, continent culture that feels, to Indians and visitors alike, like a nonstop assault on the scenes, the emotions, the imagination and the spirit. Put India and Atlantic Ocean and it would reach from Europe to America; put India and China together and you have got almost half the

population of the world. It's high time Indian literature got itself noticed, and it's started happening. New writers seem to emerge every few weeks. Their work is as multiform as the place, and the readers who care about the vitality of literature will find at least some of these voices saying something they want to hear. However, my Delhi interrogator may be pleased to hear that this large and various survey turns out to be making fundamentally, just one—perhaps rather surprising – point.

This is it: the prose writing—both fiction and nonfiction—created in this period by Indian writers *working in English*, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 'official languages' of India, the so-called vernacular languages' during the same time; and indeed, this new, and still burgeoning, 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution Indian has yet made to the world of books.

It is a large claim, and while it may be easy for Western readers to accept it (after all, few non-English language Indian writers, other than the Novel laureate Tagore, have ever made such an impact on world literature); it runs counter to much of the received critical wisdom within India itself. …

Two qualifications should be made (in the selection of the pieces in this anthology) at once. First: there has long been a genuine problem of translation in India—not only into English but between the vernacular languages—and it is possible that good writers have been excluded by reason of their translator's inadequacies rather than their own. Nowadays, however, such bodies as the Indian Sahitya Akademi and UNESCO- as well as Indian publishers themselves –have been putting their resources into the creation of better translations, and the problem, while not eradicated, is certainly much diminished. And second: while it was impossible, for reasons of space, to include a representative selection of modern Indian poetry, it was evident to us that the rich poetic traditions of India continued to flourish in many of the sub continent's languages, whereas the English language poets, with a few distinguished exceptions (Arun Kolatkar, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, to name just three), did not match the counterparts in prose…

The lack of first-rate writing in translation can only be a matter of regret. However, to speak more positively, it is a delight to be able to showcase the quality of a growing collective oeuvre whose status has long been argued over, but which has, in the last twenty years or so, begun to merit a place alongside the most flourishing literature of the world.

For some, English language Indian writing will never be more than a postcolonial anomaly, the bustard child of Empire, sired on India by the departing British; its continued use of the old colonial tongue is seen as a fatal flaw that renders it forever in-authentic. 'Indo-Anglian' literature evokes, in these critics, the kind of prejudiced reaction shown by some Indians towards the country's community of 'Anglo Indians'—that is, Eurasians.

In the half century since Jawaharlal Nehru spoke, in English, the great 'freedom at midnight' speech that marked the moment of Independence, the role of English itself has often been disputed in India. Attempts in India's continental shelf of languages to coin medical, scientific, technological and everyday neologisms to replace the commonly used English words sometimes succeeded, but more often comically failed….

Like the Greek god Dionysos, who was dismembered and afterwards reassembled—and who, according to the myths, was one of India's earliest conquerors—Indian Writing in English has been called 'twice born' (by the critic Meenakshi Mukherjee) to suggest its double parentage. While, I am, I must admit, attracted to the Dionysiac resonances of this supposedly double birth, it seems to me to rest on the false premise that English, having arrived from outside India, is and must necessarily remain an alien there. But my own mother tongue, Urdu, the camp argot of the country's earlier Muslim conquerors, became a natutralised sub-continental language long ago; and by now that has happened to English, too. English has become an Indian language. Its colonial origin means that, like Urdu and unlike all other Indian languages, it has no regional base; but in all other ways, it has emphatically come to stay…

Indian English, sometimes unattractively called 'Hinglish', is not 'English' English, to be sure, any more than Irish or American or Caribbean English is. And it is a part of the achievement of the writers in this volume to

have found literary voices as distinctively Indian, and also as suitable for any and all purposes of art, as those other Englishes forged in Ireland, Africa, the West Indies and the Unites States.

However, the Indian critical assaults on this new literature continue. Its practitioners are denigrated for being too upper middle class; for lacking diversity in their choice of themes and techniques; for being less popular in India than outside India; for possessing inflated reputations on account of the international power of English language, and of the ability of Western critics and publishers to impose their cultural standards on the East; for living, in many cases, outside India; for being deracinated to the point that their work lacks the spiritual dimension essential for a 'true' understanding of the soul of India; for being insufficiently grounded in the ancient literary tradition of India; for being the literary equivalent of MTV culture, of globalising Coca-colonisation; even, I'm sorry to report, for suffering from a condition that one sprightly recent commentator, Pankaj Mishra, calls 'Rushdie-it is…(a) condition that has claimed Rushdie himself in his later works'.

It is interesting that so few of these criticisms are literary in the pure sense of the word. For the most part, they do not deal with language, voice, psychological or social in sight, imagination or talent. Rather, they are about class, power and belief. There is a whiff of political correctness about them: the ironical proposition that India's best writing since Independence may have been done in the language of the departed imperialists is simply too much for some folks to bear. It ought not to be true, so must not be permitted to be true. (That many of the attacks on English language Indian writing are made in English by writers who are themselves members of the college-educated, English speaking elite is a further irony)

Let us quickly concede what must be conceded. It is true that most of these writers come from the educated classes of India; but in a country still bedevilled by high illiteracy levels, how could it be otherwise? It does not follow, however—unless one holds to a rigid, class war view of the world—that writers with the privilege of a good education will automatically write novels that seek only to portray the lives of the bourgeoisie. It is true that there tends to be a bias towards metropolitan and cosmopolitan fiction,

but, as this volume will demonstrate, there has been, during this half century, a genuine attempt to encompass as many Indian realties as possible, rural as well as urban, sacred as well as profane. This is also, let us remember, a young literature. It is still pushing out the frontiers of the possible.

The point about the power of the English language, and of the Western publishing and critical fraternities, also contains some truth. Perhaps it does seem, to some 'home' commentators, that a canon is being foisted on them from outside. The perspective from the West is rather different. Here, what seems to be the case is that Western publishers and critics have been growing gradually more and more excited by the voices emerging from India; in England at least, British writers are often chastised by reviewers by their lack of Indian-style ambition and verve. It feels as if the East is imposing itself on the West, rather than the other way around. And, yes, English is the most powerful medium of communication in the world; should we not then rejoice at these artists' mastery of it, and at their growing influence? To criticise writers for their success at 'breaking out' is no more than parochialism (and parochialism is perhaps the main vice of the vernacular literatures). One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are ensuring that India, or rather, Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into writing nationalistically), will henceforth be confident, indispensible participants in that literary conversation. …

The question of religious faith, both as a subject and an approach to a subject, is clearly important when we speak of a country as bursting with devotion as India; but it is surely excessive to use it, as does one leading academic, the redoubtable professor C. D. Narasimhaiah, as a touchstone, so that Mulk Raj Anand is praised for his 'daring' merely because, as a leftist writer, he allows a character to be moved by deep faith, while Arun Kolatkar's poetry is denigrated for 'throwing away tradition and creating a vacuum' and so 'losing relevance', because in *Jejuri*, a cycle of poem about the visit to a temple town, he sceptically likens the stone gods in the temples to the stones on the hillsides nearby ('and ever other stone/is god or his cousin'). I hope readers of this anthology will agree that many of the writers

gathered here have profound knowledge of the 'soul of India'; many have deeply spiritual concerns , while others are radically secular, but the need to engage with, to make a reckoning with, India's religious self is everywhere to be found….

In my own case, and I suspect in the case of every writer in this volume as well, knowing and loving the Indian languages in which I was raised has remained of vital importance. As an individual, Hindi-Urdu, the 'Hindustani' of North India, remains an essential aspect of my sense of the self; as a writer, I have been partly formed by the presence, in my head, of that other music, the rhythms, patterns and habits of thought and metaphor of my Indian tongues. What I am saying is that there is not, need not be, should not be, an adversarial relationship between English language literature and the other literatures of India. We drink from the same well. India, that inexhaustible horn of plenty, nourishes us all….

The first Indian novel in English was a dud. *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) is a poor melodramatic thing. The writer, Bankim, reverted to Bengali and immediately achieved great renown. For seventy years or so, there was no English language fiction of any quality. It was a generation of independence, 'midnight's parents ', one might call them, who were the true architects of this new tradition (Jawaharlal himself was a fine writer). Of these, Mulk Raj Anand was influenced by both Joyce and Marx but most of all, perhaps by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Raja Rao, a scholarly Sanskritist, wrote determinedly of the need to make an Indian English for himself, but even his much praised portrait of village life, *Kanthapura,* seems dated, its approach at once grandiloquent and archaic. The autobiographer Nirad C. Choudhuri has been, throughout his long life, an erudite, contrary and mischievous presence. His view, if I may paraphrase and summarise it, is that India has so culture of its own, and that whatever we now call Indian culture was brought in from outside by the successive waves of conquerors. This view, polemically and brilliantly expressed, has not endeared him to many of his fellow Indians. That he was always swum so strongly against the current has not, however, prevented *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian* from being recognised as the masterpiece it is.

The most significant writers of the first generation, R. K. Narayan and G.V. Desani, have had opposite careers. Narayan's books fill a good sized shelf; Desani is the author of a single work of fiction, *All About H. Hatterr*, and that singleton volume is already 50 years old. Desani is almost unknown, while R. K. Narayan is of course, a figure of world stature, for his creation of the imaginary town of Malgudi, so lovingly made that it has become more vividly real to us than most real places….Narayan shows us, over and over again, the quarrel between traditional, static India on the one hand, modernity and progress on the other; represented, in many of his stories and novels, by a confrontation between a 'wimp' and a 'bully'—The Painter of Signs and his aggressive beloved with her birth control campaign; *The Vendor of Sweets* and the emancipated American daughter in law with the absurd novel writing machine'; the mild mannered printer and the extrovert taxidermist in *The Man Eater of Malgudi. …*

The beauty of Nayantara Sahgal's memoir *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (extracted here) is paralleled by the liveliness and grace of her fiction; while Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* is a just renowned study of village life.

Ved Mehta is represented here by a part of Vedi, his memoir of a blind boyhood that describes cruelties and kindness with equal dispassion and great affect…

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has written so many fine short stories that it has been hard to choose just one. As a writer, she is sometimes underrated in India because, I think, the voice of the rootless intellectual (so quintessentially her voice) is such an unfamiliar one in that country where people's self-definitions are so rooted in their regional identities.…Satyajit Ray, was also an accomplished author of short stories….

Anita Desai is one of India's major living authors. Her novel *In Custody*, perhaps her best to date, finely uses English to depict the decay of another language, Urdu, and the high literary culture that lived in it…The dying past, the old world, Desai tells us, can be as much of a burden as the awkward, sometimes wrong-headed present….

One of the most important voices in the story of modern literature, V S Naipaul, is regrettably absent from this book, not by our choice, but by his own. His three non-fiction books on India, *An Area of Darkness, A Wounded Civilisation* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* are key texts, and not only because of the hackles they have raised. Many Indian critics have taken issue with harshness of his responses. Some have fair-mindedly conceded that he does attack things worth attacking. 'I'm anti Naipaul when I visit the West,' one leading South Indian novelist told me, 'but I'm often pro-Naipaul back home.'...India, his migrant ancestors' lost paradise, cannot stop disappointing him. By the third volume of the series, however, he seems more cheerful about the country's condition. He speaks approvingly of the emergence of 'a central will, a central intellect, a national idea', and disarmingly, even movingly, confesses to the atavistic edginess of mood in which he had made his first strip almost 30 years earlier: 'The India of my fantasy and heart was something lost and irrecoverable…On that first journey, I was a fearful traveller.'

In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul's comments on Indian writers elicit in this reader a characteristic mixture of agreement and dissent. When he writes: …the feeling is widespread that, whatever English might have done to Tolstoy, it can never do justice to the Indian language writers. This is possible; when I read of them in translation did not encourage me to read more. Premchand…turned out to be a minor fabulist…other writers quickly fatigued me with their assertion that poverty was sad…many of the 'modern' short stories were only refurbished folk tales…

In the 1980s and 1990s, the flow of that good writing has become a flood. Bapsi Sidhwa is technically Pakistani, but this anthology has no need of Partitions, particularly as Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* (retiled Cracking India in the US), extracted here, is one of the finest responses to the horror of the division of the subcontinent. Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* is an important attempt by a thoroughly modern Indian to make her reckoning with the Hindu culture from which she emerged. Padma Perera, Anjana Appachana, Githa Hariharan, less known than Sidhwa and Mehta, confirm the quality of contemporary writing by Indian women.

A number of different styles of work are evolving: the Stendhalian realism of a writer like Rohinton Mistry, the equally naturalistic but lighter, more readily charming prose of Vikram Seth (….), and the elegant social observation of Upamanyu Chatterjee can be set against the more flamboyant manner of Vikram Chandra, the linguistic play of I. Allan Sealy and Shashi Tharoor and the touches of fabulism of Mukul Kesavan. Amitav Ghosh's most impressive achievement to date is non-fiction study of India and Egypt, *In An Antique Land*. It may be (or it may not) that his greatest strength will turn out to be so as an essayist of this sort. Sara Suleri, whose memoir *Meatless Days* is, like Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, a visitor from across the Pakistani frontier, is a nonfiction writer of immense originality and grace. And Amit Chaudhuri's languorous, elliptic, beautiful prose is impressively impossible to place in any category at all.

Most encouragingly, yet another talented generation has begun to emerge. The Keralan writer Arundhati Roy has arrived to the accompaniment of a loud fanfare. Her novel, *The God of Small Things,* is full of ambition and sparkle, and written in a highly wrought and utterly personal style. Equally impressive, are the debuts of two other first novelists. Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy* and Kiran Deasai's Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard are, in their very unalike ways, highly original books…Kiran Desai is the daughter of Anita: her arrival establishes the first dynasty of modern Indian fiction. But she is very much her own writer, the newest of all these voices, and welcome proof that India's encounter with the English language, far from proving abortive, continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts.

The map of the world, in the standard Mercator Projection, is not kind to India, making it look substantially smaller than, say, Greenland. On the map of world literature, too, India has been undersized for too long. This anthology celebrates the writers who are ensuring that, fifty years after India's independence, that age of obscurity is coming to an end.

Salman Rushdie

March 1997

LET US KNOW



This essay is divided into two parts. In the first part Rushdie deliberates on the issues and problems often faced by the Indo-Anglian writers (Rushdie himself being one of them), while also reiterating the fact that this literature has successfully made its presence felt in the field of World literature in the last 50 years or so.

In the second part, Rushdie refers to some of the Indian English authors who in a sense shaped what we often recognise as Indian Writing in English and who have been in this Anthology. You may read the whole book to have a firsthand experience of the authors mentioned and then identify the major concerns of IWE in the last 50 years of the 20th century.

3.4 IMPORTANT ISSUES RAISED IN THE ESSAY

From your reading of the excerpts from Salman Rushdie's essay in the previous section, you must have gained important insights on the main issues and debates concerning Indian English Literature (IEL) in the 20th century. IEL usually refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Rushdie here traces the history of IEL actually began with the works of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao as they rendered remarkable contribution to Indian English fiction in the 1930s. However, IEL in the post independence period also came to be associated with the works of members of writers belonging to the Indian diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Rushdie himself and many others who are of Indian descent. Such type of literature is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature; Indo-Anglian being a specific term in the sole context of writing that should not be confused with Anglo-Indian. However, as a category, it comes the broad area of postcolonial literature from previously colonised countries such as India.

Salman Rushdie in this essay not only provides a history of modern IEL, but also very poignantly refers to the important debates regarding its status as a genre of modern literature. One of the key issues has always been the superiority/inferiority of IWE (Indian Writing in English) as opposed to the literary production in the various languages (bhashas) of India. Key binaries used in this context are superficial/authentic, imitative/creative, shallow/deep, critical/uncritical, elitist/parochial and so on. The views of Salman Rushdie and Amit Chaudhuri expressed in their introductory essays in their books—*The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* and *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* respectively essentialise this battle. However, Salman Rushdie's statement in his book, "the ironic proposition that India's best writing since independence may have been done in the language of the departed imperialists is simply too much for some folks to bear"–created a lot of resentment among many writers, including writers in English. Similarly, in his book Amit Chaudhuri questions, "Can it be true that Indian writing, that endlessly rich, complex and problematic entity, is to be represented by a handful of writers who write in English, who live in England or America and whom one might have met at a party?" The answers to such questions have always provided an enriching experience to the students and the scholars alike.

Amit Chaudhuri feels that after Rushdie, IWE started employing magical realism, bagginess, non-linear narrative and hybrid language to sustain themes seen as microcosms of India and supposedly reflecting Indian circumstances and conditions. He contrasts this with the works of earlier writers such as R. K. Narayan where the use of English is pure, but the deciphering of meaning needs cultural familiarity. He also feels that 'Indianness' is a theme constructed only in IWE and does not articulate itself in the vernacular literatures. He further adds, "The post-colonial novel becomes a trope for an ideal hybridity by which the West celebrates not so much Indianness, whatever that infinitely complex thing is, but its own historical quest, its reinterpretation of itself."

These arguments form an integral part of what is known as postcolonial theory. The very categorisation of IWE, as IWE or post-colonial

literature, is seen by some as too limiting. Even an erudite writer like Amitav Ghosh made his views on this very clear by refusing to accept the Eurasian Commonwealth Writers Prize for his book *The Glass Palace* in 2001. The renowned writer V. S. Naipaul, a third generation Indian from Trinidad and a Nobel Laureate, is a person who belongs to the world and usually not classified under IWE. Naipaul evokes ideas of homeland, rootlessness and his own personal feelings towards India in many of his books based on India. Therefore, there are certain serious issues that one is supposed to remain aware of while studying the history of modern Indian English literature.



3.5 LET US SUM UP

As you have finished reading this unit, you must have gained some ideas on the Modern Indian English Literature through a reading of the essay "Introduction" to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* 1947-1997 by Salman Rushdie. As discussed already, Rushdie here makes a subtle reference to the important debates and issues relating to the significance of IWE in the context of world literature. Rushdie almost assertively states that 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution Indian has yet made to the world of books. Regarding the use of the English language to tell 'Indian' experiences, Rushdie states that it is a part of the achievement of the writers who have found literary voices as distinctively Indian, and also as suitable for any and all purposes of art, as those other Englishes forged in Ireland, Africa, the West Indies and the Unites States. One important dimension of literature, Rushdie opines, is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. Thus, the writers he mentions and whose works he includes in his Anthology, are ensuring that India, or rather, Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into writing nationalistically), will henceforth be confident, indispensible participants in that literary conversation. It is against this background and also against the need for post colonial representation of India, that one is supposed to reflect on the Modern history of Indian English Literature. You will certainly do well if you can manage to read the books mentioned below.



3.6 FURTHER READING

Rushdie, Salman, and Elizabeth West. (Eds.). (1997). *Mirrorwork: 50 years of Indian Writing 1947-1997.* New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Chaudhuri, Amit. (2001). (Ed.). *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature.* London: Picador.

Mehrotra, A.K. (2003). *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English.* Delhi: Permanent Black.

Website and Electronic Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_English_literature

3.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Read the essay carefully, and jot down the important points Salman Rushdie makes about the nature of Indo-Anglian literature.

Q 2: According to Rushdie, most of the Indian English writers have profound knowledge of the 'soul of India'. Discuss.

Q 3: Do you think that language shall always remain a problem in Indo-Anglian literature? Give you response in terms of Salman Rushdie's observations.

Q 4: Would you agree that while discussing the status of Indian English writers whom Rushdie refers to in this essay, Rushdie also defines his own 'Indian' self? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 5: Name the writers who find themselves mentioned in Rushdie's 'Introduction'? What does Rushdie state about their respective qualities as Indian English writers?

Q 6: Indian Writing in English has been called 'twice born' by the critic Meenakshi Mukherjee to suggest its double parentage. Discuss.

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UNIT 4: GAURI VISWANATHAN: "THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH LITERARY STUDY" FROM *MASKS OF CONQUEST*

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Gauri Viswanathan : The Critic

4.4 Explanation of the Essay

4.5 Issues raised in the Essay

4.6 Issues raised in *Masks of Conquest*

4.7 Let us Sum up

4.8 Further Reading

4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

4.10 Possible Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- acquaint yourself with the different grounds for the introduction of Charter Act1813.
- trace the upshots of the introduction of English literature in India
- identify vicious British policies to cripple the natives
- locate the introduction of English literature as an efficacious remedy for the British from their conflict with 'religious neutrality' and desperate attempts to consolidate their territorial authority in India.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall deal with Gauri Viswanathan's essay "The Beginnings of English Literary Study" from her seminal book *Masks of Conquest* which is about the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies introduced in India under British colonial rule. The prescribed essay bears multifarious significance as it traces the development of English literature in India and

its various upshots. Moreover, the essay also presented objections of a section of the Englishmen in Britain for introducing reforms in Indian society without reforming their people in India. In such a crucial conflict between religious neutrality and the attempt to find mechanisms to consolidate power in India that English literature became the efficacious remedy for the British. Viswanathan rightly mentions in the beginning of the first chapter of the book that "ENGLISH LITERATURE made its appearance in India, albeit indirectly, with a crucial act in Indian educational history: the passing of the Charter Act in 1813." As you finish reading the unit, I hope that you will gain important perspectives on the emergence of English literature in India.

4.3 GAURI VISWANATHAN: THE CRITIC

Gauri Viswanathan is Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. She has published widely on education, religion, and culture; 19th century British and colonial cultural studies; and the history of modern disciplines. The author of *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia, 1989; Oxford, 1998) and *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, 1998), Viswanathan won the Harry Levin Prize awarded by the American Comparative Literature Association, the James Russell Lowell Prize awarded by the Modern Language Association of America, and the Ananda K. Coomaraswamy Prize awarded by the Association for Asian Studies. As a critic, Viswanathan dissects various convolutions and ramifications of the key matters of society and her special interest on education, culture and religion led her to investigate pernicious policies of the British rule in India. Her encounter with Edward Said has an enduring impact upon her who also taught at Columbia University.

She also edited *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (Vintage, 2001). Prof. Viswanathan is coeditor of the book series *South Asia Across the Disciplines*, published jointly by the university presses of Columbia, Chicago, and California under a Mellon grant. She has held numerous visiting chairs, among them the Beckman Professorship at Berkeley, and Affiliated Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome

and a Visiting Mellon Scholarship at the University of Cape Town. She has also been a fellow at various international research institutes. Prof. Viswanathan's current work is on genealogies of secularism and the writing of alternative religious histories. She has published extensively on the cultural influence of Theosophy, with two recent articles appearing in *PMLA.* She has been a network partner in the international research project "Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, Modernism, and the Arts," funded by the Leverhulme Trust in the U.K.

Her award-winning book *Outside the Fold: Conversion*, *Modernity, and Belief* (1998) presents 'famous conversions' as political arbitrations and cultural criticism. However, she became famous with her first book *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989) which scrutinises the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies initiated in India by the British. She argues in the book that the introduction of English studies in India relinquished the Indian values and cultures as the colonizers did not insert any 'Indian literary text' for study in Indian schools and colleges. They considered the Indian literary texts as dumps of greatest immodesty, impurity and immorality. She further criticises the pernicious experimentations of the British, as they introduced such educations that had been relinquished in England or fallen a victim of various dichotomies in England. Moreover, the British experimented with such fallen education in India so that the Indians would remain at the level of innocent children and unmindful of the meaning and intent of their instructions. She therefore criticises the British attempt to establish "one power, one mind" in India initially propagated by Charles Grant.



LET US KNOW

Charles Grant was one of the first Englishmen to motivate the introduction and proliferation of English literature and Christianity in India. In his *'Observation on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain'*, Grant presents a heroic self assumption of the colonial power in comparison with the colonised

society and propagated one single moral code "One Power, One Mind" to achieve desired positive social change in India in place of polytheism and sacrificial rites in India.

The well-known Macaulay's Minute is a continuation of the propagations of Charles Grant as Macaulay minute presented a supercilious nature of the British, stressed the importance of only English literature, and diluted values of native literature. Here, Viswanathan argues that the British considered themselves to be governed by "superior lights and juster principles and possessed of higher lights." Viswanathan indicated that Grant's idea of "One Power, One Mind" summarised equitable British ideas of cultural hegemony, monotheism, centralised authority. Thus, Viswanathan immersed into the backdrop of the introduction of English literature in India.

4.4 EXPLANATION OF THE ESSAY

At the outset of the essay, the author has pointed out that English literature made its beginning in India inadvertently with the introduction of the all-important Charter Act 1813. He Act was very significant in the history of Indian education because it was the first such educational bill that reminded the British to work for the "interests and happiness" of the natives of India. Moreover, the Act suggested to adopt advantageous measures for the accomplishing "useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement". The Act was important for two crucial reasons as it diplomatically depicted the obligations of the British towards the natives as they were feathering their nests from the natives. In addition, such an assumed responsibility towards the people of India was never officially declared and the British self-righteously declared themselves the most potent race to uplift the natives both morally and intellectually. Secondly, the Act relaxed its authority on the missionary activities in India, but the British Parliament curtailed the monopoly of the East India Company in India.

Gauri Viswanathan, in this essay, not only explained the importance of the Act in this essay but also divulged the various ramifications of it and

its reaction in England. The self–righteousness of the British as the most potent race to civilize the natives was exposed by the British Parliamentary member Henry Montgomery, and he termed the official declaration to uplift the moral and religious conditions of natives as unacceptable, "If we wished to convert the natives of India we ought to reform our own people there, who at present only gave them an example of lying, swearing, drunkenness, and other vices." However, Viswanathan mentions that the so assumed commitment was a result of British's 'own depredations in India'. Their intent was to plunder the natives and the writer quotes a few lines of the influential British politician Charles Grant who championed the causes of social reform in India:

"The primary object of Great Britain, let it be acknowledged, was rather to discover what could be obtained from her Asiatic subjects, than how they could be benefited. In process of time it was found expedient to examine how they might be benefited in order that we might continue to hold the advantages, which we at first derived from them… [Their] happiness is committed to our care."

Moreover, Viswanathan discloses that the ways to uplift the natives was means to fortify their territorial power in India. Moreover, the monopoly of the 'pampered' trading company was broken by the Act, and the British Parliament found the Act to be an efficacious remedy to tacitly subdue the natives as well as to generate authority upon the trading company. The writer has dissected the whole issue in the following words:

''…the question of how England can serve the people of India blends indistinguishably with the question of how power can best be consolidated. The shift has far-reaching consequences. Duty toward the people is seen less as a motive for involving the government than as the endpoint of a process of consolidation of territorial control. To the question, "What are the best means of perpetuating our empire there?" only acquired illicit fortunes but showed a shameful dereliction of responsibility by delegating authority loosely to sycophantic local leaders."

The Charter Act of 1813 allowed the British to intervene with the Indian education system and it emboldened the missionaries to proliferate

their activities in India. However, the British Parliament warned the missionaries not to involve more candidly in their purpose because of an apprehension that, "the inhabitants would feel threatened and eventually cause trouble for England's commercial ventures." However, they could not resist the missionaries because they feared that "many immoral and disgusting habits" might degenerate the Englishmen. Then, she dissects various designs of the accidental act and mentioned that the British were trapped between their goal to fortify territorial power in India and to fabricate a design to enter into the natives, and made them believe that they were working for "their interests and happiness". But, it became impossible for them to enter into the masses through secular and western scientific education in India. Furthermore, they considered that too much involvement with the natives might relinquish their identity and their original goal.

The British administrators were virtually paralysed from moving in either direction. Since, it was believed that knowledge could not be separated from religion in the Indian tradition, there was widespread fear among the Council of Education members that western scientific propositions opposed to the tenets of Hinduism would not merely be denounced as false, but would also be interpreted by overly suspicious Indians as deliberately hostile to the foundations of that religion. And, such a conflict was resolved by the introduction of the English literature in India as Viswanathan mentioned, "The tension between increasing involvement and enforced noninterference in religion was productively resolved through the introduction of English literature."

Although the 43rd section of the Act categorically emboldened the governor-general-in-council to utilize "a sum of not less than one lakh rupees shall be annually applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India", it was not expressive whether 'improvement of literature' meant native literature or English literature. However, the issue was settled and English literature officially made its inception in India. Thus, the essay is very significant as it traced the various causes of the official beginning of English literary studies in India.

In addition to that, the essay has also traced the role of Bengali Hindus in promoting and acknowledging the importance of English language, literature and western scientific education in India. As she mentions that Sir Edward Hyde, the then chief justice of the Supreme Court, was 'not unappreciative' of the request of a group of Calcutta citizens to offer 'European education' and impart 'an English system of morals' in India. In the one hand, the Calcutta Hindus wanted western education for self-advancement and elevation, on the other; the British were governed by shrewd and perspicacious intent to plunder the Indians. Thus, Viswanathan, in the essay prescribed, has comprehensively studied various factors responsible for the inception of English literary studies in India.



LET US KNOW

Indian cultural pride in the early 19th century dithered the British from introducing modern and scientific knowledge to the Indians. Initially, the British attempted to maintain religious neutrality so that they could refrain from getting entangle with undesired problems in India. They feared that the introduction of modern and enlightened education could encourage discontentment among the natives and they had no intention to enamour such a situation and the Indians missed the enlightened and modern knowledge in the early 19th Century. British indifference to real Indian issues and Indian cultural pride were partly responsible for the non-introduction of secular education in India.

The British wanted to consolidate their imperial power in India and they thought it right to create an English speaking group to facilitate their clandestine perverse purpose. However, the natives had no respect for the English scholar and they found it difficult to proliferate English literary studies in India as many *maulavis* and Sanskrit *pundits* assessed the new language and literature as a threat to them. The British were trapped between their notion of religious neutrality and the aim of disseminating English education in India. And, they found it convenient to introduce English literature as an efficacious remedy to such a problem. Moreover,

the Bengali Hindus also helped them to achieve their goals as they advocated ardently to introduce western enlightened education in India. And, they did not consider the foreign language and literature as threat to their cultural pride.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Why do you think the British introduced English literature in India?

Q 2: Trace the upshots of the Charter Act1813.

4.5 ISSUES RAISED IN THE ESSAY

The crucial Charter Act 1813 'indirectly' started English literary studies in India but several implications of the act were not clear that invited many conflicts of interest. The act did not explain the term 'literature' but the 43rd section of the Act categorically sanctioned "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees shall be annually applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India". The problem of not defining the term 'literature' invited various conflicts of interest and it was later resolved in 1835 with a definition that the term meaning not Sanskrit and Arabic literature but English literature. Thus, the repercussions of the act were far reaching as English was not just a language spoken by a handful of Englishman but it transmuted to the courts and offices of India.

The most important issue raised in the essay was the growing rift between the natives and the British, and the rift was never healed. Charles Cornwallis, the Governor-General and commander in chief 1786-1792, was fundamentally responsible for the created gulf. He considered that the natives were responsible for moral degeneration and 'contact' with natives was the root cause of declining European morals. He determined to 'run a government that would remain free of corrupting influences from the native society' and he excluded Indians from appointment to important and influencing posts. He believed that the exclusion of the Indians from sensible posts would revive the Englishmen. His exclusion of Indians from responsible

posts had multifarious repercussions as it created the most 'durable legends' among the British that Indians were incapable of responsible and sensible works, "Denied all opportunities for expression as a result of the harsh measure, public ability declined steadily. But curiously, when this occurred it was taken to mean that civic responsibility had never existed in India, thus giving rise to one of the most durable legends of British rule: that the Indian mind was best suited to minor pursuits of trade, but not to government or administration."

Thus, the Indians were crippled by the British and the influential British politician Charles Grant, who was motivated by evangelic Christianity, candidly mentioned that renovation and elevation of the Indian society were expressively needed because of the wrong doings of early British Conquest in India. J. S. Mill, the undoubted spokesperson for British imperialism was skeptical of the British's assumed role of giving western education to the Indians for speedy and effective reforms in India. Mill voiced his concern about the future of Indian education and Viswanathan skillfully entangled Mill's cynicism to show the 'masks' behind British's assumptions to work for the 'interests and happiness' of Indians.

Gauri Viswanathan did not only depict the upshots of the Charter Act 1813 in this essay but also described the reactions between both the colonial and the colonised people. She mentioned that a mere English scholar was not respected by the Indians, and the British believed that Sanskrit *pundits* and Arabic *maulavi*s were fundamentally responsible for that. The British were convinced that the introduction of secular and scientific education could only dissatisfy the natives. Therefore, they refrained from assimilating native religion with modern western education and the Indians missed the modern western education due to so-called cultural pride in the early 19th century.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What led the British to introduce the Charter Act 1813?

Q 4: What do you implicate by "interests and happiness of the natives"?

Q 5: Why did Bengali Hindus meet Sir Edward Hyde?

Q 6: What are the ramifications of British policy of plundering the India natives from government and administrative jobs?

4.6 ISSUES RAISED IN *MASKS OF CONQUEST*

In this section, we shall try to have a look at the other important issues in Gauri Viswanathan's book *Masks of Conquest.* The author mentioned in the 'Introduction' that the book is simple in concentration and design. The book opens with "The Beginnings of English Literary Study", the chapter comprehensively delineates the 'indirect' beginning of English literary studies in India under the British rule with the introduction of Charter Act 1813 that diluted the monopoly of the 'pampered' trading company in India, and allowed the missionaries to spread prosestylising activities in India. Moreover, the act emboldened the British Parliament to directly intervene in Indian education system.

The second Chapter "Praeparatio Evangelica" discusses Alexander Duff's role in transmuting English curriculum for religious ends. The Chapter 3 "One Power, One Mind" evaluates the British acceptance to allow the missionaries for religious use of literature. The 4th Chapter "Rewriting English" portrays the stirring rejection of the nexus between English literature and Christianity, moving away from religion English literature fortified its cultural base in India to give a fresh political authority in India. The 5th chapter of the book "Lessons of History" evaluates the subtle emphasis given on English literary studies as a part of historical analysis that attempted to fortify British cultural hegemony in India. Chapter 6 "The Failure of English" surveyed the gradual degeneration of English literary education in India and the disenchantment of the natives with the British rule. The Indians exposed the façade of British honesty termed the so-called 'moral and intellectual' improvement of the natives as fictitious interspersed with an intent to fortify British imperial power in India.

In her review of ***Masks of Conquest***, Sandhya Shetty of University of New Hampshire says that Gauri Viswanathan "takes her theoretical model from Antonio Gramsci. Her scholarly examination of the archives of colonial

governance illuminates the Gramscian notion of hegemony and the crucial role of cultural and moral leadership in the legitimisation and consolidation of power. In the records of British India's educational history, she finds a perfect exemplification of Gramsci's idea that cultural hegemony can be established and sustained most effectively through the consent of the dominated. In colonial India, the consent of the dominated was created primarily by a system of education that turned deliberately on English literary instruction. ***Masks of Conquest*** puts this collusion between power and knowledge, between political domination and the development of English literature on display, highlighting the "progressive refinement of the rapacious, exploitative, and ruthless actor of history into the reflective subject of literature." In meticulously documenting the precise mode and process by which English literature ensured cultural and political hegemony, the book undergirds current pedagogical approaches and auricular practices based on the insight that the distance between educational discourse and politics is ideologically constituted.

Masks of Conquest beautifully substantiates this logic that the strategic rupture between cultural and material practices serves the interests of dominant groups by making "culture" desirable while keeping power invisible. The six central chapters track the operations of English literary culture as hegemonic activity, providing a highly specific chart of the subtleties, self-contradictions, and vicissitudes of the discipline as a method of political management and social control in colonial India. Through intense scrutiny of particular decisions, moves, and endorsements and close readings of administrative debates and disagreements, the middle chapters also reveal how English, because of its ambiguous stance toward a number of thorny issues ("knowledge and belief, empiricism and intuition, reason and faith") served as a consummate resolution to most of the political dilemmas and ideological impasses that colonial administrators and educationists faced in the task of consolidating and maintaining authority."



LET US KNOW

It is not necessary that every new beginning is to have a positive intent, the formal commencement of the English literary studies started in India, indeed, inadvertently as the genuine purpose of the introduction of English literary studies in India was under wraps. And Gauri Viswanathan has traced various causes of the introduction of English Literature in India in her book called *Masks of Conquest*. The British found the introduction of the English literature as an efficacious remedy to various conflicts in India. Moreover, they deemed it right to take the 'white men's burden' of civilising the natives. While explaining the 'white men's burden, Gauri Viswanathan has taken resort to various modern theories like Antonio Gramsci's 'cultural hegemony' and Edward Said's postcolonial theories.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How did Gauri Viswanathan construct the whole book *Masks of Conquest* highlighting the intricacies of the introduction of English literature as a British policy in India?



4.7 LET US SUM UP

The attempt in this unit has been to discuss the various grounds of the introduction of English literary studies in India by the British and its multifarious ramifications. This unit must have familiarised you with the diverse methods adopted by the British to fortify their imperial power in India especially through English literature as a modus operandi to consolidate their territorial authority in India. After reading the unit, you are supposed to know the various pretences of the British to consolidate their territorial control in India and the introduction of the English literature in India by the British was one of the schemes of the British to exhibit their facade of care and

concern to Indian natives. You must have also come to know about the various convolutions of the introduction of English literature in India and its various upshots. An understanding of the issues raised in this essay shall help you to critically explore the rise of Indian English literature.



4.8 FURTHER READING

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Website and Electronic Resources:

https://english.columbia.edu/people/profile/412

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The British introduced English literature in India to reinforce their territorial power in India… ...at the same time, English literature

was used as an advantageous solution to various convolutions in early 19th century India.

Ans to Q 2: The Charter Act brought a vicissitude of change in British colonial India… …minimised restrictions hitherto imposed on Christian missionaries and it ascertained direct British involvement in Indian education… …it curtained the monopoly of the trading company in India… …term like 'literature' in the Act created hue and cry in India as it did not define the term… …British Parliament asserted that they would spend one lakh rupees for English literature but not on Indian literature like Sanskrit and Arabic literature.

Ans to Q 3: The British Parliament was alarmed by the proliferation of the trading company in India… …The British were convulsed by its attempt to fortify its authority in India and to appease the natives and the introduction of the Charter Act 1813 worked as a double-edged sword for them.

Ans to Q 4: The British asserted to work for "interests and happiness of the natives" and the British Parliament entrusted the duty on the British living in India… …but it can only implicate as the facade of honesty to appease the natives.

Ans to Q 5: The visit to the Chief Justice of Supreme Court (British colonial India) by the Bengali Hindus bears extensive meanings… …Bengali Hindus requested him to introduce English language and literature in India… …they belied that introduction of the European education could subtly develop India… …moreover, they asserted him that the English language was not emasculating the Indian society… …the visit suggests that some Indians in early 19th Century were disenchanted by the superstitious Indian society enfeebled by religious dogmatism.

Ans to Q 6: Charles Cornwallis, the Governor-General and commander in chief 1786-1792, believed that the contact of the natives was the chief cause of British degeneration and he decided to restrict appointment of the natives in administrative and government jobs. The biased policy of plundering the natives… …created the advantageous myth for the British that Indians were emasculated to carry on responsible duties…

…the policy did not only enfeebled the natives but also created a huge rift between the ruler and the ruled that never healed.

Ans to Q 7: Gauri Viswanathan highlighted various pretences of the British to reinforce authority in India and the Introduction of English literature in India was one of the masks of the British… …she discussed convolutions of introduction of the English literature in India to the religious use of literature… …evaluates the subtle emphasis given by the British on English literary studies as a part of historical analysis that attempted to fortify British cultural hegemony in India… … surveyed the gradual degeneration of English literary education in India and the disenchantment of the natives with the British rule.



4.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: "English Literature made its appearance in India, albeit indirectly, with a crucial act in Indian educational history: the passing of the Charter Act in 1813." Explain.

Q 2: Who is Henry Montgomery? Why did he say, "If we wished to convert the natives of India, we ought first to reform our own people…"?

Q 3: Explain the important issues raised by Gauri Viswanathan in the essay "The Beginnings of English Literary Study".

Q 4: How did English literature work as an efficacious remedy for the British? Explain the convolutions that led the British to introduce English literature in India?

Q 5: Discuss the repercussions of restricting the Indians from government and administrative jobs in colonial British India.

Q 6: How did the Indians especially the Sanskrit *pundits* and Arabic *maulavis* respond to the introduction of English language and literature in India?

Q 7: Discuss critics' views on Gauri Viswanathan's book *Masks of Conquest.*

*** ***** ***

UNIT 5: A. K. RAMANUJAN: "IS THERE AN INDIAN WAY OF THINKING? AN INFORMAL ESSAY"

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 A. K. Ramanujan: The Critic

5.4 Excerpts from the Essay

5.5 Reading the Essay

5.6 Let us Sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of A. K. Ramanujan, the famous Indian English poet and an erudite scholar of Indian Literature
- explain how the essay "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay" helps to understand the very ethos of Indian literature
- discuss the important issues raised by Ramanujan in the Essay
- gain insights into the very ethos of Indian literature from your reading of the essay

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of the Block 1 of the course on Indian English literature. In this unit, we shall try to briefly discuss the life and works of the influential Indian poet-critic A. K. Ramanujan as well as his literary essay "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay." Ramanujan was a bi-lingual writer. Besides being a poet, he was a translator and essayist. In this essay, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" (1990), Ramanujan explains cultural ideologies and behavioural manifestations thereof in terms

of an Indian psychology he calls "context-sensitive" thinking. This essay should help you to discuss what makes Indian thoughts different from its Western counterpart, and how one is supposed to form an idea of Indian literature in general. In total six Parts, Ramanujan very lucidly develops his idea of India and Indianness in the essay, which shall further help you to gain important insights into the uniqueness of the Indian thought and intellectual contexts. As you finish reading this unit, you will feel enlightened to approach any of the Indian literary texts-be it in English or in native languages besides being able to address what makes an 'Indian' literary text exclusively 'Indian'.

5.3 A. K. RAMANUJAN: THE CRITIC

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929–1993), popularly known as A. K. Ramanujan was an Indian poet-critic who wrote in both English and Kannada. However, his academic research ranged across five languages: English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. Though, he wrote widely and in a number of genres, Ramanujan's poems are remembered as enigmatic works of startling originality, sophistication and moving artistry.

Ramanujan was born in Mysore on 16th March 1929. His father, Attipat Asuri Krishnaswami, an astronomer and professor of mathematics at Mysore University, was known for his interest in English, Kannada and Sanskrit languages. Ramanujan's brother, A. K. Srinivasan was also a writer and mathematician. He started his education at Marimallappa's High School and then at the Maharaja College of Mysore. Though he was interested in science his father thought that he did not have a 'mathematical mind', and instead persuaded him to change his major from science to English. Later, Ramanujan became a Fellow of Deccan College, Pune in 1958–59 and a Fulbright Scholar at Indiana University in 1959–62. Later, he got his education in English at the University of Mysore and received his PhD in Linguistics from Indiana University.

Ramanujan taught at various colleges in South India but mainly in Belgaum in 1950s. He taught English at The Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda for about eight years. In 1962, he joined the University of Chicago as an assistant professor. He was affiliated with the university throughout his career, teaching in several departments. He also taught in prestigious universities like Harvard University, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of California at Berkeley, and Carleton College. At the University of Chicago, Ramanujan was instrumental in shaping the South Asian Studies programme. He worked in the departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Linguistics, and with the Committee on Social Thought.

In 1976, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri, and in 1983, he was given the MacArthur Prize Fellowship (Shulman, 1994). In 1983, he was appointed the William E. Colvin Professor in the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, of Linguistics, and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and the same year, he received a MacArthur Fellowship. As an Indo-American writer, Ramanujan had the experience of the native as well as of the foreign milieu. His poems such as the "Conventions of Despair" reflected his views on the cultures and conventions of the East and the West.

A. K. Ramanujan died in Chicago, on 13th July 1993, at the age of sixty-four under anaesthesia during a surgery. His theoretical and aesthetic contributions span several disciplinary areas. In his work in folklore studies, Ramanujan highlights the inter-textuality of the Indian oral and written literary tradition. His essay "Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections" (1989), and his commentaries in *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (1967) and *Folktales from India*, *Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages* (1991) are good examples of his work in Indian folklore studies.

Ramanujan has been awarded with the prestigious Padma Shri in 1976 and MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1983. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award posthumously in 1999 for his collection of poems, *The Selected Poems*.

5.4 EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY

I

Stanislavsky had an exercise for his actors. He would give them an everyday sentence like, 'Bring me a cup of tea', and ask them to say it forty different ways, using it to beg, question, mock, wheedle, be imperious, etc. My question, 'Is there an Indian way of thinking?', is a good one for such an exercise. Depending on where the stress falls placed, it contains many questions—all of which are real questions—asked again and again when people talk about India. Here are a few possible versions:

Is there an Indian way of thinking ?

Is there ***an*** Indian way of thinking ?

Is there an ***Indian*** way of thinking ?

Is there an Indian way of ***thinking*** ?

The answers are just as various. Here are a few: There was an Indian way of thinking; there isn't any more. If you want to learn about the Indian way of thinking, do not ask your modern-day citified Indians; go to the pundits, the vaidyas, the old texts. On the contrary: India never changes; under the veneer of the modern, Indians still think like the vedas.

The second question might elicit answers like these: There is no single Indian way of thinking; there are Great and Little Traditions, ancient and modern, rural and urban, classical and folk. Each language, caste and region has its special world view. So, under the apparent diversity, there is really a unity of viewpoint, a single super system. Vedists see a vedic model in all Indian thought. Nehru made the phrase 'unity in diversity' an Indian slogan. The Sahitya Akademi's line has been, 'Indian literature is One, though written in many languages'

The third question might be answered: What we see in India is nothing special to India; it is nothing but pre-industrial, pre-printing press, face-to-face, agricultural, feudal, Marxists, Freudians, McLuhanites, all have their labels for the stage India is in, according to their schemes of social evolution; India is only an example. Others, of course, would argue the uniqueness of the Indian Way and how it turns all things, especially rivals

and enemies, into itself; look at what has happened to Indo-Europeans in India, they would say: their language gets shot with retroflexes, their syntax with nominal compounds, they lose their nerve the British are only the most recent example (according to Nirad Chaudhuri). Look what happens to Buddhism, Islam, the Parsis. There is an Indian way, and it imprints and patterns all things that enter the continent; it is inescapable, and it is Bigger Than All of Us.

The forth question may question whether Indians think at all: It is the West that is materialistic, rational; Indians have no philosophy, only religion, no positive sciences, not even a psychology; in India, matter is subordinated to spirit, rational thought to feeling, intuition. And even when people agree that this is the case, we can have arguments for and against it. Some lament, others celebrate India's un-thinking ways. One can go on forever.

We-I, certainly-have stood in one, or another of these stances at different times. We have not heard the end of these questions—or these answers.

II

The problem was posed for me personally at the age of 20 in the-image of my father. I had never taken a good look at him till then. Didn't Mark Twain say, 'At 17, I thought my father was ignorant; at 20, I wondered how he learned so much in three years'? Indeed, this essay was inspired by contemplation of him over the years, and is dedicated to him.

…He (Ramanujan's father) was a mathematician, an astronomer. But he was also a Sanskrit scholar, an expert astrologer. He had two kinds of exotic visitors: American and English mathematicians who called on him when they were on a visit to India, and local astrologers, orthodox pundits who wore splendid gold-embroidered shawls dowered by the Maharajah. I had just been converted by Russell to the 'scientific attitude'. I (and my generation) was troubled by his holding together in one brain both astronomy and astrology; I looked for consistency in him, a consistency he didn't seem to care about, or even think about. When I asked him what the discovery of Pluto and Neptune did to his archaic nine-planet astrology, he said, 'You make the necessary corrections, that's all.' Or, in answer to how he could

read the Gita religiously having bathed and painted on his forehead the red and white feet of Visnu, and later talk appreciatively about Bertrand Russell and even Ingersoll, he said, 'The Gita is part of one's hygiene. Besides, don't you know, the brain has two lobes?' ….

III

Both Englishmen and 'modern' Indians have been dismayed and angered by this kind of inconsistency. About twenty years ago, The Illustrated Weekly of India asked a number of modern Indian intellectuals to describe the Indian character-they did not seem to be daunted by the assignment and wrote terse, some quite sharp, columns. They all seemed to agree on one thing: the Indian trait of hypocrisy. Indians do not mean what they say, and say different things at different times. By 'Indians' they did not mean only servants. In Max Muller's lectures (1883) on India, the second chapter was called 'Truthful character of the Hindus', in answer to many complaints.

Recently I attended a conference on karma, a notion that is almost synonymous in some circles with whatever is Indian or Hindu. Brahminical texts had it, the Buddhists had it, the Jainas had it. But when I looked at hundreds of Kannada tales, I couldn't find a single tale that used karma as a motif or motive. Yet when their children made a mess, their repertoire of abuse included, 'You are my karma!' When Harper (1959) and others after him reported that many Indian villagers didn't know much about reincarnation, such a discrepancy was attributed to caste, education, etc. But the 2,000 Kannada tales, collected by me and others over the past twenty years, were told by Brahmins, Jainas (both of whom use karma in their explanations elsewhere quite readily), and by other communities as well. What is worse, Sheryl Daniel (1983) independently found that her Tamil village alternately used karma and talaividi ('headwriting') as explanations for the events around them. The two notions are inconsistent with each other. Karma implies the self's past determining the present, an iron chain of cause and consequence, an ethic of responsibility. Talaividi is one's fate inscribed arbitrarily at one's birth on one's forehead; the inscription has no relation to one's prior actions; usually in such explanations (and folktales about them) past lives are not even part of the scheme (see also Wadley, in this volume).

Another related characteristic seems to preoccupy observers. We have already said that 'inconsistency' (like my father's, or the Brahminllaina use of karma) is not a matter of inadequate education or lack of logical rigor. They may be using a different 'logic' altogether. Some thinkers believe that such logic is an earlier-stage of 'cultural evolution' and that Indians have not developed a notion of 'data', of 'objective facts'. Edward Said's Orientalism cites many such European stereotypes about the 'Third World'. Here is Henry Kissinger's explanation:

Cultures which escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking have retained the essentially pre-Newtonian view that the world is almost completely internal to the observer ... [Consequently] empirical reality has a much different significance for many of the new [old?] countries.

Such a view cannot be dismissed as peculiar to Kissinger's version of Newtonian optics. One meets with it again and again in travelogues, psychological writings, novels. Naipaul quotes Sudhir Kakar, a sophisticated psychoanalyst, deeply knowledgeable in matters Indian as well as Western, an insider/outsider:

Generally among Indians there seems to be a different relationship to outside reality, compared to the one met with in the West. In India it is closer to a certain stage in childhood when outer objects did not have a separate, independent existence but were intimately related to the self and its a:ffective states...The Indian 'ego' is underdeveloped; 'the world of magic and animistic thinking lie close to the surface; so the grasp of reality is 'relatively tenuous' (1977: 107).

In a memorable and oft-quoted section of Foster's A passage to India, Mrs. Moore muses vividly on the relations between inside and outside in India; the confounding of the two is not special to humans in India:

Going to hang up her cloak, she found the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp. She had known this wasp or his relatives by song; they were not as English wasps, but had long yellow legs which hung down behind when they flew. Perhaps he mistook the peg for a branch-no Indian animal has any sense of an interior. Bats; rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside the house as out, it is to them a normal growth of the eternal

jungle, which alternately produces houses, trees, houses, trees. There he clung, asleep, while jackals bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums (1952: 35).

And sympaticos, like Zimmer, praise the Indians for not being hung up on an objectivity that distinguishes self from non-self, interior from exterior; what for Naipaul is a 'defect of vision', is for Zimmer vision itself:

India thinks of time and herself in biological terms, terms of the species, not of the ephemeral ego...We of the west regard world history as a biography of mankind, and in particular of Occidental Man...Our will is not to culminate in our human institutions the universal play of nature, but to evaluate, to set ourselves against the play, with ill egocentric tenacity (1946: 21).

…Is there any system to this particularism? Indian philosophers do not seem to make synoptic 'systems' like Hegel's or Kant's. Sheryl Daniel (1983) speaks of a 'tool-box' of ideas that Indians carry about, and from which they use one or another without much show of logic; anything goes into their 'bricolage' (Levi-Strauss 1962: 16-36). Max Weber, in various writings, distinguished 'traditional' and 'rational' religions…

IV

It is time to step back and try a formulation. The grammarian sees grammar in all things; I shall be true to my bias and borrow a notion from linguistics and try it for size…..

Or take Indian literary texts. No Indian text comes without a context, a frame, till the 19th century. Works are framed by phalasruti verses—these verses tell the reader, reciter or listener all the good that will result from his act of reading, reciting or listening. They relate the text, of whatever antiquity, to the present reader-that is, they contextualise it. An extreme case is that of the Nadisastra, which offers you your personal history. A friend of mine consulted the Experts about himself and his past and future. After enough rupees had been exchanged, the Experts brought out an old palm-leaf manuscript which, in archaic verses, mentioned his full name, age, birthplace, etc., and said suddenly, 'At this point, the listener is crossing his legs-he should uncross them.'

Texts may be historically dateless, anonymous; but their contexts, uses, efficacies, are explicit. The Ramayana and Mahabharata open with episodes that tell you why and under what circumstances they were composed. Every such story is encased in a metastory. And within the text, one tale is the context for another within it; not only does the outer frame-story motivate the inner sub-story; the inner story illuminates the outer as well. It often acts as a microcosmic replica for the whole text. In the forest when the Pandava brothers are in exile, the eldest, Yudhisthira, is in the very slough of despondency: he has gambled away a kingdom, and is in exile. In the depth of his despair, a sage visits him and tells him the story of Nala. As the story unfolds, we see Nala too gamble away a kingdom, lose his wife, wander in the forest, and finally, win his wager, defeat his brother, reunite with his wife and return to his kingdom. Yudhisthira, following the full curve of Nala's adventures, sees that he is only halfway through his own, and sees his present in perspective, himself as a story yet to be finished. Very often the Nala story is excerpted and read by itself, but its poignancy is partly in its frame, its meaning for the hearer within the fiction and for the listener of the whole epic. The tale within is contextsensitive-getting its meaning from the tale without, and giving it further meanings.

Scholars have often discussed Indian texts (like the Mahabharata) as if they were loose-leaf files, rag-bag encyclopaedias. Taking the Indian word for text, grantha (derived from the knot that holds the palm leaves together), literally, scholars often posit only an accidental and physical unity. We need to attend to the context-sensitive designs that embed a seeming variety of modes (tale, discourse, poem, etc.) and materials. This manner of constructing the text is in consonance with other designs in the culture. Not unity (in the Aristotelian sense) but coherence, seems to be the end.

...Like the Nala story in the Mahabharata, what is contained mirrors the container; the microcosm is both within and like the macrocosm, and paradoxically also contains it. Indian conceptions tend to be such concentric nests…

…Where Kissinger and others are wrong is in not seeing that this view has nothing to do with Newtonian revolution, education, or (in)capacity

for abstract thought. Cognitive anthropologists like Richard Shweder (1972) have studied descriptive phrases used by highly intelligent Oriya and American adults and shown that they describe persons very differently: Americans characterised them with genetic words like 'good', 'nice', Oriyas with concrete contextual descriptions like 'he brings sweets'. The psychoanalyst Alan Roland (1979) suggests that Indians carry their family context wherever they go, feel continuous with their family. He posits a familial self, a 'self-we regard', sees no phase 'of separation/individuation from the parental family as in modern America; hence there seems to be no clear-cut adolescent phase through which one rebels, and thereby separates and individuates oneself in opposition to one's family (the exceptions are in 'modern' urban-centred families). Roland remarks that Indians develop a 'radar' conscience that orients them to others, makes them say things that are appropriate to person and context. (No wonder Max Muller had to insist that Indians were truthful!) Roland also found that when directions to places are given, Indians always make reference to other places, landmarks.

Such a pervasive emphasis on context is, I think, related to the Hindu concern with jati-the logic of classes, of genera and species, of which human jatis are only an instance. Various taxonomies of season, landscape, times, *gunas* or qualities (and their material bases), tastes, characters, emotions, essences (rasa), etc., are basic to the thought-work of Hindu medicine and poetry, cooking and religion, erotics and magic. Each jati or class defines a context, a structure of relevance, a rule of permissible combinations, a frame of reference, a meta-communication of what is and can be done.

It is not surprising that systems of Indian philosophy, Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina, confine themselves to the consideration of class-essences (jati) called genera and species in Western philosophy. They never raise the question of whether there are universals of other types, namely identical qualities and relations. The assumption seems to be that qualities and relations are particulars, though they may be instances of universals (Dravid 1972: 347).

The most important and accessible model of a context-sensitive system with intersecting taxonomies is, of course, the grammar of a language. And grammar is the central model for thinking in many Hindu texts. As Frits Staal has said, what Euclid is to European thought, the grammarian Panini is to the Indian. Even the Kamasutra is literally a grammar of love-which declines and conjugates men and women as one would nouns and verbs in different genders, voices, moods and aspects. Genders are genres. Different body-types and character-types obey different rules, respond to different scents and beckonings.

V

All societies have context-sensitive behaviour and rules-but the dominant ideal may not be the 'context-sensitive' but the 'context-free'. Egalitarian democratic ideals, Protestant Christianity, espouse both the universal and the unique, insist that any member is equal to and like any other in the group. Whatever his context-birth, class, gender, age, place, rank, etc.-a man is a man for all that. Technology with its modules and interchangeable parts, and the post-Renaissance sciences with their quest for universal laws (and 'facts') across contexts intensify the bias towards the context-free. Yet societies have underbellies. In predominantly 'contextfree' societies, the counter-movements tend to be towards the context sensitive: situation ethics, Wittgensteinian notions of meaning and colour (against class-logic), the various relativisms including our own search for 'native categories' in anthropology, holistic movements in medicine (naturopaths who prescribe individually tailored regimens) are good examples. In 'traditional' cultures like India, where context-sensitivity rules and binds, the dream is to be free of context. So rasa in aesthetics, moksa in the 'aims of life', sannyasa in the life stages, sphota in semantics, and bhakti in religion define themselves against a background of inexorable contextuality.

Where kama, artha and dharma are all relational in their values, tied to place, time, personal character and social role, moksa is the release from all relations. If brahmacarya (celibate studentship) is preparation for a fully relational life, grhasthacrama (householder stage) is a full realisation

of it. Manu prefers the latter over all other states. Vanaprastha (the retiring forest-dweller stage) loosens the bonds, and sannyasa (renunciation) cremates all one's past and present relations. In the realm of feeling, bhavas are private, contingent, context-roused sentiments, vibhiivas are determinant causes, anubhavas the consequent expressions. But rasa is generalised, it is an essence. In the field of meaning, the temporal sequence of letters and phonemes, the syntactic chain of words, yields finally a sphota, an explosion, a meaning which is beyond sequence and time.

In each of these the pattern is the same: a necessary sequence in time with strict rules of phase and context ending in a free state.

The last of the great Hindu anti-contextual notions, bhakti, is different from the above; it denies the very need for context. Bhakti defies all contextual structures: every pigeonhole of caste, ritual, gender, appropriate clothing and custom, stage of life, the whole system of homo hierarchicus ('everything in its place') is the target of its irony….

VI

In conclusion, I would like to make a couple of observations about 'modernisation'. One might see 'modernisation' in India as a movement from the context-sensitive to the context-free in all realms: an erosion of contexts, at least in principle. Gandhi's watch (with its uniform autonomous time, governing his punctuality) replaced the almanac. Yet Gandhi quoted Emerson, that consistency was the hobgoblin of foolish minds. Print replaced palm-leaf manuscripts, making possible an open and egalitarian access to knowledge irrespective of caste. The Indian Constitution made the contexts of birth, region, sex and creed irrelevant, overthrowing Manu, though the battle is joined again and again. The new preferred names give no clue to birth-place, father's name, caste, sub-caste and sect, as all the traditional names did…

In music, the ragas can now be heard at all hours and seasons. Once the Venkatesasuprabhatam, the wake-up chant for the Lord of Tirupati, could be heard only in Tirupati at a certain hour in the morning. Since M. S. Subbulakshmi in her devotion cut a record of the chants, it wakes up not only the Lord, but anyone who tunes in to All India Radio in faraway places.

Cultural borrowings from India to the West, or vice versa, also show interesting accommodations to the prevailing system. The highly contextualised Hindu systems are generalised into 'a Hindu view of life' by apologues like Radhakrishnan for the benefit of both the Western and modern Indian readers. The individual esoteric skills of meditation are freed from their contexts into a streamlined widely accessible technique. And when T.S. Eliot borrows the DA DA DA passage (quoted earlier) to end 'The wasteland' (1930), it becomes highly individual, introspective, as well as universal: Then spoke the thunder DA datta: what have we given?...

In reverse, Indian borrowings of Western cultural items have been converted and realigned to fit pre-existing context-sensitive needs. English is borrowed into (or imposed on) Indian contexts, it fits into the Sanskrit slot; it acquires many of the characteristics of Sanskrit, the older native Father-tongue, its pan-Indian elite character-as a medium of laws, science and administration, and its formulaic patterns; it becomes part of Indian multiple diglossia (a characteristic of context-sensitive societies). When Indians learn, quite expertly, modern science, business, or technology, they 'compartmentalize' these interests (Singer 1972: 320ff.); the new ways of thought and behaviour do not replace, but live along with older 'religious' ways. Computers and typewriters receive ayudhapuja (worship of weapons) as weapons of war did once. The 'modern', the context-free, becomes one more context, though it is not easy to contain…..

My purpose here is not to evaluate but to grope toward a description of the two kinds of emphases. Yet in each of these kinds of cultures, despite all the complexity and oscillation, there is a definite bias. The Buddha (who said 'When we see a man shot with a poisoned arrow, we cannot afford to ask what caste he or his enemy is') also told the following parable of the Raft: Once a man was drowning in a sudden flood. Just as he was about to drown, he found a raft. He clung to it, and it carried him safely to dry land. And, he was so grateful to the raft that he carried it on his back for the rest of his life. Such was the Buddha's ironic comment on context-free systems.

5.5 READING THE ESSAY

Ramanujan in **Part I** of the essay asks four very pertinent questions and then tries to answer them by emphasising specific aspects of the question.

First he asks ***Is*** there an Indian way of thinking? The answer is: there *was* an Indian way of thinking, which can be traced in the upper-caste; Brahmanical section of the society through a perusal of the Vedas and other religious texts; but it does not exist now. However, since our thinking is still shaped by the religious texts like the Vedas, it is still pertinent to state that there is an Indian way of thinking that exists. The second question Ramanujan asks is: Is there ***an*** Indian way of thinking? In reply to this, he mentions that there has always been the existence of Great and Little Traditions. Therefore, as we do celebrate the multiplicities and diversities in India, no single Indian way of thinking exists or can exist. The third question is: Is there an ***Indian*** way of thinking? Ramanujan's reply is that India is nothing but a product of the influences of alien cultures, languages, religions and social evolutions. Therefore, some might tend to state that there is nothing unique about India. However, India has also shown her capability to adapt to the changes and accommodate these external influences into its culture. The last question Ramanujan asks is: Is there an Indian way of ***thinking***? He states that it is the West that is capable of thought. The West is projected as materialistic and rational. In India, logic is rationalised with religion and superstitions. In India, actions are projected, not the thoughts behind those actions. Thus, in the last part of Part I of the essay, Ramanujan states how India is perceived differently at different stages by different people and from different perspectives.

In **Part II** of the essay, Ramanujan refers to the inconsistency between tradition and modernity. In order to discuss that he refers to his experience of his own father to show how India can be ancient yet modern at the same time. Ramanujan's father was a South Indian Brahman, but at the same time, he showed his scientific mindset as can be seen in terms of the following: While wearing dhotis in traditional Brahmanic style, he also

wore English jackets over his dhotis; he wore tartan-patterned socks and leather shoes when he went to the university but removed them before entering the inner quarters of the house; he was together a mathematician, an astronomer, a Sanskrit scholar and an expert astrologer; American and English mathematicians as well as the local pundits and astrologers used to visit him; while he read the *Bhagvad Gita* religiously every morning after taking a bath, he would talk about Russell and Ingersoll also with the same amount of passion. Ramanujan could not actually figure out such an 'inconsistency' in his father, because for him, 'consistency' refers to strict adhearence to any one– either religion or science.

In **Part III**, Ramanujan explores the concept of 'inconsistency' in a wider perspective. He discusses the concept of 'karma'—implying the self's past as determining the present and future, and Talaividi or 'head writing'– focusing on destiny. The Western world often seek to construct the Orient (India) based on the notion of 'objective facts.' Ramanujan refers to Sudhir Kakar, who stated that in the oriental world, there is no clear difference between self and non-self that further problematises the causes of inconsistency. In India, there is no concept of the universal. The Indian way of thinking lacks universality; because it is a traditional society constituting of inconsistency and hypocrisy and because in India there are subjective positions. Therefore, in India, the understanding of reality is always 'context-sensitive' and not 'context-free'.

In **Part IV**, Ramanujan examines how context-sensitivity is an important part of Indian thought and culture. In India, all additions are often the subtraction from a universal law. Stories get their context with reference to the frame in which they have been placed. Indian texts are historically dateless, but their contexts, uses and efficacies are explicit. Even when we look at the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, we find that there are several episodes—each story is within another story, these producing a meta-story. In addition, within the text, one story is the context for another within it. Thus, the outer-frame story as well as the inner sub-story provides relevant contexts for the other's existence. Aristotle's theory of unity of time, place and action therefore cannot be applied to the Indian narratives.

Besides the way we divide time in India is also very different from the way it is done in the West. The Indians have times that are auspicious, inauspicious (rahu kala), and the past and present seem to merge together. Even our houses have moods (vaastu shastra). The Indians are prone to blame their wrong doings on fate, vaastu and it is not possible for them to remove this context-sensitivity. With modernity, they are widening their context in the way they want to rather than doing away with all the traditional practises. It is because of this that the original context seems to be lost. Ramanujan says that all societies have 'context-sensitive' behaviour and rules but the dominant idea is always 'context-free'.

In **Part V**, Ramanujan observes that societies that are 'context-free' have movements, which are context-specific in nature whereas in societies like India, which are context-sensitive, there is a dream to be free of context. This gives rise to the concept of 'rasa' in aesthetics, 'moksha' in the aims of life and 'sanyasa' in the end of life-stages.

In the last part of the essay—**Part VI**, Ramanujan states how the Indians have gradually moved towards context-free situations in India. He says that with modernity and modernisation, there has been a movement from context-sensitive to context-free at least in principle. Today, the Indian people can listen to any raga at any time rather than strictly sticking to the time prescribed. But the new thoughts and behaviours borrowed from the West has not necessarily replaced the old religious ideas. They get incorporated with the existing tradition. For example, In 'Ayudhapuja', even computers and typewriters are worshiped instead of weapons. Therefore, no matter how hard the Indians try to move to a context-free society, the result is that the context-free nature ends up becoming yet another context i.e. the 'modern' context.



5.6 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of this unit, you have learnt how A. K. Ramanujan in his essay very beautifully answers to the question "Is There an Indian

Way of Thinking? with the help of four additional questions, which he answers one by one with various examples drawn even from his own life. With examples drawn from different contexts Ramanujan asserts that there ***Is*** an Indian way of thinking which can be traced in the perusal of the Vedas and other religious texts; there is ***an*** Indian way of thinking as Indians do celebrate the differences and diversities in India, for which no single Indian way of thinking exists or can exist, there an ***Indian*** way of thinking because India has also shown her capability to adapt to the changes brought by external influences into its culture; and lastly, there is an Indian way of ***thinking*** because unlike in the West, in India, logic is rationalised with religion and superstitions. Thus, the main thrust of the essay has been to explore what the notion of 'Indianness' in Indian literature indicates and how 'context-sensitivity' still remains an important issue in Indian Literature even in the 'modern times. You will need to know that such a background has also affected the birth and development of Indian English literature since the beginning



5.7 FURTHER READING

A. K. Ramanujan. "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay." Available at: http://cis.sagepub.com

Website and Electronic Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._K._Ramanujan

http://www.indiaonline.in/about/personalities/writersandpoets/a-k-ramanujan

5.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the important issues raised by Ramanujan in the essay "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?"

Q 2: In what way, do you think, does Ramanujan explain the cultural ideologies and behavioural manifestations of the Indians in terms of an 'Indian' psychology he calls "context-sensitive" thinking.

Q 3: What are the four questions that Ramanujan poses to answer if there is an Indian way of thinking?

Q 4: "The Ramayana and Mahabharata open with episodes that tell you why and under what circumstances they were composed. Every such story is encased in a metastory." How does this statement help to understand the storytelling processes in Indian Writing in general.

Q 5: In what way, do you think, Ramanujan's essay " Is There an Indian Way of Thinking' informs our reading of Indian Literature. Illustrate with a few examples.

*** ***** ***



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