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INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

SEMESTER VI

ENGLISH

BLOCK- 2

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Major Themes, Major Characters, Style and Language, Critical Reception

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the second block of the course. It contains eight units encompassing different genres like short story, fiction as well as drama. The eighth and ninth units take up R.K. Narayan's *Kanthapura* which is considered one of the first major Indian novels in English that was inspired by the Indian oral traditions of the Sthala-Purana (legendary history) and woven with the progressive Gandhian ideals of the national struggle in its entirety. The novel is enjoyable particularly with its interesting translation of the Indian idiomatic expressions in English. It represents the revolutionary struggle and change at the microcosmic level of the Indian village and at the macroscopic level of macrocosmic level of the nation at large. The tenth and eleventh units unravel a short story titled "Shakti" by Vikram Chandra which explores the fierce rivalry between two wealthy families of Bombay-the Boatwallas and the Bijlanis. This story deals with the tussle for 'power' and 'position' and exposes the stereotypes of the Bombay high society. It is presented through a well-fed gossip style of narration which at once leaves us wondering at the ways of the rich and again leaves us curious to find out how it culminates. The twelfth and thirteenth units deal with the play *Final Solutions* from Mahesh Dattani's award-winning collection titled *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. The play can be considered a drama of social maladies which is thematically rich and engaging and captures the tension between two Indian communities divided along the lines of religion in the aftermath of the Partition. The fourteenth and fifteenth units revisit the historical reign of Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq dynasty through the dramatic representation in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*. The Sultan of Delhi who won several rebellions and ruled the capital from 1324-1351 was also known for his impulsive nature which had led him to shift the capital of Delhi to Daulatabad and impose on his subjects before reverting the same. The play reveals the tragic flaws and ambiguities in the Sultan's persona and extends it to the contemporary political practices.

After going through these units, you will be able to analyse the short story, and get an idea about the context and issues reflected in the novel and the two plays. 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 some relevant ideas and concepts in "Let Us Know" along the text. We have kept "Check Your Progress" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study.

UNIT 8: RAJA RAO: *KANTHAPURA* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Raja Rao: The Novelist

8.3.1 His Life

8.3.2 His Works

8.4 Context of the Novel

8.4 1 Summary of the Novel

8.5 Let us Sum up

8.6 Further Reading

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.8 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- acquire an idea regarding the life and works of the Indian novelist Raja Rao
- appreciate the inspiring text of the novel that reflects the Indian freedom struggle
- explain the context of the novel Kanthapura
- discuss the summary of the novel and analyse its content
- utilise the ideas gained in this unit to comprehend certain other significant aspects of the novel.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Kanthapura is often referred to as a Gandhian novel as it is a represented story based on the ***resurgence*** of a small, sleepy village during the times of the nationalist struggle for freedom, spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi. What is reflected in the novel is that in the wake of the Gandhian movements of non- violence and non-cooperation such



Resurgence : become stronger or more popular again.

Dynamic : (of a process) constaning changing or active

resurgences was actually occurring simultaneously all over India in thousands of Indian villages in the ***dynamic*** days of 1919-1930, when Gandhi transformed the entire country into a throbbing army of enduring and disciplined fighters for freedom. There were three basic aspects of the Gandhian movement- the political, the socio-economic and the religious, and Rao tactfully incorporates all these three aspects in the complex narratorial fabric of the novel. *Kanthapura*, thus, regenerates with vigour and fervour of a people whose spirit has been infused with Gandhian philosophy of freedom and self dependence. Therefore, *Kanthapura* exists not only as a political document, but also as an intense work concentrating as much on the socio-economic progress and religious as struggle for freedom. This unit will enable you to critically appreciate the novel, *Kanthapura* which is often referred to as a post independence novel. Interestingly, it was written much before India gained independence, in the year 1938. But there is more to the novel that makes it a post independence novel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Choose the correct option :

A. The novel covers the period between
   a. 1857-1890
   b. 1947-1950
   c. 1919-1930
   d. 1919-1920

B. *Kanthapura* is often referred to as
   a. Gandhipurana
   b. Harikatha
   c. Veda
   d. Ramayana

8.3 RAJA RAO: THE NOVELIST

In the following subsections you will find a concise idea on the life and works of the famous Indian English novelist Raja Rao.

8.3.1 His Life

Raja Rao was born on 8th November, 1908, in Hassan, Mysore. He belonged to a Smartha Brahmin family, of the Hoysala Karnataka caste. His father, H.V. Krishnaswamy, was a Kannada teacher at Nizam College, Hyderabad. His mother, Gauramma, died when he was four. This left a lasting effect on his mind. He received his early education at Madrassas which are schools for Muslim children, the Madrassa-e-Aliya in Hyderabad, and later, in Aligarh Muslim children. After graduation, from the University of Madras, having English and History as major subjects, Rao had won the Asiatic Scholarship from the Hyderabad Government, in 1926, to study abroad.

Raja Rao went to study in France, in the University of Montpellier. He studied French language and literature there. Later, he moved to Paris, at the Sorbonne, to study the Indian influence on Irish literature. He married a French teacher working at Montpellier, Camille Mouly, in 1931. But the marriage did not last long and they were separated in 1939. He married the second time with an American stage actress, Katherine Jones, with whom he had a son named Christopher Rama. In 1986, the couple separated. Rao married for the third time, and took his student Susan, as his wife whom he had met at the University of Texas in the 1970s. Rao had come back to the States as a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin from 1966 to 1986. He passed away at the age of 97 on 8 July, 2006, at Austin, Texas.

8.3.2 His Works

Raja Rao return to India in 1939 had a deep impact on his

literary career. He edited with Iqbal Singh an anthology titled *Changing India* that included enlightening thoughts of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru. He co-edited a journal from Bombay named *Tomorrow* with Ahmed Ali, a friend he had met during his years at Aligarh Muslim University, Raja Rao was deeply touched by the Gandhian view on non-violence. He even participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. It is this impact of Gandhi that finds its natural expression in his novel *Kanthapura.* In terms of narration, Rao adopts in this novel the narrative style from Indian oral traditions of storytelling and folk epic.

Raja Rao name has been clubbed together with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan as one of the greatest Indian fiction writers writing in English. His literary contribution is rather few with only three novels to his name- *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965). Yet with these few literary contribution, he has achieved international fame and recognition, owing to the quality of his work. What is striking is the range of characterisation and levels of consciousness he has brought into the narrative structure of the novel, along with his choice of medium that spontaneously merges the timeless with the temporal, the social with the imaginary and the local with the political. In his forming years as a fiction writer, he has moved from simple narration to complex observation and philosophical speculations in his later novels.

In all his works, Rao adopts a peculiar art form for the exposition of Indian themes in the Indian oral tradition of storytelling. The line between contemporary realities and imagined realities is blurred in his novel- gods, humans, myths and legends- all share the same canvas. He makes his novel a vehicle for his profound reflections on the nature of the world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: When and where was Raja Rao born? Name the community to which he belonged.

.....

.....

Q 3: Name the three novels by Raja Rao.

.....

.....

Q 4: Which was the significant historical movement of India in which Raja Rao had participated?

.....

.....

Q 5: Which of the following is not a work of Raja Rao?

a. *The Cat and Shakespeare*

b. *The Serpent and the Rope*

c. *Coolie*

d. *Kanthapura*

8.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

The novel opens with the ***picturesque*** definition of the village and ends with its ruin. Raja Rao has faithfully captured the spirit of resurgence of India's freedom struggle at the wake of Gandhian impact: its religious concerns, its political philosophy and its socio-economic dynamics, everything has been adequately discussed just as Gandhi had tried to bring about the all round development of the country. It is through Rao adoption of the Gandhian theme that lends the novel its desired success. It jolts the village into action and breaks its indifferent ***passivity***, so as to bring out the hidden patriot in each of the residents of Kanthapura. The novel also ***delineates*** Gandhi's own strife to reach out to the remotest villages of the country so as to wake her up from the complacent slumber she had been under colonialism. Gandhi's invisibility in the novel is not



Picturesque: attractive in a charming way.
Passivity: accepting or allowing what others do.
Delineates: indicating precisely.

to be regarded as his complete absence; rather, he is more than just a physical presence in the story who make the novel alive and telling. He is a powerful presence through his influencing ideals.

The novel adequately records the spirit of sacrifice in each of the village folks, and not just the spectacular sacrifice of a few prominent figures whose names surfaces in the Indian history. They are not the political leaders who spearhead freedom processions, but little names and figures who form the faceless, nameless-***anonymity*** of these processions for freedom. They all shed their differences and assemble together in order to respond to the ***clarion call*** of Gandhi to free their country from the clutches of the British rule. While writing this novel, Raja Rao was in France which gave them the necessary distance to perceive the events in his country from a ***vantage*** position. He could objectively be a spectator and commentator of the violence and atrocities of the British on one hand, and the non-violent handling of the matter by the Indians, on the other.

Anonymity: without revealing one's real identity.
Clarion Call: a strongly expressed demand for action.
Vantage: advantageous position.

Raja Rao, in order to serve his purpose as a detached recorder of the nation's history, chooses to represent Kanthapura as a microcosm of India during her freedom struggles. The narration of the story begins with the chanting of *Harikatha* where the Mahatma emerges as the deliverer of the country from the serpentine trap of the British, portrayed as Kali, the Serpent. The Mahatma comes to the scene and embraces all- from a Brahmin to a Pariah, and tries to eradicate the rigid, conventions that had enslaved India since time immemorial. He tries to lift the dismal situation that suffocates the country's economy and social system under foreign rule. The real credit goes to his ability to produce staunch patriots from each little province where only his voice, his messages or his ideals are able to seep through. Moorthy is presented as "little Gandhi", the visible avatar, of the "invisible God", the Mahatma.

Moorthy, the protagonist of the novel, was a college student when he was greatly influenced by Gandhian ideals on national freedom. Leaving aside his college studies half-way, he joined the processions and thereafter, courted arrest. In his life, he never had any form of first- hand experience

with Gandhi, but admits of bearing Gandhi's vision addressed to a crowd of common people. This vision transforms a simple village youth to a staunch or hard and fast Gandhian follower. The novel reaches epic dimensions with what follows hereafter. Moorthy becomes an ***avowed*** Satyagrahi, with a single-minded mission of awakening thousands of villagers against the ***atrocities*** meted out to them by the British. He mentors them into forming the Congress Committee in the village that is constantly in touch with the city, and through pamphlets and newspapers, he remains informed of the recent agendas of the committee across the country. It is Moorthy who invites the *Harikatha* man, mingles politics and religion together to make it more accessible and legible to the masses, and compares the Mahatma with Rama and the Redmen with Ravana. He moves from door to door as a ***mendicant*** with his begging bowl to collect money for a series of ceremonies that would entail the active participation of the masses from the Brahmin and non- Brahmin quarters of the village. He stirs up a mass movement through his humble attempts. This attempt is made to unite all sections of the society and bring about a sense of brotherhood among them. His mission is to use this integrated energy against the British policies of segregating Indians on improper grounds like caste and communal identities. Moorthy has the liberty to reach out to all the sections of society like Gandhi did, to the extent of earning the ***taboo*** of being an outcaste. He gives a practical dimension to the Gandhian philosophy behind his Swadeshi movement by explaining the significance of the Charkha to the rural folks. He inspires the womenfolk of Kanthapura to take up spinning, and organises the Women's Voluntary Corps in his village. The village is greatly stirred by these programmes and the atmosphere becomes charged with patriotism and enthusiasm. An awakening is seen among the masses as Gandhi's Dandi March reaches Kanthapura.

Avowed : assert or confess openly.
Atrocities : extremely wicked or cruel act.
Mendicant : regularly engaged in begging.
Taboo : a social or religious custom placing a bar or restriction on a particular thing or person.

With the Dandi March, a simultaneous procession is initiated in Kanthapura that renders a religious colour to the political scenario. Gandhi was considered the 'Sahyadri Mountain', as Raja Harish Chandra, and as a pathfinder who was followed by thirty thousand people on his way to

Dandi. The volunteers are seen as pilgrims and Moorthy becomes the 'Small Mountain', a minor pilgrimage site.

Moorthy faithfully follows Gandhi's dictum: "Fight, but harm no soul". Responding to Gandhi's clarion call, Moorthy pleads for non-violence. But it is not easy for a college drop-out like Moorthy to challenge burly men in the village like Bade Khan who threatens to squash another man called Range Gowda ''like a bug'', where the Sahibs violate the dignity of the village virgins, and where the police torture the simple minded village folks. Moorthy's appeal to the villagers illustrates his faith in non-violence: "No beatings in the name of the Mahatma", "We are not soldiers in arms…but soldier saints". Moorthy preaches that Swaraj is the three-eyed deity where self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity and Khaddar are the three eyes. He inspires the women to get involved with the Khaddar and form their own Sevika Sangha. One does see the Mahatma coming to Kanthapura, but the news of his arrest takes the whole village by surprise and there is an angry tide of protest among the village folk. Men, women and children gather before their temple to form the "Don't Touch the Government" campaign.

The air is charged with a nationalistic spirit and everyone seems to be united under the impact of this spirit. Although the villagers are physically battered yet their spirit is not crushed easily. The battle fought is an unequal one, and while some of the Satyagrahis are maimed some die, and those alive reach another village, Kashipura, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis including Moorthy, Ratna and Rangamma are arrested and compelled to spend some time in the jail. But the Gandhi-Irwin pact that entails the political truce necessitates their release in a short span of time. The main narrative in the novel, thus, is that it highlights the influence of Gandhi on the village folks of the village Kanthapura. It is in this context that Raja Rao weaves his tale of a remote sleepy village transformed into a rebellious one, and which achieves epic dimension through the novelist's skillful handling of the narrative.

8.4.1 Summary of the Novel

The story begins in the oral tradition of the Harikatha narrated by an old woman, probably the oldest in Kanthapura, named Achakka. It all begins when Moorthy, a college dropout, along with his companions, discovers a half-buried linga and decides to build it into a sanctum. From here starts the regular practice of chanting of the Harikatha. Bhatta, the Chief Brahmin, comes forward to offer the first ***libation*** of Bananas to the presiding goddess of the village, Kenchamma. However, Moorthy, being a city educated, modern youth, has other plans. He arranges the Harikatha man (Jayaramachar) to read out the Scripture as an allegory of India under the foreign rule. He visualises India as Sita, Gandhi as Rama, and Ravana as the British who rule the Indian nation. Soon, some suspicious looking policemen put a stop to these gatherings, fearing them to be **propagandist** in nature.

Libation : a gift or something offered to God.



Kanthapura, like any other village at that time, is shrouded in superstition and casteism. There are watertight demarcations or divisions between quarters- broadly, the Brahmin Quarter, the Potter Quarter, the Sudra Quarter, the Weaver Quarter, and the most pathetic one the Pariah Quarter. The people who worsen those divisions are Bhatta and Range Gowda. They are against any policy that germinates into harmony among these social groups. But people like Moorthy and Ratna toil hard to bring about stability in their village.

Moorthy represents that group of youngsters who fiercely adhere to the ideologies of Gandhi, and share Gandhi's views about Hind Swaraj. He keeps in touch with the city through pamphlets and newspapers. Ratna and Rangamma also join hands with Moorthy and they collaborate to awaken the woman power in the village. Together they organise the Sevika Sangh. It is Moorthy, along with his companions, who preach the necessity of

Vengeance: the action of punishing or harming someone is return for an injury or wrong.
Picketing : the act of others standing outside a place trying to persuade others not to enter during a strike.
Ex-communication : officially (bar) someone from religious sacraments.
Toddy : a drink made of spirits with hot water and sugar.
Grove : refers to the place where toddy is sold.

spinning in each house, irrespective of the caste division rampant in Kanthapura. The character of Waterfall Venkamma is insidious and she nurtures a sense of hatred for Moorthy, because, the latter refuses to marry Venkamma's second daughter. She is filled with ***vengeance*** and instigates the whole village against Moorthy and his secular ways.

The village suffers another misfortune in the form of Bade Khan. He is a terror to the village, and cannot stand the sight of ***picketing***. Bhatta and Range Gowda are already the opportunists who reap the hard earned money of poor peasants. Moorthy fights for the cause of eradicating the caste system prevalent in the village, and against untouchability. Enraged, Bhatta suggests Moorthy's ***ex-communication***. When poor Narsamma learns about her son's misfortune, she passes away. Thus, Moorthy is taken under the wings of the benign Rangamma. He is invited by the elite Brahmin clerks working at Skeffington Coffee Estate to create awareness among the coolies working there. When Moorthy stands up for them, Bade Khan hits him. This enrages the pariah coolies and they turn up brutally against Bade Khan. Moorthy is disappointed at this sight, being a non-violent fighter himself. Ranchanna and her family are thrown out of the estate to rebel against Bade Khan. Moorthy has to spend a prison spell of three months. Meanwhile, Rachanna, Gowada, Seenu and Rangamma are elected as the office bearers of the Committee. Moorthy refuses to come out of his prison even on bail that Rachanna and Rangamma offer. After his release, Moorthy emerges stronger. Picketting and demolishing Boranna's ***toddy grove*** are activities that Moorthy indulges in after his release from jail. Atrocities reach its heights when women are equally made victims of the lathi charges made by the police to resist their procession. At the end of the novel, the villagers of Kanthapura settle down in a nearby village, Kashipura, while people from Bombay come to occupy Kanthapura.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Who read out the Hindi scripture as an allegory of India? What did he visualise?

.....

.....

Q 7: Name the various quarters in the village of Kanthapura.

.....

.....

Q 8: What are the social causes for which Moorthy fights in the novel *Kanthapura*?

.....

.....

Q 9: Where do the people of Kanthapura village shift their homes at the end of the novel?

.....

.....





8.5 LET US SUM UP

After having studied the unit thoroughly, you have been familiarised with the life and literary contributions of the Indian English novelist Raja Rao. You have gained an idea how Rao tactfully incorporates the three basic aspects of the Gandhian movement- the political, the socio-economic and the religious, in the complex narrative fabric of the novel, *Kanthapura*. You are now familiar with the setting and context of the novel and can reflect how the story begins in the oral tradition of the Harikatha. *Kanthapura* deals with certain key issues such as superstition and casteism, which we shall deal elaborately in the next unit.



8.6 FURTHER READING

1) Bhatnagar, Manmohan Krishna. (ed.) (2000). *Indian Writings in English, Volume 7.* New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributers.

2) Sharma, Kaushal. (2005). Raja Rao: A *Study of His Themes and Technique.* New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.

3) Trivedi, Harish and Richard Allen. (eds.) (2000). *Literature and Nation.* New York: Psychology Press.

8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The following are the answers of the questions

A. c

B. a

Ans to Q No 2: Raja Rao was born on 8th November, 1908, in Hassan, Mysore. He belonged to a Smartha Brahmin family, of the Hoysala Karnataka caste.

Ans to Q No 3: *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965).

Ans to Q No 4: He had participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942.

Ans to Q No 5: (c) *Coolie*

Ans to Q No 6: Harikatha man (Jayaramachar) read out the Scripture as an allegory of India under foreign rule. He visualises India as Sita, Gandhi as Rama, and Ravana (the British) as fettered India under the British rule.

Ans to Q No 7: There are fixed demarcartions between quarters- broadly, the Brahmin Quarter, the Potter Quarter, the Sudra Quarter, the Weaver Quarter, and the most pathetic one is the Pariah Quarter.

Ans to Q No 8: Moorthy fights for the cause of eradicating the caste

system prevalent in the village, and against untouchability.

Ans to Q No 9: At the end of the novel, the people of Kanthapura settle in a nearby village, Kashipura, and people from Bombay come to occupy Kanthapura.



8.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the role of Gandhi in Raja Rao novel *Kanthapura.*

Q 2: Write a short note on the life and works of the Indian novelist Raja Rao

Q 3: Give a detailed summary of the Raja Rao novel *Kanthapura.*

Q 4: Why is the novel *Kanthapura* called a post independence novel although it was published in 1938, nine years prior to independence?

Q 5: *Kanthapura* exists not only as a political document, but also as an intense work concentrating as much on the socio-economic progress and religious as struggle for freedom. Elaborate.

Q 6: Briefly state the significant features of Raja Rao as a novelist.

Q 7: Mention some of the social issues that have been highlighted through the novel.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 9: RAJA RAO: *KANTHAPURA* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Major Themes

9.4 Major Characters

9.5 Style and Language

9.6 Critical Reception

9.7 Let us Sum up

9.8 Further Reading

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.10 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the thematic concerns in the novel *Kanthapura*
- analyse the major characters in the novel
- gain an insight into the style and language employed by the novelist
- discuss the critical reception of the novel
- appreciate the novel which is replete with Indian idiomatic expressions

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of the previous unit. Here we shall emphasise on Raja Rao use of language and how he handles it with so much of ease that English becomes just another vernacular languge that one hears in one's day-to-day conversation within one's immediate surroundings. It is interesting that Rao offers the centre stage to a nondescript person called Moorthy, from an equally nondescript village (Kanthapura) in South India, rather than drawing his characters on famous

individuals from history. One might naturally expect Gandhi to be a character in the novel with pre-independent India being the setting of the story. However, Gandhi is not physically present anywhere in the novel. It is Rao craftsmanship that makes Gandhi's presence felt in the narrative strands of the other characters, without his physical presence as a character in the story. As a novelist Rao skillfully mingles the private and the political, the timeless and the temporal through the vast canvas of characters that act and react in such lively a manner that they almost pulsate with life. Let us then explore the varied themes of the novel along with the characterisation and lay emphasis on Rao style and technique of writing.

9.3 MAJOR THEMES

There are various thematic concerns that emerge from the novel of *Kanthapura*. A few of these have been discussed below under the captioned headings, to which you could add your own interpretations, observations and thematic analyses of the novel in its entirety.

A Glimpse of the nature of pre-independent Indian village

Kanthapura concentrates on the rustic life and humility of an Indian village- its traditional continuities and its religious inclinations. It can be considered a political novel because it covers the time length from 1916 till Mahatma Gandhi's death. The novel aims at re-enacting the collective conscience of the country and even of the world at large, focusing primarily on the political scene. It also picturises the suffering condition of India in the 1930s under the British rule. The novel is a projection of the freedom movements led by Gandhi, but at the same time, it also acts as a mouth piece of Gandhi's concerns for social reform, other than Swaraj. The novel celebrates Gandhian ideals of anticipating liberty only after observing certain social obligations and a consciousness for fraternity. This social awakening included freedom from economic exploitation by the British, discarding foreign goods completely, spinning yarn and wearing only Khadi stuff spun out of it. This was also a step towards his attempt to eradicate casteism and untouchability prevalent in our society. As the novel approaches its end, Raja Rao seems to have established his notion

through the character portrayal of Moorthy, that is, Gandhism is not a final solution of the problem. In fact, he seems to convey the thought that the problem of our country has seeped deeper than what Gandhi had conceived, that is the problem of inequality that gave rise to disparity.

Kanthapura is more than just a glimpse of the freedom struggles in India. It records the enthusiasm of a remote village at the very call of Gandhi, as though it was a charm that was acting on the people and made them move. They observed fasting to show their cooperation with Gandhi, as Gandhi carries forward his phenomenal Dandi March. Moorthy exemplifies the spirit of millions of young Gandhi followers, who left their schools, colleges and even jobs to participate in the freedom movements that book the streets of the country, burning bonfires and torches made out of imported goods. Ratna and Rangamma also represent the radiant zeal of young India who contributed wholeheartedly to the movements.

The impact of British Rule in India

Along with the representation of the freedom struggle in India, *Kanthapura* also reflects the British rule in the country, its laws and ways. The insidious British policy of 'Divide and Rule' is beautifully illustrated in the episode where the loyal Swami is tempted with a gift of twelve hundred acres of land so that he refuses to participate in the mass movement initiated by the Satyagrahis.

Kanthapura discusses at length the prevalent lines of disparity among different castes and communities that make it almost impossible to achieve freedom. This idea is well illustrated through characters like Bhatta and later, through Swami both being conservative orthodox Brahmins and agents of the British government. The novel also describes the attempts of the Indians to become self reliant and to cripple the manufacturers foreign goods manufacturers through humble efforts. The policy of the British was to exploit the rich resources of the country. The insistence of spinning taught the people the value of self-dependence and dignity of labour.

***Kanthapura* as a Gandhi Purana or Epic**

The novel may be called a 'Gandhi Purana' or a 'Gandhi Epic' as

it ***encapsulates*** the ***quintessence*** of those telling days of India's freedom struggles spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi. Although, has no appearance in the novel, we are made to feel the presence of Gandhi the leading figure of the nation who single-handedly inspires his countrymen to transform into satyagrahis and peaceful fighters who make freedom and independence from the British possible. Kanthapura, thus, becomes the microcosm of what takes place in the nation at large.

We can conclude by saying that, the themes of the novel ranges from political movements of India, to economic ***dynamism***, to Gandhian principles, to the participation of a ***nondescript*** mass of people from a remote village, to caste disparity and finally, to the celebration of the virtue of sacrifice as portrayed in thousands of Satyagrahis.



Encapsulates: enclose in or as if in a capsule, express clearly and in a few words.

Quintessence: a refined extract or essence of something.

Dynamism: the quality of being dynamic.

Nondescript : lacking special or interesting features.

Perfunctorily : that which is carried out with a minimum of thought.

9.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Raja Rao uses real people to colour his canvas- they are not mere cardboard cutouts, speaking and acting ***perfunctorily***. While Gandhi was an invisible presence through out the narrative, it were these people whose participation brought about an awakening that was almost impossible on the part of the British to suppress. For our convenience, we can broadly divide them up as male and female characters who contributed in making the novel an interesting narrative that rewards the freedom struggles of the many forgotten or even unknown rural masses of the country.

Moorthy

The protagonist of the novel, Moorthy is a college dropout, and a staunch Gandhian follower. He leaves his studies behind to organise programmes in order to awaken the patriotic zeal among his countrymen. He toils day and night to eradicate caste divisions in his village, Kanthapura. Although a Brahmin, he takes up the noble responsibility of educating children from the Pariah quarter in the village. He is clever but humble, calm but steadfast. He raises the wrath of many a Brahmin in his village because of his secular views. He designs the Harikatha, which is actually an allegory of his own country in the hands of the British. He

is aware that the strength of the people lies in their unity, irrespective of castes and classes. He also knows that to motivate his people, he has camouflage his intentions under religiosity. Thereby, he appoints Jayaramachar to narrate the Harikatha to his people. Although he has been jailed and beaten up several times, he remains loyal to his Gandhian ideals, and it is he who introduces the spinning wheel to his village. He keeps in touch with the whereabouts and events of the city through newspapers and pamphlets. He is the reincarnation of Gandhi in this novel. The novel actually begins when Moorthy, along with some of his companions, dig out a half-buried *linga*, and decides to pay it homage by building a sanctum for it. Later, he organises the Harikatha as an allegory of India (as Sita) in the clutches of the British (Ravana) and the coming of the saviour Gandhi (Rama).

Bhatta

Bhatta is the Chief Priest or the first Brahmin who presides over any ceremonial activity. He is the villain in the story; an internal threat to the social harmony of the village. He does not want the people of Kanthapura to flourish economically, because then they would tend to become less dependent on him. He reaps the hard earned money of the poor by lending them money at 'high interests'. He is a staunch Brahmin who is against this 'Gandhi –business' and dreads the 'pariahs' or the untouchables of the village. Apparently, he is a traditionalist and resists any form of change initiated by Gandhi (in the novel, Moorthy). In truth, he is an opportunist in disguise who derives maximum work on meagre labour wages. He wears a religious and pious face by smearing holy ashes on his forehead and wearing a face of ***sobriety***. But he is actually the chief agent of colonial administration who mortgages his land to poor peasants at high interests. He frequents the city of Kawar to strengthen his position as the legal agent of the British. Later, when the untouchables burn his house, he flees to Kashipura, a nearby village, and settles there.

Sobriety : the state of being sober.

Patel Range Gowda

This man is the enemy to the village of Kanthapura who acts as the chief executive officer of the village, acts as the mayor, constable and minor

judge to resolve certain trifles among the villagers. He has no genuine dedication towards Gandhian ideologies, but apparently sides with the villagers to reap material benefits. His position makes him lose Bhatta's favour, and Bhatta, for obvious reasons, strips Range Gowda of power. His authority, which he considers as a hereditary right, is acknowledged by the Congress Party. He accepts a minor role of leadership during the processions, for which he is jailed. He returns to Kanthapura when the dust of social and political turmoil settles in the village.

Belur Narahari Sastri

The character of Belur Narahari Sastri is significant in initiating the Harikathas for the villagers. He is patronised by the Maharaja of Mysore. He performs with bells in his ankles and cymbals in his hands, and is shrouded in a shawl gifted by the Maharaja himself. Further, he writes an epic for the Maharaja based on the journey of Rama and Sita, and it serves as an allegory of the story of 'Hindustan'. His narration is a clear pointer towards the fact that the historical greatness of India's freedom struggles is no less than the epic grandeur of the *Ramayana.*

Bade Khan is another enemy to the village. He is a policeman, who belongs to the Muslim community. He is presented as opportunist who is dreaded for his ill-tempered grumblings that leads to his being driven away by the infuriated Kanthapuris. He later seeks refuge in Skeffington Coffee Estate. Bade Khan has an aggressive attitude towards the picketers, and nurtures a distaste towards the Gandhi followers. As the violence intensifies, more policemen come to the village, making bade Khan less prominent and ultimately, his orle in the novel is ***absolved***. The ***delineation*** of the women characters in *Kanthapura* is no less remarkable than that of the male characters. Raja Rao has presented them with a purpose- to portray the mass freedom movement which would have been an inanimate, and incomplete without the participation of these village women.

Absolved : declarecd someone free from guilt, blame or sin.
Delineation : describing or indicating precisely.

Rangamma

A prominent woman character in the story is Rangamma. She is introduced as one of the active participants in the freedom struggle.

Prejudices : opinions on something that is not based on reason or experience.
expounding : presenting and explaining a theory or idea systematically.
Garrulous : extremely talkative.

Generally, she is seen clad in a saree, with a gold belt clasped around her waist. Rangamma happens to be one of those rare women with the knowledge of so many things. She regularly reads the newspaper and keeps herself updated on the latest news and current events in the city. By nature, she is soft-spoken, but stern and decisive. She is gentle, in her behaviour but her knowledge and her wealth cannot have the better of her wisdom. She helps Moorthy in organising his work, in the footsteps of Gandhi. However, she nurtures her own ***prejudices*** when she finds it difficult to believe that the Brahmins and the pariahs are equal. Her meeting with Sankar turns her into a fine speaker and leader. She takes after her father in ***expounding*** the Vedantic texts during the Harikatha evenings. She is instrumental in forming the Sevika Sangh with the womenfolk of the village. Moreover, she advises the women to remain rooted to their household chores, while participating actively in the freedom movements. Raja Rao creates Rangamma as a foil to the ***garrulous*** and noisy Waterfall Venkamma, who has an attitude of vengeance towards her. It is in the simplicity of Rangamma where lies her real strength. She possesses the strength of silent determination and a certain resilience. She even displays much courage to the reader when she gives shelter to Moorthy at a time when the whole village turns against him. Although a childless widow, she is a mother to her siblings and their children.

Ratna:

Ratna, is a poignant character in the story who is portrayed as the most powerfully delineated character. She is influenced by modern ideas, and being a woman she is someone who has never suffered inferiority or shame for anything. She is exposed to modern ideas and the light of education, and therefore refuses to surrender herself to a life of widowhood. She wears bangles, dons colourful sarees, and applies 'kumkum' or vermillion mark on her forehead. Despite the traditional conventions of her society, she aligns with Moorthy for the cause of the nation. Ratna is seen by Moorthy as someone 'feminine and soft', and he suggests Ratna to pray with him for the purification of everyone's sins. When Moorthy is arrested and imprisoned, it is Ratna who vows to

observe a 'thousand-and –eight-flames' ceremony on his release.

According to Achakka's narration, under normal or usual circumstances, Ratna and Moorthy would have been married. But, in Kanthapura, all normal activities were suspended, and all the strength of the people was drained in rescuing India from the British. She rises above physical desires and reaches the level of mutual understanding when the compulsion to actively plunge into the political matters emerge. Ratna's leadership shines through when she shows her worth in her skillful handling of the Sevika Sangh and taking Moorthy's activities in her own hands during his spell in jail. After Ramakrishnayya's death, Rangamma urges Ratna to read out the texts during the Harikatha evenings, while she herself takes the rein of the Gandhian movements in her hands. After Jayaramachar's arrest, Ratna conducts the Harikathas, and after Moorthy is arrested, she leads the women's volunteer corps. Moreover, she inspires and boosts the morale of the depressed women fighters in the village. Ratna achieves maturity when she forbids the people to be delighted on seeing Bhatta's house on fire.

Ratna blows the conch shell to begin the procession of the Satyanarayan Maharaj, and continues blowing till police arrives at the scene and she is locked up in a room. Later, she is also arrested and jailed. All things considered, Ratna exemplifies the enlightened woman of her village who thinks and acts ahead of her time. She is inspired by the Gandhian principles and is ready to walk hand-in-hand with men, as long as her country's freedom is in question. She emerges out of her domestic comforts and takes up the challenges ahead of her with a fighting spirit. When she is released from jail, Ratna is a changed woman. Following her stint in jail, she is humbled after which she moves to Bombay. But, sadly she is disillusioned and disheartened like many of her fellow freedom fighters.

Achakka:

Achakka's character is never isolated, but one finds her presence ever in her narration of others. Her observations on people or events reveal her character and her strength lies in her anonymity. Also, her

purpose is fulfilled when she narrates the events of her village. Her response to the clarion call of Gandhian ideals is visible when she supports the activities of Moorthy. She is a part of the brave resistance of the people and their sufferings that follow. In the whole novel, perhaps, it is Narsamma, Moorthy's mother, who plays a ***tacit*** role. She is naïve and ignorant of the lofty principles and visions that her son cherishes.

Tacit : understood or meant without stating.
Indomitable : impossiblity of defeating or subduing.

It is through the portrayal of Waterfall Venkamma that Rao delineates the jealous, orthodox and petty nature in a woman. A scheming Venkamma mixes lizard poison in Rangamma's food, and is unable to bear the sight of her prosperity. She refuses to join the freedom movements and even suggests Moorthy's ex-communication for mixing with the Pariahs. It is Venkamma who refutes the enlightening ideas of Ratna together with her defiance of an orthodox society. However, it is through Venkamma's dark presence that Ratna's character shines through.

Raja Rao presents the Kanthapura women as various manifestations of Shakti. Shakti's ***indomitable***, almost devastating energy possesses them as they march against the British. When the police try to repress them with sticks, they think and act together as one. As against a typical shy nature and compelling submissiveness that is characteristic of a village woman, these women are capable of becoming freedom fighters when the hour demands. They can become as firm and indomitable as Shakti herself, and resist the evil forces that try to harm their homeland.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is the reincarnation of Gandhi in the novel *Kanthapura*?

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Q 2: Briefly discuss the character of Patel Range Gowda.

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Q 3: Name the child widow in the novel *Kanthapura*. Why does she refuse to give into widowhood?

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Q 4: How does Raja Rao present the various Kanthapura women in the novel?

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9.5 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Raja Rao *Kanthapura* uses the oral technique of narration that aptly suits the ends that he wishes to achieve. In his *Forward* to the novel, Rao confesses that "telling has not been easy" given the English language that was foreign to express and reflect the ***intricacies*** of a rural India. Further, he admits, "We, in India, think quickly, and when we move, it is this swiftness of movement an Indian novelist must capture, he must tell a tale in which episodes follow episodes in an endless succession. *Kanthapura* is just such a tale…" The narrative in *Kanthapura* is very fluid and methodical, one does not encounter any break of tense or time while reading as expected in a stream-of-consciousness novel.



Intricacies : referring to the details.
Reverberates : echoes.

The story of *Kanthapura* is narrated by an old woman of the village, Achakka. Similar narrative technique has been used by Kamala Markandaya in her fiction *Nectar in a Sieve,* where Rukmini, the grandmother tells the protagonist the tale of the family. Achakka, a grandmother and one of the most ancient storytellers in the village, narrates the story of a South Indian village that ***reverberates*** the wake of Gandhian movements in the nation's struggle for freedom. She is seen personally involved with the struggles and this forms the quintessence of the novel which she vividly narrates years later. Thus, the bulk of the novel is what exists in Achakka's memory through which some of the events and characters fade into oblivion, and many others acquire a heightened status given to her imagination. Achakka is blessed with a brilliant narratorial skill, lofty imagination and an eye for detail. Things do not easily escape her notice. Her imagination colours the nation's struggle for freedom and they all come alive. Her own character is revealed

through bits and pieces in her narrative where one finds glimpses of this old woman's life. She is a poor widow with a rich store of stories and tales of gossip, trying to incorporate as many details as possible from her fading memory. Her rustic ways and expression offer the narrative an interesting appeal which is usually not found in writings that adopt a language foreign to the land.

Topography : the arrangement of the physical features of an area.
Idyllic : very peaceful or beautiful.
Revelry : enjoyment of oneself in a lively and noisy.
Similes : a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another.

The story of the village emerges from Achakka's hazy memory where a coherent fabric is woven out, and the final picture is an assembled ***topography*** of the village, its society, its people, their lives, their anxieties and a resurgence of nationalist spirit among them. Achakka's narration is rendered interesting with her canvas peopled with characters, myths and legends mingled together. They are depicted with an immediacy and directness against the backdrop of an ***idyllic*** milieu. The illiterate Achakka draws analogies from day-to-day rustic life- such as the heart is likened to an "April pomegranate", the ***revelry*** meant for a religious occasion is compared to a marriage party, and economic exploitation is projected through an imagined picture of the motherland bleeding to death. The dream of peaceful co-existence is conjured up through the image of a "thousand-pillared temple" and "mustard seeds". Politics is merged with mythology and the image of the Mahatma driving away the British is resembled with Lord Krishna slaying the Kali serpents.

Achakka has an interesting way of addressing people; it is unique and funny at the same time. To illustrate, she has a few acquaintances whom she calls 'Post-office' people, 'Corner-house Moorthy', 'Nose-scratching Nanjamma', 'That-house people', among many other such expressions. Her choice of adjectives to identify individuals is also unique in its own way- Rangamma is a "tight-jawed man", Ratna is "a bangled widow", Dasi is as "pale as a first-calved cow", Seenu is "fire-tailed Hanuman to Moorthy", and the like. Venkamma's hostility is brought alive through various ***similes*** of animals and reptiles. She draws allusions from to mythologies, history and nature to prove her point or whenever she feels that her description is unconvincing and inadequate. She is taken into her own narration so much so that she becomes a living part of it.

There are several passages when poetry quietly seeps into the prose and makes the novel all the more gripping. The procession of the Gods in ***gaiety*** is juxtaposed with the gloomy aura that shadows Kanthapura after Moorthy's arrest. The waters of the sea, as old Achakka describes, are inadequate to wash away the sins of Bhatta; Swaraj is likened to be a deity with three eyes- self purification, peaceful coexistence between the Hindus and the Muslims and Khaddar, and Moorthy, as the "Holy Bull" the vehicle of this deity.

Gaiety : quality of being light hearted and cheerful.

There is a typical tonal variation and flexibility in Achakka's narration that make it appealing to her listeners. It ranges from being prosaic to poetic, from the immediate social to the remote mythological and religious, from personal to political and economic. Her description of the march to the Sheffington Coffee Estate gains a significance through her narration.

Raja Rao deliberate choice of picking up an old village woman as the narrator fulfills several ends. She is a garrulous woman whose narration is often punctuated by gossips, digressions and pure facts. This lends the writer a free play of imagination that colours dry facts with palatable fiction. This also serves his purpose of blending both factual and mythical fragments in a lucid manner. Every single event is rooted in religion in Achakka's narration- Ram, Sita, Krishna, Parvati and Siva. They are not mere cardboard cutouts for Achakka; rather, they are flesh and blood characters for her, sharing the same narrative canvas. For her, Nehru is Bharata to Mahatma who rescues Sita (India) from the shackles of Ravana (the British). For Achakka, Gandhi is a God and Moorthy, his divine reincarnation or avatar.

The second advantage of having Achakka as the narrator is "that the language used by her is of an elemental quality". Her response to things and events is direct and vivid, not ordinary and lacklustre. Therefore, she looks at the moon and calls it "the pumpkin moon", the river as "the stream of milk splashed on a moonlit night" and young boys "as bright as banana trucks". His choice of a narrator brings him closest to the rustic, unrefined, raw speech of South India, even though it is written in English. Achakka's

unusual adjectives come effortlessly to her, given her position as a rustic woman. In keeping with the Indian oral tradition of storytelling, Raja Rao creates his own epic through *Kanthapura.* Thus, this novel celebrates the triumph of narrative over other devices in storytelling.

9.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although *Kanthapura* is a novel that dates back to the pre-independence era, its echoes cut across the contours of time and space and has been received enthusiastically worldwide. Ruvani Ranasinha in the article "Cultural Contestation in the Literary Market Place: Reading Raja Rao *Kanthapura* and Aubrey Menen's *The Prevalence of Witches"* recounts the publication history and critical reception of the novel. It is not only an article drawing a comparison between the two novels, but also a political dossier of the influences that necessitated its publication. Again, in another article, titled, "A Betweenness in the Language of Enactment in Raja Rao *Kanthapura",* by Krishna Barua, is an interesting reading of the language politics adopted by Raja Rao. It must have been difficult for Rao to inculcate the nationistic zeal among the people of India in a 'foreign' language, as he himself admits in his 'Foreword', "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own." He considers English as an 'alien' language, but he is at home when he is writing his novels. His readers are equally at ease when they are reading his fictions. David McCutchion opines about Rao in his article "Indian Writing in English" that he is one among "those Indians who try to create a consciously Indian style".



9.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit will enable you to grasp the general context, content, thematic concerns and major characters in the novel *Kanthapura*. Also, the critical reception together with the style and language will enable you to analyse

the novel from a critical perspective.

Raja Rao is mostly accredited for his capacity to create living characters. Despite being a philosopher in nature, Rao characters are neither philosophical abstractions, nor are they highly symbolical. They are flesh and blood men and women, each with his or her distinctive traits, vices or virtues. Each has his or her individual idiosyncrasies of behaviour and own set of world-views. The characters, even those playing minor roles, come alive in the course of his tales. Rao equal concern is grounded in delineating the characters in their private aspects as well as in relation to their broader surroundings- this achieves the end of reaching impersonal goals that occupy mankind, their relation to public affair, spirituality, politics and religion.



9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bhatnagar, Manmohan Krishna. (ed.) (2000). *Indian Writings in English, Volume 7.* New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributers.
2) Sharma, Kaushal. (2005). *Raja Rao: A Study of His Themes and Technique.* New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.
3) Trivedi, Harish and Richard Allen. (eds.) (2000). *Literature and Nation.* New York: Psychology Press.

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Moorthy is the reincarnation of Gandhi in this novel

Ans to Q No 2: Patel Range Gowda is the enemy to the village of Kanthapura who acts as the chief executive officer of the village, acts as the mayor, constable and minor judge to resolve certain trifles among villagers. He has no genuine dedication towards Gandhian ideologies, but apparently sides with the villagers to

reap materialistic benefits.

Ans to Q No 3: The name of the child widow is Ratna. She is exposed to modern ideas and the light of education, and therefore refuses to surrender herself to a life of widowhood.

Ans to Q No 4: Raja Rao presents the Kanthapura women as various manifestation of Shakti.

9.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the narrative style of Raja Rao in *Kanthapura.*

Q 2: What is the significance of the old narrator, Achakka, in the novel?

Q 3: Bring out the significance of Harikatha in *Kanthapura.*

Q 4: Write a note on the thematic concerns of the novel *Kanthapura.*

Q 5: Define the various characters of the novel *Kanthapura* as listed below:

(a) Moorthy (b) Ratna (c) Rangamma (d) Achakka

Q 6: How is the impact of British rule reflected through the novel? Discuss.

Q 7: Give a brief idea of the narrative techniques used in the novel.

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UNIT 10: VIKRAM CHANDRA: "SHAKTI" I

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Vikram Chandra: The Author

10.3.1 His Life

10.3.2 His Works

10.4 Explanation of the Short Story

10.5 Let us Sum up

10.6 Further Reading

10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.8 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- discuss the biography of the Indian author Vikram Chandra
- gain a brief idea on the author's literary output
- explain the detailed summary of the short story titled "Shakti"
- gain an insight into the development of the story

10.2 INTRODUCTION

Among the new crop of Indian English writers is the noted author Vikram Chandra. Contemporary Indian writing in English or CIWE is defined by the literary works by Indian authors writing in English, which also takes the significant literary contributions of the Indian ***diaspora*** into its fold. Some of the contemporary Indian English writers are: Kiran Desai (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 2006), Amitav Ghosh (*Sea of Poppies*, 2008), Jhumpa Lahiri (*The Lowland,* 2013), Rohinton Mistry (*Family Matters*, 2008), Vikram Seth (*A Suitable Boy*, 1993), Arvind Adiga (*The White Tiger*, 2008) among several others.



Diaspora: refers to a scattered population with a common origin in a smaller geographic area.

The present unit is taken from the critically acclaimed anthology

of short stories titled *Love and Longing in Bombay*. The short-story "Shakti" is in sequential order of the book, with four other short stories titled as "Dharma" (Religion), "Kama" (Passion), "Artha" (Essence) and "Shanti" (Peace). The book won the Commonwealth Writers Prize in the category of Best Book, Eurasia Region in the year 1997. The entire anthology is set against the backdrop of Bombay and unravels the myriad hues of life in this 'city of dreams.' These short stories had also appeared in the pages of The New Yorker and The Paris Review. The text of "Shakti" explores the fierce rivalry between two high-profile families in Bombay and the "narrative forces of history" that seem to have a deciding influence on their future. Before we delve into the text of the story, let us gain an insight into the life and works of the author Vikram Chandra.

10.3 VIKRAM CHANDRA: THE AUTHOR

The following subsections will introduce you to the biography and literary contributions of Vikram Chandra. Although, as a writer he is only three-novels-old, he is undoubtedly a promising talent in the contemporary scenario of modern Indian English writers as also attested by his literary accolades.

10.3.1 His Life

Vikram Chandra was born in the year 1961 in New Delhi to Navin Chandra, a business executive and Kamna Chandra, a playwright and also writer of several screenplays for popular Hindi films. His siblings are Tanuja Chandra who is a successful film maker and screen writer and Anupama Chopra, who is a film critic and consulting editor for a reputed national news channel.

Vikram Chandra received his early education at the prestigious residential school known as Mayo College in Rajasthan. Although, he had entered St. Xavier's College for a short while, he left abroad and graduated from the Pomona College, California specialising in Creative Writing. His creative bent of mind led him to

enroll into film studies at Columbia University, New York but half-way through, he dropped from the programme. Later he completed his post graduation at the Johns Hopkins University in creative writing. He also had a stint as a teacher at George Washington University and also lectured at the University of California, Berkeley. After his formal education, Chandra explored his gift for writing and enjoyed much literary success with the distinct style and range of his short-stories and novels.

His literary merit has been established with the pouring critical acclaim and literary awards and nominations such as the 1995 David Higham Prize for Fiction for his novel, Red Earth and Pouring Rain; 1996 Commonwealth Writers Prize in the category of Overall Winner, Best First Book for the same debut novel and the 1997 Commonwealth Writers Prize in the category of Best Book, Eurasia Region for his short-story collection *Love and Longing in Bombay*. Also, his novel *Sacred Games* was shortlisted for the 2007 Commonwealth Writers Prize in the category of Best Book, Eurasia Region and shortlisted for the Encore Award in 2007.

For the record, he has co-written the Bollywood movie "Mission Kashmir" (2000) with Suketu Mehta. Also, his mother had written the Bollywood films "Prem Rog" (1982) and "1942: A Love Story" (1994) while his sister Tanuja had directed the films Sur and "Sangharsh" (1999). Chandra presently teaches creative writing at the University of California, Berkeley with his wife Melanie Abrams who is also a writer. With his bundle of talent, he also works as a journalist and as a software engineer, computer programmer and computer consultant, dividing time between work and travel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: a. When and where was Vikram Chandra born and brought up?

b. In which city is Vikram Chandra's first anthology of short stories set?

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Q 2: Where was the Indian author Vikram Chandra educated? Discuss briefly.

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Q 3: a. What is Vikram Chandra's present professional engagement?

b. What is the name of his spouse who is also an author?

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10.3.2 His Works

"Vikram Chandra is beginning his writing life already a master." – John Hawkes.

Vikram Chandra's writing career began with his debut novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) which received much critical acclaim. The novel took its name from the title of a poem in *Kuruntokai*, a classical Tamil anthology of romantic poetry. The poem with the central image of the red earth and pouring rain brings alive the fresh monsoon rains, a time when lovers meet. Although, the novel spans across 18th and 19th century India, it is very much a post-modern work presented in the form of captivating stories that also unravel the socio-cultural contexts of India and abroad. It has an interesting narration, where the story is narrated by the 19th century poet and revolutionary named 'Sanjay' and a modern young man 'Abhay'.

The *Literary Review* in its review considered the novel as "memorable and astonishing". While the Indian writer and diplomat

Shashi Tharoor in *Los Angeles Times* reviewed the work as "above all a novel about the telling of stories" penned in prose that employs "***fabulist*** imagery, ***magical realism***, ***political satire*** and the conventions of the ***Kerouac road novel***". It was written over a long stretch of time, during his years at the Johns Hopkins University. In one of his interviews, he spoke of his literary interests saying, "[w]hen I wrote [*Red Earth and Pouring Rain*], when I write now, I want a certain density that encourages savoring. I want entanglement, unexpected connections, reverberations, the weight of pouring rain on red earth. Mud is where life begins." The novel had won the Commonwealth Writers Prize in the category of the Best First Book and also the David Higham Prize for Fiction.

His second anthology of short stories was titled *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997) which again brought him the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book (Eurasia Region) and was short-listed for the Guardian Fiction Prize. The anthology contained five short stories based on various themes such as romantic-love, power, mystery-thriller etc. This work was followed by his novel *Sacred Games* (2008) which in Chandra's own words "is about organised crime and policing and terrorizing in India". One of his recent works is the non-fiction titled *Geek Sublime: The Beauty of Code, the Code of Beauty* (2014) which again clinched the National Book Critics Circle Award and is based on computer programming, coding and the functions of the internet, etc.

As a writer, he confesses of being dependent on typing his fictions on the computer for years, so much so that he finds the experience of writing by hand very difficult. He is an avid reader and in an interview to the *Hindustan Times* he had confessed that he could spend weeks without films but felt "incomplete, somehow barren" without books. It is his vast reading and relevant interaction that shapes his writing, by providing him ideas and directing his imagination towards creative expression.



Fabulist: it refers to the kind of writing with conventions of fables, myths and allegories.

Magical realism: the portrayal of magical or unreal elements as a natural part in an otherwise realistic or mundane environment through literature.

Political satire: the kind of writing that gains entertainment from criticising contemporary politics.

Kerouac road novel: the American poet and author John Kerouac's autobiographical book *On the Road* (1951) based on travels and road trips across America became a genre of its own kind.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: a. What was the debut novel of Vikram Chandra?

b. Name the classical text from which Chandra borrows the title for his book *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995).

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Q 5: What are the literary awards that Vikram Chandra received for his anthology of short stories *Love and Longing in Bombay* ?

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Q 6: What does Vikram's Chandra's *Greek Sublime : The Beauty of Code, the Code of Beauty* deal with ?

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ACTIVITY 10.1

What do you understand by the term 'diaspora' or whom would you describe as a 'diasporic' individual? Make a list of some of the Indian 'diasporic' writers in English by simply getting hold of resources such as library books or simply typing your search on the internet for your quick reference. You may start with some of the names given in the introduction to the unit.

10.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

The main events in the short story are explained under captioned headings in order to help the learner develop a clear idea of the story. This is not only an easy way to remember the sequence of events but also a good way by which the learner can quickly recall or remember and accordingly organise answers during examination time. Now, let us go through the explanation of the text and look into the vivid details of the

short story– "Shakti".

- **Subramaniam's Conversation**

  It all starts with a conversation among a circle of men who are drawn into the story of the rivalry and the final fate of two powerful families known as the Bijlanis and the Boatwallas in the city of Bombay. In his general conversation, the narrator of the story, Subramaniam who is a wise ex-civil servant shifts to the topic of Sheila Bijlani who in her younger days happened to be every man's desire. In contrast to Sheila's modest upbringing, she had grown up to be an accomplished woman and to carve her own position in the elite society of Bombay. After having graduated from St. Xavier's College, she had joined the Air France airlines as an air hostess at a time when "travelling abroad was rare" and she lived a perfectly carefree life.

  To everyone's surprise, she went on to marry T.T. Bijlani, an upcoming businessman whom she met through a common friend Cyrus Readymoney. Within a few years, they had bought a house on Malabar Hill which set many tongues wagging and drew the jealousies of many in the gossip vine. The Boatwalla mansion stood tall on the same hill, just as the reputation of the Boatwallas, being counted among the rich and powerful people in Bombay. Nevertheless, Sheila had set her eyes on the hill right from the beginning and there was no telling how or when she would ascend it which we can decipher from the narration itself: "Sheila knew it was where she had to go to get to the real top, the only one that mattered."

- **Two women meet at a party**

  Dolly Boatwalla had politely dropped several invitations from Sheila the previous year. Sheila on her part had sent invitations every other week to Dolly but what had arrived were only "typed regrets." This was until Sheila was introduced to this proud woman at a plastic-business tycoon's birthday party. Dolly appeared discreet in her mannerisms and carried a sense of superiority to even consider

the newly introduced Sheila as her competitor in the social circuit. In no way could she perceive or even suspect the ambitious zeal that Sheila carried in her whom she simply considered as only an “upstart” in their circles. Shortly, Sheila had joined the Lunch Club, group in which the women met once in a month for lunch at one of the member’s houses, played cards somewhat like the kitty parties, engaged in gossip and left after tea. Although, Dolly loathed to even hear the mention of Sheila’s name, the others liked Sheila and were in good terms with her.

- **Lunch Club at Sheila’s Home**

  So, it happened that it was Sheila’s turn and the Lunch Club had arrived at her place. It was relatively a new place in comparison to the dark and dingy Boatwalla Mansion, although the garden patches was nothing in comparison to the Boatwalla jungles from the colonial times. It was a white painted, two-storied mansion with impressive interiors and decors of Kashmiri rugs, stone-topped dining table, stone and wooden carvings, ikebana flower arrangements, big double doors inlaid with brass etc. Sheila welcomed her friends into her home and introduced them to her son asking him to greet her guests. The household helper Ganga took the young boy to his room. In the meanwhile, Dolly was caught making an absurd expression of pursed nostrils as she took offense at the sight of Sheila’s son. This was just the beginning of several things to come. At that moment, one of the ladies Mani Mennon, who happened to be Sheila’s main supporter, caught up with her to gossip about Dolly. They relished the exotic dishes and dessert prepared by the Bijlani’s cook from Lucknow and their lunch was successful. Following lunch, they lazed around on the sofas to listen to Dolly’s cruel stories and mimicry of others. Thus, the afternoon saw “an enormously successful lunch.”

- **Between Sheila and Ganga**

  After the lunch party, Sheila retires to her office desk (at home) among her books to think about Dolly’s incomparably snobbish

attitude. She thinks to herself that, "it had come to open conflict" and she was not one to "stand losing." At this, Ganga approaches her to ask if the lunch was successful and takes her leave for the day after a short conversation on their children.

In order to make ends meet, Ganga had to work in several households up and down the hill every day and travel home standing on local trains every other evening. She lived in a shack with her daughter Asha like many others in the locality who lived in make-shift shacks. It was a noisy neighbourhood with narrow lanes, gutters (which flooded in the rains). Ganga was to move to a new area where she had found a new plot and intended to build her own *kholi*. For the same reason, she had wanted to approach Sheila that late afternoon to request her for a loan. On finding that Sheila's body language suggested that something was bothering her after the lunch, Ganga decides to bring up the matter at some other favourable time. As Ganga had a month's time in hand from the owner of the plot, she waits for a week before placing her request.

Later, Sheila agrees instantly to help Ganga with a loan without any fuss and decides the terms according to which Ganga was to return the money in six year's time through monthly installments. Thus, the new *kholi* came up on the plot which was small but well-managed by Ganga. But, while she laboured everyday for their survival, here was a disturbing element that invaded their lives.

- **Asha and Girish**

Asha who was coming of age is wooed by a local bootlegging rogue who fell in love with her beauty when she was merely fifteen years of age. His name was Girish and he followed the girl around though she did not take much notice of it as such. The neighbours informed Ganga of the rogue's intentions and at that very moment Ganga perceived the danger of it all. Thus, she decides to take Asha to her maternal grandfather's village (called Saswadi), not wanting to take chances with her daughter's future. Somehow, her daughter Asha is seen to be more relieved than sad after having

escaped from weeks of tension and of being bothered by a dangerous man, ten years older to her. Also, her mother had seen too much of suffering to risk another possible tragedy involving her only child.

When Ganga returns to Bombay, Girish appears out-of-the-blue threatening her to disclose Asha's whereabouts. That he is seriously passionate about the girl becomes clear from his words. It is at that particular moment that Ganga pierces his heart with just the one sensitive question: "Don't you have a mother?" At this, a tear rolls down the boy's cheek- the very rogue who had just threatened a woman, before a few minutes. Thus, she leaves him tongue-tied and sends him home for good.

- **Shanghai Club**

The Bijlanis had diversified their business interests ranging from manufacturing mixies to plastics, transportation to pharmaceuticals. They invested their profits in founding the Shanghai Club, an elite club in Bombay which came to be considered as Sheila's "masterstroke". The front man of the club happened to be Mr. Fong. The idea of the club had sprung from their being blackballed or rather rejected at the Malabar Gymkhana where the Bijlanis had applied for membership. Although, the busy Bijlanis had applied late, their application could have been accepted easily, had there been no fixing in the membership committee. Prior to the blackballing episode, Mr. Boatwalla had suddenly applied for the committee after thirty years of membership with a particular plan in mind. This is why he had secretly passed an anonymous chit of blue paper (which everyone knew was his doing) during the meeting with a scribbled "No" in it. This was Boatwalla's obvious implication of influencing the committee members to blackball or reject the Bijlanis. Thus, this was pre-planned by the Boatwallas and the society now waited for a response from the other side. But months passed by without any form of revenge or retaliation to the blackballing incident but then, suddenly there was talk of the new Shanghai Club. This

was a new agenda for things to come from the Bijlani's end.

Although, the news on the opening of Shanghai Club was on its rounds, not many paid attention until information had it that the Club would admit 'only women' members through exclusive invitation. Thus, the invitations in the form of phone-calls and posted cards went out all over Bombay. And according to information leak, the ten anonymous committee-members of the Club consisted of Sheila Bijlani and Mani Mennon who would shortlist only a total of hundred ladies for membership. Thus, things picked up so quickly that in the narrator's own words "that plain envelope was the most coveted thing in the city." Also, there were instances of calls from councilmen, captains of commerce or even the Chief Minister for offering their valuable reference or recommendations of business heiresses who took advantages of their wide-connections.

The invitations had begun to pour in and there were invitations sent to a policewoman, a deputy commissioner, a documentary filmmaker, several journalists and even a poetess known for her erotic poetry. The selected women members to the club demanded to learn about the selection criteria lest they dropped out of the club. All this while, Dolly pretended that the Club never did or would exist. But as the weeks passed by, the Shanghai Club became the centre of attraction and the subject of discussion. It was to open on the twenty sixth of January that year but many admired the fact that Dolly Boatwalla seemed unaffected and indifferent like "a stately ship in sail, constant and beautiful and unmoved by choppy waters."

- **Bijlani brings in News**

It was the evening of fifteenth January when Bijlani came in with an exciting story about his meeting with Freddie Boatwalla at the Dolphin Club. Bijlani had gained much financial success that earned the insecurities of Freddie Boatwalla. Surprisingly, he approached Bijlani that evening for a brief conversation over a couple of drinks. At that moment, even Bijlani felt a sense of "bilelike envy" looking at Freddie who broke the ice or in other words initiated the conversation by

complimenting his recent Pharmaceutical deal with a French company. Bijlani knew that recently the Boatwalla Shipping Company had some ups and downs but had no idea why the business magnate had suddenly approached him. Then, Freddie abruptly excuses himself and takes leave saying "Can't stay away. Family. You know how these women are." But before leaving, he puts in a word asking Bijlani to resubmit his membership application which he would take care of the next time around.

Following this brief conversation, Bijlani excitedly narrates all that had taken place that evening to Sheila which she found very interesting. It was not a surprise that news of T.T and Freddie's meeting had already spread half an hour after it had taken place. This made everyone speculate about the possible discussion. Perhaps, it was a fresh offer, some kind of a deal or negotiation in exchange of another. This is why Dolly looked forward to receiving the white envelope soon. As the Shanghai opening was close at hand, everyone was caught busy with prior appointments and tight schedules at work.

- **A Telephone Call**

  Nothing happens until the 23rd when there is a phone call from Dolly Boatwalla. Both Sheila and Dolly exchange courtesies and Dolly brings up the topic of Freddie's meeting with T.T. to finally arrive at her main question: "have you heard anything about this Shanghai affair?" And this being the moment that Sheila had waited for– she poses and utters a polite "No". You will notice that earlier it was a similar "No" written by Freddie in a small chit of paper during the committee meeting because of which the Bijlani's membership had suffered a direct cancellation. Now it was Sheila's turn to give Dolly a taste of her own medicine or in other words teach her a good lesson. Mani Mennon who was just beside Sheila looking at the invitation list that afternoon enjoys a good laugh at Dolly's last-minute desperation and embarrassment.

- **Shanghai Club Grand Opening**

  The Shanghai club was open to welcome the invited guests and

members that evening. The club was too small and the arrangements were ordinary in terms of the money poured in for the affair with ordered Danish- style furniture from Bhendi Bazaar, diminutive drinks and dim lamps. But the place was charged and rather transformed by everyone's excitement that had built up for the evening. Sheila wore a green sari and sat in the middle of the room with her husband. There was a "pleasant chatter" while light strains of music was playing in the background. Much was written and photographed on the Shanghai affair, yet it could not capture the newness and excitement of that evening. It felt very new and at least six affairs were known to have started that evening. In the words of the narrator: "for a few hours there was nothing else to do, it was the cusping of time and place and history and power an effort that lifted the Shanghai Club that night into romance and made it unutterably golden." Everyone thought that Sheila was now "invincible". But as all stories have an interesting twist, Sanjeev was to unknowingly prove his mother wrong on being triumphant over the Boatwallas.

- **Sanjeev Bijlani and Roxanne Boatwalla**

Sanjeev studied at the Doon School and went on to study at Yale where he developed his interests in photography and art history. He returned from the states and was now a poet who was adored like a jewel by his mother. But just as the narrator says, like most parents she never thought her son could possibly fall in love. After his return, Sanjeev felt lonely and disoriented with his own city that appeared so extraordinary in his childhood days. He wandered around the place to reconnect and feel at home in his own city and happened to drop in at the Pastry Palace. It was speculated that Sanjeev had met Roxanne, Dolly's daughter there after a gap of six long years and that love had blossomed between the two. While some said that it was the "narrative forces of history," and the inevitable scheme of things with the "ferocity of the feud" and others merely considered it as "merely love."

Initially Sheila had no idea until she found out that at the end

of summer, Sanjeev had declared a marriage proposal to the girl. He had even asked Roxanne to make it known to her mother. It was not like Sanjeev did not have an idea of the looming danger at hand but inspite of that he was optimistic about his future thinking that wars were fought mostly due to veiled ignorance. This had baffled Sheila but she knew that she had to do something about it. This was Sheila’s turn to make calls to Dolly but the first few unanswered calls made it clear that this time Dolly knew what to do and quickly made her departure to London with her daughter in tow. This had Roxanne in tears while the story of her heart break “passed from phone to phone” Dolly’s two other daughters were married and settled in London and Chicago and there was no telling of what would befall Roxanne.

- **The Wait and the Visit**

  Sheila was sure that Dolly would not leave her husband alone for too long and would surely return and so she waited for her. In the meanwhile, she looked after her love-sick and suffering son who only longed for Roxanne. Sheila knew that asking her son to forget his girl was similar to asking him to forget his own childhood. She was almost into a trap after all the years of personal victory. They had information from their connections at customs and through the green channel they received information that Dolly Boatwalla was back in Bombay. Thus, when Dolly did return after almost two months, Sheila waited for forty eight hours before deciding to visit the Boatwalla Mansion.

  In all the years that she had lived in the hill, this was the first time that she had actually literally seen the mansion at a close proximity. The gates were made of wrought iron with a regal coat-of –arms that guarded the sprawling lawns with high walls, with the standing mansion bearing tall white column, ornate windows and fading grandeur. Sheila was received by a well-dressed but silent maid who went in to inform of the visitor. Although, Sheila waited by the door the maid returned saying that Madame was not at

home and thus, she had no option but to leave. As Sheila's Mercedes pulled away, she had a clear strategy in her head which was to buy the mansion sooner or later and that she would also buy their declining shipping business as well. This she thought was only a matter of time and history.

- **Sheila's Strategy**

That very night, Sheila and her husband sat figuring out the exact liquidity of their money. She saw now how hard cash could be "flowing", "unpredictable and underground" which could put her strategy in place. Her money could turn into a upward "torrent" that would trap the hilltop and ruin the Boatwalla pride and property. The Bijlanis calculated all the wealth that they had spent their lifetime accumulating. That night, Sheila pictured their companies like pieces on a chessboard and planned on her next moves. She had a sleepless night, picturing round shapes of zero and remembering the lesson her father had taught her that zero simply meant nothing.

But when they had begun their bid on Boatwalla Shipping International & Co, she found that there was no pleasure in such a game. Yet she reminded herself that it was afterall for her son. Sheila was at her wit's end, feeling completely lost and T.T. was uneasy with the change of things. On the other hand, the lover in young Sanjeev was lost in pouring his sorrow into pages of poetry. During this confusing phase, Ganga comes to meet Sheila.

- **An Invitation on Cards and the Takeover**

It was a formal visit. Ganga brought Asha along who had just completed her nurse training the previous week. Sheila received Ganga's invitation to her daughter's wedding who was engaged to be married to a school teacher. She assured Ganga that they would certainly grace the occasion. For some reason, Sheila suddenly remembered her younger days when she experienced the first fear and excitement on an Air France flight take off the ground. Sheila was taken back to her hey days when she would travel to the airport with her colleagues, enjoying the promises of flying in the

skies and the sing-songs on their way back from work.

But coming back to the present, she feels that things had to be set right as the takeover of the property did not go according to the Bijlani’s plan. By some turn of fate, the Boatwallas were suddenly in grip of their situation which also revealed that they had quick political connections and solutions. Yet, the Bijlanis at least welcomed the revelations of the Boatwallas’ political networks in order to test their own political strength and connections. In a matter of few weeks, it became clear that the Boatwalla International was “even more over extended” than the Bijlanis had assumed. Just when it seemed that the Boatwallas would surrender or be reduced to nothing, there was a sudden flow of money that once again strengthened their position. Freddie made appearances on “Business Plus”, gave interviews of their come-back and Sheila now knew that the Boatwallas had lots of borrowed money at “un-heard of rates of interest.” And although she tried to find out and had exhausted her intelligence sources all over the city, she could not find out who had lent such huge sums of money. There was literally no information.

If they could gain an access to this information they could politically interfere or take resort to legal means to bring down their sudden prosperity. It was well-known that once in a similar crisis the Boatwallas had managed to cleanly purchase the entire lending corporation and grow from strength to strength. Thus, the narrator says “Boatwalla International stayed perversely healthy, like a patient sprung from the deathbed and made up with rouge.” The Bijlanis were now a distressed team of two who tried to deal with their failed plans.

- **Asha’s Wedding Ceremony**

The Bijlanis arrived at the wedding ceremony and received Ganga’s warm welcome. The marriage hall was decorated with ribbons with a *mandap* in the middle and two pairs of ornate chairs placed at opposite ends – one for the wedded couple and the other for the esteemed guests, the Bijlanis. In the marriage, Asha looked very

pretty and plump by the ceremonial fire with her groom and Sheila nodded at her lovingly, thinking of her own son Sanjeev. In all those years that was the first time that Sheila had seen Ganga sit still and seemingly at rest. Sheila was lost in her thoughts, looking into the ceremonial fire and listening to the priest's chanting. After the ceremony they joined the wedding feast and were served among other guests. In keeping with their traditional custom, Ganga began to distribute gifts among the womenfolk at the wedding and approached Sheila with the gift of a traditional sari. Sheila became emotionally touched by this gesture.

And while T.T. discussed the stock market scandals with a circle of men which included Ganga's father, Sheila found a private moment with Ganga. They had known each other for a long time and liked each other as well to be able to share a frank conversation. Sheila asked, "How did you manage this, Ganga?" to which she replied that she had sold her *kholi* for everything!

There was music playing from actor Amitabh Bachchan's movie and children were running about the place. Sheila thanked Ganga for the customary gift.

- **An Interesting Revelation**

During their conversation, Sheila finds out that Ganga had worked for the Boatwallas too and for longer than for the Bijlani's. Similar to several other homes on the hill, Ganga worked at the Boatwalla Mansion, doing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen. Thus, in the middle of their conversation, she narrates of once having overheard Dolly Boatwalla discuss her daughter in London, as she had developed an ear for the English language for the past twenty years while having worked for Sheila. Ganga is able to figure out certain words spoken in English and reveals of having overheard some conversation on the 'American business' and some 'Hong Kong Bank'. This catches Sheila's attention in an instant and she asks Ganga for the exact name of the Bank, which Ganga remembers as Foo Ga or Fu Quay Bank.Thus, this becomes a vital

piece of information to Sheila.

After having taken leave, Sheila takes her husband’s hand in silence and looks out of the car window in her own thoughts. She wonders how Bombay was still noisy at night with people everywhere. Outside on the road, Sheila notices a family sitting on the roadside, huddled around a cooking pot on fire which lights up their faces. She has something cooking in her mind too.

- **Anticipation of Things to Come**

Back at home, she did not reveal anything to T.T. and held back the piece of significant information for the while. Sheila was all awake and went up to the roof in the dark moonless night. There was a gentle breeze on the terrace and she sat on a garden chair remembering her father. Her father Kishen Chand was a hard-working person who kept his shop open till late in the evening and opened early morning. As a child she always thought her father to be a simple man. He took the family to trips out-of-station every once in a year. She remembered of one such childhood trip when she had woken up to find her father sitting by the river’s edge. She had walked through a garden to get down to the edge and sit beside him. Her father had smiled at her and looked into the distance on the waters. His family had suffered the atrocities of Partition, a time when he had to leave half his murdered family in Lahore, his “beautiful Lahore”.

She remembered asking her father if the river was a holy one and he had said it must have been or that it rather was a holy river. There was smell of smoke which her father had associated with burnt wood, and in his stream of thoughts, drew further similarities to cooking fires, hearth fires, hay fires, funeral fires, ceremonial fires, waste fires, home fires, factory fires; fires everyday everywhere. This sudden memory brought tears to her eyes as she looked at the golden sea beyond. The sun came up and it was a new day again. Sanjeev came up to her and sat beside her to ask her where she had been the previous night. He thought she must have been attending one of her parties but she ruffled his hair

saying: "Sanju, you're my son, but it would take a lifetime, two lifetimes, to tell you all the things you don't know about the world.

Then she went to her bedroom and gently prodded her husband from his sleep saying they still had some work to do. T.T in a daze woke up and followed her to their office. And just like a playful, naughty child Sheila grinned, it was clear as she was up to something, some clever strategy of hers. She looked at T.T and picking up the phone said: "I thought we might make a few calls to Hong Kong."

- **The Grand Wedding: A Double Ceremony**

The next thing that we know is that there was a grand wedding in the honour of Sanjeev and Roxanne. Both the feuding families came together because of the two lovers which again would not have been possible without Sheila's intelligent lead. The narrator in the closing of his tale discusses how speculations were not centred on the beautiful couple or the grand scale in which the wedding was held; nor was the centre of speculation on the couple's honeymoon foreign trip the sight of celebrities or the friendship between Sheila and Dolly. Rather, the narrator recalls that there was only the lucid memory of the relatives on both the sides looking at each other in silence, not knowing what to say or do and attending the double wedding (one for each religion as the Bijlanis were Hindu and the Boatwallas were Zoroastrians by religion.

On one side were Sheila's aunts dressed in bright saris and diamonds; and on the other side were Dolly's relatives. In the narrator's words, "Yet there had been that strange silence, maybe it was just that nobody knew what to do with each other." The marriage brought a great change and as a result of it there was also the formation of the Bijlani-Boatwalla Bombay International Trading Group and the success stories of BBBI which became clichéd with the other news stories like the fall of the Yashwant Rao Ghatge government, Agarwal loan scandal and the sudden rise of Gagganbhai Patel among others. Thus, the narrator winds up the story on a dramatic note in which we find that Sheila ultimately

settles her son's future without affecting their reputation or losing their prowess and power. It was this 'Shakti' or true 'power' of transforming even the most difficult circumstances into grand success that makes Sheila a truly powerful figure in the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Who was the narrator in the short story titled "Shakti"?

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Q 8: What was Sheila's occupation after she had completed her graduation?

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Q 9: Briefly describe the Shanghai Club decors on the evening of its grand opening.

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Q 10: Where did Sanjeev receive his education? What were his main interests?

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Q 11: Briefly describe the Boatwalla Mansion.

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Q 12: What were the associations that Sheila's father had drawn in relation to the wood smoke?

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Q 13: What was the name of the newly merged company of the Boatwallas and the Bijlanis?

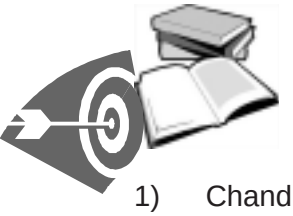
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10.5 LET US SUM UP

After having read the unit, the learner will be more conversant with the discussion on the biography and literary credentials of the Indian author Vikram Chandra. The introduction to the unit provides the learner with a brief idea on the contemporary Indian writers in English, the content of the Chandra's second anthology and a gist of the prescribed text of "Shakti." The detailed explanation will provide you with a clear idea of the story and enable you to discuss it in your own words. The learners are, however, advised to read the text thoroughly so as to grasp and examine its various nuances. The unit shall further help you in exploring other important aspects to be discussed in the next unit.



10.6 FURTHER READING

1) Chandra, Vikram. (2010) *Love and Longing in Bombay*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Website of British Council: literature.britishcouncil.org/vikramchandra

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. Vikram Chandra was born in the year 1961 in the city of New Delhi.

b. Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* is set in Bombay.

Ans to Q No 2: Vikram Chandra was educated at the residential school Mayo College, Rajasthan. Although he had entered St. Xavier's College for a short time, he went on to graduate from the Pomona

College, California specialising in Creative Writing. Following this, he had enrolled in the film school at Columbia University but half-way through the course he dropped from the school and later received his post graduation at Johns Hopkins University.

Ans to Q No 3: a. He presently teaches creative writing at the University of California, Berkeley. He also works as a journalist and as a software engineer, computer programmer and consultant.

b. The name of his spouse is Melanie Abrams who also teaches creative writing at the University of California Berkeley.

Ans to Q No 4: a. Vikram Chandra's debut novel is the critically acclaimed novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995).

b. It takes its name from the similar title of a poem in a classical Tamil anthology of romantic poetry known as *Kuruntokai*.

Ans to Q No 5: The anthology of short stories *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997) brought him the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book (Eurasia Region) and was short-listed for the Guardian Fiction Prize.

Ans to Q No 6: Computer programming, coding and the functions of the internet, etc.

Answer to Q 7: The narrator of the story was referred to as Subramaniam who was also a wise ex-civil servant

Answer to Q 8: After having graduated from St. Xavier's College, she had joined the Air France airlines as an air hostess at a time when "travelling abroad was rare" and lived a perfectly carefree life.

Answer to Q 9: The Shanghai club was too small and the arrangements were ordinary in terms of the money poured in for the affair with ordered Danish- style furniture from Bhendi Bazaar, diminutive drinks and dim lamps

Answer to Q 10: Sanjeev studied at the Doon School and went on to study at Yale where he developed his interests in photography and art history. He returned from the states and was now a poet who was adored like a jewel by his mother.

Answer to Q 11: The Boatwalla Mansion was a huge residence with

sprawling lawns and even jungles. The gates were made of wrought iron with a regal coat of arms, that guarded the sprawling lawns with high walls, with the standing mansion bearing tall white column, ornate windows and fading grandeur.

Answer to Q 12: There was smell of smoke which her father associated with burnt wood, and in his stream of thoughts, mentions cooking fires, hearth fires, hay fires, funeral fires, ceremonial fires, waste fires, home fires, factory fires; fires everyday everywhere.

Answer to Q 13: The formation came to be known as the Bijlani-Boatwalla Bombay International Trading Group.



10.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a brief biography on the Indian author Vikram Chandra.

Q 2: Discuss the literary works by the author Vikram Chandra.

Q 3: Briefly discuss contemporary Indian writing in English.

Q 4: Discuss the Indian diasporic writers in English by highlighting some of their major works.

Q 5: Give a detailed explanation of Vikram Chandra's "Shakti".

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UNIT 11 : VIKRAM CHANDRA: “SHAKTI” II

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Major Themes

11.4 Major Characters

11.5 Style and Language

11.6 Critical Reception

11.7 Let us Sum up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.10 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- highlight the significant themes pertaining to the story “Shakti”
- discuss the main characters of the story
- analyse the use of style and language in the text
- discuss the critical reception of the work
- further explore the other works of the author

11.2 INTRODUCTION

The previous unit contained an introduction to the life and works of the author Vikram Chandra, along with a detailed summary of the short story “Shakti”. In the present unit, we will take up the short story for a textual analysis through which the relevant themes, characters, style and language together with the critical reception of the work will be highlighted for a detailed study. Let us first have a look at the major themes of the story.

11.3 MAJOR THEMES

- **Symbolic Title**

  If we examine the story carefully, we will certainly find several examples of symbolism. But, from your reading, don't you think that the title of the short story is symbolic in itself? We already have learnt that there are a total of five short stories in Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* from which the present short-story has been taken. Apart from being in a sequential order with the rest of the short-story titles in the book i.e., "Dharma", "Kama", "Artha" and "Shanti", the title "Shakti" appears to be appropriate and very well suited to the story centered on the discourse of power. The Sanskrit word 'Shakti' defines both inner and outer 'power' and 'strength'. And only the right use of power enables one to grow from strength-to-strength as we also find in the final outcome of the story.

- **Power and Position**

  The thread of the story is wound around the constant tussle for 'power' and 'position' in society. The world of the powerful, ***thrive*** on ***cut-throat competition*** where only the fittest survive. The word "Shakti" means 'strength' and here in the story we find that it is the 'powerful' and those within the reach of higher or elite class and society, who gain wide-access to the roads-to-riches and to the world of fame and power. While 'power' has a positive side, it also has a negative side to it. Power used wisely can bring prosperity but misused power has a tremendous destructive potential.It is said that with 'great power comes great responsibility' and indeed, both power and responsibility make a great combination and go hand-in-hand.

  Here in the story, two warring families could have easily ruined the other through the misuse of power whether it was through political maneuvering, secret networking, unhealthy competition ego clashes or even ***defamation***. But the protagonist Sheila knows her



Thrive: grow or develop well, or vigorously.
Cut-throat competition: fierce or ruthless competition.
Defamation: to damage one's good image.

Rivaled: competing.
Sophisticated: having worldly experience and refined tastes in matters of culture and fashion.
Metropolitan: relating to a metropolis or a modern city.
Superficial: existing or happening at or on the surface; apparent rather than real.
Façade: a deceptive outward appearance.

mind and takes control of a crisis that would have escalated and even harmed two ***rivaled*** families. The hill in which the Boatwalla Mansion is located is symbolic of the pinnacles of success achieved by the Boatwallas. In a similar manner, the Bijlani Mansiom located somewhere in the middle of the hill is again symbolically suggestive of the heights of success that was 'yet to be achieved' by the Bijlanis. The Bijlanis emerge as powerful but do not merely desire power and position at the cost of their child's future which is why by the end of the story we find that they conquer the heights to power with an intelligent decision and clever move.

- **Bombay City and High Society**

A reading through the story draws our attention to the author's portrayal of the elite classes and the so called 'high society' in the metropolitan city of Bombay. It not only reflects the ways of the rich and the powerful but also exposes their falsities, rivalries, jealousies and other such unrefined qualities. The story from the start to the end is replete with representations of the social circles, resourceful connections, intelligent networks and powerful characters of the ***sophisticated*** modern ***metropolitan*** life.

The elite class is considered as the crème of society who are well-established and influential, socially-networked and powerful, rich and sophisticated as represented through the relevant characters in the story. While reading the short story, you will come across various aspects connected to the elite life such as the prevalence of social circles, sophisticated lifestyles, posh localities, high-profile parties, expensive fashionable cars, cricketing-royalties, grand properties, international collaborations, political connections, information networks, media-coverage, gossip vines in other words gossip-driven stories or rumour-mills, open-conflicts, family or professional rivalries, high competitions for status and power. Through the story, we find that the modern fabric of the elite society is much ***superficial***, as though they were living in a ***façade*****,** for the reason that they tend to be blinded by their position and power in society.

The story is dotted with places that almost conjure up the city of Bombay in our mind and many have exotic names which are easily recognised as posh locales to consider a few: try to think of the names such as the residential areas of the Boatwalla Mansion, Bijlani Mansion, Boatwalla Jungles; places of sports and recreation such as the Lunch Club, Shanghai Club, Dolphin Club, Napier Bar, Pastry Palace, Malabar Gym, Racecourse etc. In contrast, we have the mention of some forgotten corners of the city such as the poor slums of Dharavi, the makeshift shacks in migrant localities, the traffic and noisy streets of Bombay.

- **Women and Power**

The Goddesses with divine powers are worshipped in India and perhaps owing to the same factor, women are held as powerful and possessing "Shakti" or power. In common Hindi ***parlance***, we find the word "Nari-Shakti" which in other words means 'women-power', a form of divine blessing. In the story, more than the men we find that the women steal the big-picture, where they are portrayed as intelligent, practical and competitive. While the two powerful women, Sheila and Dolly are seen to compete for power over the other, with their flaring egos, we also find the two in the role of protecting mothers. An inkling of this is found in the very line that states thus, "[w]e thought that Sheila was invincible, but we had forgotten that even the strongest will in the world is easily defeated by its own ***progeny***." To quote the narrator, "[s]he [Sheila] already understood that getting what you wanted from the world meant that your own struggles became grubby and irrelevant to your children, which was as it should be, that was after all why you gave them what you didn't have."

Parlance: a way of using words associated with a particular subject.
Progeny: offspring referring to one's children.

Although, Sheila was almost close to crushing the Boatwalla business empire, she spared a thought for her son who was in love with Boatwalla's daughter. Although, Sheila should have been furious to learn about her son's choice, owing to the "ferocity of the feud", she respects his choice and even considers ways to approach the girl's family. Similarly, Dolly Boatwalla who fears her daughter's fate

Strategy: a plan designed to achieve a particular long-term aim.
Doting: being excessively fond of someone.

immediately takes her girl abroad. Sheila takes the final sweep when she brings the two families together with her clever ***strategy*** and even causes the expansion of their business through a joint venture i.e. BBBI.

Also, we find that the hardworking maid, Ganga who has a daughter to look after is practical enough to survive independently on her own. By the dint of her hard work and foresight, she not only ensures a good future for her daughter but also expands her earning sources by buying a large shed in Dharavi where she plans to put in a cloth-reclamation factory. Ganga takes her daughter to her native village in order to protect her from the rogue Girish, she also equips her with education and marries her off to a school teacher. At the same time, she does well for herself and expands her income sources in order to be self-sufficient. Thus, we see that the women characters in the story are projected in a strong light and do very well for their families and for themselves. They are fiercely competitive in the social circles and professional lives, but are ***doting*** mothers who protect and keep their children away from harm or danger. We find that it is indeed the women characters who create complications in their regular life but who at the same time also resolve entire problems and crisis with their intelligent solutions. Women make powerful initiators, mediators and even negotiators as also reflected in the story.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the names of the short story titles in *Love and Longing in Bombay*?

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Q 2: What is meant by the word "Shakti"? How is it connected to the short story?

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Q 3: What are some of the various aspects related to the elite life?

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11.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

It is through the portrayal of the interesting characters that we are able to imagine the plot, context, issues, crises and turn of events in the gripping story and receive a slice of the elite social life in Bombay which is also known as 'Mayanagri' in Hindi almost translated as the 'City of Dreams'. The following major and minor characters are listed below in the order of their appearance in the story.

To begin with, the narrator of the story is an old retired ex-civil servant (as we learn from Chandra's book) who is introduced here as Subramaniam. In turn, Subramaniam takes over the narration and introduces us to Sheila Bijlaniwho is the beautiful and accomplished wife of T.T. Bijlani, a successful businessman. The other characters are Cyrus Readymoney, a common friend of the Bijlanis through whom Sheila and T.T meet and later enter into a relation. The centre of attraction in the story is Dolly Boatwalla, a fashionable and high profile socialite,wife of the business tycoon Freddie Boatwalla. The Bijlani's have one child Sanjeev who grows up to be a poet and fall in love with Roxanne, the youngest daughter of the Boatwallas.

Ganga is the long-time maid at the Bijlani household who is a widow with a daughter named Asha. Mani Mennon is Sheila's supportive friend and committee member of the Bijlani ventured Shanghai Club. Meenu is Ganga's concerned neighbour and Girish, the local bootlegging rogue is Ganga's major worry as he desperately loves her daughter. Mr. Fong is the front-man of the Shanghai Club which was to have a grand opening with invitations to selected personalities in the social circles of Bombay. Bubbles Kapadia of the Ganesha Mills Kapadias and Ramani Ranjan Das, an erotic poetess were both invited members of the Shanghai Club. Also, there is a short appearance of the Bijlani's ***chauffeur*** whose name



Chauffeur: an appointed driver especially for the rich and important people.

is Gurinder Singh. Let us now, look at the detailed character sketches of the major characters in the short story.

- **Sheila**

  Sheila Bijlani was a beautiful, independent, intelligent and a strong-willed woman who was envied by many other women who gossiped about her humble upbringing in her absence. She was married to the businessman T.T. Bijlani and had a young son. She looked after the accounts of their business and as we find, her decisions counted when it came to any sort of problems. She was a stronghold of the family and her husband relied on her abilities. Sheila in the description of the narrator was always a glamorous woman, right from her school days. She was a shopkeeper's daughter and is remembered as the "poor girl" who was eyed as having the "best legs" in Walsingham School. After graduating from St. Xavier's College, she went on to work for Air France as an air hostess. In the words of the narrator, she perfectly fitted the job with her grace and elegance. This was at a time when flying abroad was not a common thing to do. Mostly graduates from St Xavier's who were "killingly beautiful" joined the aviation industry among whom Sheila was the most chic of them all. She was wooed by rich princes, *Jamsahebs* and actor's sons and many men ***pining*** for her beauty. Although everyone expected her to marry some kind of a prince, she tied the knot with T.T. Bijlani who was not an established businessman at that time. The rumours flew that she had married him for his money but had money been her only interest, she could have easily chosen some other rich person. She had made the first move in their relation and the silent Bijlani counted his blessings. Although, many made fun of them, the two married and even brought a flat on Malabar Hill.

  Pining: to long for someone.

  She was patient and had the steadiness to invest and wait for their own home to come up and now her eyes were set on a long-term goal to take over the Boatwalla Mansion which stood on top of the hill. Thus, she was fiercely competitive and ambitious in her

head, not to mention her calculative vision. This was perhaps, because she was ***ridiculed*** by everyone for her humble background, suppressed by jealousies of other women who opined that Sheila was not "[their] type." But gradually, she made fast-friends; she threw cocktail parties, lunches and breakfasts, thus, making her entry into the elite social circle. Most of the women liked Sheila for her money and her witty ***demeanour*** but she was kind and hospitable to them all.

Ridiculed: to mock or make fun of someone else.
Demeanour: outward behaviour or bearing.
Bias: an opinion or tendency to be strongly for or against a person or thing.

She was also very kind and helpful to her maid Ganga. It took her six months, compelling Ganga to have her lunch at their place before leaving to work in several other households, the entire day. She even gave her a loan during her hour of need. What is noticeable is that she did not suffer any sense of ***bias*** towards those people who were lower in social position like the other rich women did. In fact, even in her own hour of crisis, she attended the wedding ceremony of Ganga's daughter with Bijlani. There is also this instant when Ganga offered their customary gift to Sheila, a gesture which touched her emotionally and in fact, took her a moment to regain her composure. Therefore, although it was true that Sheila was a woman of business who had to have her calculations in place, she was also a kind woman at heart. She knew when to put her best step forward, an instance being her triumphant denial to Dolly about the Shanghai Club. But then again, she knew when to give up her game and turn humble, as we find in the instance when she decides to visit Dolly to discuss on their children's affair and marital prospects.

There are some instances in the story, when Sheila remembered her father and his words of wisdom. This often made the otherwise practical woman an emotionally wise one. She was a doting mother who was almost his shield and stood between her son and the world. Also, she was a loving wife who was her husband's strength at all times. Sheila made no pretences like the other ladies and she was her natural self with the same irresistible charm and beauty of her younger days. She was intelligent, knew how to extract

information and make her next moves like a winner does in a chess game. And indeed she played her cards right, which is why she decided to answer the Boatwallas rejection with the launching of the new and happening Shanghai Club. She was not one to lose or give up easily, with anyone who rivaled and competed with her on equal terms. That was the only mantra of reaching the top of both the business and the social world. But even when Sheila is almost on the verge of succeeding over the Boatwallas’, she does not lose her sensitivity as a mother. In fact, she finds it ***repelling*** to take-over the Boatwallas’ family business. And this is the reason that her good sense prevails and makes an intelligent decision and emerges triumphant in her role as a mother, a wife, a business woman and a powerful individual.

Repelling: driving or forcing away.

- **Bijlani**

T.T. Bijlani was a businessman who began with manufacturing mixer grinders, plastics, pharmaceuticals and transportation. He has studied in America and returned to start his own business in Bombay, where he first met Sheila Bijlani. By nature he was a very quiet person, the kind who had silently been led into love and marriage. Also, it was because of his desire to start his own business and his wife’s faith in him that he had achieved much success. Over the years, he had carved his own niche in the world of business and with his “many-faceted magnitude” acquired a name for himself. But although he was successful, his rival Freddie Boatwalla was someone to watch out for because the Boatwallas owned an established family business and were very influential people. Thus, there are instances when we find that he suffered a sense of insecurity and “bile-like envy” towards his business rival Freddie.

Apart from business there was nothing personal against each other like their wives did and even when Freddie approached him at the Dolphin Club, they simply shared a casual business-talk. It was almost like a custom for T.T to be by himself, enjoying his drink on the balcony of the Napier Bar above the Dolphin Club swimming

pool. He was a large figure dressed in regal silk suits bearing a "dense, magisterial composure". That he shared a transparency with his wife whether it was business, accounts or other personal matters was evident throughout the story. Together, T.T. and Sheila made a good team and settled everything in the best of interests.

- **Sanjeev**

Sanjeev was a sensitive and a romantic young man who was doted by his mother. He studied in a residential school at Doon and then pursued his higher studies abroad. There he developed an interest in art and photography and indulged in skiing. He was a handsome and attractive young boy with a "look of sad nostalgia" who happened to be a heart-throb among the girls. He had returned from America to become a poet. The narrator describes him as indolent and a young man who wore a faint smile but could be forgiven for his excellent poetry. This young man was to become the ultimate reason behind the coming together of the two rivaled families. After his return from abroad, he felt the need to step out and draw back his old familiarity with the city which was precisely the time when he met Dolly's daughter Roxanne and fell in love.

He had made up his mind to even marry her and asked the girl to let her mother know all about it. There was an air of seriousness in him, the kind that invited Mani Mennon's words of wonder who said: "[y]ou know he looks always like he's gotten off a horse." His mother doted on him as if he were a prince being protective towards him and his well-being, so much so, that gave up all her ambitious plans to take his words seriously. This was an optimistic young man who knew nothing of the ***shrewd*** practical world and stood optimistic about the future. In the words of the narrator "he had the essential belief that the wars of the past were fought because of benighted ignorance" and that all would be set right in the end. He was serious in love and even when women, old and young pined after him, he longed for his only love. By nature, he was quiet and aloof but all-in-all he was a well-brought up young man.

Shrewd: having or showing good judgement.

- **Dolly**

Dolly Boatwalla was a known name in the social circles, business worlds and party circuits. She came across as a proud, egoistic, conceited a mean person who dominated the scene wherever she went. Even after having received several invitations from Sheila, Dolly was too proud to oblige so easily. She is described as "horsy-looking" with thick hair and sharp features, a long bony frame exuding an elegance and careless charm that could not be imitated. Although, she played by the "rules of diplomacy", an almost artificial politeness with Sheila in particular, there are many instances when she had almost expressed her dislike openly i.e., when she first saw Sheila's son Sanjeev. Dolly first began a cold-war with Sheila after having finally accepted her invitation. Dolly suffered a superiority complex and was the kind who could easily ***patronise*** others with her open ***sarcasm***.

Patronise: treating someone in a way that suggests they are inferior.
Sarcasm: a way of using words that implies the opposite of what they mean, so as to upset or make fun of someone.
Snobbish: a person who believes that their tastes in a particular area are superior to others.

Dolly was a good mimic and had a good sense of comic timing but used it to make fun of others. She not only had the habit of cutting rude remarks but also telling cruel stories about others who were stupid, ignorant, clumsy or embarrassing. She had a "vivacity that came from her intelligence" but she was too unpleasant behind all the courtesies that she posed. She was so mean that in her impatience, she had purposely stepped on her maid Ganga's hand who had been mopping their kitchen. Ganga reveals when Dolly began talking, the whole world became invisible to her. This was what Ganga had to say about her, "[h]ow she talks in English-chutter-chutter-chutter, like she is everybody's grandmother in the world…"

It is because of her that the Bijlanis were rejected from gaining membership at the Malabar Gymkhana. She was a scheming woman and always suffered an ego-clash with Sheila among all other people. And although, she was a ***snobbish*** woman who was too busy with her rivalries, she had to ultimately give in to the Bijlanis for the sake of their family name, business-empire and also their daughter's

future. It was because Sheila had vital information on the Boatwallas foreign Bank accounts and other deals, that she had perhaps compromised with her family pride and joined hands with the Bijlanis and agreed to let Roxanne marry Sanjeev.

- **Freddie**

Faredoon Rustam Jamshed Dara Boatwalla or better known as Freddie was a business tycoon who owned the reputed family business Boatwalla Shipping International & Co (established 1757). He was the son of Percy Boatwalla, grandson of Billy and thus, came from an affluent background. He was a thin, elegant man who in his ***heydays*** was known to have bowled out Tiger Pataudi, the legendary cricketer during a match at Cambridge. He was a busy man expanding his business and looking after his business-empire which during that time had seen a crisis which in time would pass like the one before it. But he was also an ambitious man whose decisions were often influenced by his proud wife.

Heydays: a time when one is at the prime of youthful days.
Eat humble pie: to swallow one's pride.
Overbearing: trying to control people in an unpleasant way.

He had applied to be in the Membership Committee of the Malabar Gymkhana for the reason that Dolly influenced to ensure that the Bijlanis late application for the membership was rejected. But then again, he had to ***eat humble pie*** and approach his arch rival Bijlani to suggest his resubmission of application for membership. But this was again because Dolly was anxious to find a place in the invitee list of the Shanghai Club members, which according to speculations was owned by the Bijlanis. With an ***overbearing*** spouse like Dolly, the man could not be blamed entirely for his actions. Nevertheless, things were set right in the end after his daughter was married into the Boatwalla family and their known rivalry had settled for good.

- **Roxanne**

Roxanne was Dolly and Freddie Boatwallas youngest daughter who was eighteen years old and had just finished her schooling. She was shy, quiet, sweet and charming by nature and by appearance had a fair complexion, dark eyes, straight hair and a little plump.

The only thing we learn about her from the narrator is that she was equally in love with Sanjeev and was forcefully taken away abroad by her mother. But the agreement of the Boatwallas finally resulted in her marriage with Sanjeev.

- **Ganga**

Ganga was recommended by one of Sheila’s neighbours and was hired to work as a maid for the Bijlani household. She had such a composure that did not give away any idea on her thoughts or her as a person. Ganga was a short wiry woman who worked without pausing for the entire day in about dozen homes up and down the Malabar Hill without a break. And after she was done, she still had the stamina to stand on a local train for more than an hour to get back home to her daughter. This is how she had to make ends meet after her husband had passed away.

She arrived in Bombay from her native village with her husband eleven years ago and had lived there ever since. Her husband was a millworker and a Marxist who was stabbed to death in a quarrel with another union. After he passed away, she had to find an earning source and look after her daughter. After all these years of work, she was in a better position to make plans to expand her income source which is why, she took a loan from Sheila to build her *kholi* and later even sold it, to start a new cloth reclamation factory in Dharavi. She was practical enough to know what could be best for her survival. Ganga was a loving mother and in order to protect her daughter from the desperate rogue Girish, took her back to the village. She was not one to settle for her daughter’s affair and possible marriage with a rogue which is why, she later found a school teacher for Asha. Being a practical woman, she sold her *kholi* to manage her daughter’s wedding and did not just stop there. She expanded her own business plans in order to secure her own survival as well.

Here, in the story Ganga becomes an interesting source of information where she provides sufficient clues to Sheila without

knowing its significance to her. One of the dozen families that Ganga had worked for happened to be the Boatwallas. Ganga washed the dishes and cleaned their kitchen and had heard Dolly several times chattering things that she would never speak outside her home. It is due to Ganga's keen ear and sharp memory that she remembers the most recent conversation that Dolly had with her husband in the presence of the servants at home. And thus, she reveals some of the words Dolly had spoken in English. Ganga develops an ear for the English language after years of hearing Sheila talk in English which had also enabled her to figure out keys words. This vital piece of information becomes a weapon in Sheila's hand who further takes care that everything falls into place.

By the end of the story we find that those in the high profile circles never make permanent friends nor remain permanent enemies. This is why we find the worst of rivals Dolly and Sheila walk hand in hand during their children's wedding reception even er all the years of fierce rivalry between the two families.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What was Sheila's reaction towards Ganga?

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Q 5: Briefly describe the character of Sanjeev.

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Q 6: What was Freddie Boatwalla's real name?

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Q 7: How does Ganga become an interesting source of information to Sheila?

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11.5 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Through his conversational style of writing, Vikram Chandra evokes the city of Bombay and mirrors the high-profile circles in a very realistic manner. The modern city life in Bombay truly comes alive in the pages of "Shakti" and the other short-stories in the book as well. The contrasting potrayal of the modern and the traditional, the rich and the poor, the posh locales and the slums, the highs and the lows of city-life, love and war are all encompassed in one stroke in the lay-out of the story.

The story is written in a gripping style by the author with a dash of 'dramatic quality' in the way it begins and the way the turn of events are presented. The story is rather long and runs into several pages but the interesting web of narration entraps the reader into curiosity till its concluding end. It begins with the narratorial voice of Subramaniam (who is also present in the other stories) and the voice takes over the entire narration in the form of casual conversation (in the presence of others) and at times in the tone of casual gossip. This manner of presentation instantly draws the interest of the reader and adds an interesting quality to the narration. Thus, the narration is not plain in its style and in the words of the narrator himself is seen to add a "*masala* grinding" factor in it.

After our initial reading, we find the use of Hindi words that sit comfortably in the sentences of the English text and in the form of normal conversational style. If attention is drawn at the use of language, we can take the instance of words like: *dupatta*, *garara, kurta, chappals, payals, mogra, jira, puri bhaji, jalebis, biryani, shunya, jhadoo, charpoi, kholi* etc. Also, there are dialogues that are presented in the colloquial spoken form, for an instance, "Pakka?" (meaning "Are you sure?") "How she talks in English chutter-chutter-chutter" (mimicking the sound of someone chattering words) or "Namaste" (an Indian way of greeting someone). The author employs the colloquial Hindi words as well e.g., *tapori* (meaning rogue) or "mixies" (mixer-grinders) and employs them in his writing without losing the flow of narration or the dialogues in English. Apart from these, there are interesting quotes such as: "the beginning

and end of everything is a marriage", "her success drew the venom up and down the coast of Bombay" etc. There are also phrases in the text such as: 'whats and whys of what happened', 'rules of current diplomacy', "known nobody", "unheard-of rates of interest" and "not our type, really" among others.

Also, we find the use of clichés in the text which even the narrator notices in his own narration when he says that it was the "[f]erocity of the feud that made them long for each other. What a bloody cliché?" The word "cliché" defines a phrase or idea that has been overused and has become uninteresting. To give you an example, you will often come across clichéd dialogues in the old Hindi movies where dialogues are often predictable because of their over-use. While reading the text, we come across many metaphors such as: "Her success drew out the venom up and down the coast of Bombay…" or "The hill resisted, it fought back right from the start…" among others. And there are uses of similes such as: "Her hair as dark as Malabar wave on a moonless night," "Dark and attractive air of tragedy" and "She grew more and more to resemble a kind of stately ship" to mention a few.

Also, the narration highlights certain moments of retrospection and reflection in the story particularly in the character of Sheila. She is seen to have an emotional side to her and often tends to revert back to memories of her as a child and her childhood, the wise words of her father and his presence in her life, her younger days as an air hostess and the promises of youth. At certain significant moments, she remembers her father telling her "Shunya is zero and zero is shunya," a thought that appears at a time when she is intent on her calculations of her financial and business goals. Again, she remembers her airhostess-days at the moment when she looks at Asha's delightful eagerness towards her marriage. Also, towards the end of the story, she is seen to remember the wise words of her father that he had once spoken on the varied symbolical meanings and significances of the element of 'fire' which she relates to the various phases of her own life.

Thus, in the narration we find that there is a thread of connection

that twines back towards the distant past unraveling its secrets and lingers around the ever-present memories that are relevant in the present. The narrator ends the story on a promising note of another tale (followed in the succeeding stories of the book) saying, "…[b]ut that's another story. May be I'll tell you about that another evening."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What do we notice with regard to the use of Hindi words in the text? Give examples.

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Q 9: What is meant by the word "cliché"?

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11.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The *Literary Review* reviewed the anthology *Love and Longing in Bombay* as: "…very much set in Bombay and in the twentieth century" in which "-the nostalgic poise of the prose is blended with the sweep and chaos of modern Indian city life."*The Hindu* reviewed the author thus, "…Chandra might become to metropolitan India what Scott Fitzgerald was to the American jazz age." One of the significant reviews focusing on the short story is clipped from *The Citizen* which wrote: "In its breeziness, bitchiness, and drollery, 'Shakti' is the verbal match of the gossip-driven stories in Truman Capote's Answered Prayers. And like Capote at his very best, Chandra reaches deep inside these lives and uncovers the longing for love in a child that can turn even the best-laid plans of an astute mother upside down and the social order with it…"

Much of the review and critical reception is on the volume of *Love and Longing in Bombay* as an entire collection rather than the short story itself. When it first appeared as an anthology of short stories based on Indian experiences and cultural contexts of India and abroad, it received

much critical acclaim and was very well received. Owing to its captivating string of stories the anthology enjoyed a wide readership. A significant critical review by the *San Francisco Chronicle* reviewed the work as Chandra's "mastery" through which "inspite of the very distinct and modern voices of the main characters, we gain a glimpse into a timeless India."

Another review by the *Literary Review* gives a glimpse of the wide critical reception of the work and reads thus: "The five stories are all love stories, yet they are also stylish mysteries. Chandra's style is reminiscent of the nineteenth century short story in his elegant plots and his interests in ghosts (in "Dharma"), high society (in "Shakti"), detectives (in "Kama"), and gangsters (in "Artha"). But *Love and Longing in Bombay* is very much set in Bombay and in the twentieth century-the nostalgic poise of the prose is blended with the sweep and chaos of modern Indian city life."

The work had earned Vikram Chandra the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book (Eurasia Region) in the year 1997 and was credited as one of the top releases of the year owing to the craftsmanship of narrating brilliant stories tied to the city of Bombay which comes alive in its reflection of the city's modern chaos and multiple realities together with the unraveling of its timeless charm. Thus, all things considered *Love and Longing in Bombay* is a complete set of short stories which has collectively earned wide critical acclaim and appreciation.



11.7 LET US SUM UP

After a detailed and thorough reading of the unit, the learner will be able to grasp the summary and context of the short story. The detailed explanation will provide you with a clear idea of the story and enable you to discuss it in your own words. In relation to the text of the short story, the significant themes have been discussed to enable you to reflect on the wider aspects reflected through the text. The analysis of the style and

language will help you to appreciate the linguistic nuances of Indian English in the story. And also, the critical reception of the work will give you a better idea of the wider reception of the work along with the author's literary success. Further, the unit will certainly stir your interest in exploring the other four stories of Love and Longing in Bombayand other literary works of Vikram Chandra.



11.8 FURTHER READING

1) Chandra, Vikram. (2010) *Love and Longing in Bombay.* New Delhi: Penguin Books.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The names of the five short stories in *Love and Longing in Bombay* are: "Dharma", "Shakti", "Kama", "Artha" and "Shanti".

Ans to Q No 2: The word "Shakti" means 'strength' and here in the story we find that it is the 'powerful' and those within the reach of higher or elite class and society, who gain wide-access to the roads-to-riches and to the world of fame and power.

Ans to Q No 3: Some of the various aspects connected to the elite life are the prevalence of social circles, sophisticated lifestyles, posh localities, high-profile parties, expensive fashionable cars, cricketing-royalties, grand properties, international collaborations, political connections, information networks, media-coverage, gossip vines in other words gossip-driven stories or rumour mills, open-conflicts, family or professional rivalries, high competitions for status and power.

Ans to Q No 4: She was also very kind and helpful to her maid Ganga.

It took her six months, compelling Ganga to have her lunch at their place. She even gave her a loan during her hour of need. What is noticeable is that she did not suffer any sense of bias towards those people who were lower in social position like the other women did. Infact, even in her own hour of crisis, she attended the wedding ceremony of Ganga's daughter with Bijlani. There is also this instant when Ganga offered their customary gift to Sheila, a gesture which touched her emotionally and in fact, took her a moment to regain her composure. Therefore, although it was true that Sheila was a woman of business who had to have her calculations in place, but she was also a kind woman at heart.

Ans to Q No 5: Sanjeev as a sensitive and a romantic young man was doted by his mother. He studied in a residential school at Doon and then pursued his higher studies at Yale. There he developed an interest in art and photography and indulged in skiing. He was a handsome and attractive young boy with a "look of sad nostalgia" who happened to be a heart-throb among the girls. He had returned from America to become a poet. The narrator describes him as indolent and wearing a faint smile who was forgiven for his excellent poetry by everyone. This young man was to become the ultimate reason behind the coming together of the two rivaled families. After his return from abroad, he felt the need to step out and draw back his old familiarity with the city which was precisely the time when he met Dolly's daughter Roxanne and fell in love.

Ans to Q No 6: Faredoon Rustam Jamshed Dara Boatwalla.

Ans to Q No 7: Ganga becomes an interesting source of information where she provides sufficient clues to Sheila without knowing why it's significance to her. One of the dozen families that she worked for happened to be the Boatwallas. She washed the dishes and cleaned their kitchen and every now and then had heard Dolly chatter things that she would never speak outside her home. It is due to her sharp memory that she remembers the last conversation that Dolly had with her husband in the presence of

servants at home.

Ans to Q No 8: There is a use of Hindi words that sit comfortably in the sentences of the English text and in the form of normal conversational style. Some of the Hindi words in the text are: *dupatta*, *garara, kurta, chappals, payals, mogra, jira, shunya, jhadoo, charpoi, kholi, shamiana,* etc.

Ans to Q No 9: The word "cliché" defines a phrase or idea that has been overused and has become uninteresting.



11.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Briefly discuss the minor characters in Vikram Chandra's "Shakti".

Q 2: Discuss the following major characters in the short story "Shakti"
a. Sheila Bijlani b. Dolly Boatwalla c. Ganga

Q 3: What are some of the relevant themes that emerge from the text of "Shakti"?

Q 4: Discuss the style and language employed by Vikram Chandra in "Shakti".

Q 5: Briefly comment on the title of the short story "Shakti".

Q 6: Briefly discuss the critical reception of Vikram Chandra's "Shakti".

Q 7: Who is the narrator of the story? Brifly write a note on the narrative style of the story.

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UNIT 12: MAHESH DATTANI: *FINAL SOLUTIONS* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Mahesh Dattani: The Dramatist

12.3.1 His Life

12.3.2 His Works

12.4 Sources of the Play

12.5 Reading the Play

12.5.1 Summary of the Play

12.5.2 Critical Commentary on the Play

12.6 Let us Sum up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.9 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- gain a brief idea on the scenario of contemporary Indian English drama
- discuss the life and works of Mahesh Dattani
- discuss the sources and content of the play
- discuss the play critically

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani is one of the leading playwrights in the context of contemporary Indian drama in English. He is a prominent playwright, actor and director whose socially conscious plays have elevated Indian English drama to a significant genre of social criticism. The present unit will discuss the play titled *Final Solutions*. Apart from discussing and analysing the play in a detailed manner, the unit provides the learner with

a broad view on the other literary contributions and theatrical writings of the playwright.

12.3 MAHESH DATTANI: THE DRAMATIST

Mahesh Dattani considers theatre as an agent for creating awareness on the existing social problems. As a playwright, Dattani is more concerned on mirroring and representing society as experienced by him. Dattani strongly believes that one's personality is reflected through one's writings. His plays originate from the transforming society and revolves around pressing social concerns.

As a playwright he is reluctant to accept the idea of a choice or any from of particular identity in writing about his surroundings and rendering his thoughts in such a mould. Dattani does not like to be categorised as a postcolonial playwright, although his plays belong to this particular period. More than a particular identity, he is concerned about representing the society as seen and experienced by him and also those themes that best represent the contemporary social scenario of India. Being a part of the contemporary urban India, Dattani in his writings, makes the effort to reproduce his own time and place through the use of a lively and Indianised English language to best suit his environment.

Dattani's plays are characterised by an inherent attempt to represent the unseen yet existent social realities. A courageous playwright Mahesh Dattani represents the concerns of the marginalised section of our society that includes the minorities, homosexuals and women. Homosexuality, politics of the family, politics of gender, gendered violence, communal violence - these are some of the major themes that we find him representing in his plays. His works not only represent these issues, but also critique and question the same. Dattani's attempt to reveal the hidden realities of our society makes him vulnerable to grave criticism. However, he has been successful in drawing a great response from his readers and critics who appreciate his bold representations of social realities.

Like Vijay Tendulkar, Dattani also highly values the performative aspect of a play. For Dattani, theatre is a kind of shared experience between the playwright, society, director, actors and the audience. According to him, a playwright also needs to understand the machinery of theatre, apart from understanding the society. In his plays, Dattani provides ample scope for the director to experiment and design the performances of the script. He says "I create what is going to happen on stage, but I only begin that" (Dattani, 2010b). He thinks the entire concept of theatre in terms of a circle that begins with the playwright and then moves toward the actors who explore the things with the help of a director, and finally it goes to the audience. As a playwright, Dattani maintains a non-judgmental stance while scripting the social issues and also provides ample scope for the audience to contemplate on these relevant issues.

12.3.1 His Life

Mahesh Dattani currently resides in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was born to a Gujarati family settled in Bangalore on 7th August, 1958. He received his early education in Baldwin High School and St Joseph's College of Arts and Science. He graduated in the Arts stream after which he completed his masters in Marketing and Advertising Management form Bangalore University. Initially, Dattani worked as a copywriter in an advertising firm in Bangalore. Gradually, he was drawn towards the world of theatre and became a full time theatre professional, establishing his own theatre company known as Playpen in 1984. Dattani wrote his first full length play titled *Where there is a Will* in 1986. The play was first performed at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on 28th September 1988 as a part of the Deccan Herald Theatre festival. He has his own studio in Bangalore devoted to training and showcasing new talents in directing and stage writing. Dattani inspires as well as helps writers like Abhishek Majumdar to become professionally involved in theatre.

Dattani was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award in 1998 for his collection of plays *Final Solutions and Other Plays*

published by East-West Book, Chennai. He was the only playwright in India to win this prestigious award for writing plays in English. Dattani also writes plays for BBC Radio. He has conducted several theatre workshops across India and abroad, most remarkably at the University of Oregon, USA. Dattani's plays have been directed by some of the eminent theatre directors in India which includes Alyque Padamsee, Arvind Gaur and Lillete Dubey. In fact, it was Alyque Padamsee who first spotted Mahesh Dattani's talent and encouraged him to pursve a career in theatre.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the role of theatre according to Mahesh Dattani?

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Q 2: Name a few eminent theatre directors in India. Name the theatre director who had first spotted Dattani's talent for the theatre.

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Q 3: Which work had earned Mahesh Dattani the Sahitya Academy award in 1998?

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12.3.2 His Works

Mahesh Dattani has made a significant contribution to the world of India drama in English by writing original plays in English. It has already been mentioned that his plays represent the scenario of which he himself is a part. A questioning of the dominant gender identity is one of the major concerns that the playwright seems to exhibit, apart from scripting invisible issues that exist in our society. Dattani has authored a number of plays which include:

Where there is a Will, *Seven Steps around the Fire, Final Solutions, Tara, Bravely Fought the Queen, Do the Needful, Dance like a Man, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Thirty Days in September.*

Among these plays, *Brief Candle* deals with the situation of terminally ill patients; the play is inspired by his own experience of his mother's illness and death. The next work *Bravely Fought the Queen* deals with instances of violation of women's rights, dignity and freedom in Indian society. Apart from the theme of violence on women is society, homosexuality, the politics of capitalism and family are some of the relevant issues that he represents in the play. His earliest radio play *Do the Needful* also deals with issue of homosexuality. *Where there is a Will* represents a rich Gujarati family where the father acts as a dominating figure who exercises his control over the family members to assert his self. It is the story of Hasmukh Mehta, a staunch patriarch who imbibes such an attitude from his father. *Tara* is the story of a pair of twin siblings Tara and Chandan. They are by birth Siamese twins with three legs which is later separated by means of a physical surgery. In the story, it is seen that blood supply to the third leg comes from Tara's body, raising the chances of Tara's survival. Despite the obvious danger inherent in allowing the surgery to Chandan be the receipient of Tara's leg, both the parents bribe the doctor to operate in favour of Chandan as he is male child. But the limbs last only for two days in Chandan and Tara's condition worsens compelling her to suffer. The preference for a male child subjects Tara to sufferings which are beyond compensation. But what is strikingly memorable is the wonderful love and understanding between the siblings and their good-nature unlike their insensitive parents.

Seven Steps around the Fire is a radio play by Mahesh Dattani where he deals with the issue of what is considered as the third gender, the community of ***eunuchs*** and their marginalised existence in the mainstream society that does not consider them



Eunuchs: those who belong to the third gender with both male and female attributes.

as social beings. *Dance Like a Man* deals with the story of Jairaj whose effort to form his identity as a dancer is strongly opposed by his father, who imposes his own choice upon him. *Thirty Days in September* deals with deep imprinted childhood experience of trauma by Mala who was sexually abused many times by her maternal uncle when she was a child. It is significant to note that in writing this play, Dattani was commissioned by an NGO called RAHI who works for the survivors of child sexual abuse.

Gay: a term referred to those who have alternate prefererces for the same sex or gender
Repercussion: the consequences of an event or action

His work titled *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* represents the presence of alternative sexualities in India and the kind of repression and constraints under which they continue their lives. It is the story of Kamalesh, Ed, Ranjit, Sharad, Bunny, Deepali and Kiran. Apart from Deepali (who is a lesbian) and Kiran (who is a heterosexual), the rest of the characters are ***gay***. Like On *a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful* also represents the clash between homosexual sentiments and the dominant social norms which suppress the marginalised sections*. Do the Needful* is the story of Alpesh and Lata and their forthcoming marriage which is arranged against their will. Neither Alpesh nor Lata are willing to marry each other. Alpesh being a gay is in love with Trilok while Lata is in love with a terrorist called Salim. But, despite their unwillingness, the marriage is forced upon them by their parents for their own interests.

Final Solutions deals with the theme of communal prejudices that still exist in our society, and also its historical and contemporary ***repercussions***. However, no final solution to the situation is found in the play; but there is an implication that a great deal depends on the choices that people make to bring about changes in the society.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Name some of the plays by the playwright Mahesh Dattani.

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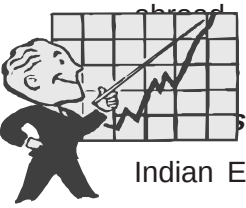
Q 5: What is the core theme of the play *Final Solutions*?

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12.4 SOURCES OF THE PLAY

Final Solutions is a play on communal hatred and consists of three acts which was first performed at Guru Nanak Bhavan, Bangalore in 1993. Immediately after this, the play was performed at Tara theatre, Mumbai directed by Alyque Padamsee. Since then, the play had been performed in various cities in India like New Delhi and Kolkata and also abroad. *Final Solutions* was created as a result of the new direction in which Indian drama in English was headed. Dattani was ***commissioned*** to write the play by Alyque Padamsee, the father of Indian English theatre in India. He revised the script many times after several discussions and inputs from Padamsee and other actors.



In fact, this play is the product of the collaborative exercises between the playwright and actors and the director. Finally, the play was completed in 1991 and the year was made ready for its first public launch in Deccan Herald Theatre Festival in Bangalore, 1992. Meanwhile, there were riots on the ***demolition*** of Babri Masjid and the organisers of the festival halted further performances on it. Finally, the play was staged in 1993.



Commissioned: an instruction, command or duty.
Demolition: the action of knocking down (a building or such structure).

12.5 READING THE PLAY

After going through the text of the play, and the provided act-wise summary will the learner gave you a clear overview of the entire context and content of the play. It will certainly help you in recalling the string of

events and incidents in the play particularly for the purpose of examination. Thus, the following subsections highlight the content and critical analysis of the play in order to both supplement and enrich your reading of the text.

12.5.1 Summary of the Play

- **Act I**

Daksha is Hardika's younger self and it is through the form of her diary that the reader is taken into to Daksha's past which reveals information about her personal and social life. Married to Hari, the son of conservative Hindu family, Daksha is not allowed to do the things that she would love to do. Her freedom is completely restricted. She is compelled to even change her name from Daksha to Hardika in order to match with Hari's name.

In Act one, Dattani portrays the picture of a conservative society which denies any kind of autonomy to women. Daksha is to give up her dream of becoming a singer as Hari's family was against it. The act also introduces the traditional way of worshipping god in the Hindu households. In the past, Daksha and her mother, and in the present Smita and Aruna are continuing this tradition of offering daily worship to the idol of Krishna. Despite being ***sceptical*** of traditional practices Daksha had to accompany her mother then and now Smita also has to do the same to satisfy her mother Aruna by helping her in the daily rituals.

Sceptical : doubtful.
Mob : a disorderly crowd of people.
Traitor: a betrayer or someone who betrays another.

Suddenly, the focus shifts from Daksha to a chorus outside, and also towards the characters of Bobby and Javed. The chorus catches hold of them and suspects them to be the creator of the recent trouble in Amargaon and happens to thrash them. Somehow, Bobby and Javed manage to escape and knock at Ramnik's door for help. Ramnik Gandhi protects them from the ***mob*** outside and provides shelter for the night despite the silent protest coming from Aruna and Hardika. The mob outside constantly demand Bobby and Javed to be thrown outside; they call Ramnik a ***traitor***

and threaten him for having protected the two boys. On the other hand, Hardika and Aruna do not support Ramnik's decision to protect Bobby and Javed because they belong to the Muslim community. In the midst of protest coming from both outside (mob) and inside (family), Ramnik remains firm in his decision. Suddenly, Smita comes out from her room and recognises the two boys, surprising everyone in the household.

- **Act II**

Act II begins with the chorus discussing about the prevailing unrest and ongoing ***curfew*** in the town. The members of the chorus pick up the Hindu masks and wear them. Then the focus shift from the chorus to the Gandhi household where everybody questions Smita on how she knows Javed and Bobby. From Smita, the reader learns to know that Javed is the brother of Tasneem who is Smita's friend, and Bobby is Tasneem's ***fiancé*****.** From their conversation, it becomes clear that Javed does not stay with his parents. In his speech, the audience can feel his antipathy or dislike towards the Hindus; the same feeling of dislike towards the Muslims is noticeable through the speech of Hardika and Aruna.

Curfew: a regulation requiring people to remain indoors between specified hours of the night.
Fiancé: a person to whom another is engaged to be married.

Hardika is not happy for what Ramnik does by giving them protection. As the scene progresses, there are certain other things that come into light. Smita reveals the reality about Javed that he has been thrown out of his house because of his involvement in anti-social activities. She says that Javed makes his living by working for the political parties who hire him and many such people who create riots in society. This revelation brings tears to Javed's eyes; he calls Smita a traitor as his sister reveals this truth only to Smita thinking that Smita would not disclose this information to anyone. On hearing this, Ramnik advances towards Javed while Bobby steps in front of him protectively while Smita is horrified and rushes out. Thus, Act II ends at this juncture leaving the reader anxious and tensed.

Act III

This act begins with the Muslim chorus offering prayer and discussing their condition. Then the focus shifts to Bobby, Javed, Ramnik and Daksha. With Daksha, the narrative goes back to the past. Daksha reads out her diary again, and this time she talks about her friend Zarine and her family. Zarine's family had to experience a tough situation when their family shop catches fire and gets destroyed. Seemingly no one knows, how the shop catches fire, but it brings a severe financial crisis to the entire family. The conversation between Javed, Bobby and Ramnik brings into light the various hidden stories. The common perception of Javed as a hired riot-rouse is transformed when the reality comes into light. Javed gets involved in these activities voluntarily without knowing the fact that he has been taken advantage of by the politicians for their own interests. In fact, Javed is compelled to do like that; he is provoked by the hatred shown by the Hindus towards the Muslims. Thus, Javed takes it as a cause to fight for his people who are always ***humiliated*** for what they are.

Humiliated: make someone feel ashamed or stupid in front of the others.

There is a story behind Javed's choice to be a riot rouser. One day Bobby and Javed were playing cricket with the younger boys. Then a post man came and gave a letter to Javed to deliver it to his neighbour as the latter was in hurry. When Javed went to deliver the same to the neighbour, a rough voice threatened Javed asking him what he wanted. Then the same voice ordered Javed to leave the letter on the wall. Following this, the man came out with a cloth and wiped the letter before picking it up; then he wiped the spot, as well as, the gate. The incident made the young boys very angry, especially Javed, who avenged himself on his neighbour by dropping a piece of meat in his campus. This had angered his sentiments and Javed started considering it as a cause - a cause to give meaning to their communal existence. Javed attended those meetings which talked about fighting for their faith, without understanding the outcome of such mindless

ways of protesting against religious hatred.

The act reveals that Javed is also partly involved in provoking the current riot between the Hindus and Muslims in Amargaon by breaking the idol in the chariot on the day of Rath Yatra. When Ramnik mentions about handing Javed over to police, he laughs loudly and Bobby joins him as well. It is due to the fact that it is the police who help Javed and his companions to get into the street, and instigate the riot. In between, the narrative goes back in time with Daksha reading something from her diary. She mentions about her visits to Zarine's house where she used to listen to her favourite songs of Noor Jehan; her encounter with their foods, and how cruelly Daksha was treated by her husband Hari for sharing friendship with Zarine.

The act also throws light on Ramnik's character. His identity as a liberal person has been challenged when Ramnik criticises the Muslims saying that Javed's life is based on violence and his faith also encourages violence. According to Javed, it is people like Ramnik who provoke them to be violent. Then again the narrative shifts to Aruna and Smita's life. Smita apologises to Javed for unveiling the secret about his identity. Aruna wants to go out to fill water for her early morning worship and Javed moves forward to help her. This gesture terrifies Aruna. However, she tries to be polite and rejects Javed's idea to her. She says that she respects his religion; but it is the Hindu way of worshipping their God whom Javed should also understand and respect. So, she does not want that water to be ***contaminated*** by Javed. Aruna's statements unsettle Smita very much and she openly declares her a sense of not wanting to belong to her religion. According to Smita, her religion suffocates her and she is not proud of her inheritance. On hearing this from her own daughter, Aruna feels very hurt. Ramnik is surprised at Smita's liberal mindset of which he had no previous idea. Smita does not reveal her feelings to Ramnik as she thinks it would have given more power

Contaminated: make impure by exposure to a poisonous polluting substance.

to Ramnik to underestimate Aruna's feelings.

When Smita, Javed and Bobby go out to fill water, Smita gives one basket to Javed and she herself takes the brass pot where to fill water for her religious ritual. Here it is seen that Aruna warns her not to give that basket to Javed. Then again the play goes back to the past when Hari had abused Daksha for questioning why they had not helped Zarine's father by providing him a job or lending him some money. But the narrative shifts yet again and comes back to Bobby, Javed and Smita. From their conversation, the reader comes to know that Bobby and Javed intentionally enter into Smita's houses. It also reveals that Bobby who is engaged to Tasneem now, has a soft corner for Smita but it does not work out between them owing to personal reasons on Smita's part. Then the three friends fill water and Smita intentionally gives the brass pot to Javed in order to prove that his touch does not contaminate her God and her upset God does not fly off to anywhere. She realises that she cannot but help escape from her home at least for five minutes every day in order to have some fresh air. After filling water, they all come back and wait for Aruna to provide them breakfast. Now, the narrative focuses on Hardika who ***vents*** out her frustrations on Javed and Bobby; she reveals how her father died in Hussainabad after being beaten up on the street.

Vents: give free expression.
Traumatic: a deeply disturbing experience.

Again, the narrative moves back in time and reveals how Daksha was locked inside and beaten up by Hari after his family suspected her of eating food at Zarine's home. Hardika blames Zarine for what she had suffered in the past. She now thinks that she would have been happier if she had not met Zarine. Those ***traumatic*** memories are still vivid and fresh in her mind. She is full of hatred against the pride that people like Javed have on their faith. Meanwhile, Bobby enters the Puja room and picks up the idol of Krishna and holds it in his hands to prove that the Hindu God does not burn him into ashes and does not mind

Bobby touching Him. Rather, the Hindu God smiles at their trivial pride. Aruna breaks down; Hardika is seen recollecting her past, and the two boys leave. Finally, Ramnik reveals the shocking reality before Hardika that it is his father who had burnt the shop owned by Zarine's father, which was done out of communal hatred. The revelation makes Hardika motionless and the play comes to an end. The only question Hardika puts form is this : "Do you think…do you think those boys will ever come back?" (75) It is thus a sensitive play through which we realise the potential danger in disharmony and communal hatred which is not only baseless but also has no final solutions.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Who is considered as the father of Indian English theatre?

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How does Act II of *Final Solutions* begin?

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Q 8: Why did Javed decide to be a riot rouser in Act III of the play ?

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12.5.2 Critical Commentary on the Play

In all his plays, Dattani strives to represent the social issues that affect the society and its people, and *Final Solutions* is also no exception to this. Here, he represents the presence of communal hatred and religious fundamentalism in Indian society which adversely affect the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims. The play shows that how one incident of communal hatred may lead to many counter reactions causing irreparable damage to the lives of people. Dattani makes a very balanced

portrayal in *Final Solutions* showing the shortcomings in the attitudes in both Hindus and Muslims. However, as usual, he abstains or keeps away from sermonising and suggesting any solution to this existing social problem. But, the play conveys a very significant message that communal hatred is a mental phenomena is deeply rooted in our minds. In his introduction to *Final Solutions,* Alyque Padamsee says that "the demons of communal hatred are not out on the street, they are lurking inside us" (Dattani, 2000:161). According to him, the mob in the play is symbolic of our hatred and ***paranoia***; each one of them is a different individual, but they become one when politicians play on their religious fear and communal anxieties (Dattani, 2000: 161).



Paranoia: unjustified suspicion or mistrust of others.

The play includes two choruses that stand for the Hindu and Muslim mobs who carry tremendous hatred against each other. For example, a Hindu mob beats Javed and Bobby very badly when it suspects them to be the members of the Muslim community. Dattani makes use of the two choruses very strategically to show how communal hatred is triggered among common people by the politicians and how such hatred finally leads to mob violence. Most often, the religious processions in our society are organised in communal interest, communal, and the worst happens when such processions are carried out under the influence of the political parties who play on the sentiment of common people. The play shows that there is always someone behind the scene to trigger the feeling of hatred which finally leads to attacks and counter attacks, causing mob violence, death, curfews etc.

Throughout the entire play, Javed maintains a rebellious stance towards Ramnik Gandhi as he is unable to forget the humiliation that he has experienced from the Hindu community. Javed has a justification for his hatred towards the Hindus and adopts a rebellious attitude to fight for his faith. But, Bobby adopts a different approach and remains quiet. He considers himself as superior by not belonging to his community. He is ashamed of

being himself unlike Javed. Bobby feels oppressed by his religion just as Smita feels. By projecting the religious predicament experienced by Bobby and Smita, Dattani tries to show how oppressive religion can be for people like Bobby and Smita.

The play shows that behind Ramnik's liberal attitude, there is a story. He tries to be liberal so that he can compensate for the guilt that he carries inside. It was Ramnik's father who had burnt the shop of Zarine's father. Ramnik knows about this truth and is afraid of revealing it to Aruna and Hardika. Thus, he thinks that it is his duty to offer Javed a job. However, his liberal outlook is challenged when Javed says that it is people like Ramnik who provoke them to throw stones causing Ramnik to try slapping him. Javed believes that people like Ramnik are not actually liberal minded; rather they wear a mask of it. As a compensation of his father's offence, now Ramnik tries to give a job to him which he categorically refuses to accept.

The play exposes the oppressive nature of Indian family which underestimates its women. For example, Aruna is always humiliated by Ramnik for maintaining a rigid religious outlook towards life. Likewise, Smita feels suffocated within the confines of four walls of her family where she has to accompany her mother Aruna in her religious activities even though she herself does not believe in those activities. Smita is in a sense oppressed by her mother as well as her own family. There is nobody in the family to listen to her and what she thinks about life. Here the playwright tries to show the clash between tradition and modernity; tradition is represented by Aruna while modernity is represented by Smita. Aruna being a traditional Hindu wife is unable to think of welcoming a Muslim guest to her house. She even becomes unwilling to feed water to Javed and Bobby, and thinks that their presence can pollute the house. On the other hand, Smita does not believe in what Aruna does or thinks. She is a liberal minded girl who does not belong to any religious tradition. She believes in humanity unlike her mother Aruna

for whom her religion is her identity.

Towards the end of the play, we see that Smita exchanges her brass pot with Javed and permits him to fill water for God against Aruna's warning. Javed moves on and fills water in the brass pot which gains a significance in the play. We learn that Smita does it intentionally, so that the prevailing religious prejudice can be challenged proving them as baseless. However, Bobby goes one step ahead by touching the idol of Krishna only to prove that God does not hate them. It is evident that is all man-made constructs that binds the collective consciousness of people in society. The ***essentialist*** and ***biased*** notion of a Hindu God who differentiates between the Hindus and Muslims has been challenged by Bobby.

Essentialist: one who holds the essential notion of purity and difference with regard to something.
Biased: an opinion or tendency to be strongly for or against a person or thing.



12.6 LET US SUM UP

After you have finished reading the unit thoroughly, you will be familiarised to the present status and scenario of Indian English theatre with a special emphasis on one of the leading playwrights of contemporary Indian drama in English, Mahesh Dattani. You have gained an idea regarding the sources, general context, and content of the play *Final Solutions*. It must be noted how the playwright has used drama as a space to represent the prevailing communal tensions in our society. Mahesh Dattani not only considers theatre as a mirror to society, but also considers it as an agent for social change.

12.7 FURTHER READING

1) Dattani, Mahesh. (2010). "The Playwright's Quest." NEWF. Confluence Asia International Literary Festival. Don Bosco Institute's Symposium Room, Guwahati.

2) Dattani, Mahesh. (2000). *Collected Plays*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

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6) Kuthari Chaudhuri, Asha. (2005). *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction***.** Delhi: Foundation Books.

7) Mukherjee, Tutun. (ed.) (2012). *The Plays of Mahesh Dattani, An Anthology of Recent Criticism.* New Delhi: Pencraft International.

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Mahesh Dattani considers theatre as an agent for creating awareness on the existing social problems. As a playwright, he is more concerned about representing the society as it is, and as experienced by him. Dattani strongly believes that one's personality is reflected in one's writings. According to him, it is the society from which his plays originate, and eventually, it is the society again to which they go back.

Ans to Q No 2: Dattani's plays have been directed by some of the eminent theatre directors in India who include Alyque Padamsee, Arvind Gaur and Lillete Dubey. In fact, it was Alyque Padamsee who first spotted Mahesh Dattani's talent in theatre and encouraged him to try his future in theatre.

Ans to Q No 3: Dattani was awarded with the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award in 1998 for his collection of plays *Final Solution and other plays*.

Ans to Q No 4: *Where there is a Will, Seven Steps around the Fire, Final Solutions, Tara, Bravely Fought the Queen, Do the Needful, Dance like a Man, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Thirty Days in September.*

Ans to Q No 5: *Final Solutions* deals with the theme of communal prejudices that still exist in our society, and also its historical and contemporary repercussions.

Ans to Q No 6: Alyque Padamsee is the father of Indian English language.

Ans to Q No 7: Act II begins with the chorus discussing about the prevailing unrest and ongoing curfew in the town.

Ans to Q No 8: Javed is compelled to be like a riot rouser as he is provoked by the hatred shown by the Hindu people towards the Muslims. He takes it up as a cause to fight for his people who are always humiliated for their identity.



12.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: How would you like to analyse the play *Final Solutions* in the light of India's Independence?

Q 2: Comment on the set design used by Dattani in *Final Solutions.*

Q 3: Briefly state the use of chorus by Dattani in his play *Final Solutions.*

Q 4: Give a detailed act-wise summary of the play *Final Solutions.*

Q 5: Give a precise critical commentary on the play *Final Solutions*.

Q 6: Write a brief note on the source of the play.

Q 7: What is the central theme of Dattani's play *Thirty Days in September?*

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UNIT 13: MAHESH DATTANI: *FINAL SOLUTIONS* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Major Themes

13.4 Major Characters

13.5 Style and Language

13.6 Critical Reception

13.7 Let us Sum up

13.8 Further Reading

13.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.10 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- grasp the themes that Dattani explores in his theatrical writings
- discuss the main characters of the play
- explain the use of style and language used in the work
- gain an insight into the critical reception of the work
- locate the playwright in the broad context of Indian English theatre and compare his concerns to his contemporary dramatists.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of the previous unit. Here we shall be dealing with the major concerns reflected through the play, *Final Solutions*, besides, gaining an insight into the style and technique of the playwright and his use of language. You will not only be familiar with the portrayal of communal violence or the status of woman in the play, this unit shall further add to your idea regarding the major characters of the play. We shall also discuss the various scholarly discourses on the play pouring from different critical perspectives.

13.3 MAJOR THEMES

Communalism, violence, position of women, family as an oppressive apparatus, clash between tradition and modernity are some of the themes which the play deals with. Among them, the theme of 'communalism' occupies the major importance.

Communal Violence and Intolerance

Final Solutions shows that the Indian society is still haunted by the problem of communal hatred. Communalism refers to the practices of communal ownership; it refers to the socio-political groups based on religious and ethnic affiliation. This groupings based on socio-religious differences create a feeling of opposition between different communities. The difference in traditions, religions, food habits and culture lead to the feeling of difference that further leads to communal hatred among the Hindus and Muslims in the play. History is witness to the fact that the instances of communal violence stirred by mindless communal hatred is very common in the Indian society particularlly among the Hindus and Muslims. This communal hatred is represented by the attitudes carried by the Hindu and Muslim mobs towards each other in the play.

The play shows that neither the Hindus nor the Muslims are tolerant towards one other. Not only the common people, even the educated and the supposed liberal-minded individuals also support this communal bias. It is this same feeling of communal hatred that provokes Ramnik's father to burn the sweet shop of Zarine's father and it was the same sentiment which had led to the death of Hardika's father. Also, it is the same feeling of hatred that causes Daksha to suffer a lot. She had to suffer all those abuses by her husband for sharing friendship with Zarine. Thus, with ample examples, Dattani represents how badly such hatred contaminates the society and leads the young minds astray. Javed chooses the profession of riot rouser only because he wants to take revenge upon the Hindus for all those minor instances of humiliation that he had experienced in his life.

The play also shows the connection between communal hated and

violence, and how one instance of violence begets another. Violence normally refers to the abuse of power. It can be either visible or invisible. Visible violence refers to the acts of physical violence while invisible violence refers to the acts of mental or emotional violence. Scholars also divide the subject of violence into the categories like subjective and objective violence, human violence, natural violence, etc. According to E.K Englander, violence refers to an aggressive behaviour with the intent to cause harm, both physical and mental. Violence is a behaviour that produces human misery; which does not conform to any solution. He points out that "intent" is central to the notion of violence.

Any psychological and physical violence that occur by accident is not violence, if it is not intended to cause harm (2003:1-2). Here in the play, the reader will notice that the " intent" of violence is communal hatred. In his book *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard defines violence as a raging fire that feeds on the very objects intended to smoother its flame; it is self-propagating and eminently communicable, and only violence can put an end to violence(2005: 27-32). In *Final Solutions,* we notice that one instance of communal violence triggers another act of violence. In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Slavoj •i•ek talks about systematic violence caused by the economic and political systems. He distinguishes between subjective violence and objective violence and says that the former is visible while the later is invisible; both cannot be perceived from the same standpoint (2009:1-3). Communal violence can be considered as a form of subjective violence; violence inherent in the social system which welcomes communal hatred and violence based religious and cultural difference.

The clash between tradition and modernity

Dattani also draws attention to the clash between tradition and modernity through the characters of Aruna and Smita. Generally, by tradition we understand those beliefs and behaviour passed on to us or the society as a whole by our ancestors which bear special significance to our lives. It has its origin in an unspecified past. Tradition is transmitted and or it handed down to the present generation from the past. Although,

it is assumed that traditions are created in the past, many traditional norms have been invented purposefully by the powerful sections of the society to meet their individual interest; be it a political or cultural tradition. Whereas tradition is considered as a continuation of the past, modernity or modernisms is a reaction to the past, a challenge to the traditional norms and beliefs. Modernity questions the very basis of the age old traditions and its oppressive nature.

In the play, Aruna stands for the traditional practices whereas her daughter Smita opposes her stance and poses a challenge to Aruna's very identity. Aruna takes pride in her religion; she is proud of her inheritance and unwilling to accommodate someone else's faith in her house. She cannot allow Javed to fill drinking water for her family because Javed is a Muslim boy. Aruna's very identity is based on her religion. But Smita finds her religion suffocating. According to her, she does not wish to be identified with or to belong to her religion whice stifles her. But, Smita does not believe those prejudices that Aruna carries with her in the name of religion. She does not even feel sorry for openly negating her mother's activities which hurts Aruna's sentiments; she says "you can stop being so cruel".

Oppresion of Women

Family as a means of oppression, especially for the women is another theme discussed in the play. The play represents a picture of the patriarchal nature of Indian family where women's voice is hardly heard. In the play, the learner will find that Ramnik Gandhi has an authoritative presence in the family, especially over his wife and daughter. Ramnik often humiliates Aruna for adopting a traditional and non-liberal attitude towards life.

The same feeling of oppression is also experienced by Smita. The only time she feels relaxed is when she goes out with her friends. Like Javed, she also prefers to run away from her house at least for five minutes every day so that she can breathe some fresh air. However, Smita seems to be somewhat stronger than her mother Aruna. Smita adopts a very political stance here by supporting Aruna in all her religious activities, although she does not believe in those activities. She does so

only to protect her mother from undergoing further humiliation from her father. She does want her mother to feel more inferior in front of Ramnik. In the play, Dattani shows how family can act as a 'repressive apparatus' (as discussed below) by encompassing conflicts, hostile and aggressive behaviours, and differences in opinion among the family members.

Louis Althusser in his well known work *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (1971) discusses the notion of power in its relation to the state. The state, being the supreme political institution and repressive apparatus of society, maintains its power by "Repressive State Apparatuses" (RSA) such as the police, the law, the government, the prisons etc. as well as "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISA) such as the churches, the trade unions, some school, the media, the cultural ventures etc. The repressive state apparatuses are part of the public domain whereas the ideological state apparatuses are part of the private domain. Repressive means are used inside the family as well (1971:136-138).

Not only Aruna and Smita experience suppression in family, even Smita's grandmother Hardika suffers to a great extent as a young girl in her in-laws place. Even, she suffers physical or domestic abuse by her husband Hari for a simple reason as mingling with Zarine's family. Daksha's freedom is completely restricted by Hari's family once they suspect her of having food at Zarine's house. Daksha is even beaten up by Hari for the same. Thus, *Final Solutions* highlights the gendered nature of the society which hardly values its women.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does Mahesh Dattani portray communal violence in his *Final Solutions*?

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Q 2: Discuss the clash between tradition and modernity with reference to the play *Final Solutions*.

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13.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

The characters in the play include Daksha, Ramnik, Smita, Aruna, Hardika (Daksha's older stage), Javed, Bobby and mobs of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. Let us discuss a few of the major characters in the play. You may also engage in the exercise of writing short notes on all the characters of the play in addition to the following characters.

Daksha

The play begins with Daskha reading her diary. She is the mother of Ramnik Gandhi and now known as Hardika. Being a part of the Indian patriarchal family, **Daksha** had to change her name into **Hardika** to match her name with Hari. As a young girl, Daksha had suffered a lot for making friendship with the Muslim community. Daksha is unable to detach herself from the painful memories of her past and she carries them with her in the present. In her present, she is seen possessing an extreme sense of hatred towards the Muslims. She begins to hate the Muslim community for all those suffering that she experiences in her early life. Moreover she character with changed names of Daksha and Hardika regrets her friendship with Zarine as uttered by the same :

Not only Daksha was a victim of such communal hatred, but her father was also killed by them on the street for which, Hardika is unable to tolerate Javed's presence in her son's house. A young girl who has no idea about the communal prejudices in the beginning is now full of hatred towards the Muslims. It is her circumstances and surroundings that compel her in her biasness towards Javed and Bobby, the representative of the Muslim community. However, till the end she is unaware of the fact that it is her husband's family who sets the sweet shop owned by Zarine's father on fire.

Ramnik Gandhi

Another important character in the play is Ramnik Gandhi, Aruna's husband and Smita's father. Throughout the play, Ramnik adopts a liberalistic attitude and that is the reason he gives shelter to Bobby and Javed who belong to the Muslim community, despite strong opposition

coming from Aruna and Hardika. Ramnik knows the actual truth behind the destruction of Zarine's father's shop and he is unable to bear the burden of his past; the injustice done to Zarine's family by his father. While growing up Ramnik takes a liberal stance to compensate for what his ancestors have done. His intention of offering Javed a job is perhaps his way of compensating the loss done to Zarine's family.

- **Bobby**

Bobby is another major character in the play who is not proud of his religion and faith. Infact he feels ashamed of being a part of his faith and feels superior with a sense of not-belonging to his faith unlike his friend Javed. In the play, the reader finds that he has a feeling of liking towards Smita which does not work out eventually. In the play, Bobby challenges the religious prejudices carried on by Aruna by touching her worshipped idol of God and proving God could not possibly hate them or anyone. Towards the end of the play, Bobby makes a very powerful statement on the ongoing war of communal hatred between the Hindus and Muslims. He says "the tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe I one another, nothing can be destroyed…" (2005:74).

Unlike Bobby, Javed possesses a very hostile attitude towards the Hindus. He volunteers to be a riot rouser to fight for his faith. But, he fails to understand the dark game played by the politicians who actually use the youngsters like him to fulfil their own interest. Javed gets misled by the false political assertion without realising that he is being used, which Bobby is unable to understand clearly.

Smita

Smita is the only daughter of Ramanik and Aruna. She is the only character in the family who actually possesses a liberal and humane attitude towards the world. Amidst all chaos and opposition coming from Aruna, Smita allows Javed to fill water for God just to validate the fact that God is not discriminatory like them. Throughout the entire play, Smita opposes her mother's religious prejudices, and finally she has been successful in changing Aruna's perspective towards faith and religion. Smita's character is representative of the modernist and liberal outlook

that many youngsters possess.

Aruna

Aruna is a firm believer of her faith, and follows the traditional norms and beliefs with complete dedication. She takes pride in her religion and looks down upon the Muslims. Every morning, she does Puja and wants her daughter to help her in her daily religious rituals. Aruna seems to possess a closed mindset. She does not welcome Javed and Bobby to her home as they belong to a different religion.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Briefly discuss the character of Daksha in the play *Final Solutions*.

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.....

Q 4: Why can we consider Aruna as over-conventional in her views and practices?

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13.5 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Mahesh Dattani's play *Final Solutions* is a play in three acts. Act I begins with Daksha reading out her diary aloud. After reading the stage direction, the reader comes to know that Daksha and Hardika are the same character. Daksha is Hardika's younger self. The stage direction also introduces the mob/chorus that the reader will meet in the play. There are two levels on the stage. One level represents the Gandhi household which comprises Ramnik Gandhi, his wife Aruna, their daughter Smita and grandmother Hardika; the other level takes the reader to 1940s. This level belongs to Daksha who is also seen as Hardika alternatively. The diary takes the reader to Daksha past and reveals information about her personal and social life.

A thorough reading of the play will enable you to grasp the shifting narrative technique employed in the structure of the play. The flow of the

play is interrupted with the constantly shifting narrative structure which unravels the string of events of both the past and the present. It also contrasts the views and practices of the two Indian communities involved in the violence. Along with the stage instructions, the learner will find the interesting use of the 'chorus.' The play includes two choruses that stand for the Hindu and Muslim mobs who carry tremendous hatred against each other. The chorus in the play comprises five men and ten masks on sticks. There are five Hindu masks and five Muslim masks. The chorus becomes the mob when they either wear the Hindu mask or the Muslim mask. However, at individual level, they remain chorus 1, chorus 2 etc. The language in which the story is laid out is easily comprehensible and as it is based on the Indian context, the narrative almost conjures up the vivid images to the reader through which the play almost comes alive in its form. Thus, it is written in the form in which it can be easily adapted for stage performances.

In the play, there is no final solution as such to the issue of communal hatred caused by cultural and religious differences or practices the Hindus and the Muslims. Dattani as a playwright keeps himself away from sermonising in the play which makes the narration objective. However, the readers can feel its implied message in the play that change is possible if everybody thinks like Smita, Bobby and Ramnik, and acts accordingly. The play is powerful enough to leave its mark in the mind of the audience and mirrors the real picture of our society.

13.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The play has been discussed by various scholars from different critical perspectives. In her essay on "The Much That is Sacred: Rituals and Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*", Swati Paul says that *Final Solutions* deals with anti-fanaticism concerns, not only religious ***fanaticism*** but fanaticism in all spheres of life. In her essay titled "Final Solutions" Angelie Multani on how Dattani places history as an active character in the play. According to Multani, history is present throughout the entire play, making its presence felt through Daksha's diary and also through instances of



Fanaticism: the extreme belief in political or religious ideals.

Disseminated : spread widely.
Template : something serving as a model for others to copy.
Strait-jacketing : a severe restriction.

violence which take place in the past as well. The play takes us to the Indian history of partition. Also, the essay talks about how Dattani uses the set design to show that the unit of a family is representative of our entire society.

In his essay on "Daksha, Music and Transgressive Identity Formation in Final Solutions", Niladri Chatterjee talks about how Daksha constructs her identity through music and finds a way to life in it. According to him, the electronically ***disseminated*** voice and body of Noor Jahan becomes a ***template*** on which moulds her own gendered identity and also an identity which rejects the cultural ***strait-jacketing*** that her family imposes on her. Another essay named "Final Solutions: Towards Peaceful Coexistence", Saptarshi Mallick makes a detailed analysis of the play, discussing the major themes and the characters of *Final Solutions.* In her easy on "Dramatic Structures in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and *Final Solutions*" Charu Mathur discusses the dramatic structure of the play which is used effectively to show the shift in time and situations. According to her, the cross fading of lights play a major role in transferring the dramatic space form one time and place to another.



13.7 LET US SUM UP

After having studied the unit thoroughly, the learner will be familiarised to the present status and scenario of Indian English theatre. It will enable you to discuss the sources, general context, content, thematic concerns and major characters in the play Final Solutions. Also, the critical aspects such as the commentary, reception, style and language will give you a complete idea on the prescribed play. After reading the play and analysing it from various critical perspectives, one thing becomes clear that the playwright has used drama as a space to represent the prevailing communal tensions in our society.

Mahesh Dattani not only considers theatre as a mirror to society, but also considers it as an agent for social change. In the play, Final Solutions,

the playwright not only shows the presence of communal hatred in the society, but also shows that change is possible if the entire society starts to think like Smita and Bobby. Dattani uses social realism as a mode of expression and proves how theatre can be used as a space to address the social issues. The immediacy of social and mass appeal is a phenomenon unique to Indian English theatre. Theatre helps us to understand the close connection between theatre and everyday reality; it also acts as an alternative medium for the scope towards analysing and transforming a given society. A thorough reading of the play will enable the reader to understand all these aspect of theatre as an art form.

13.8 FURTHER READING

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13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Final Solutions* shows that the Indian society is still haunted the problem of communal hatred. Communalism refers to the practices of communal ownership; it refers to the socio-political groups based on religious and ethnic affiliation. This groupings based on socio-religious differences create a feeling of opposition between different communities. The difference in traditions, religions, food habits and culture lead to the feeling of communal differences that in turn lead to a sense of communal hatred among the Hindus and Muslims in the play. The instances of communal violence caused by communal hatred are very common in the Indian society, among the Hindus and Muslims. This communal hatred is represented by the attitudes carried by the Hindu and Muslim mobs towards each other.

Ans to Q No 2: In the play, Aruna stands for the traditional practices whereas her daughter Smita opposes her stance and poses a challenge to Aruna's very identity. Aruna takes pride in her religion; she is proud of her inheritance and unwilling to accommodate someone else's faith in her house. She cannot allow Javed to fill drinking water for her family because Javed is a Muslim boy. Aruna's very identity is based on her religion. But Smita finds here religion suffocating. According her, she does not want to belong to her religion as it stifles her.

Ans to Q No 3: Daksha is the mother of Ramnik Gandhi and now known as Hardika. Being a part of the Indian patriarchal family, Daksha had to change her name into Hardika to match her name with Hari. As a young girl, Daksha had suffered a lot for sharing friendship with her friend Zarine. She is unable detach herself from the painful memories of her past and carries them with her

in the present. In her present, she is seen possessing an extreme sense of hatred towards the Muslims. She hates the Muslim community for all those suffering that she had experienced.

Ans to Q No 4: Attempt on your own. (Hint 13.4)



13.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Do you agree that the play *Final Solutions* is a mouthpiece of the condition of women in a patriarchal society?

Q 2: Write in brief on the theme of communal violence.

Q 3: What according you is the major theme of *Final Solutions*? Validate your answer with examples from the text.

Q 4: "Theatre is a mirror to society". Discuss this statement in the light of the play *Final Solutions.*

Q 5: State the reason behind Ramnik's liberal attitude as evident in the play *Final Solutions.*

Q 6: The flow of the play is interrupted with the constantly shifting narrative structure which unravels the string of events of both the past and the present. Discuss.

Q 7: Discuss the following characters taken from the text of the play *Final Solutions*

a. Daksha b. Bobby c. Smita

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UNIT 14: GIRISH KARNAD: *TUGHLAQ* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Girish Karnad: The Dramatist

14.3.1 His Life

14.3.2 His Works

14.4 Context of the Play

14.4.1 Summary of the Play

14.5 Let us Sum up

14.6 Further Reading

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.8 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- describe the emergence of Karnad as a modern Indian dramatist
- gain an insight into the rich and mythology-based works of the playwright
- explain the play with reference to its historical context
- discuss the summary of the play and analyse its content
- utilise the ideas gained in this unit to comprehend the other significant aspects of the play.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The present unit deals with one of the famous playwrights from India, Girish Karnad and his well-known play, *Tughlaq*. In the unit, the learners shall be acquainted with the trend in modern Indian plays in general and Karnad's thematic concerns in particular, with reference to this play. This is Girish Karnad's second play which revolves around the great and learned emperor of the fourteenth century Delhi, Muhammad-

bin-Tughlaq. The play unravels various facets of Sultan's powerful reign particularly centered on the shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad that results in a number of mysterious murders and also throws light on the complexities one faces in the political world.

The unit aims to draw the attention of the learners towards Indian English drama, that has seen an emerging rise in terms of concept, performance and so on. Here in this unit, the learner shall gain an insight into the plot and scenes of the play which has been summarised for your easy comprehension and better understanding. Apart from the discussion on the life and works of the dramatist the learner will find, a section on the "context" in which the play was written which shall enable you to relate the entire thematic and conceptual idea contained in the play along with its historical significance. Before moving on to a discussion of the play, it is necessary to gain a glimpse into the social and cultural context in which theatre in India has developed with special reference to the playwright as discussed below.

Girish Karnad and the Indian Theatre

Girish Karnad's plays reflected his tendency to advocate theatre as a means to identify with one's roots and tradition. His first play, *Yayati* that reflected the theme of sacrifice, drew its source from mythology, thereby mirroring his interest in for finding one's roots in ancient Indian literature and mythology. Before independence, theatre in India particularly borrowed from the British theatre in following the ideas about ***proscenium*** stage and emphasising on the financial success of a play. But it must be remembered that, earlier in India, performance in theatre did not call for financial gains because it was largely performed owing to the patronage of kings and other hierarchically superior people including temple authorities and so on. Hence, performances "depended on how the actors improvised with the given narrative material each time they came on stage" (p. 5 Karnad *Three Plays*). Gradually, the role of performance in theatre changed its course when financial gains formed a part of theatrical production. Performance had to be well-balanced and rehearsals became vital because the success of theatres became interdependent with



Proscenium: refers to the part of the stage in front of a curtain.

performance.

The Parsi stagecraft which depicted hierarchy by “shallow and deep scenes” was challenged by Karnad’s *Tughlaq*. The plot of the play *Tughlaq* demanded a blurring of the hierarchical order. In relation to the dramatic practices in post-independent India, the main concerns were centered on the utilisation of space and Indianising it as well. As a result, the Western dramatic techniques seemed unsuitable for the Indian context, which barely presented a limited and unrealistic view of life for the Indians. The emergence of a group of playwrights like **Ratan Thiyam** could be seen in this context. Their reliance on ancient Sanskrit dramas sought to establish an Indian sensibility among the audience while dealing with modern issues. Karnad had a strong inclination towards the folk theatre of India and his plays like *Naga-Mandala*, *Hayavadana*, etc. are suggestive of this aspect. Through the use of folk theatre in most of his plays, Karnad aimed to maintain a traditional yet modern outlook in his plays. With this, let us gain an insight in to the life and works of Girish Karnad, the playwright, who had juxtaposed tradition with modernity in his plays.

LET US KNOW

Theatre of Roots: It referred to the movement that began in the 1970s in the world of Indian theatre. As quoted by Erin B. Mee in his book Theatre of Roots: Redirecting the Modern Indian Stage, “After Independence, in 1947, in their efforts to create an ‘Indian’ theatre that was different from the Westernised, colonial theatre, Indian theatre practitioners began returning to their ‘roots’ in classical dance, religious ritual, martial arts, popular entertainment and aesthetic theory. The Theatre of Roots - as this movement was known - was the first conscious effort at creating a body of work for urban audiences combining modern European theatre with traditional Indian performance while maintaining its distinction from both.”

Ratan Thiyam is a leading Indian playwright and a theatre director who hails from the North eastern region of India, that is, Manipur. Associated with the theatre of roots movement, in his plays Thiyam notably uses theatre traditions belonging to ancient India in order to explore themes bearing contemporary socio-cultural and political significance. Some of his productions include plays like *Andha Yug* (*The Blind Age*), *Ritusamharan*, *When we Dead Awaken*, etc. He is also the founder director of "Chorus Repertory Theatre" in Manipur in 1976.

14.3 GIRISH KARNAD: THE DRAMATIST

Girish Karnad is one of the most famous playwrights of India. His contribution in the field of drama is to be studied in relation to his inclination towards the Kannada language. He basically writes in Kannada. And most importantly, his works are self translated; that renders its originality thereby retaining its essence. In the following sub-sections, you will gain a detailed idea of Girish Karnad, his life and works.

14.3.1 His Life

Girish (Raghunath) Karnad was born on 19th May, 1938 in Matheran, now called Maharashtra. He is known as a reputed playwright, poet, director, actor, screenwriter and critic in Kannada language.His received his early education in Marathi language. As a child, Karnad was drawn towards theatre forms like those performed by the "natak companies" and "Yakshagana". However, after the family shifted to Bombay, Karnad saw plays being staged and was inspired to become a playwright himself. Regarding his academics, it is known that he graduated in the subjects namely, Mathematics and Sanskrit from Karnatak Arts College, Dharwar in 1958. He was a recipient of Rhodes scholarship and hence, after his graduation, went to England for higher studies. At Oxford, Karnad completed his Master's degree in the disciplines of Philosophy,

Politics and Economics. After the completion of his Master's degree, Karnad returned to India and worked for the Oxford University Press located at Chennai. But he left the Press after a few years to pursue a career as a full-time writer.

Girish Karnad married Dr. Saraswathy Ganapathy and together they have two children. The Karnad family presently lives in Bangalore, India.

14.3.2 His Works

Girish Karnad has immense contribution in Kannada literature particularly in the field of drama. He wrote *Yayati* in 1961, a play that had its base on the mythical characters of the *Mahabharata*. When the play was staged, it earned good reviews and ran through several translations in different languages of India. Karnad in this play dealt with King Yayati's story from the Mahabharata. Like his first play, his second play *Tughlaq* (1964), was centered on the historical figure of Mohammed-bin-Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi. However, *Hayavadana* written in 1971 was, influenced by the German author Thomas Mann's story titled "The Transposed Heads" which in turn has been adopted by Mann from *Kathasaritsagara*, a Sanskrit story collection. In the play, Karnad uses 'Yakshagana', a form of Indian folk theatre which combines dance, music, dialogue and several other stage techniques together, to explore a "world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods, dolls that speak and children who cannot, a world indifferent to the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human beings" (Pg. 70 Karnad). The play deals with the complexity and misperception that human identity can bring forth in a relationship. Karnad's inclination towards tradition is well exemplified in this play. Another of his best known works is *Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra*. This play also had its roots in the oral folktales of Karnataka. Karnad acknowledges A.K. Ramanujan– a renowned poet, philologist, folklorist and anthropologist– who supplied him with the resources on oral folktals.

This play was written when Karnad went to Chicago University for a year as a Visiting Professor and Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence. Originally written in Kannada language in 1988, this play deals with the newly weds–Rani and Appanna and their complex relationship. Karnad here bring in the folk element of a snake as a lover and festivities such as like Nag-Panchami. He was awarded the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for this play in 1989. Karnad wrote other plays titled *The Fire and the Rain* (Agni Mattu Male), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Bali: The Sacrifice*, etc. among others.



LET US KNOW

Some of the folk theatres that have gained popularity are the “Kuchipudi”, “Nautanki”, “Yakshagana”, etc. It must be mentioned that the Bhakti Movement initiated new trends in theatre that bordered the sentiments of various religion in India and thus, developed “Rasleela and Ramleela” of Uttar Pradesh, “The Ankianat” of Assam and “Krishnattam” of Kerala to name a few. However, spanning across various modes of presentation and various forms, Indian theatre today has become altogether a different specimen compared with its own past.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What idea do you get from the concept, ‘theatre of roots movement’?

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Q 2: Who is Ratan Thiyam?

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Q 3: What scholarship did Girish Karnad receive for his further studies abroad?

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Q 4: What did Karnad do after returning from London?

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Q 5: Name a few plays written by Girish Karnad.

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Q 6: What is meant by 'Yakshagana'?

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Q 7: Name a few popular folk theatres of India.

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14.4 CONTEXT OF THE PLAY

Girish Karnad, in general, drew the context of all his plays to the divide that arose out of the Western ideas and concepts on the one hand, and the traditional Indian culture on the other. It was basically the product of India's 'cultural past' and the 'colonial past'. While writing *Tughlaq*, Karnad aimed to throw light upon the "slow disillusionment my [Karnad's] generation felt with the new politics of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and the coming to terms with ***cynicism*** and ***realpolitik***" (p. 7 Karnad *Three Plays*). In his "Introduction" to the play, Karnad had revealed his inclination towards the subject-matter of the play:

> "What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi . . . and one of the greatest failures also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his idealism as well as the shortcomings within him, such as his impatiences, his cruelty, his feeling that he



***Cynicism*:** the belief that people always act from selfish motives.
***Realpolitik* :** Politics based on practical rather than moral and ideological considerations.

had the only correct answer. And I felt in the early sixties India has also come up very far in the same direction—the twenty- year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel." (Girish Karnad "Introduction" to *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes*)

14.4.1 Summary of the Play

Published in 1964 in Kannada, *Tughlaq* is divided into thirteen scenes. It revolved around the sequence of murder and politics, as well as, the quest for the meaning of life. Let us discuss each of the scenes in details for acquiring a better idea regarding the play and analysing Karnad's brilliant juxtaposition both of history and politics. While reading the play you will come across the historically significant figure of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the Sultan of the Tughlaq dynasty. For the ease of reference to the characters Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq shall be referred by either Tughlaq or Muhammad in the present subsections in order to avoid any form of confusion.

Scene One

The first scene opens in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi. Its takes us straight to the huge gathering there chiefly comprising Muslims as well as a few Hindus amidst them. The crowd gather in order to hear the result of a case involving a Brahmin of Shiknar, who sues Vishnu Prasad 'His Merciful Majesty'-the Sultan of Delhi Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Vishnu Prasad claims that his losses, (may be recovered and thereby save him from a state of poverty) had resulted from the state officials seizing illegally the land that belonged to him. The Announcer beats his drum to let the public know about the decision of the Kazi-i-Mumalik regarding this matter. He announces that the Sultan was found guilty in the case and hence, Vishnu Prasad would be granted 'five hundred silver dinars from the State Treasury' as compensation for his loss.The announcer further tells the crowd that the Sultan,

accepting the decision of the Kazi-i-Mumalik, in addition to providing financial compensation shall offer a post to the Brahmin in the Civil Service, thereby providing him a regular source of income for the future.

The scene also includes the appearance of the Sultan himself. The Sultan believes in religious tolerance and in the prevalence of justice, equality and peace in his Kingdom. The Sultan gives the news of his plans to the crowd. The Sultan Muhammad says "Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daulatabad" (Karnad 3). Thus, the Sultan aims to shift his capital for the betterment and security of his kingdom and assures his subjects that it was a decision taken with careful planning and discussion. The most significant reason, however, was the presence of the Hindus in Daulatabad. The Sultan aimed to strengthen the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims and he believed that this step would result in realising this end. His aim was to build an empire free from religious violence.

***Patricide*:** the killing of one's father.
***Fratricide*:** the killing of one's brother or sister.

This plan of the Sultan was not taken easily accepted by his subjects who were surprised with the news. We also get to know that the Sultan, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq was rumoured of having committed ***patricide*** and ***fratricide***. A tense atmosphere the kingdom with the announcement of the Sultan's idea of shifting the Kingdom's capital. There was a hue and cry as such. The scene introduces the readers to Sheikh Imam-ud-din, a respected cleric who had overwhelmed/impressed many people with his strong and powerful oratory skills. However, he had also spread rumours about the Sultan as well as, instigated the people on "Islam" in Kanpur.

In this scene, Karnad introduces Aziz and Aazam to his readers. Aazam is asked by the Guard of the court to move away because they are done with the issue of the Brahmin. But Aazam insists on seeing the Brahmin who receives a favourable decision

from the Court. Aazam is caught surprised on finding the Brahmin is none other than his old friend, Aziz who once was a “dhobi” by profession. It is learnt from their conversation that Aazam is ‘a common pickpocket’ (7) and hence was often found ‘where there is crowd’ (7). Aazam is eager to know the reason behind Aziz becoming a Brahmin. Aziz explaines thus :

“There’s a Brahmin called Vishnu Prasad whose land has been confiscated recently. I shaved my head and went to him. I said I would buy the land.” (8)

This is how Aziz had brought his land and also decided to file a suit against the Sultan. Aziz offers Aazam to work as his ***subordinate*** in the Civil Service. The very idea of “a Brahmin with a Muslim friend” (8) undoubtedly becomes a matter of pleasure to the Sultan. It must be noted that the scene outlines a description on the reception of Muhammad by his subjects. Along with this, it is made clear that the Sultan seek to create harmony in his Kingdom by considering both the Hindus and Muslims as equal.

Subordinate: someone lower in rank or position.

Scene Two

The scene takes place at a room at the Sultan’s palace. The Sultan shares a long conversation with his step-mother. His step-mother is much concerned about the sleepless nights that the Sultan had been spending all the way. They talk about chess and then discuss about Ain-ul-Mulk, Tughlaq’s childhood friend. His step-mother is curious and tensed about Ain-ul-Mulk’s march towards Delhi with a troop of thirty thousand soldiers. The Sultan shares a good rapport with him but is unable to understand what leads Ain-ul-Mulk to march against him. He guesses that it is due to the letter that he wrote to him asking him to be “the Governor of the Deccan” (9).

The scene describes Tughlaq in a philosophical light. He prays to the Almighty that sleep may not disturb him in his grand vision of the near future. The Sultan confides in his step-mother

that his inability to sleep at night is due to the fact that night is the only time when he is freed from the affairs of his State and is able to concentrate on his vision. He says that he prays all night so that he may find his subjects cooperating with him in all that he planned to do. And in fact he wonders “how can I [Tughlaq] spread my [his] branches in the stars while the roots have yet to find their hold in the earth” (10) which also marks his awareness regarding his people and therefore he is seen engaged in his prayers. His religion differing from the tenets or beliefs in Hinduism maintains that life and death are in a linear progression and that there is one life and one body. Therefore, he envisages that the subjects and the Kingdom should be accomplished in this life itself. Through the conversation of the mother and son, it becomes clear that the Sultan is worried about his people, the various rumours that had been spreading against him and his childhood friend Ain-ul-Mulk.

Vizier: a historical term of referrence to important officials in some Muslim countries

In this scene, ***Vizier*** Muhammad Najib and Zia-ud-din Barani visit the Sultan to discuss serious matters of the State. It becomes known that Barani is a historian and Najib is a politician. They discuss about Sheikh Iman-ud-din’s rising protest against the Sultan, as well as, the deficient troop of the Sultan. In a way, the political problems that crop up are discussed thoroughly by them. Najib also tells that the Sheikh had “a striking resemblance” (16) with the Sultan. Further he also adds that the Sultan should be aware of the danger that Ain-ul-Mulk and the Sheikh may bring forth. The Sheikh considers the Sultan to be a “disgrace to Islam” (13) and hence protests against him. Najib is seen as a considerable influence upon the Sultan. Hence, the Sultan plans to move towards Kanuaj immediately. Najib feels content as the Sultan decides to give him the charge of looking after the administration in his absence. At the same time, the step-mother expresses hatred towards Najib and confides her feelings to Barani. Both of them show their concern towards Tughlaq because both

are aware of his impulsive nature. Thus the plot is well-developed as the scene comes to a close.

The Announcer informed about the meeting that the Sultan had planned to organise in front of the Great Mosque.He further informed that the meeting shall be addressed by Sheikh Imam-ud-din, "who is revered all over India as a saint and as one who stands in the Grace of Allah" (19). The Sultan will also be present at the meeting in order to personally meet the so-called saint and seek advice from him. As such, the Sultan requested the presence of all the people of Delhi.

Scene Three

The third scene opens near the Great Mosque. The Sultan is astonished to see no one in front of the Mosque. This scene that follows establishes the "cleverest man" in the Sultan that even the Sheikh cannot help but admire. Skillfully, the Sultan organises a meeting so that people do not turn up and the tag of a spy is eventually attached to the Sheikh. However, the scene also throws light on the intelligence of the Sultan. Even, the Sheikh considered him as "one of the powerful kings on earth today" (21). Therefore, according to the Sheikh it is the duty of the Sultan to abide by the Koran and hence he dis-favours the Sultan's policy of communal ***conciliation***. The Sheikh to place it here considers that after the Arabs, it was through kings like Tughlaq that Islam could be spread far and wide. Hence, the Sheikh suggests that with all his "power, learning, intelligence, talent" (21), the Sultan should make his move.

Conciliation: making calm or content
Envoy: messenger or representative
Exponent: a promoter of idea or theory

The Sultan, very trickily, persuades the Sheikh to act as his ***envoy*** and 'dissuade' Ain-ul-Mulk from engaging in a fight against the Sultan. As an ***exponent*** of Islam, the Sheikh in unable to turn down this offer so as to find thousands of Muslims being killed. He agrees with the proposal and as a result the robes of honour and the headdress are placed upon him by the Sultan himself. The scene shows how the Sultan deals with the problem

of the Sheikh in his own way. This strategy of Tughlaq was enough to bring about his admiration in the eyes of the Sheikh. Though a short scene, it is one of the most interesting and subtly intriguing scenes.

Scene Four

The fourth scene openes at the Palace and Shihab-ud-din is found reading a few letters; he acts as the Sultan's Regent in his absence. The curious Step-Mother comes along to inquire Shihab about her son. He informs the Queen Mother that it was a week since he had heard from the King. We are aware of the admiration of the step mother for Shihab when she tells him about the way he impressively handles the administration in Muhammad's absence. Sardar Ratansingh, Shihab's adopted brother, makes an entry with the news of the King's victory and arrival in Delhi. The King is to arrive as soon as he finishes meeting Vizier Najib. This scene brings about one of the major developments in the play, that is, the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din. Ratansingh informs them that the Shiekh is unable to survive the battle.

The King along with his two companions, Najib and Barani join them at the Palace. The Sultan does not miss a chance to show his gratitude towards Shihab-ud-din. However, the Sultan turns cold when his step-mother asks him on the Sheikh's death; his death comes as a terrible blow to their faith. The Sultan is struck by this great loss and even though victorious in the battle, he orders that "Delhi will observe a day of mourning tomorrow for Sheikh Imam ud-din" (29). Further, he relates the incident to all and shows his generosity by informing them that even after the battle is won, he frees Ain-ul-Mulk and returns him the Kingdom of Avadh with a promise not to send him to the Deccan again. Soon all the characters depart from the scene except Shihab and Ratansingh. Left alone, the two brothers discuss serious issues regarding the Sultan. Ratansingh tells Shihab-ud-din about the Sultan's plan and the

eventual murder of the Sheikh. And he adds that it was a trap; his contempt for the king is obviously due to the reason that he had been "placed in the front rank of the ***platoon***" (30), which hardly survives a battle. The Sultan takes advantage of the resemblance in appearance that he had with the Sheikh and starts the battle. The enemies become trapped in the plan and just as the battle begins the Sheikh's body is pierced with arrows from the enemy's side. Ain-ul-Mulk and his army are thus deceived by the Sultan; they think or rather make the mistake of thinking the Sheikh to be Tughlaq himself. Thus, they march forwards and what follows was one of the "bloodiest massacre" (31).

***Platoon*:** a subdivision of company of soldiers.
***Hypocrisy*:** behaviour in which a person pretends to have higher standards or beliefs than is the case.

The twist in the plot is followed by Ratansingh's news to Shihab regarding the meeting where the "nobles of the Court and the prominent citizens of Delhi" are to come to discuss issues relating to the Sultan. Ratansingh is to join them and as a brother, he expects Shihab to join with them, against the king. Gradually, it is seen that Muhammad's subjects begin scheming against him. This scene exposes certain other traits of the Emperor like ***hypocrisy*** and selfishness.

Scene Five

This scene opens in a 'house in Delhi' where many Amirs and Sayyids are plotting against the king. Shihab-ud-din and Ratansingh are also present there. They urge Shihab to join them. Since he is an outsider, Shihab would not be suspected by the king or his soldiers. The Amirs become tensed because the shift to Daulatabad would result in their powerlessness. They express their sense of belongingness and security in the capital of Delhi. Though it is tough, Ratansingh and the Amirs ultimately compel Shihab to join them in the conspiracy. Shihab-ud-din is partly surprised and partly confused to learn about the Delhi episode, that is, the meeting called for by the King before the Great Mosque. Shihab is emotionally moved when he learns about the brutality of the king towards those who wanted to come to that meeting.

In fact, soldiers had been sent to every nook and corner of Delhi in order to warn the people of the consequence if they had dared to attend the meeting. The old Sheikh tells Shihab how he was wounded by a soldier when he tries to attend the meeting. Moved by the old man's concern for their faith, he finally joins hands with them. The scene also reveals another fact about Ratansingh, whose father is killed by Shihab's father.In an outburst of sentiment, Ratansingh relates this past story to the present and concludes that Shihab adopted him to lessen his guilt.

However, the most important thing that we came across in this scene is the plan to attack the king during prayer at the Durbar-i-Khas. Ratansingh is involved in executing the plan to attack the Sultan during prayer because at that moment "the whole palace is unarmed" (36) and they would only require "an extra couple of hundred soldiers outside the palace" (37). They decide to carry out the plan because they consider it the best time, though the Sayyid and the Sheikh are against it as killing at a sacred hour did not seem conscientions or justified. Firstly, they decided to 'smuggle arms into the palace'. However, Shihab-ud-din and others carry on with the plan.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Describe the context of the play *Tughlaq* by Girish Karnad.

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Q 9: How many scenes comprise the play *Tughlaq*?

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Q 10: Who looked after the kingdom of Delhi in the Sultan's absence?

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Q 11: Describe the plan that was plotted against the Sultan.

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Scene Six

The scene opens at the Palace. The Sultan awaits there along with Najib and Barani to welcome the Amirs and others for the Durbar-i-Khas. As Shihab-ud-din enters there along with the Amirs the Sultan announces that the Durbar-i-Khas should not take much time as he had to attend the mosque for prayer. The king then informs them of the possible arrival of "a descendant of the last Khalif" (40) that is Abbasid Ghiyas-ud-din, in his new capital, Daulatabad. The Sultan expresses his satisfaction that the Khalif had consented to his invitation.The Sultan secondly announces the introduction of copper currency along with silver dinars in his empire from the next year onwards.

He clarifies everyone's doubts by assuring the people that copper currency would have the same value as a silver coin. For the Sultan, his subjects must co-operate with him in order that his plans are accomplished. The Sultan is disappointed to hear objection by his courtiers on the use and value of copper coins. However, he pleads them not to mistrust the Sultan. He assures them it is the trust of his people that the Sultan required.In this scene, the king talks about his visions and dreams of India. Then the Sultan has them pledged in an oath in support of him.Thus, the scene shows the darker side of the Sultan. He brutally kills Shihab-ud-din and it becomes known that Ratansingh had informed the king about the possible attack on him by Shihab and the Amirs. Therefore the Sultan emerges to be a merciless and dominating figure through the end of the scene. The king forbids the people of his kingdom to pray until the arrival of the Khalif in his new capital. Let us consider the following lines from the text

where Tuglaq comments on prayer :

"Muhammad : There will be no more praying in the kingdom, Najib. Anyone caught praying will be severely punished." (46)

The Announcer sought attention of the people of Delhi and forwarded the message of the king that all the inhabitants of Delhi were asked to leave for Daulatabad within that month. If anybody is found to disobey the king's order, severe punishment is what they would receive. The State would, however, take care of the people while they shift from Delhi to Daulatabad by providing them food, clothing and medicine on their journeys."

Scene Seven

This scene relates the episode of the journey from Delhi to Daulatabad by reflecting on the social and political conditions that prevailed during that time. The scene is that of a camp where Aziz, the disguised Brahmin, behaves rudely with a Hindu women who requests his leave in order to attend to her child. Aazam is moved at her condition although Aziz appears indifferent not. He does not allow her to leave and demand her to stay at the camp. The scene also deals with the arrival of a family: "a man with a woman and six kids" (49-50). The man justifies his delay in reaching the camp by informing Aziz that he had buried two corpses on his way to the camp. Aziz is however concerned whether those two corpses belong to the Muslim sect. It was a matter of serious concern because if the dead bodies happened to be of Hindu sect, the man who had buried them would be in great trouble and hence warns him from future interference in such acts. But the man replies in the negative citing his profession to guard the dead bodies in the palace. One important observation is found in the man's remark that even "the relatives of the dead have to pay us before taking their bodies" (51); this showed how corruption prevailed in the State. The sense of morality in the people was so low that theft was a major source of income. Moreover, the

rich and the poor were all thieves in a sense. The dead bodies were stolen at night. Even the example of Aazam can be cited. Another aspect of immorality is found regarding marriage. The man had six children, all without marriage. Both Aziz and Aazam possess different mindsets while Aziz is hopeful about his future by entering into politics, Aazam is seen in the opposite. However, they embark upon a new plan by making "***counterfeit*** coins".



Counterfeit: made in exact imitation of something valuable so as to deceive or defraud.
Sentries**:** Soldiers stationed to keep guard or to control access to a place.
Uprisings: acts of violent rebellion
Rebellions: acts of rebelling or fighting against a government or ruler.

Scene Eight

The scene opens in front of the fort at Daulatabad. Two ***sentries*** await there– one young while the other is old. The young man, who had previously served in the army, curiously listens to the old man speak about his love for Delhi and how he had lost his family on the way to Daulatabad.The old man expresses his longing for Delhi. While they are busy in talking, the Sultan arrives at that moment. He seems impressed that the sentry is a young man of only nineteen years. The Sultan had come to Daulatabad almost at his age for the first time and with his grand vision where of creating history by building a fort.The restlessness of the Sultan is explicitly presented in this scene. He was once a lover of books. But then, his dreams and idealistic visions had stolen away his sleep which finds him asking Barani to suggest him a remedy for the same. They talk about the various ***uprisings*** and ***rebellions*** that had started against Tughlaq. Barani reminds the Sultan about his place among the learned men, and the popularity for his "knowledge of philosophy and poetry" (57) and "not in the market of corpses" (57). The Sultan confesses his desire "to give up this futile see-saw struggle and go to Mecca. Sit there by the Kaaba and search for the peace which Daulatabad hasn't given me." (57-58). The Sultan was well aware of his reception among his subjects. Thus, the scene ends with the arrival of the old sentry who brings the news of Vizier Muhammad Najib's murder.

Scene Nine

This scene involves a twist in the plot. Aziz and Aazam had

a serious discussion regarding their own existence. Aazam is idealistic and hence dreams of leading a life like a common man with "a nice home, till a farm and live happily?" (59). They ideally talked about happiness with both of them having different views. Aziz was always the one who insisted on crime, robbery, murder, rape, etc. as a means of survival. Although Azaam practiced pickpocketing, his idea of happiness was attached to the life led by a common man. While Aziz was power-hungry and as the play progresses, his excellence in the field of politics becomes evident. Aziz employs Karim to abduct a man and soon it is discovered that the kidnapped man is none other than the Khalif, Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid; this development in the plot unravels a new facet. However, on realising their mistake, both Aziz and Aazam seek to compensate by being his slave on his way to Daulatabad. But, Aziz is not the kind of person to be trusted. He is seen to extract all the information from the Khalif one by one and order the Khalif to be murdered. Aazam reacts to this and finds Aziz's decision shocking. However, as he is guided and dominated by Aziz, he helps him in murdering the Khalif. Ironically, the descendant of the Khalif was a man who grew "up in filth, live in filth" (63) and his glamorous and anxious visit to Daulatabad ends in his tragic death. Aziz soon takes out the robe from the dead Khalif's bundle and pretends to be the "great-grandson of the Khalif" (64).

***Virulence*:** extremely harmful or bitterly hostile.

Scene Ten

This scene is another revelation of Tughlaq's personality. Najib's murder arouses a ***virulence*** in him and he drives "the nobles to rebellion" (66) just to find out the murderer. His Step mother is displeased with him as it ruins the peace and harmony of the kingdom. She is glad that Najib was dead because she thinks that he had a bad influence on her son. But the obsessed Sultan is seen in a fiery temper. He recounts Najib's loyalty to the throne and in a steadfast manner resolves to punish the murderer. The step mother is unable to bear such distress on Muhammad's part. To the Sultan's

utter surprise, his step mother exposes herself as the murderer of Najib who admits thus "I [Queen Mother] had poisoned him" (67). She expresses her inability to tolerate the shattered personality of the once, 'glorious' and 'idealistic' Tughlaq. She, however, does upset the Sultan and he immediately calls for her punishment. In what comes across a tragic scene, he orders her to be punished by being publicly stoned to death. When the depressed Sultan is about to pray and break his own order Barani arrives with the news of the Khalif's arrival in Daulatabad.

"***Barani*** : We have just received a letter from your Governor. The good news is that we all can pray now, Your Majesty."(70)

Thus, the scene ends with a mixed reaction from the Sultan who is almost seen "on the brink of madness" (70).

The Announcer informed of the arrival of His Worship Abdul Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad who have come all the way from Baghdad to purify Daulatabad, where people have not prayed since the past five years. The Public Prayer will be started again from the coming Friday. "Henceforth, every Muslim shall pray five times a day as enjoined by the Holy Koran and declare himself a Faithful Slave of the Lord." (71)

Scene Eleven

This is a small scene that opens outside the fort of Daulatabad. People are seen rebelling against the announcement that prayer had been allowed. The scene drew the attention of the economic and social condition of the masses during that period. With the mass murder and disharmony across the empire, and the decline in the economy, there was also a scarcity of food. The common people had to feed themselves odd things for survival like 'barks of trees', 'burnt strips of skin', drink the blood 'spurting from the ***slaughtered*** beasts', and such others. Aziz disguised as the Khalif, Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad comes along with Aazam and his entourage and the Sultan receives them. The Sultan stares at Aziz the moment he sees him and embraces him declaring that the

Slaughtered: 'cruel' killing in this context.

"moment has come for me and my people to rejoice" (74). Soon there was a spreading confusion when a Hindu woman, on seeing Aziz disguised as the Khalif, shouts that her child was killed by him. This is sufficient to stir the crowd that results in a chaotic situation.

Scene Twelve

This scene captured the two contrasting attitudes of Aziz and Aazam. Once again, they have an argument over the implementation of their plan. Aziz, as usual, becomes the one to dominate. Aazam becomes scared conscious and their truth being discovered, as the Sultan would not spare them if that happens. In fact, he had bribed two servants for two horses and laid out his plan of escaping from the palace by a 'secret passage'. But Aazam becomes unable to overlook the Sultan's obsession with the kingdom, power and a vision. Aziz exclaims with irritation regarding Aazam's fear of the Sultan's **'*insomnia*'**. Aazam quite worriedly requests Aziz to leave the palace along with him as they acquire enough money to settle down their future. Aziz is however, not the kind whose determination can be easily shaken. So he decides to stay back in the palace. The scene ends as Aazam leaves the palace along with his friend, Aziz.

Imsomnia: being unable to sleep.

Scene Thirteen

The last scene of the play opens at 'another part of the Palace' and both the Sultan and Barani share a discussion on Barani's possible departure from the palace. Barani wanted to leave the palace for he intended to be present at his mother's funeral. Even Barani, the loyal companion of the Sultan seeks ways of departing from the Sultan's domain. The news of Aazam Jahan's murder is disclosed to them by a young soldier. Eventually, the Sultan ordered the news to be concealed from every one including Ghiyas-ud-din. The ingenious Sultan doubts the Khalif's choice of "bloody streets to the palace" (80) and orders that Ghiyas-ud-din is brought in front of him immediately. Aziz comes and is given the news of murder of Aazam Jahan.

Suddenly the Sultan explains his awareness regarding Aziz's ***masquerade*** and demands explanation from him.He even blames Aziz for daring to deceive him. But Aziz proves his loyalty and passion for serving under the Sultan by way of words. He explains to the Sultan that his dream could be fulfilled only by followers like Aziz. However, Barani tries to persuade the Sultan that Aziz is harmful and deserved punishment. In a way, Aziz traps the Sultan with his intelligent talks. The Sultan, even if he wished, is unable to kill Aziz (disguised as Ghiyas-ud-din) because in the eyes of the public, he is a Khalif. Aziz also discloses his previous disguise, as a Brahmin, before the Sultan.

***Masquerade*:** a pretence, pretending to be someone or something.
***Treachery*:** behaviour that involves betraying a person's trust in one.
***Muezzin* :** a man who calls believing Muslims to prayer.

The existential theme of the play is best reflected through the episode that is related by Aziz with respect to the worth of human life. Gradually, their discussion bear an impressive influence upon the Sultan so much that he decided to make Aziz a State official. Certain conditions are however to be followed so that it is done smoothly. With a "hysterical tinge to his laughter" (85), the Sultan asks Aziz to lead the much-awaited prayer. The Sultan then overtly expresses his joy before Barani on finding a person like himself. Barani, from his experience as a historian, is able to analyse the possible ***treachery*** of Aziz towards the Sultan. Equipped with power, Aziz could possibly rebel against the Sultan someday. Thus, all-in-all, Barani was totally against the Sultan's decision to grant Aziz power in the Deccan. The Sultan however ignores Barani's warning because he says, "all I [Tughlaq] need now is myself [himself] and my [his] madness— madness to prance in a field eaten bare by the scarecrow of violence" (87). While Barani finally requests His Majesty's permission to leave, the Sultan reclines on his throne and his eyes are closed. On being asked, the Sultan implied his comfort and peacefulness by expressing his desire to 'sleep'. The play ends with the Sultan sleeping on his throne. He only opens his eyes just as the call of the ***Muezzin*** fades out.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: What was the announcement of the Sultan regarding copper currency?

.....

.....

Q 13: What did Aziz and Aazam do by abducting the Khalif?

.....

.....

Q 14: How does Karnad end the play?

.....

.....



14.5 LET US SUM UP

As you have finished reading the unit, now you are familiar with one of the greatest dramatists of Indian theatre, Girish Karnad. Apart from receving an idea regarding the life and works of Karnad, you have learnt about his famous play, *Tughlaq*. A reading on the significant context of the play has helped you to associate the play with its historical context. By going through the detailed summary of all the scenes, you will be able to analyse the play in its entirety. Basically, Girish Karnad wrote in Kannada and this play was originally written in Kannada but later translated into English by the playwright himself. You have also gained a fair idea about the issues and topics that were primarily dealt with in the play. The other aspects of the play shall be dealt with in the next unit which is a continuation of this unit.



14.6 FURTHER READING

1) Budholia,O.P. (2011). *Girish Karnad: History and Folklore*. Delhi:

B.R. Publishing Corporation.

2) Dharwadker, Aparna Bhargava. (2005). *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

3) Karnad, Girish. (1975). *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

4) Leslie, Julia. (1997). "Nailed to the Past: Girish Karnad's Plays" in *Journal of South Asian Literature*. Vol 31/32, No. ½

5) Pandey, Manoj K. (2007). *The Plays of Girish Karnad and Tradition*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors.

14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: After Independence, in 1947, in their efforts to create an 'Indian' theatre that was different from the Westernised, colonial theatre, Indian theatre practitioners began returning to their 'roots' in classical dance, religious ritual, martial arts, popular entertainment and aesthetic theory. The Theatre of Roots - as this movement was known - was the first conscious effort at creating a body of work for urban audiences combining modern European theatre with traditional Indian performance while maintaining its distinction from both.

Ans to Q No 2: Ratan Thiyam is a leading Indian playwright and a theatre director who hails from the North eastern region of India, that is, Manipur. . Some of his plays include *Andha Yug* (*The Blind Age*), *Ritusamharan*, *When we Dead Awaken*, etc. He is also the founder director of "Chorus Repertory Theatre" in Manipur in 1976.

Ans to Q No 3: Rhodes scholarship.

Ans to Q No 4: He worked for the Oxford University Press located at Chennai. But he left the Press after a few years for pursuing a career as a full-time writer.

Ans to Q No 5: *Yayati* in 1961, *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hayavadana* written in 1971, *Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra*, *The Fire and the Rain* (*Agni Mattu Male*), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, *Bali: The Sacrifice*, etc.

Ans to Q No 6: 'Yakshagana' is a form of Indian folk theatre which combines dance, music, dialogue and several other stage techniques together, to explore a "world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods, dolls that speak and children who cannot, a world indifferent to the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human beings.

Ans to Q No 7: "Kuchipudi", "Nautanki", "Yakshagana", etc. It must be mentioned that the Bhakti Movement initiated new trends in theatre that bordered the sentiments of various religion in India and thus, developed "Rasleela and Ramleela" of Uttar Pradesh, "The Ankianat" of Assam and "Krishnattam" of Kerala to name a few.

Ans to Q No 8: While writing *Tughlaq*, Karnad aimed to throw light upon the slow disillusionment that his generation felt with the new politics of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and the coming to terms with cynicism and realpolitik.

Ans to Q No 9: Thirteen scenes.

Ans to Q No 10: Shihab-ud-din.

Ans to Q No 11: The plan was to attack the king during prayer at the Durbar-i-Khas. Ratansingh plans to the attack during prayer because "the whole palace is unarmed" (36) then, and they would only require "an extra couple of hundred soldiers outside the palace" (37). They decide to carry forward his plan as that was the best time, though the Sayyid and the Sheikh were against it because killing at a sacred time was neither conscientious nor justified.Firstly, they decided to 'smuggle arms into the palace'.

Ans to Q No 12: The Sultan announces the introduction of copper currency along with silver dinars in his empire from the next year onwards. He clarifies everyone's doubts by assuring the people

that copper currency would have the same value as a silver coin.

Ans to Q No 13: Aziz extracts all the information from the Khalif one by one and orders the Khalif to be murdered. But Aazam reacts to this and is shocked at Aziz's decision. However, as he is guided and dominated by Aziz, he helps him in murdering the Khalif.

Ans to Q No 14: The play ends with Muhammad sleeping on his throne. He only opens his eyes as the Muezzin's call fades out.



14.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Trace the significance of Girish Karnad as a playwright among the modern Indian dramatists.

Q 2. Write a short note on the contribution of Girish Karnad in modern Indian dramatics.

Q 3: What led Girish Karnad to draw a character from history in his play *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes*? Discuss.

Q 4: Discuss any of your favorite scenes from the play *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes*. Justify your answer.

Q 5: What is the general idea or perception of the Sultan that is received after reading the play *Tuglaq*?

Q 6: Comment on the Indian dramatic tradition with reference to Girish Karnad.

Q 7: Discuss the play *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes* with reference to the historical event of the shifting of capital.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 15 : GIRISH KARNAD : *TUGHLAQ* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Major Themes

15.4 Major Characters

15.5 Style and Language

15.6 Critical Reception

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.10 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the important themes highlighted through the play, *Tughlaq*
- appreciate Karnad's use of the significant historical figure of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq in the play to address contemporary issues
- analyse the major characters of the play and draw the various points of similarities and dissimilarities among them
- discuss Karnad's interest in the Kannada language
- describe the reception of both the play and the playwright in India, as well as, abroad
- appreciate the playwright for his contribution towards the growth of modern Indian drama.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of the previous unit on Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*. In this unit, we shall discuss and analyse the play. Based on the history of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, a ruler of the fourteenth century India,

this play explores various themes which will be discussed as you go through this unit. Apart from this, you will be acquainted with the major characters of the play and gain an idea about Karnad's skill in characterisation. It must be noted that Girish Karnad prefers to write in his native language, that is, Kannada.

To him, writing comes automatically when he uses the Kannada language. He opines that the rich and traditional oral literature is best captured through the Kannada language. This unit will thus provide you with an idea regarding Karnad's choice of language, as well as, his treatment of 'history'. It must interest you to know about the successful reception of the play, both at the regional level, as well as, in its translated version. This unit, therefore, shall provide you with a detailed insight on the issues that held prime importance in the hands of the modern Indian playwright Girish Karnad and provides you with ample scope for you to learn more about Indian drama.

15.3 MAJOR THEMES

Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* is an interesting piece of literature for one's reading. The following sections will enable you to analyse, explain and describe the significant aspects of the play, thereby stirring your interest to read more of the works by Girish Karnad. The play is based on history and Karnad's treatment of the historical figure of "Tughlaq" must be considered for our discussion. The following are the major themes of the play.

- **History as a Device**

  In his depiction of the figure of Tughlaq, Karnad followed the records that historians like Ishwari Prasad, Zia-ud-din Barani, Ibn Batuta, and others had provides him with. While developing the storyline of his play, Karnad mostly follows these sources but at the same time takes the liberty in creating new characters and in presenting a modified ***ambience*** of distrust, idealism, communal rigidity, corruption and famine. The action in the play took place in 1327 A.D. during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi. Bringing into history, Karnad fascinatedly uphold certain modern political



***Ambience**:* an atmosphere or a setting.

Tinge: hint or touch
Disillusionment: dis-sapointment
Radical: revolutionary

dilemmas where power and politics rule over the Indian nation with a ***tinge*** of corruption, chaos and disintegration. Karnad certainly bore the "Nehruvian period" in mind while bringing down history to the play. In this play, Karnad's emphasis was more on the ***disillusionment*** and idealism of Tughlaq rather than Tughlaq as the ***radical*** and fearless ruler of Indian History. In a sense, it may be considered, a symbol or a 'political allegory' where history had been used as a device to interpret the various follies of Indian politics at large.

- **Corruption, Intrigues and Treachery**

Strategically: cleverly
Reconciliation: the end of a disagreement and the return to friendly relations.
Conspiracy : the secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful.

In relation to this aspect, the mention of the protagonist, as well as, Aziz is noteworthy. Karnad's Tughlaq worked upon his every plan quite ***strategically*** and implemented them with accuracy, be it while murdering Sheikh Imam-ud-din or Shihab-ud-din or in his ***reconciliation*** with Ain-ul-Mulk to mention a few. The play is all about ***conspiracy***, deception and man's craving for power and politics. Rumoured to have killed his own father and brother for the throne, in the play Tughlaq suffering inwardly. At the same time, he fits into the figure of a plotter or schemer. It is not only about killing his own family member including his Step Mother, but also the conspiracies against his enemies which he did tactfully. Firstly all was done to promote himself as the one and all powerful ruler and secondly, to fulfill his dream or vision that he holds at his heart since the time of his youth. Let us take note of a few lines from the play uttered by Tughlaq :

"Muhammad: One night I was standing on the ramparts of the old fort here. There was a torch near me flapping its wild wings and scattering golden feathers on everything in sight. There was a half-built gate nearby trying to contain the sky within its cleft. Suddenly something happened— as though someone had cast a spell. The torch, the gate, the fort, the sky— all melted and merged and flowed in my I was the earth, was the grass, was the smoke, was the sky . . . And to that challenge the half-burnt torch and the half-

built gate fell apart . . . I have searched for that moment since then and here I am still searching for it". (Pp. 55-56)

Apart from the Sultan, Aziz is also a manipulator and takes full advantage of the king's liberal attitude. He firstly posed as the Brahmin and is successful in his deception; he manages to get money from the king, as well as, an administrative job. He is a master mind in claiming himself to be his "Majesty's true disciple" and wins the confidence of the Sultan, subsequently acquiring power and position. He even deceives the king by disguising himself as the Khalif's grandson. It must be noted that the corruption ***rampant*** at that time was well captured by Karnad in this play. Right from bribery to murder, every thing was mostly political. Even the State officials took bribe in such acts like discharging the dead bodies to the deceased family members. As a whole, the play opens and ends with a series of intrigues. The play is undoubtedly a juxtaposition of treachery, doubt, faith, mystery, politics, religion, murder and deception.



Existential Aspect

This is one of the important themes of the play. The experiences of Tughlaq are the best example of this theme. In terms of a theory or philosophy, existentialism deals with the "*existence of the individual person as a free agent, responsible for their own development*" as provided in the Oxford Dictionary. Tughlaq is seen to have a tendency of being both 'sympathetic' and 'mad' at times, spiritual yet doubtful and idealistic yet cruel. His personality in a way reflects his two extreme selves. His self ***obsession*** and his gradual loss of self-control eventually brought about his ***doomsday***. As such, he seeks ***solace*** in the creation of his own history and shapes the discourses of history. The shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad comes as a major decision which bears had a negative impact on his subjects. They subsequently revolted against it and as such the entire shifting of the capital is marked by bloodshed and cruelty. Muhammad becomes aware of his shrinking fate when he discusses

Obsession: pre-occupied with himself.
Doomsday: an unpleasant destiny.
Solace: comfort.
Rampant : prevalent.

***Confidants*:** someone who could be trusted.

the various uprisings against him. The three closest ***confidants*** of the Sultan leaves him; Najib is murdered, the step-mother is sentenced to death perally and Barani refused to stay with the king. The Sultan's utter loneliness poses as an existential problem to him. He is neither achieve his goal nor is he able to live in peace. His journey through the different phases of life, from an idealist, a learned scholar and a prospective king– to a self that comes to be regarded as insane and tyrannical or "mad Muhammad" itself is suggestive of this existential aspect. Throughout the play, Tughlaq's search for meaning in life is imbalanced with the politically absurd world where he tries to impose his own decisions, however, failing pathetically at the end. He seeks after the absolute or final meaning—which is represented by the vision he has, and continues to find it to risk everything until it is no more found and till he is left with no plans. The deconstructed self of Tughlaq is a result of the dilemma between the ideal and the real. His disintegrated personality becomes a bolt in his over-reaching aspirations or life. Though an idealist, Tughlaq is not careful in the implementation of his goals and infact the means he preferres are seen in sharp contrast to his ideal vision. He chooses cruelty, violence and aggressiveness to support his ideal vision which finally turned everything against him. He was indeed a progressive ruler but had a miserable failure as a king with an inability not only to restore his kingdom but also to comprehend his meaning of life. This existential crisis of Tughlaq reflects the modern element in the play.

The above discussion are a few of the themes highlighted in the play highlighted. Your reading of the play must not be solely limited to the themes discussed above. After reading the play, you must explore certain other themes in the play like the role of religion, Tughlaq's liberalism, symbolic use of 'prayer' and the game of chess, Tughlaq's rise and fall from his throne, Tughlaq' progressive attitude, etc.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: When did the action of the play take place?

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.....

Q2. Write a brief note on Aziz's deception.

.....

.....

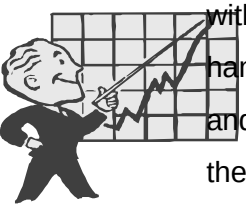
Q3. What aspect of the play adds to its modern relevance?

.....

.....

15.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

- **Tughlaq**



The play takes its name after a powerful Sultan of the fourteenth century A.D. known as Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. The play deals with the rise and subsequent failure of Tughlaq. Karnad's depth in handling the historical figure, by reflecting the various psychological and emotional experiences of the king, is worth appreciating. He is the protagonist and the soul of the play, and hence his dreams, visions and ideals are articulated throughout the play. What is special about Karnad's Tughlaq is the idea of an existential hero. An emperor from the fourteenth century is taken up by Karnad to deal with a theme of contemporary relevance.

Tughlaq is liberal in his attitude towards religion. He holds that religious tolerance was the key to success and therefore leads the shifting of capital and his people from Muslim-dominated Delhi to the Hindu-populated Daulatabad. Mentally burdened with the blame of being a murderer of his own father and brother, Tughlaq's character depicts the contradictory and his irrationality. His liberal attitude often becomes a matter of suspicion among his subjects. Yet the Sultan never ***refrains*** from dreaming of a kingdom where equality would prevail among the people of all religions. Though



Refrains : resists.

portrayed as a tyrannical ruler, Tughlaq is a sympathetic ruler as well. He seems to be concerned about his subjects in the arrangement of rest houses, food, etc. while they travel from Delhi to Daulatabad. He also provides compensation and an administrative job to the Brahmin who filed a suit against him. As a whole, Tughlaq is a character who is represented by contrasts: good and evil, idealism and cruelty, sympathy and violence.

- **Aziz and Aazam**

  Aziz was a 'dhobi', a washer-man who plays a significant role in the play. From the beginning of the play, his intention was to become powerful and rich. He was a shrewd and wicked man who left no stone unturned forwards achieving his aims. Taking advantage of the king's liberal attitude towards religious harmony, he poses to be a Brahmin and seeks sympathy from the Kazi. He is daring and loves to take risks. He is the one to file a suit against the king. Eventually he wins it and is rewarded a job, as well as, money. Pretension is what he believes on in order to fulfill his wishes. He is also involved in corrupting practices and produces 'counterfeit coins' along with his companion, Aazam. Aziz was basically an opportunist and dreams of a luxurious life. Also he is seen to be very ill-mannered and unsympathetic towards the poor people. His interests rested on politics through which he finally able to get what he desires. The most crucial thing he does is the abduction of the Khalif and the subsequent plan of disguising himself as Khalif Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid.

  On the other hand, his foil Aazam survives by pickpocketing and is seen as less ambitious than Aziz. His idea of happiness is seen to be limited to leading a life of the common people, though in a comfortable and luxurious manner. He is Aziz's friend and helps him in every step. He is well aware of Aziz's crude ambitions but is less strong to fight against it. However, towards the end of the play, Aazam leaves Aziz but is unfortunately murdered. His murder remains a mystery. On Aziz's insistence, he even murders

Ghiyas-ud-din. It becomes ironical that he becomes even sympathetic at times. Both these characters are used by the playwright to provide a comic relief from the otherwise grave theme.

- **Barani and Najib**

Zia-ud-din Barani was a historian and an adviser to the Sultan. He was a witness to the Sultan's ups and downs and sees history forming in front of his eyes. He serves for seven years in the company of the king and holds a special role in the Sultan's life. He is seen to be sympathetic by nature. Though he likes the Sultan, it becomes intolerable to see the Sultan being destroyed. At the end of the play, he asks the Sultan for leave and manages to do so. He remains even faithful to the Sultan warning him about the various uprisings that were set against Tughlaq. In contrast, Vizier Muhammad Najib is an evil character. He had a huge influence on the Sultan. He is a ***shrewd*** politician. He is a Hindu but converts himself into Islam. His evil nature leads the Step-Mother to doubtful suspicion. As a result, he is poisoned by her. She believes that Najib extends a devilish influence on the king. Both these characters are seen to be close to the Sultan. They may perhaps be seen to resemble the good and bad sides of the emperor himself.

***Shrewd* :** clever.

- **Sheikh Iman-ud-din**

He was a protestor of the Sultan and was an orthodox Muslim cleric. He addressed public meetings against the Sultan. No one could challenge his oratory skills. He was a good speaker and his concern was the security of Islam. The Sultan's liberal attitude poses as a threat to him. He often suffers the vision of Muslims in danger. However, his 'striking resemblance' with the king leds to his downfall. He falls into the trap of the king and is persuaded to act as an envoy. The enemies killed him suspecting him to be the Sultan. His death is finally in the State by most of the people who consider his absence as a great loss to Islam.

- **Step-Mother**

Tughlaq's one and only attachment with a woman character in the

***Patricide*:** the act of killing one's own father
***Fratricide*:** the act of killing one's own brother

whole play is established with his step-mother. She is portrayed as a caring mother whose only concern is centered on the Sultan's well-being. Although aware of the Sultan's past relating to his commitment of ***patricide*** and ***fratricide***, she accepts him. The Sultan in return offers her his respect and loves her. However, the step-mother is unable to tolerate the interference of any evil or wicked partner of the king. In Najib, she sees a harmful person particularly as he exercises a major influence on the king; which according to her is not good. She sees the Sultan affected by the crude, aggressive and negative thoughts instilled in him by Najib. All her care and affection is bestowed upon Tughlaq. This love and protective attitude of the step-mother results in the murder of Najib.

The step-mother is concerned about the Sultan's irrational behaviour and his growing madness. He orders to carry out a search for the murderer of his close companion, Najib at the cost of anarchy and tyranny. She is the one who selflessly loves Muhammad but finally became a victim of his anger and frustration. When the step-mother reveals that it is on her order that Najib was poisoned, the Sultan finds it unbearable. This is particularly because he found solace and affection in her earlier. But the news leaves him shocked and at once, he punishes her by calling her an adulteress. She is in fact, given the worst punishment- which is her being 'stoned to death publicly'.

On the whole, she reflects the sprit of a courageous woman who is not afraid of the Sultan's inhuman behaviour and someone who does what she perceives to be her proper and rightful duty. She even openly protests the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din. Thus, Karnad's art of charcterisation in *Tughlaq* can be summed up in the words of U. R. Anantha Murthy who had commented that "Girish's plays have a lyrical quality in them. His characters in the play whisper to themselves".

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Name the two confidants of Muhammad.

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Q 5: Who was Sheikh Imam-ud-din? What leads to his downfall?

.....

.....

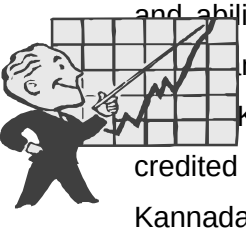
Q 6: How was the step-mother's attitude towards Tughlaq?

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15.5 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

The play was originally written in Kannada, Karnad's childhood language. He undertook the writing of the play as a challenge and brought the character of Tughlaq into life from the history books. His expertise and ability to shape the character from history in order to suit modern



ments was critically acclaimed. Karnad choice of language is Kannada, the language he grew up with. In fact, he had been credited as the first Kannada dramatist who had successfully taken out Kannada theatre from a specific audience to a broader one. Girish Karnad acknowledged Alyque Padamsee who was the inspiration behind the English translation of this play. Also he expressed his gratitude towards S. Gopalie who helped him in the translation of the play. Through the means of translation, Karnad had been able to communicate his ideas with an international audience.

Interestingly, Girish Karnad revealed that "I never knew I would write in Kannada till I wrote *Yayati*. Writing in English, becoming an international poet was my ambition, (laughs ...) Till I actually went to England I thought I would never return from there. But, when I began writing in a country which reads only Eliot and Auden, suddenly Kannada came back to me! I realised that I was condemned to my language, there is no escape from this ..." (*Excerpts from the discussion on "Girish Karnad, The Playwright: A Discussion/ U.R. Anantha Murthy, Prasanna, Girish Karnad"*)

ACTIVITY 15.1

Think about the relevance of "translation" with reference to Girish Karnad's works. What, according to you, are the merits and demerits of a translated work? Write your answer in about 500 words.



LET US KNOW

Apart from Girish Karnad, some of the dramatists of Kannada literature are Chandrasekher Kambar, B. M. Srikanthayya, Kuvenpu, Kaulasam, Shriranga, etc. But it was Girish Karnad who has been credited to bring out Kannada theatre from its regional level to the world outside.

Facts about Girish Karnad

*You must be interested to know that Girish Karnad played the role of "Guruji" in the Hindi language film *Iqbal*, directed by Nagesh Kukunoor and produced by Subhash Ghai.

*He was the first recipient of the *President's Golden Lotus Award* for Kannada cinema.

*His first attempt at direction won him the **National Film Award** in the category of Best Direction for the film, *Vamsha Vriksha*.

15.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

In reviewing Girish Karnad's book *Three Plays: Naga-Manadala; Hayavadhana; Tughlaq*, Prema Nandakumar pointed out that "Karnad's creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical-legendary experience and fusing them into a forceful statement. His childhood exposure to street plays in villages of Karnataka and his familiarity to Western dramas staged in Bombay engaged him in retelling the secular legends of India to suit the modern context". Regarding Karnad's play *Tughlaq*, Nandakumar remarked that "Karnad makes use of ***caracoling*** courtiers and royal spectacle to insinuate the prime ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru and the puzzlement of a distracted nation". Praising



Caracoling: a half-turn executed by a horse rider.

Karnad, Nandakumar stated that "Karnad's plays depend a good deal on the physicality of stage ***spectacle*** and the power of spoken Kannada. That much of the original linguistic power does get conveyed in the English versions is a tribute to Karnad's ***unambiguous*** storylines. A legend, a myth, a page of medieval history: but the ambience is strictly contemporaneous".



Spectacle**:** display.
Unambiguous: having a clear cut meaning.

The play was a success when it was staged. For the first time it was staged at the Indian National Theatre in Bombay, then at Kannada Bharati in Delhi and the productions were in Kannada language. Audiences enjoyed the play and soon there was a demand for the play to be staged in English and other regional languages. Karnad in his "Author's Note" even mentions that he had to translate the play into English for Alyque Padamsee's production in Bombay in 1970. The play had gained a good reputation both in India as well as abroad and critics had pointed Karnad's brilliant use of history as a medium to address contemporary issues of politics and modern governance.

Karnad's popularity and Tughlaq's successful production can be summed up in Dharwadker's words as: "Published originally in Kannada in 1964, and directed in that language in 1966 by B. V. Karanth, the play exploded on the national scene during the next decade with landmark productions by Satyadev Dubey, Alyque Padamsee, Arvind Deshpande, and Ebrahim Alkazi, in Urdu, English, and Marathi. Tughlaq is now one of the most frequently read, discussed, and performed contemporary Indian plays, both in India and abroad." (Dharwadker 223)



LET US KNOW

"Karnad describes the influences on him at the time of the play's composition as eclectic, even opportunistic—they include Jean Anouilh's *Beckett*, Albert Camus' *Caligula*, Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo*, the history plays of Shakespeare, Sergei Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*, and every historical play he could see in England, on stage and on the screen. Yet the principal structural model for Tughlaq was not Western and

literary but Indian and popular, and Karnad turned to it not because he sought a large audience in the theatre but because, as an Indian student in England writing a Kannada play, he discounted the possibility of performance altogether". (Dharwadker 244)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Who inspired Girish Karnad to translate the play, Tughlaq?

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.....

Q 8: In which Hindi film did Girish Karnad acted in the role of "Guruji"?

.....

.....

Q 9: What did Prema Nandakumar say about the modern outlook in Karnad's plays?

.....

.....

Q 10: What are the sources that Karnad mentioned about in his writing of the play?

.....

.....



15.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have been acquainted with the themes that Karnad had focused in the play. Karnad's juxtaposing history with modernity in the play has placed it into a modern theatrical canon. The exploration of the existential theme in the play has lent a crucial factor to its reception worldwide. You have been familiarised with the major character, Tughlaq along with the other important characters. The provided discussion will enable you to analyse Girish Karnad's treatment of 'history' in the play.

The discussion on the successful reception that the play in theatres will certainly added to your knowledge regarding the work. You must have noted Karnad's emphasis on translation in order to get across and spread the message of his play to a wider audience. The unit encourages you to explore the other plays by Karnad and at the same time concentrate upon the development of a modern sensibility in Indian drama.



15.8 FURTHER READING

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15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The action in the play took place in 1327 A.D. during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi.

Ans to Q No 2: He firstly poses as the Brahmin and is successful in his deception; he even manages to gain money from the king, as well as, an administrative job. Also, he deceives the king by disguising himself as the Khalif's grandson.

Ans to Q No 3: The deconstructed self of Tughlaq is a result of the dilemma between the ideal and the real. His disintegrated personality becomes a bolt to his over-reaching aspirations in life. Though an idealist, Tughlaq is not careful in the implementation of his goals; the means he prefers are in contrast to his ideal vision. He choses cruelty, violence and aggressiveness to support his ideal vision and this is where everything turns against him. He is indeed a progressive ruler but has a miserable failure as a king with an inability not only to restore his kingdom but also to comprehend the meaning of his life. This existential crisis of Tughlaq reflects the modern element in the play.

Ans to Q No 4: Zia-ud-din Barani and Vizier Muhammad Najib.

Ans to Q No 5: He was a protestor of the Sultan and was an orthodox Muslim cleric. His 'striking resemblance' with the king leads to his downfall. He falls into the trap of the king and is persuaded to act as an envoy. The enemies kill him suspecting him to be the Sultan.

Ans to Q No 6: She is portrayed as a caring mother whose only concern is the Sultan's well-being. Although aware of the Sultan's past and his commitment of patricide and fratricide, she accepts him. The Sultan in return offers her respect and loves her. She is also unable to tolerate the interference of any vicious or wicked partner

of the king. All her care and affection is bestowed upon Tughlaq. This love and a protective attitude of the Step-Mother results in the murder of Najib. The step-mother is concerned about the Sultan's irrational behaviour and his growing madness. She reflects the personality of a courageous woman who is not afraid of the Sultan's inhuman behaviour being forthright by nature and being strong-headed in what she perceived as her rightful duty. She openly protests the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din as well.

Ans to Q No 7: Alyque Padamsee.

Ans to Q No 8: *Iqbal.*

Ans to Q No 9: Praising Karnad, Nandakumar stated that "Karnad's plays depend a good deal on the physicality of stage spectacle and the power of spoken Kannada. That much of the original linguistic power does get conveyed in the English versions is a tribute to Karnad's unambiguous storylines. A legend, a myth, a page of medieval history: but the ambience is strictly contemporaneous".

Ans to Q No 10: Jean Anouilh's *Beckett*, Albert Camus' *Caligula*, Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo*, the history plays of Shakespeare, Sergei Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*, and every historical play he could see in England, on stage and on the screen.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Comment on the historical aspect in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes*.

Q 2: Analyse the themes and motifs that Girish Karnad emphasised in his play titled *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes.*

Q 3: State the factors that uphold the play *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes* as symbolic of politics and power play in the contemporary world.

Q 4: Discuss the character of Tughlaq from an existentialist perspective.

Q 5: Give the character sketch of Aziz, Aazam, Barani, Najib and Step Mother.

Q 6: Write a note on the critical reception of Girish Karnad.

Q 7: Consider Girish Karnad's play *Tughlaq: A Play in Thirteen Scenes* as the depiction of intrigue and deception.

Q 8: How far is the title of the play appropriate? Justify your answer.

*** ***** ***



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Name of the Paper: Course Code:

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Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University
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Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KKHandiqui State Open University
Housefed Complex, Dispur, Guwahati- 781006
(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? | | | |
2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

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(To be inserted as last page after the end of the last unit of the course) 1