

**KUNTHAVAI NAACCHIYAAR GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE FOR WOMEN(AUT),
THANJAVUR-613007.
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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WOMEN'S WRITING IN ENGLISH

CODE :18K5E12

UNIT-III- DRAMA (DETAILED)

1.Alice Childress- Trouble in Mind

Trouble in Mind

- Alice Childress

Summary:

A painful indictment of racism in American commercial theatre, “Trouble in Mind” tells the story of Wiletta Mayer and African American actress cast in a “progressive” play about racism by a white male author. It turns out to be anything but progressive, both in terms of its scripts and rehearsal environment. This play is about the troubled production of a fictional, anti-lynching, Broadway play, **Chaos in Belleville**. Wiletta Mayer, the African American actress lead of the Chaos, as well as the other black actors, must deal with the condescending attitude of the white director Al Manners. Wiletta stands up to Manners and reveals his racist attitude. At last she faces severe consequences as a result.

Introduction to the Playwright:

Alice Childress was born on October 12, 1920, in Charleston, South

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Carolina. When she was 5 years old her parents separated, and she was sent to live in New York city with her maternal grandmother, Eliza White. Brought up in Harlem, White encouraged her granddaughter's creative side. As a small child Childress improvised plays with friends and was a very voracious reader. In 1941, Childress became involved with the American Negro theatre. Though technically an amateur group, Childress learned every aspect of the theatre, from set building to directing, acting and writing, in her eleven years of involvement. Childress's first success was an actress, including an appearance in the original Broadway company of "Anna Lucasta". In 1949, Childress wrote her first produced play a one act entitled "Florence". Three years later, she wrote "Gold through the Trees" the first play by an African American woman to be professionally produced on the American stage.

Childress directed the Off- Broadway production of her play "Trouble in Mind" in 1955. These plays led to Childress's increasing reputation as a writer, though she continued to act in theatre, television and film for several decades. In 1957, Childress married her second husband, Nathan Woodward, a musician and music educator. She co-wrote several musical plays with him, including "Young Martin Luther King". Her best known play, "The Wedding Band; A Love/Hate Story in Black and White". The play opines an inter-racial romance set in Charleston during World War I. Her best known fiction work was 1973 juvenile novel, "A Hero Ain't ;Nothing but A Sandwich". Childress wrote another acclaimed juvenile novel in 1982, "Rainbow Jordan", following her first adult novel, "A Short Walk"(1981). Childress received numerous awards for her many

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contributions to the arts, including the Harlem School of the Arts Humanitarian award in 1987. She died of cancer in New York city on August 14, 1994, leaving behind an unfinished novel about two of her great grandmothers.

Introduction to the Play:

Trouble in mind is the first professionally produced play written by Alice Childress, a pioneering African- American playwright. Childress directed the first production of the play which debuted on November 5, 1955 in Greenwich Mews Theatre, New York City. For ‘Trouble in Mind’ Childress was awarded an Obie Award in 1956 for best original Off- Broadway production, making her the first African American woman to win an Obie Award. Though ‘Trouble in Mind’ was award winning and a hit with critics and audiences at the time, the production was plagued with problems, including a clash between the original director and cast that prompted Childress to take his place.

‘Trouble in Mind’ also had script problems. The original production was also a three act play with a relatively happy ending, while the published version, discussed in this entry, has only two acts and an ambiguous, though downbeat, close. Childress has said that she was not satisfied with either ending. Childress had a chance to take ‘Trouble in Mind’ to Broadway, but the producers demanded too many changes that Childress felt would have compromised the play. Though ‘Trouble in Mind’ was not seen on Broadway, critics have acknowledged its power.

Essay on ‘Trouble in Mind’:

‘Trouble in Mind’ starts inside the entrance of a Broadway theatre in New York

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city. Wiletta Mayer, a middle aged African- American actress, bangs on the door and at last lets herself in. She shouts the elderly doorman, Henry for not letting her in out of the the cold, until she sees the stage. While she is spellbound by the sight of the theatre, Henry identifies her from when he was an electrician on a show 20 years ago. John Nevins, a young African- American actor, enters. He tries to hide his nervousness. In discussing with him Wiletta realizes that they come from the same place and that she knows his parents. Wiletta advises him career guidance about how black people are perceived by white directors and others who run the show.

Millie, another African- American actress now enters. Then, a young white actress, Judith Sears, and an elderly African- American actor, Sheldon Forrester, join the conversation. John tries to approach Judi several times, but the other actors prevent him. They are talking about this play and previous productions they have been in. Judy explains that this is her first play, and she hopes it will educate their audience. The rest of the actors do not disagree outright. Their discussion is disturbed by the arrival of the play's director, Manners, his assistant Eddie. After greetings are exchanged, Manners gives them the sketches for the production's scenic design. He encourages each member of the cast, especially Wiletta, who worked on a movie with him sometime ago. Manners instructs the cast about the play and how the production came to be. He says that it is ahead of its time in its description of race. The cast has questions about their parts, but Manners insists that they read a scene in the middle of act one.

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Judy gets up to read, but she is nervous and forgets where down stage is. Manners yells at her. He tries to make Wiletta act naturally, but it comes off wrong and he seems to be racist. Wiletta became very careful around him. The cast continues with the read. The black actors questions the situations and words they object to. Manners tries to smooth things over, but does not concede such things are objectionable. Henry brings up with coffee and doughnuts. Manners becomes angry when Henry does not bring him the proper pastry. His anger and superior attitude increase when Eddie informs Manners that his ex wife is on the phone. Judy invites the cast to visit her family's home in Bridgeport. Wiletta and Millie tell her she better ask them before she makes such an invitation because whites might not want them there.

Again Manners turns the conversation to the script. He enquires the cast to explain to him what is going on. They try to explain the director, at the end of act one Wiletta sings the song. She knows the song and performs it well. Manners demands to know what she is thinking about. She tells him that she knows what he wants, but he is not satisfied with this answers. Manners insists her play a word association game that makes Wiletta uncomfortable. While talking about racial topics the cast say accusatory things to each other. John, Shelton and Millie leave and Wiletta is left alone. Henry comes in and tries to comfort her. As Henry talks about Ireland and the problems there, he grows increasingly indignant. Wiletta shares his anger and she says she will be an actress no matter what is thrown in her path.

After three days, Manners and Eddie are rehearsing with a new addition a

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white actor named Bill O' Wrary. Bill plays Renard, the father figure in the play and is passionately reading a long- winded speech from the play. When he is done, Bill seems unsure of himself. Bill extends suggestions to Manners about the play. Manners thinks about his personal problems, then asks a favour of Bill. He tells Bill to stop leaving at lunch hour because it looks like he does not want to eat with the black members of the cast. Bill tells Manners that he does not want to eat with them, not because he does not want people to stare at him.

Wiletta tries to tell the director about problems she has with the script. Manners disregard of her concerns. He compliments her every time she tries to say something. Wiletta finally gets out that she thinks the third act might not seem a natural outcome after the first. When the rest of the cast joins them, Judy looks more sophisticated and John acts more like Manners. Wiletta has a hard time focusing on her lines. The play soon reaches a dramatic climax, as John's character goes out to be lynched and Wiletta's character lets him go. When they reach the end of the scene, Shelton reveals that he has not read the whole play, just the part that he is in. Manners compliments all the actors on their work except Wiletta. She tells him that he will not listen, to her suggestions, though he does pay attention to the other's thoughts. Manners illustrates that she must lose herself in the role by relating, but Wiletta does not understand why Job, John's character does not get away. Manners does not hear to Wiletta, and the cast falls into a bit of and chaos infighting.

Manners tries to control his cast. He asks them to imagine a lynching. He is surprised when Shelton says that he has already seen one. Sheldon relates the

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story. Manners and Bill are affected by the story, and the former calls for lunch. The cast decides to go together. Wiletta still tries to make her point about the script, but Manners dismisses her concerns again. Some of the cast leaves, and Wiletta says she will catch up them later. Wiletta arrives just as Manners begins rehearsal. She tells him she wants to talk to him after rehearsal, but Manners is noncommittal. They start to read act 3. Wiletta ignores Manners' order to keep John on his knees. She challenges Manners about the play, she does not accept her character would send her son out to a lynch mob. Though others try to silence her, she asks

Manners if he would do it to his son. He ignores the question and justifies his position. Wiletta accuses him of prejudice and keeps trying to ask him her question. Manners finally answers her in an angry outburst. He says that he and his son could not be compared to her and John's character.

Manners and Eddies quickly leave the stage, and the cast is in disarray. The cast is both accusatory and supportive of what Wiletta said. She is firm in her conviction that the play is a lie. Judy and Bill are resentful what the black actors say about whites. At last, Eddie comes in and informs that rehearsal is over. He will call them about tomorrow's rehearsal. The cast, except Wiletta, leave. Henry sees that Wiletta is upset and tries to calm her. She says that she will show up at rehearsal tomorrow, no matter what, so that Manners has to fire her in person. At Henry's urging, she recites Psalm 133 onstage.

SHORT QUESTIONS:

1. When did "Trouble in Mind" enacted on the stage?

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2. Who is Wiletta?

3. What is the attitude of the director to the cast?

4. Is racial discrimination existing in American theatre?

5. What type of character is Judy ?

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UNIT-IV-SHORT STORIES

- 1.Doris Lessing - Flight
- 2.Kamala Das - A Home Near the Sea
- 3.Ambai -Squirrel

FLIGHT

-Doris Lessing

SUMMARY

The old man keeps Pigeons which he cares for, showing his kind, caring nature. The grand daughter is growing up and he does not like this. His mood is affected by his granddaughter's appearance. He becomes very angry, troubles and overprotective. He feels she is too young to be courting with boy. The illustration of her boyfriend, Steven, from the old man's point of you is very negative and he looks like a ragged youth. He is angry as he does not want her to grow up. She remains so stubborn, showing she is older now and can stand up to him. Being an old man, he is powerless, as when he goes to his daughter, she tells him not to be so silly. He experiences loneliness, empty and cries a lot. The grand daughter and her boyfriend give him a pigeon as a peace offering. He seems childish as he

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accepts it. He is very upset by their grown up nature. Then he lets his favourite pigeon go, almost as if he feels this is symbolic significance of having to let his granddaughter go. The doves all return, but there is no mention of the pigeon who is gone forever. At the end the granddaughter is in tears as she perhaps realizes finally why her grandfather is so upset.

Introduction to the Author:

Doris May Lessing was born in 22 October 1919. She was a British Zimbabwean novelist. She was born to British parents in Iran, where she lived until 1925 then her family shifted to Zimbabwe, where she remained until moving in 1949 to London, England. Her notable novels include *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *The Sequence of 5 Novels* collectively called *Children of Violence* (1952 to 1969). *The Golden Notebook*, *The Good Terrorist* and five novels collectively known as *Canopus in Argos: Archives* (1979 to 1983). Lessing was awarded the 2007 Nobel prize in literature. The Swedish Academy, while avoiding the prize, described her as “that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny”. Lessing was the oldest person ever to receive the Nobel prize in literature. She was awarded the David

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Cohen prize for a lifetime achievement in British literature. In 2008, The Times ranked her 5th on a list of “The 50 greatest British writers since 1945”.

Introduction to the Short Story:

The short story “Flight” was published in 1957, in a collection of short stories entitled “The Habit of Loving”. In ‘Flight’ Doris Lessing brings out the theme of anger, acceptance, jealousy, conflict, change, independence, letting go and freedom. This has been taken from her African stories collections the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator. After reading the story the reader realizes that Lessing may be exploring the theme of anger. **Flight** is a short story that illustrates how strong symbolism can be to build a protagonist’s character through the development of the story with the inclusion of the action and gestures portrayed by the way the characters within the story use self-perception.

Essay on “Flight”:

An old man who keeps pigeons and doves, worries about his granddaughter’s attitude. He is angry about her relationship with Steven. He does

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not like it to be suitable for a young girl of her age. If anything the grandfather thinks as though he may be losing Alice to Steven, which may result him to feel jealous of Alice and Steven's relationship. He likes company yet since Alice's three sisters have gotten married, the grandfather may actually feel lonely and bitter. The reader can understand, when the grandfather tells Alice that he will tell her mother that she is waiting for Steven. The grandfather is the one constant voice in the story.

The grandfather does not like change. This is true when it comes to the grandfather. He is set in his ways and a beliefs that Alice should not marry Steven. The reader might consider the grandfather to be selfish that he is only thinking about himself and not Alice's happiness. Whereas Alice mother sees nothing wrong with Alice getting married. She herself married at the age of 17 while Alice is a year older. Times may have changed and the grandfather has still the same. He feels that Alice is the last of his granddaughters and he knows that he will be alone when she marries Steven.

In this story, some symbolism have been existing that could be important. The pigeons symbolizes how the grandfather thinks about Alice. Just as they are

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kept in the dovecote . Alice too is trapped at home or at least her grandfather wishes to see he trapped at home. At the end of the story, by freeing all the pigeons, the grandfather is also symbolically giving his blessing to Alice and Steven and freeing Alice.

Now Alice is no longer under the control of her grandfather. This too could be really important as it brings out that Alice has an independent attitude. Then she is act according to her conscience. Regardless of what her grandfather might think on matters with her and Steven in fact throughout the story, Alice shows herself to be independent when she is swinging freely on the gate. The grandfather who lacks any sort of freedom with him ,being reliant on others to help him and only his birds to occupy his time.

Alice is also so stubborn as her grandfather. The story is a battle of wills with Alice winning out. However the truth that Alice is crying when the birds are free may suggest that she is fully aware of the meaning of her grandfather letting the birds fly away. She too is flying away and will miss her grandfather. Each character in the story wins out. Alice gets the blessing of her grandfather. Steven gets the girl he loves. Alice's mother she is that her daughter is happy. There is

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complete acceptance of the situation. Particularly, when it comes to the grandfather who has allowed to let go of Alice and will see her grow into woman.

SHORT QUESTIONS:

- 1.) How does the Old man feel about Alice's marriage?
- 2.) How did the Old man dovecoat?
- 3.) What is the implication of the title Flight?
- 4.) Who is Steven?
- 5.) What is the attitude of Alice's mother to the Old man?

A Home Near the Sea

- Kamala Das

SUMMARY

The short story begins with the introduction of Arumugham's wife. The husband and wife have indulged in frequent quarrel brought on by him losing a decent job because he was drunk at work. This has happened before and he has learned to suppress his anger. Because of this they have been homeless for a year ago. He liked the languor of this life but feared the monsoons. During this monsoon days when no edible food would be found in the garbage heap outside the Ritz Hotel. Hunger has played a vital role in their life and Arumugham's wife always picked up quarrels with Arumugham again and again for having got drunk enough to lose a fine lucrative job. Arumugham is really irresponsible. The wife is telling her story to a young beggar man. She begins to almost flirt with the younger man. The woman suggests the man to stay with them. The young man begins to talk to her of music, he can sing beautifully. As the story ends, the women the woman gives their only blanket to the departing man her husband is very mad.

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Introduction to the Short Story Writer:

Kamala Das was born in 31st March 1934 at Punnayurkulam, Malabar district, India. She was popularly known by her one time pen name Madhavikutty and married name Kamala Das. She was an Indian poet in English as well as and author in Malayalam from Kerala. She also had a weekly newspaper column for many years in which she discussed issues relating to the lives and rights of women. She wrote some forbidden topics such as the sexuality of women. She was socially and politically active. She ran for parliament and lost. In 1989 she converted from Hinduism to Islam. She changed her name to Kamala Suraiyya. Her works have been translated into French, English, Spanish, Japanese, Russian and several other South Asian languages. Her notable works are My Story(Autobiography) An Introduction, A Hot Noon in Malabar(Poems), The Kept Women and other stories (Short story collection). On 31st May 2009, aged 75 she died at a hospital in Pune.

Introduction to A Home near the Sea:

‘A Home near the Sea’ is the third short story by Kamala Das. The central themes of this story are poverty, dreams, jealousy, generosity, loyalty and control.

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Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator it becomes clear to the reader after reading the story, Kamala Das may be exploring the theme of poverty. 'A Home near the Sea' was translated by Khushwant Singh from the Malayalam language, one of the official languages of India, spoken by 35 million in Southern India.

Essay on 'A Home near the Sea':

Arumugham and his wife are homeless and live on the street. While Arumugham was on work, he drank the alcohol and due to that he lost his decent job and that makes their life so miserable. Now they are homeless. Arumugham's wife hits him very often when she feels bad tempered. The bad temper comes from the position that she finds herself in. She is not expecting to be swayed by gifts or luxuries. She simply wants to be able to have a roof over her head and some food. Despite this Arumugham does not try and seek work. Because he is somewhat lazy.

The young beggar man who shelters with Arumugham also proves to bring out a nasty streak of jealousy within Arumugham. The wife is telling her story to a young man. She tells him she was once young and docile, with a rich suitor but because of her husband she has lost her youth and beauty. The man

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suggests she should look for a job as an Ayah, a helper for the children of a rich family. He tells her she would get four meals a day and the work would be light. Of course she wants for this but it feels it is beyond her reach. At last Arumugham has banished him from his shelter because he made his wife cry. But the real reason that Arumugham wife cried is because she felt for the things she once had but she has since lost. Once she was happy and not poverty stricken and without a home. It may have only been a hut but it was a home to Arumugham's wife. She is so generous and kind and she gives the young man her best blanket. It is as though she is thankful for the wonderful moment that a young man made her happy. This gift is not lost on Arumugham and he contempts his wife for her generosity. It is also a fact that on two different occasions in this story Arumugham threatens to hit his wife. It is he who has brought difficulty on the family.

The author Kamla Das may be suggesting that Arumugham's wife is independent of her husband. She remains loyal and faithful to him. Even though she considers him to be a useless. This may be very important as it suggest that Arumugham's wife would be better when she leaves him. Her life could only get better and she may no longer feel bad tempered because of her miserable position.

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Being a man Arumugham is not an attractive option and without his wife he would be in an even worse position.

SHORT QUESTIONS:

- 1.) How did Arumugham lose his job?
- 2.) What is the basic expectation of Arumugham's wife?
- 3.) Why did Arumugham feel jealous on the young beggarman?
- 4.) What is the gift presented by Arumugham's wife to the Beggarman?
- 5.) How does Arumugham's wife show off her feeling of insecurity to her husband?

SQUIRREL **- Ambai**

SUMMARY

The short story 'Squirrel' is based on the narrator's visit to a library. This library contains full of feminist writing. She asked the librarian what was there on the top floor of the library. The librarian replied that there was nothing but only dust. The narrator enquired about the books there. The librarian said that those were the books written by female writers. The narrator requested the librarian to permit her to look at those books. Meantime, there was a squirrel which has come there to eat the glue found on the covers of the books. The role of the squirrel in the story stood for the inner world of the narrator. The exchange between dream and reality and vice versa is made through the representation of the squirrel. The narrator identified volumes of Jaganmohinni and Penmadhi Bodhini and many other books in the third floor of the library. This story conveys what the narrator perceives and comprehends of the world around.

Introduction to the Short Story Writer:

C.S. Lakshmi was born in 1944 at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Her pen name is Ambai. She grew up in Mumbai and Bangalore. She obtained her bachelor

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of Arts from Madras Christian College and MA in Bangalore. She did her PhD in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. After completing her education she worked as a school teacher and college lecturer in Tamilnadu. She is an Indian feminist writer and independent researcher in women's studies from India. In 1962, Lakshmi published her first work Nandimalai Charalilae. Her first work of fiction was the Tamil novel Andhi Maalai, which came out in 1966. In 1988, her second Tamil short story collection titled Veetin Mulaiyil Oru Samaiayalarai was published. This gained her reputation as a major short story writer. Her works are focused on feminism, an eye for detail and a sense of irony. Some of her notable works are A Purple Sea(1992) and In a Forest, A Deer (2006) have been translated in English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. For her contribution to Tamil literature, she received the 2008 Iyal Virudhu (Lifetime achievement award) awarded by the Canada based Tamil Literary Garden. She is a current member of the University of Michigan's Global Feminisms Project. She points out, "a feminist who has lived without compromise".

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Introduction to the Short Story “Squirrel”:

The Squirrel is well known short story by Ambai. It was written Tamil language under the title Anil by Ambai and was translated into English by Vasant Kannabiran and Chudamani Raghavan in 1992. The author is known for writing about women. This short story also brings out the problem faced by women.

Ambai makes readers to understand how women's writings were not taken care of in those days, through this story. The short story ‘Squirrel’ voices out the feminism and male domination. This story rebels in their own way against the existing system. Ambai voices strongly about feminism, through a completely different style of narrative. Women, who protest to accept the prevalent codes, question the injustice, assert their individuality, and demand their right to seek fulfillment are grouped under the title of ‘non- conformists’. Ambai also comes under the category of ‘non- conformists’. A study of the women characters in this story establishes the point that the writer has a zone admirable psychological insight while creating her women character. The novelistic concern is to probe, analyze and develop deeper into secret feelings of her as women and present her in flesh and blood. She has been successfully able to brought out a sympathetic cord with

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their women characters and with their psychological reactions and responses, broodings and frustrations.

Essay on Ambai's Squirrel:

The protagonist, in the story **Squirrel** is a feminist sympathizer. The central theme of the story is based on the narrator's expedition to a library, which contains full of feminist writing and how she feels and perceives it. The narrator ironically says that only she and the squirrel were there to mourn for Anna Sattianadhan who was on her deathbed and requested her husband to pray. She says that the women who first set out on horseback to spread Christianity broke through the meshed windows of the library. A Bengali girl set fire to herself when she could not protect her father selling their only house to meet her marriage expenditure. Thus the books she read made her feel the extreme pain of the women writers.

The narrator observes that the books on the 3rd floor of the library were not mere books. They spoke about the whole generations agonizing with life. Our Indian women wore nine yard sarees and played badminton with the white women. Women were taught the Dharma to be followed by them. Nallathangal pushed her

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son into a well and jumped herself into it. An unshaven dead widow was denied the performance of the last rites. The Devadasis confined to the temple underwent a lot of suffering. Gandhi addressed women spinning at the chakra.

Again the narrator went through the journals. In the journal Tyagabhoomi' Umarani proclaimed that she was not a slave. "Kasini" gave new patterns for bangles. The girl on the cover of the Ananda vikatan walked freely while her husband carried the shopping bag. Thamarai Kanni Ammaiyar declared that we should give up our lives for Tamil. Ramamrutham Ammaiyar angrily confronted Rajaji who wrote that Gandhi would not come unless people pay him money. The narrator returned to conscious only when the squirrel tapped its tail and raised dust. The squirrel ate the glue found on the covers of the books.

The narrator identified that the library a dark and dusty place where the library staff was trying to restore the books that were torn. During the lunch time the staff involved in the idle conversation and exhibited no interest in the work allotted to them. The librarian used string to mend the books in the library. He wrote letters to the higher authorities to reimburse the amount which he spent for the string, but was in vain. The librarian told the narrator that the books and the

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magazines were waste and they should be burnt one day. This gives a great shock to the narrator and leaves the library with a heavy heart. Thus the story brings out the sufferings of women and women writers in the past. This story reveals the different facets of women in modern India and as such reflect their fully awakened feminine sensibility.

SHORT QUESTIONS:

- 1.) Who has eaten the glue which found on the back cover of the books?
- 2.) What is the moral of the story Squirrel?
- 3.) Mention the name of any four feminist writers from the short story Squirrel.
- 4.) What is the real name of Ambai?
- 5.) What is the statement of the librarian regarding the Women writer's books?

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UNIT-V -FICTION

1.Manju Kapur - Difficult Daughter

Difficult Daughter

- Manju Kapur

Summary:

Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughter" deals with the struggle of women to establish an identity. This novel focuses on the struggle of an educated woman of middle class against the norms of a family that cherishes old values of arranged marriage. This is the search of the protagonist for autonomy and self-hood. India's history of freedom and the protagonist's struggle for freedom and identity run parallel to each other. The story is about three generations, Kasturi the mother of the Virmati, who is the main protagonist and Ida the daughter of Virmati. This story happens during the period when India was politically unstable and undergoing a historical catastrophe, the partition of 1947.

Introduction to the Novelist:

Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar, India. She is an Indian novelist writing in English. Her first novel 'Difficult Daughters', won the 1999 Commonwealth Writer's Prize, best first book, Europe and South Asia. She teaches English at Delhi University. She studies MA in 1972 from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada and M.phil from Delhi University. She's married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia and they have three children and three grandchildren and now

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they are living in New Delhi. In 2011, she has awarded the DSC prize for South Asian Literature short-listed for 'The Immigrant'. Her notable works are 'Difficult Daughter'(1998), 'A Married Woman' (2003), 'Home'(2006), 'The Immigrant' (2008), 'Custody'(2011) . She has edited a book named 'Shaping the World: Women Writers on Themselves'(2014).

Introduction to 'Difficult Daughter':

In Indian Writing in English, Manju Kapoor has emerged as a new novelist in the world of fiction in 1990s. Her first novel, 'Difficult Daughter' received The Commonwealth award for Eurasian region. Manju Kapur has created sensation in the literary world by voicing the inner turbulation of women. This novel bares various whims in newly woven pattern that establish its worth as a work abounding certain novelists of the period. Her first novel 'Difficult Daughter' elaborates the dilemma of women. The search of one's 'self' and destiny constitutes the key theme of the novel. There is no doubt refers to the independence aspired by a nation as well as by women residing in the same nation at the same time. It is the story of freedom struggle of both Virmati and nation.

Essay on 'Difficult Daughter':

'Difficult Daughter' is the story of a woman who caught in between the sentimental situations of her family and her thirst for education, affection and freedom. There are lots of perspectives between the female characters about their existing culture and norms. The daughters learn to think for themselves, begin questioning the basic values and the hypocrisy of the society. The story travels between the demands of modernity and set traditions. The novel is set in a straight,

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high-minded, middle class Punjabi family in the outset of 1930 and 1940s during partition. The novel probes that study of conservatism prevailing in Amritsar. When Kasturi, the mother of the protagonist Virmati, insist her daughter to accept marriage as a traditional norm, Virmati does not accept it and she seeks knowledge. The narrator of the novel, Ida is Virmati's daughter. Through her voice Manju Kapur differentiate the woman from three generations. The novelist uses Virmati as a weapon of her writing to highlight the marginalization suffered by women who are much concerned about their individuality and dignity.

Virmati is a educated, simple woman is the protagonist of the novel. Virmati comes from an affectionate and well protected family shifts to Lahore for further studies, accompanied by her mother. The limitation that woman is weaker than men is the basic principle of India and the idea that she is a woman is reinforced by innumerable tragic situation in the novel. Virmati's father did not accept her going alone to Lahore and raises questions: Who will go with her to Lahore. At the outset, the question seems to be simple it reflects the consideration of women to have no courage to make decision for herself and her future. As Kasturi, mother of Virmati is always busy in delivering a baby year after year, it is Virmati, who is the elder of the family and sacrifices herself to bring up her siblings. She makes herself as a second mother for her siblings. Amidst this kind of responsibility Virmati has no time to think about herself. She loses her identity in taking care of the family and children. The family's old tradition of getting married is delayed for Virmati as she does not have any interest in marriage. Even though

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her mother compels her to get married, she ignores, because she has much interest on education.

Shakuntala, Virmati's cousin is an epitome of modernity whom Virmati inspires a lot. Shakuntala, as an independent, defiant and assertive girl, she does not have any limitations towards the tradition of getting married, and family relationship. Virmati refuses the engagement with Indrajit and marries Harish, a London returned professor whom she falls in love with at Lahore. Her passionate attraction for the professor makes her difficult by a sense of failure. This failure results from her unconventional path of selection that she has accepted to be there co-wife of the professor. The pathetic position of a co-wife, the real sense of marriage for Virmati is lost. Ganga, Harish's first wife very dedicated to him and his family. There is a lot of difference between Harish and Ganga, their match is totally unacceptable. Ganga's attitude towards study and lack of awareness brings Virmati to her husband's home as a second wife.

The next problem arises when Virmati gives birth to her girl baby. As a remembrance of independence she names her baby as Bharati, but this name is rejected by her husband. Though the country has got freedom, her husband who speaks about the country's freedom, not able to provide a freedom for his wife ,even for trivial matters in the family. When India was fighting for the freedom from British government, but a woman, Virmati literally is fighting for her own affirmation and identity. Her life is filled with sufferings, searching her 'self', identity and conflict between mind and heart. She lost all her hope. Even her daughter doesn't want to be like her mother.

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The story begins with Ida, the daughter of Virmati going back to Amritsar carrying her mother's ashes to meet her maternal family. The narrative then swings between the past and the present with the mother and the daughter speaking to each other through places and events. Ida collects Virmati's life information from her mother's friends, brothers, sisters and acquaintances. Ida did not want to live Virmati's life. Ida resembles Virmati. Ida is a childless divorcee. Virmati is filled with sorrow, ignorance and victimization. The daughter despite her love and care for the mother and her soul being half-dead on the mother's death, does not want to be like her mother. This novel is in fact the story of Virmati, the protagonist, with whose death the novel opens. Ida, her educated and modern daughter, having cremated her mother feels an urge to know her mother more intimately. This adventure, which is also a moral and psychological need for a divorced and childless woman, takes the reader, deep into the social, moral, financial and psychological world of its women characters belonging to different environments.

SHORT QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the award Manju Kapur received for 'Difficult Daughter'?
2. Why was the novel titled 'Difficult Daughter'?
3. What type of character is Virmati?
4. What is the intention of Ida to come to Amritsar?
5. Who is Shakuntala?

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