

UNIT:I-POETRY (DETAILED)

1. *RIVER ONCE* BY R PARTHASARATHY

INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R. Parthasarathy (born 1934) is an Indian poet, translator, critic, and editor. Rajagopal Parthasarathy was born in 1934 at Tirupparaiturai near Tiruchchirappalli. He was educated at Don Bosco High School and Siddharth College, Mumbai and at Leeds University, UK, where he was British Council Scholar in 1963–64. He was Lecturer in English Literature in Mumbai for ten years before joining Oxford University Press in 1971 as Regional Editor in Chennai. He moved to New Delhi in 1978. He is Associate Professor of English and Asian Studies at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, USA . His works include Poetry from Leeds in 1968, *Rough Passage* brought out by Oxford University Press in 1977, a long poem ( Preface "a book where all poems form part of a single poem, as it were" – R. Parthasarathy ) and edited *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* published by Oxford University Press in 1976 which went into Sixteenth Impression only in 2002. He translates from Tamil to English. Parasarathy was awarded the Ulka Poetry Prize of Poetry India in 1966. He was a member of the University of Iowa Writing Program during 1978–79. He has been a member of the Advisory Board for English of the Sahitya Akademi – the National Academy of Letters, New Delhi, India .His translation into modern English verse of the 5th-century Tamil epic, *The Tale of the Anklet: An Epic of South India* (Columbia University Press, 1993) has received significant awards including the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 1995 and The Association for Asian Studies, Inc. – A.K. Ramanujan Book Prize for Translation in 1996.

ANALYSIS

R PARTHASARATH'S 'River once' indicates that it was a river once and it is no longer a river due to man's indifference to the beauty of nature. The poet expresses his sense of shock at the degradation of the river Vaigai, which flows through the city of Madurai. Using the device of contrast effectively, the poet shows how the river that was once the cradle of a glorious culture has now become a sewer . The river is personified as a mother. The mother river feels for her lost glory and speaks about her present pitiable condition . The Vaigai was a fast flowing perennial river once and a glorious civilization flourished on its banks. Now it has become a play-field for boys and the mischievous boys "tickle the ribs" with paper boats. The word "ribs" has been used metaphorically for the banks of the rivers. Buffaloes have turned the river into a pond and are wallowing in it. Once there were flower gardens on the banks of the river and now one finds only thorny bushes and shrubs.

There is eagle wood in my hair and state flowers. Now a lot of eagle wood floats on the water and state flowers that are thrown into it can also be sun. Once was the refuge of emperors and poets. The poets of the past came to her for inspiration. She inspired them to write great poetry. Here the poet makes a reference to the three great Tamil Academies that flourished at Madurai in the ancient past and to the great contribution made by sangam poets to the richness of the ancient Tamil Poetry. In the past, birds like Kingfishers and egrets were regular visitors and as a mother the river fed them. Now they have flown away as she is unable to feed them. The poet presents an altogether different scene of the river today in a humorous and ironic vein. Every evening "when bells roll in the forehead of temples", a man comes to the river for defecating in it unmindful of the divine call of the temple bell. The poet presents this ugly scene to highlight man's indifference to the beauty of nature. Once people congregated on the banks of the river Vaigai for noble purposes but ironically now they do so for different and unholy purposes. Now the river Vaigai has become a receptacle of refuse.

"River, 'Once' is indeed a powerful poem deeply felt and powerfully expressed. The river is a symbol of the flow of life but in its present contaminated state it is only a symbol what human life has become. Anguished over decay of the river the poet seems to convey the idea that nature has made everything beautiful but man has rendered it ugly because he has lost the sense of wonder and beauty. The poet has succeeded in presenting this idea through contrastive pen- pictures.

2. *DEATH OF A BIRD* BY KEKI N DARUWALLA

Death of a Bird, one of Daruwalla's finest poems, reminds us of S.T.Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Both the poems poignantly express the violent convulsions which disturb Nature's cosiness, peace and sublimity, when someone dares taking away lives of innocent creatures--albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the he monal in the *Death of a Bird*. At this unlawful intrusion in Nature's realm there is upheaval and ultimately the evil does has to suffer the nemesis of guilt. The poem is

in the narrative form which is artistically and coherently developed. The narrator who is on a hunting expedition along with his female companion, enters a forest where two monals are passionately engaged in love making, Daruwalla picturesquely describes their copulation :

**Under the overhangs of crags fierce bird love :  
the monals mated, clawed and screamed;  
the female brown and nondescript the male was King, a fire dream.**

The hunter did not take pity on the love making monals and all of a sudden fired at the birds. Consequently the male monal came down and was dead. The hunter and his female companion felt no regret for their heinous act and without any feeling of compassion they picked the dead bird and put it in a bag. The female monal, which was not hit, was so terrified that crying painfully it flew far off.

**The realm of nature was badly disturbed,  
With bird-bloods on our hands we walked,  
and as the sky broke into rags  
of mist, why did our footsteps drag.**

The hunters walked on. Their pony was walking slowly. They smote the pony on its shanks so that it might hurry up. It lost its balance and fell down the rock a thousand feet below, where the roaring river flowed. The pony screamed in great pain as it fell down into the river. Its scream fell into the ears of the hunters. They were horror-stricken at the accident. Although they were feeling very depressed, they resumed their journey. It was evening. Bears and jackals were howling in the forest. Thinking that the bears were lurking behind the bushes, the narrator-hunter fired the gun but missed the aim each time. When jackals howled, she asked if they were wolves but he made no reply but taking her hand gently in his hand, they walked gently towards a cave which was surrounded by fine trees. It was dangerous. A bhoria dog, left behind by resin tappers to guard their cans contain resin, was growling. It was getting darker and darker and mist was thickening. His companion was feeling very cold. He lit a fire of turf and feet and rubbed her clotted sides and feet. She did not sleep and found her waking in his hands. Their bodies were in close contact but for some unknown reason they inwardly felt apprehensive.

**They rose for the final kill. They had no feeling of guilt :**

**each of us thought the other was free of the pony's scream and the monal's wings  
and the fowling bears in the firelight-rim.**

The woman resting his head on his chest slept soundly. He held her hair tightly in his hand. The night was advancing towards its climax. Both the hunters were taking rest. The night was peaceful, except the wind moaning aloud. The night scape is vivid and picturesque:

**And the wolves, with the mist, went over the cliff---  
but for the wind we both would have dreamed  
the very same dream of quiescence and love;  
but the wind was a thorn in the flesh of the night  
and moaned aloud like a witch in the flue.**

At dawn they repent for killing the he-monals. A brown bird rose from the crags. Flying strongly as it passed over the heads of the two hunters, it fearfully shrieked aloud and fell down dead on their feet. She recognized the dead bird as the Queen monal. She felt that they were accused by the dead bird :

**"Just watch its eyes !" For though the bird was near dead  
its eyes flared terror like bits of dripping meat !"**

Death of A Bird reveals a vision which has an inherent moral. An evil does has to pay the penalty of his or her misdeeds. The woman feeling an expression of terror in the eyes of she-monals understands that a curse would fall upon them. They were responsible for the death of two living monals. An evil does reaps the consequences of his misdeeds. It is an artistic poem, remarkable for stylistic qualities and chaste, apt and highly suggestive diction. Daruwalla's use of chiselled phrases and picturesque color-words contribute the artistic excellence of the poem; for example, " fierce bird-love" , " the monals mated, clawed and screamed" , " his eyes were glazed, the breast still throbbled" , " firmling like a spray of cysts" , " a passion of dissky gold and blue" , " dream of quiescence and love" , "like a witch in the flue" , and " the wolves, with the mist, went over the cliff". The poem is also remarkable for its dramatic quality. The climax of the dramatic

moment reaches in the last stanza when the female monal drops dead at the feet of the hunters, reminding them of their guilt. The lady exclaims :

**" It's the queen-monal ! We are accused !" she said.**

**"Just watch its eyes !" For though the bird was near dead**

**its eyes flared terror like bits of dripping meat !"**

## 2. *TRIBUTE TO PAPA* BY MAMTA KALIA

Summary of the poem 'Tribute to Papa' by Mamta Kalia.

'Tribute to Papa' by Mamta Kalia is a challenging poem in which Mamta tries to compel the readers to understand the hardships of being a woman that the society wants her to be. In this poem, she portrays men dominance over women in all matters of life. Mamta tries to question her father why should his traditional values determine the fate of his daughter. She questions whether if he cared enough for his daughter's own voice and opinion. Tribute to Papa pays a different kind of tribute to a father. It is rather the poet trying to sort out the different values that she and her father had.

In the poem, Mamta mentions how she longed for love and care but she hardly received any from her father. She also talks about disowning her father which shows how hurt she was. Although her father has died, she could not stop blaming him for not loving and supporting her as much as she needed. In the end, the poet mentions how she only longed for a good relationship with her father. Mamta Kalia's "Tribute to Papa", is according to Eunice De Souza, one of the most compelling poems. She figures out an opposition not only to men's dominance over women but women's acceptance of men's dominance. Mamta Kalia's personal rejection of the non-materialist father however ironic in its tone is a 'tribute' to the contemporary materialistic Father India. The poem moves from one hateful statement to another, with extreme indifference to traditional Indian values. Not only are the father's ideals for the daughter rejected scornfully, but his normal way of life insulted. As a daughter Mamta Kalia is preoccupied by the father figure. Father in her case becomes a symbol of male-dominance. In her poem A Tribute to Papa Mamta Kalia pays a different kind of tribute to her father, stating that her ideas and values clash with those of her father's: "Everything about you clashes with nearly everything about me." Mamta Kalia also rebels against patriarchy and the restrained world of middle-class respectability. Such poems are haunted by the memories of her father: "But you've always wanted to be a model man, A sort of an ideal. When you can't think of doing anything, You start praying, Spending useless hours at the temple. "In Tribute to Papa she interrogates even her father for his observance to customs, traditions and complains of the generation gap she feels with him. She has liberal views but at the same time she finds it hard to defy the commandments of her father:

"You suspect I am having a love-affair these days,

But you're too shy to have it confirmed

What if my tummy starts showing gradually

And I refuse to have it curretted?

But I'll be careful, Papa,

Or I know you'll at once think of suicide."

The poem 'Tribute to Papa and Other Poems' brings out the contrast between her father's idealism which could not give prosperity on him and her fascination for modern life which is without idealism and values:

Who cares for you Papa?

Who cares for your clean thoughts, clean words, clean teeth?

Who wants to be an angel like you?

Who want this ?"These days I am seriously thinking of disowning you,"The mutual disenchantment has grown so much that she even thinks of disowning her father and his blessedness. She mourns about her father's status that he could not make a grand and 'cozy place' for himself so he is an unsuccessful man from the 'worldly point of view. If he had enough guts to 'smuggle eighty thousand watches' then she would proudly tell everyone about her father's import-export business. To smuggle eighty thousand watches at a stroke, And I'd proudly say, My father's in import-export business, you know I'd be proud of you then.

She asserts that she does not want to be a model. She expresses her frustration over her father idealism in these lines,

"You want me to be like you,

Papa, Or like Rani Lakshmbai.

You're not sure what greatness is,

But you want me to be great.

Thus, in this poem she rejects her father's notions of greatness and the Indian model of a woman as Laxmbai who fought and died in one sense not for the sake of women but for her son that patriarchy would not mind. Mamta Kalia rejects her father's life of limited dreams. She proposes to choose her own course and follow her ideals. Ironically, she claims her father to be an unsuccessful man and defines the clash between the old and new value.

## POETRY(NON-DETAILED)

### 3. AGHA SHAHID ALI'S THE SEASON OF THE PLAINS.

#### ANALYSIS:

Agha Shahid Ali's multi-cultural belonging laid an ultimate effect on his poetic endeavor. His motherland, Kashmir, where he grew up, is witnessing the agony of war and claims of ownership between India and Pakistan, to the present times. Ali's upbringing amongst three languages have also created a poetic gallery with fusion of themes and cross-cultural subjects. Augmenting his poetic zone, Ali's migration from India to United States, has raised the concept of travel, migration, diaspora and cultural plurality. Reading Ali's poetry under this lens, it is intriguing to understand the implicit meaning of home as well as the poet's traditional and cultural affiliations to one's native land. His poems also throw light on Kashmir's colonial history and the after effects of colonialism on the present, socio-economic growth of the land of Kashmir. The idea of nation in Ali's poetry is composed in response to the actions taken by the political powers for the land of Kashmir. Strolling around the beauty of Kashmir, Ali comments upon the pain and fear of the nuclear war. So, the war and violence are simultaneous frames through which his verses circulate. Kashmir is a place that lacks communication and it meets its voice on the poetic platform of Agha Shahid Ali. Kashmir forms the center of Ali's world. The constant urge of the poet to long for the beauty and identity for his land raises the relative question about the political unrest between India and Pakistan. It is the vehicle which the poet opts to reflect the loss of his homeland which was once called the paradise on earth. In this respect, Akshaya K. Rath, remarks, "That Shahid Ali constantly portrays Kashmir as a disturbed place has a long history and an extensive purpose in mind. The large-scale atrocities, constant subjugation, mass rapes, curfews and tortures in army camps are embedded in Shahid Ali's poems, so as to show the real image of a place that was once termed 'the blessed land' or 'paradise on earth'. Kashmir, has now emerged as the 'no-man's land' which is full of harsh realities. It is about war, ownership, identity, peace and search for a new horizon. Ali's poetry evolves such perspectives and concern for Kashmiri people. Therefore, it is a captivating task to estimate the expression of 'Kashmir', the character and role of Kashmir and the artistic subject of the Kashmir in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali. The natural beauty of the land of Kashmir was unparalleled in yester years. Its beauty was admirable in ancient time and it was termed as 'paradise on earth'. In ancient times, it was a land where people from Hindu and Muslim religion, lived in complete harmony. Thus, such Hindu-Muslim bonding made the land a beautiful picture of strong socio-religious bond. Unfortunately, with the course of time, Kashmir has sadly turned into a land of war and violence. The political lust and religious discord has fractured the beauty of Kashmir into pieces. It has turned into continuous war of the ownership between the two countries-India and Pakistan. Both the countries claim ownership of the land. The people of Kashmir have been badly affected due to this political and religious war. Many people have migrated and left their home due to unbearable socio-economic conditions and the harsh realities, ruling this land. Thus, the people of Kashmir are in constant search for their identity and their lost homeland. Making 'Kashmir' as an indivisible vehicle of his verses, the poet has raised issues and agendas before the readers about the loss and the longing, the feeling of alienation and exile, for his motherland. The character of Kashmir is reflected through language, tradition, scenes and communication, in most of the poems of Agha Shahid Ali. Thus, it is interesting and motivating to glorify the various roles of motherland in his poetry. It is also compelling to understand the fate of Kashmiri people on the twists and turns of political powers. Ali, too longs for his motherland Kashmir like any other diasporic writer. His poetry dwells on the words taken from the land to stress his love for the place. Ali's poetry makes

reader experience his narrative within many frames. History is witnessed and visited through different shades of memory as in the poem “The Seasons of the Plains”. The poem “The Seasons of the Plains” discusses his mother’s background. It explores the myth of Krishna and Radha, and the oral stories “on the shores /of the Jamuna”(44). The Indian classical music of the celebrated ‘Banaras thumri-singers’ is drawn parallel to the love and longing of Heer and Ranjha, the legendary lovers from the land of Punjab. The secular image of India is drawn in all the poems of this volume.

#### EXPLANATION:

“The Season of the Plains” brings alive the pangs of separation experienced by people who are living away from their homeland. Absence of a particular season in exile acts as a trigger for longing and nostalgia. Shahid Ali lived most of his adult life outside his homeland, Kashmir and passed away in the USA. This brings an intensely personal feeling into the poem. The poem talks about the background of his mother. It explores the story of Krishna and Radha, and the oral tales “on the shores /of the Jamuna”(44). The Indian classical music of the celebrated ‘Banaras thumri-singers’ is drawn parallel to the love and longing of Heer and Ranjha, the legendary lovers of the land of Punjab.

**Summary** The poet’s mother, having actually been born in Lucknow and married in Kashmir, misses her past life in her hometown. She especially misses the monsoon season which does not occur in Kashmir. She keeps listening to the Banaras thumri-singers who sing of longing and separation. The monsoon is a season of relief and enjoyment for children who drench themselves in the rain after the scorching summer heat. But for lovers, who have to hide their love from the conservative and censoring society, the rain intensifies their feeling of separation. The poet becomes curious whether his mother longed for somebody, especially during the monsoon, in her hometown. His mother says nothing to this except humming a lover’s lament.

**soaking their utter summer:** Children drench themselves in the rain because it brings relief from summer’s scorching heat.

**their love forbidden:** The lovers are not allowed to disclose their love because they live in a conservative society which forbids such relationships.

**soft necks of ash:** The shape of the burned out incense stick with the soft ash hanging around on a curved slender thread of burnt wood.

**Theme** The theme of separation has been dealt with in the poem at two levels: separation from homeland (home-sickness) and separation in love. Separation from homeland is an intensely painful experience. The poet’s mother finds the beautiful seasons of Kashmir painfully wanting because unlike Lucknow no monsoon occurs here. She keeps listening to Siddheshwari and Rasoolan who sing thumris of longing when the rain comes. Home-Sickness is the core theme of this poem. It shows his devotion to his home. It’s about how he feels away from home and how he finds home based on memories. Ali found himself to be a complex blend of various cultures that shaped his identity, but he still prefers to call himself a Kashmiri-American. He combines the landscapes of Kashmir and America in his writing, along with the feelings of exile (nostalgia about home-sickness). Shahid expresses his frustration for loss; his home that he will never see again. The poem is also about separation in love. As the lovers await each other’s message fearing their love may be discovered by society, the rains bring sharp feelings of separation and longing. The anxious nightly watch of the lovers has been captured in the image of the incense stick burning away overnight and leaving behind but a soft neck of cold ash.

**Point of view** The poem is written from the point of view of an exile. It vehemently advocates that separation from homeland and separation in love are both deeply felt and cause agony that cannot be expressed.

**Tone** The tone is nostalgic and melancholic as the poem deals with separation and longing. The tone is reinforced by the imagery of the incense stick.

#### 4. THE PRIEST BY ARUN KOLATKAR

Through his poetry, Arun Kolatkar deals with many themes, obstacles, religious dogmas, blind faith, superstition, religious practices that prevalent in society and he also shows how common man is easily deceived and affected by these. So it is very much true that Arun Kolatkar is really the poet of common man and society. It is very much true that the impact of tradition, culture and blind faith turn the Indians religious minded. But the youth like Arun Kolatkar sees everything in light of reality, logic and scientific explanation. So society is now turned into mix culture, tradition and thoughts. Kolatkar with his trans-historical and cross-cultural images wants to show the society and culture in his poems. Some of the poems from his famous and eternal poetic collection ‘Jejuri’ show these. In his ‘The Priest’, he

also shows the society and culture related to worshipper. It is the society full of money minded people and the priest is no more exception. The priest waits for the arrival of the bus as the pilgrims are the source of his income. He is more concerned about the bus time table, number of pilgrims and offering puja to deity is their secondary work. So Kolatkar here aptly shows how the society is corrupted by this so called hypocrite priests. He often comes out from the temple to see whether the bus arrives or not. He also says something like mantra with a 'puran Poli' in his plate as if he is praying for the bus and its passengers. It may be also true that his utterance of mantra will be a policy to attract the pilgrims as so many other hypocrite priests are available there. Such is the picture of the society that the poet paints in his poem: "An offering of heel and hunch On the cold altar of the culvert wall the priest waits In the bus a little late The priest wonders Will there be a Puran Poli in his plate?" (The Priest) So the poet here shows how the caretaker and worshipper of god is changed into a greedy person. The pilgrims are more religious and devout than that priest. He takes this as his service and the offerings from pilgrims as his salary. Everything is showed here in commercial way and commercialization is in everywhere in our society. The temples are surrounded by beggars, greedy and hungry people and the priest is the representative figure of those people. Here the poet compares him with an animal to show his hunger and the condition of society: "As a catgrin on its face And a live, ready to eat pilgrims held between its teeth." (The Priest)

## UNITII PROSE

### 1. NIRAD C CHAUDHURI'S *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* CHAPTER- I-(MY BIRTH PLACE) :

*The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* is the 1951 autobiography of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, an Indian writer. Written when he was around 50, it records his life from his birth in 1897 in Kishoreganj, a small town in present-day Bangladesh. The book relates his mental and intellectual development, his life and growth in Calcutta, his observations of vanishing landmarks, the connotation of this is dual—changing Indian situation and historical forces that was making exit of British from India an imminent affair. The book is divided into four books, each of which consists of a preface and four chapters. The first book is entitled "Early Environment" and its four chapters are: 1) My Birth Place, 2) My Ancestral Place, 3) My mother's Place and 4) England.

Over the years, the autobiography has acquired many distinguished admirers. Winston Churchill thought it one of the best books he had ever read. V. S. Naipaul remarked: "No better account of the penetration of the Indian mind by the West - and by extension, of the penetration of one culture by another - will be or now can be written." In 1998, it was included, as one of the few Indian contributions, in *The New Oxford Book of English Prose*.

Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri (1897-1999) was born in a small town named Kishoreganj of East Bengal in pre-independence India. He has made a special niche for himself among other literary giants such as R. K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand in the field of autobiography. His first book *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, published in 1951, made him famous in the whole literary and intellectual field. Chaudhuri decided to write down incidents and events which he had seen with his own eyes or had the first hand experience of those events. Therefore, he started writing his past experiences in the form of autobiography. In the words of Ian Jack: Chaudhuri's power as a describer speaks for itself in the pages that follow and needs no elaboration; he is a fascinating, ground level witness and expositor of a vanished Indian way of life and of what British imperialism, then at its height, meant to its humble and not-so-humble subjects. The word "courage," however, deserves some context. In this book, Chaudhuri is courageous in two ways: in his literary ambition and in the open declaration of his political and historical beliefs. (AUIvi) By reading this autobiography, the reader comes to know the poverty of the country, and infatuation of Indian people for England which they thought as a symbol of prosperity as each and every educated young man of India wanted to go and study in England. Thus, England has been a dream world for the author also and that influenced his sensibility since the beginning as he himself describes, "England evoked by imagination and enjoyed emotionally, has been as great an influence on me as any of the three places sensibly experienced" (AUI 1). On the contrary, his hometown, Kishoreganj, had nothing significant in comparison to England. He compares both: Kishoreganj, my birth place, I have called a country town, but this description, I am afraid will call up wholly wrong associations. The place had nothing of the English country town about it, if I am to judge by the illustrations I have seen and the description I have read, these being my only sources of knowledge about England, since I have never been there, nor in fact anywhere outside my own country. (AUI 3) On the other hand, his home town Kishoreganj was only a normal specimen of its class with a collection of tin-and-mat huts or sheds, comprising courts, offices, schools, shops and residential dwellings, which British administration had raised up in the green and brown spaces of East Bengal for their own use. The description of his home town explicitly presents the picture of urban India at that time, and unfortunately, it was not different in any manner from rural India. Depicting the poverty-stricken living style of this town, he informs that the villagers used to drink water from the same river where they took bath along with the other animals like cow and elephant. They had to live in squalid conditions; moths, ants and centipedes were their constant companions. In rainy season they had to deal with flies, while in winter, mosquitoes made their life troublesome, and they did not have any preventive measures for such conditions.

Whenever the children got the insect-bite, the only remedy they could get was a mixture of mustard oil and slaked lime which was worse than a disease in itself. They had to live in such unhygienic conditions that resulted in the disease like Cholera which was very frequent visitor in their life. Writing about Cholera, he says: "It was not by flowers alone that the season were marked for us at Kishorganj. There was another visitor both at the beginning and end of the cold weather, but mostly at the beginning...that being one of the regular sights of the cholera season" (AUI 22). Among other problems of Indian society, the author describes one of the most severe problems that prevailed throughout Indian subcontinent i.e.the population explosion,which is becoming more and more dangerous day by day. It is so because population explosion also becomes the sole cause of many other challenges in Indian society such as lack of food, hospital facilities and jobs, and consequently the people have to live in very disappointing conditions. Gradually, this problem becomes even worse. The author too contemplates about this problem when he faces a huge crowd during the annual fair in his town. He says that the over population of a country gives birth to the problem of sanitation and many others.He observes that the problem of sanitation is one of other several problems in over-crowded cities throughout India in general and in the city like Calcutta in particular. The sewage system of these cities does not suffice the need of over population, and in the rainy season, the situation becomes worse. Further, due to the bad sewage system, the water is excessively blocked in many places, and becomes the cause of many diseases. Further, the author also discusses the problem of gender-bias in the society. He is very conscious of all the problems and difficulties that a woman has to face in Indian society. When the matter of the status of women comes in context of the Indian society, it is considered no better than that of a mere object. They have no right to speak or do anything according to their own choice. They have always been exploited in the name of the pride of family or in the name of tradition. Same is the case with the family of the author. They are very conscious of their „Blue Blood.? For instance, as the author describes that when his aunt became a widow at an early age, a marriage proposal came from the richest landlord of the town but he was considered rather inferior in status by author's family. The author expresses his grandfather's reply to that proposal: "I would sooner cut her up and feed the fishes of the Brahmaputra with the pieces" (AUI 60). It clearly shows the authority of male members of the family over female counterparts. The females of the family have no decision-making power when it comes to the question of saving the honour of the clan.Moreover,women have to face the discrimination in Indian society due to their complexion, especially at the time of marriage. The complexion of girls is rigorously scrutinized by the people from the boy's side. Whether or not the marriage will take place, depends on the fact that the girl have not the fair complexion. It becomes very humiliating situation for the girls. Besides, the author describes a shocking and common practice in Bengal to rub the face of the girl with a wet towel in order to know whether the girl's complexion is naturally fair or the result of makeup. Therefore,it is unfortunate to know that the life of dark marriageable girls was not easy in Bengal as they always have to face public humiliation just because of their complexion.

## 2. SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *IMAGINARY HOMELANDS* FROM *IMAGINARY HOMELANDS: ESSAYS AND CRITICISM*

Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist. His writing represents the national identity in a way that is radically departs from the usual concept. It is not a series of identifications and attachments to a unified and distinct homeland, but rather a complex nexus of culture constructions that arise from adherence to and distancing from a series of narratives, personal and public, and historical conditions. There is a lived reality of national identity, but it is a reality lived in representation and reiteration, a constant creation and amelioration of the individual's existence. Memory and exile, disruptions and re-evaluations are inexorably linked to the reconstruction of the notion of home.

'Imaginary Homelands' is the title essay of Salman Rushdie's collection of total 75 essays. This can be considered a paradigm of the discourse of writers in the between-world condition. In this piece, Rushdie describes and defines the situation of those writers who are, in the words of Michael Ondaatje, " born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere, fighting to get back or to get away from our homelands all our lives". More specially, Rushdie, analyses the theme and the presentation of the homeland by pointing out that the attempt to portray one's land of origin is inevitably coupled with the inability to be faithful to any objective reality. Although he speaks particularly about Indian writers, his observation of the situation clearly applies to most writers who share the multicultural experience. Rushdie quotes:"It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge-which gives rise to profound uncertainties-that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short create fictions, not actual cities or village, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India's of the mind" Thus Rushdie admits that in his novel, 'Midnight's Children', he created an India that is " a version and no mere than one version of all the hundreds of the millions of possible versions." Of course, versions of the homelands are not whimsical; they are shaped by circumstances and serve a purpose. Perhaps his

version of India, he says, is only India to which he is willing to admit he belongs. Rushdie admits this notion mostly to himself, but very likely also to a Western audience that may harbor distorted preconceptions about India and Indians, just as they may about any group that seems distant from their own experience. Any writer that writes about his homeland from the outside, Rushdie claims, must necessarily "deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost". Nonetheless it is precisely the fragmentary nature of these memories, the incomplete truth they contain, the partial explanations they offer, that make them particularly evocative for the "transplanted" writer. For Rushdie, "these shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities." Rushdie calls the migrants the "translated men". The word "translation", he points out, comes from the Latin for "bearing across", and "having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in the translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained." As Rushdie has amply demonstrated in his own writing, the gains from such "translation" are real and many. Rushdie also, raises the point that duality in an author's identity resulting from his migration from home provides a highly unique point of view within his work. Rushdie describes his own experience of writing his novel, 'Midnight's Children', on the basis of his experience of relocating to Britain to India. With regards to the standpoint he has as being an author with a dual sense of identity from both cultures he says: "Our identity is at once plural and partial.

Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy if literature is a part of the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality. Then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective may provide us with such an angle." Rushdie's point here holds true not only for those of dual geographical or national identities involving race and gender as well. Authors who have personally experienced and grappled with servile components that make up their identity are at an advantage of having a unique position. Although it may pose challenges within their writing, (for example Rushdie contemplates writing in English over his native language). It also enables them to tell a story that is nonetheless distinct and valuable. For example, a man of color within a society that functions on white privilege and is primarily patriarchal and has a different experience to tell than a woman of color who lives in the same society. Salman Rushdie's 'Imaginary Homelands' is a narrative portraying a migrant's inner conflict between his strong urge to reclaim his homeland and his inability to capture its true essence. This conflict leads the author to create a number of "imaginary" homelands in his fictions such as, an India of the mind in 'The Satanic Verses'. While they are not precisely real, these imaginary homelands capture the essence of reality as seen through the eyes of a character who, like their author, face the challenge of straddling two cultures.

### 3. ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE COST OF LIVING* (LECTURE 22)

Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 in the Northeastern Indian region of Bengal, to a Christian mother and Hindu father. She spent her childhood in Aymanam in Kerala, which serves as the setting for her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (under the name "Ayemenem"). Roy's mother, Mary Roy, home schooled her until the age of ten, when she began attending regular classes. She has been reluctant to discuss her father publicly, having spent very little time with him during her lifetime; Roy instead focuses on her mother's influence in her life. Mary Roy, a political activist, won an unprecedented victory for women's rights in Kerala. Through her persistence, the Supreme Court granted Christian women in Kerala the right to have an inheritance.

She spent her teenage years at boarding school in Southern India, after which she earned her degree from the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi. After graduating, Roy supported herself by teaching aerobics while honing her writing skills. She eventually wrote several film scripts, which are recognized for their complex structure and biting social commentary. Roy wrote and starred in the film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*, and she wrote the script for *Electric Moon*, directed by her second husband, Pradip Krishen. (Her first husband was Gerard Da Cunha, whom she met while in college. Their marriage lasted approximately four years.) Both films garnered a cult following, setting the stage for the fiction-writing side of Roy's career. Penguin published the script for *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* as a book in 2004.

Even when she was a low-profile writer, Roy began to assert her political opinions loudly. She rallied media support for Phoolan Devi, a politician and former criminal of Robin-Hood fame, whom she felt was being misrepresented by the film *Bandit Queen* (directed by Shekhar Kapur). After the controversy surrounding *Bandit Queen* subsided, Roy took time to write her first and only novel to date, *The God of Small Things*. She received an extraordinary advance of half a million pounds on the book, making its release high-profile well ahead of time. After the novel's publication in 1997, the book won the prestigious Booker Prize, making Roy its first Indian woman and non-expatriate Indian recipient.



In addition to her novelistic skills, Roy is widely known for political activism (perhaps along the lines of a Noam Chomsky). She has published many works of nonfiction including several essays as well as The End of Imagination (1998), The Greater Common Good (1999), The Cost of Living (1999), Power Politics (2002), War Talk (2003), The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile (2004, with David Barsamian), and An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire (2004). She also took part in the June 2005 World Tribunal on Iraq. In January 2006 she was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for her collection of essays, The Algebra of Infinite Justice, but she declined to accept it.

Roy has faced accusations of being anti-American and was convicted of contempt of court by the New Delhi Supreme Court for her political activism. She remains relentless. For instance, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 for her efforts toward social justice and peaceful conflict resolution. Roy continues to write, engage in advocacy, and live with her husband in New Delhi

Since the 1980s, the construction of the Sardar Sarovar, a megadam to be built along the Narmada River, has been promoted by the Indian government as an instrument of democratization, potentially supplying drinking water to millions of people. On the other hand, the nationalist discourse on dams as 'Temples of Modern India' has been challenged by social movements such as Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). Activists and intellectuals have stressed that dams form part of a bio political apparatus causing displacement and relocation, mainly for *Adivasis* (indigenous people). Drawing on the language of Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy in 'The Greater Common Good', this essay addresses the colonial legacy of the Land Acquisition Act (1894) and discusses how the legal framework of the modern state repeats and reinforces a process of orientalization of indigenous populations rooted in imperialist, evolutionary economic and legal discourses. Referring to Roy's narrative and her experience in the Narmada Valley, this article also shows how local movements of resistance re-signify the logic of development, questioning 'modernity', 'development' and 'justice'. Roy's de-orientalizing text reveals how Adivasi protests and their ways of expressing political subjectivity challenge a traditional model of citizenship.

#### UNIT-III- DRAMA (DETAILED)

##### **Dance Like a Man — Mahesh Dattani**

**Mahesh Dattani's play "Dance Like a Man"** is one of the best plays written by an Indian in English. He is one of the finest and most prominent playwrights in India. He is the first playwright in English to have won the 'Sahitya Akademi Award'. He chooses topics which are usually never being spoken about in society. Such topics are always debated in society and are usually seen discussed in his plays and exhibited on the stage in a very good manner. The stage has all the technicalities which take the play to a different level. Mahesh likes to play with lights and this has different connotations attached to it, which when one reads finds it difficult to imagine. There is a difference in the book and the play that is performed on stage or theater. The characters are usually Indian and have some problem which are not socially unacceptable. Dattani comes here and shows how the society and the idiosyncrasy of individuals work. "Dance Like a Man" the title itself suggests that a man is supposed to do the work which suits the man and not pursue their career in anything else which makes them less of a man. Here, literally the title means to say that the protagonist's father doesn't want his son to become or behave like a woman and that he should not pursue his career in dance. Dance Like a Man is a two-act stage play. The story revolves around three generations, their personal ambition, their sacrifices, their struggle and compromises, internal conflict and the way they cope up with life and dance being the major topic of discussion in the house as it is a topic of debate between the father and his son and daughter-in-law. Dattani in the very start of the play puts a question on a man's identity and his sexuality. The title itself suggests so. The play deals with the self and the significance of others in a manner of gender specific roles assigned by the society and how if you deviate from it, you are being sidelined by the people and the society.

**Plot and Analysis-** The story revolves around three generations. Jairaj and Ratna want to develop their career as a dancer. Dance for them is not only their passion but also their life and soul. They want to develop their careers in this field. The stereotypes of gender roles are set in the society and in spite of that Jairaj goes on to pursue his career as a dancer. This is the twist that the playwright gives to the stereotypes associated with 'gender' issues that view solely a woman at the receiving end of the oppressive power structures of the society. The play flips open in the opposite gender's point of view and shows that even men can be a part or a victim to such circumstances by being oppressed, and suppressed by the opposite gender and society. Jairaj and Ratna have to live within the domain of the 'patriarch' Amritlal, father of Jairaj. Dance for Amritlal is a profession of a prostitute and which is why he cannot accept his daughter-in-law learning it and is unimaginable for his son to learn it and make career out of it. Mostly this is also because he was a reformist and people would laugh at him for Jairaj's actions and his reputation would be sacrificed. He cannot tolerate the sound of dancing bells in his home and his son roaming around with the tinkling of bells in his leg during the practise session. His father also hates the effeminate guru that comes to their house and also the long hair

that he and his son both have kept. So Ratna goes onto learn the dance from a lady who lives in a brothel. Amritlal thinks that the temples have slowly turned to brothels as they practise dance there. He forbids Ratna to visit the old devdasi who teaches her the old forms and techniques of 'Bharatnatyam' which were slowly extinguishing. Here there are subtle signs that learning dance and having a guru like that would definitely make his an effeminate man which suggests the idea of homosexuality though it is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the text. As he cannot accept his son pursuing his career as a dancer, he tries all the possible means to stop him from seeking his ambition. He removes them/ disowns them from his house and his property, not giving them a single penny to survive. Jairaj, leaves and take Ratna along with him. But the results are disastrous. They stay at Ratna's uncle's house and he tries to take advantage of her and so they leave the house only to return. The quote said by Amritlal to Jairaj to restrict him from dancing, "*A woman is man's world is considered progressive, but a man is a woman's world is considered pathetic.*" He then later makes a deal with Ratna. He says that he will allow her career to take off only if she helps him pull Jairaj out of his passion and make him a more 'manly' man. The character of Ratna can be called as that of a selfish one because she agrees to her father-in-law's demands and also considers that there would be one less person to compete with. She constantly misguides him and plays with his emotions in spite of being his partner. Though Jairaj was a male member, he never forced his opinions on anybody and instead of that Ratna would always dominate and take decisions for herself, for him and now their daughter as well. She wanted her own career to proper and so she is willing to sacrifice her husband's career in the process. She was blinded by her passion so much so that she joined hands with Amritlal. This subtly displays the relationship she herself shared with Jairaj which was more for her own personal motive than anything else. She married him because Jairaj himself was a dancer and he would never stop her from dancing even after getting married. Had it been that she would have married another man, there was a possibility that she would be deprived of her career and her passion and she would be helpless. When Jairaj possibly knew about her motives, the purpose was already achieved, that he was a failed dancer and that he did not make much out of his life. He had become an alcoholic. She constantly took advantage of Jairaj's love for her and being his wife. She pushed him into the world of dance and also knew that he was not a great dancer himself, to reach among the top dancers, that he was just a mediocre one. She was responsible for Jairaj's undoing as a character as well as a dancer. Ratna here did not stop but went on to make her daughter Lata, also a Traditional dancer. She used her daughter too, to earn fame and money all over the world. She schemes and manipulates and uses all her contacts to put her daughter's career on the right track right from the start. She also uses the contacts to get appreciative reviews for her daughter's performance. Lata here is seen as the younger Ratna who succeeds with the help of her mother. Later, in the play Jairaj blames his wife for their son's death as she wanted to be successful and she had left him home along with a nanny. The nanny had given him a sleeping dose so that he would stop crying and that she could also sleep peacefully but unfortunately, she gave it too much in quantity which ultimately led to his death. Jairaj blames her for his unsuccessful career. Dattani uses the technique of Traditional Dance as a medium to portray the conflict of gender issues in the play. Hence his plays are relevant and will be relevant even for years to come. Amritlal would never accept his son becoming a dancer, Ratna misguided him, Jairaj was blamed to be not being a man enough to earn and support his family. All these things led to the circumstances that show how gender stereotype works in the Indian society.

**Conclusion-** The play "Dance Like a Man" poses serious questions on the reader's mind. It makes one think and rethink about how our actions are shaped according to the society and how one accepts them without questioning. This conditioning which is done right from the childhood and it is nobody's fault. The rules were made according to the society then and it is impossible to stay put on them even now especially when the society is constantly evolving. Personally, I feel that the rules should be mended according to the situations and time period. The characters are shaped in such a manner that one cannot term them as a proper white or a proper black character. It displays shades of gray.

#### UNIT-IV- SHORT STORIES.

##### 1. MANOJ DAS'S CROCODILE'S LADY:

"Crocodile's Lady" by Manoj Das (1975, first published in The Illustrated Weekly of India, edited by Khushwant Singh, 1969 to 1979, a premier source for the publication of quality short stories and poems) is a story in the tradition of magic realism. It is a delightful story which can fairly be called a work of magic realism. Some say magic realism was born in South America, in truth this tradition in India goes back at least to before Homer.

As the story opens a Western professor visiting India wants to see a real village. He is taken deep country to a village where there are no other cars in eight miles, few residents have ever seen a movie and the village youngsters come just to look at him. He tells the man who accompanied him, he was born in the village but moved to the big city long ago, that he wants to bath in the river as long as the crocodiles are not

dangerous. He is told a wonderful story of "The Crocodile's Lady" who lives in the village, ninety-four years old, widowed at age four. They had a daughter who had been married at the age of three and had become a widow at four. She lived with her parents and, people say, grew up to be a beautiful damsel. 'One day while bathing in the river with the other women, she was dragged away by a crocodile. She was given up for dead. But a decade later she suddenly reappeared in the village. Her father had died and her mother was dying. Their little hut on the river was in shreds. 'One morning, two days later, a crocodile was found crawling on the embankment behind her hut. The earth, loose at one place, gave way under its weight. It slipped down on the village side of the embankment and the people thrashed it to death."

'The crocodile's Lady' is short story by Manoj Das in which he describes human Faith in God. Here in this story the writer renders the great love of a foreigner towards 'Indian Mysticism'. India is a land of Fakirs, snake-charmers and the people with Bohemian existence may not be having a place on the map for its great scientific and technological advancement but one thing the rest of the world is sure of is that life throbs and thrills in India for its mystery. As Dwijendra Lal Ray writes in his poem Bharat Amar "India, my India, where first human eyes Awoke to heavenly light! All Asia's holy place of pilgrimage..... Knowledge thou gav'st to man, God- Love, works, art, religion is opened door " (38) Truly the Indians live with the notion that god will help them in whatever good they will do. They can overcome each and every obstacle because of the merciful god and his love. The Crocodile's Lady, despite her mysterious disappearance for a decade, is sympathized, honored, loved, and revered by the people. One of the features of the characters of Manoj Das' is that they love humanity with their tears and laughs. They give message that life should be accepted with smiles with its follies and fallacies. The crocodile's lady tells the story which is considered as a true story by the foreign professor when for others it is an imaginary story. The story also focuses the village life where human beings live their life fully with whatever they come across. They believe in ghost and supernatural. Human touch is observed more in the village people than the city dwellers. The crocodile lady gives up the thought to reunite with the crocodile with the help of mantra because her mother is on the deathbed. She wanted to serve her mother. It is her honesty that compels her to remain with her mother during her last days. Honesty is the best policy. Similarly, the crocodile is also humanized. The crocodile can't live without the lady and comes up out of the water to be killed. Thus not only human beings but also the crocodile also humanized in the stories of Das.

## 2. SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THE STONE WOMEN*

### Summary.

The Protagonist of the short story is a newly married women, going out for a tour with her husband . She comes to know that it is a temple.-the guide says the temple was built by King Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala dynasty. The guide approaches and asks them he can explain every thing, inside and outside the temple in any language. The protagonist's husband asks her "shall we...?" have the guide, but even before she replies, he begins to discuss the terms with the guide and she retreats into the world that is always waiting for her those days- the world of the wonder of the two of them, the marvel of the two of them together. The time before that seems so distant, she can scarcely connect herself with it, to the girl she was then. Her husband says "a ll right, Let's go". Abruptly he stops and looks at her and smiles and says " you 've lost". After she realizes she was humming again. So he triumphantly says "you won't win. She has a habit of humming Hindi film songs all day. The phrase "you'll never win..." she thought that, there any contempt in the words of her husband. After she feels his palm against her, warm and reassuring, tells her he isn't really displeased, so she relaxed. She thought that she must conquer that silly habit of humming and she warned herself. She asked herself, 'why a tune gets hold of her that way, she did'nt know'. But there is , a different tune each day, dancing in her head all day. She hums always Hindi film tunes. Her husband says 'silly jingles, after he heard her. One day her husband challenged her and suggested her to control herself just one day. She had stopped listening to film songs, she tried to crush the tunes whenever she knew they were there, but they were always biding their time, waiting to spring out, taking her unawares even when she was in temple when guide narrates facts in a drab monotone, she could hear the song going on inside her head. She says to herself she must stop that hum. She gave him a quick guilty look to see if he is hearing that too. He was listening intently to the guide and she forced herself to listen as well. He asks her to see the carving in the wall and says the God as ladies. They were women, lush-bodied, high breasted women carved on rectangular stone panels, leaning provocatively out looking into the mirror, doing their hair, playing on musical instruments, dancing, hunting. She walks along, looking at them as if mesmerized, while the man goes on describing each carving in meticulous detail. The guide points out tiny details like the fly on a woman's arm, the seeds of a fruit a parrot is eating, the tiny bells on a woman's anklets. These details in the carvings are not amazed her and the amazed are the joyous playful, narcissistic existence of the stone women. She heard the word 'Beautiful' over and over again and she

looks at the women with their high, firm breasts, tiny waists, straight noses and elongated eyes and wonder. But the voice inside her protests that they didn't look real.

She reminds of her husband's words "What an ugly thing", after they were married, touching the silver bracelet she was wearing. She asks herself, 'was that ugly, she had been wearing that for long, that was like part of herself. But she put that away that day. In idle moments the fingers of her right hand grope for it and there was a sense of loss when they miss its familiar contours.

They went on in the temple from one panel to another, she finds herself overcome by a sense of uneasiness. A strange feeling that the stone women are converging on her, pressing on her so that she could not breathe. She thinks it must be the heat, for she was conscious then of the taint of a headache, she had a feeling of relief when they go inside the temple. There was a sense of space there. The guide takes them to a smooth, shining dark circle. The guide says 'this was the dance floor', and he shows the roof with most beautiful carvings. And had a sense of vertigo. She clutched at her husband's arm and was conscious that her palm was clammy. She felt sick. She was retreated into a kind of daze and words came to her disjointed and fragmentary.

She heard the guide's words "there was a queen who used to dance here". She had a bizarre picture of a woman dancing on that smooth polished floor, a galaxy of gods lolling before her, dressed like the gods in TV serials, in plastic heads and tinsel crowns. She moves to go out, on that time the guide asks her she doesn't want to do puja. She realized that with gods to be worshiped. The god Chenna Keshava was bejewelled and beflowered, flanked by two wives. When their offerings to be accepted, her uneasiness congeals into a heavy oppressive weight threatens to suffocate her. She made an involuntary sound. She says to her husband she was not feeling well. He helped her to go out. She goes out and sits under a neem tree. There was one woman sitting cross-legged with a child sleeping on her lap looking at her curiously. The woman queried about her. The woman says to her that the child is her grandchild. Her husband and the guide go out and bought her a tender coconut to drink. For her the woman's words reminded her mother's warmth.

They got back to their room and refreshed her, on that time he ordered tea for them. She sits by him and poured the tea. A new song enters her mind: "*izi liye mummy ne meri tumhe chai pe...*". She stopped that and crushed that, refuse to go on. He puts his arm around her. His hand traces her body. She felt that about the sculpted women in stone. She has evoked the sound of the hammer as the men chipped away at the stone, worked out their fantasies on that, creating women with unreal bodies, women who played and sang and danced all day. For a moment he looks at her, she has overcome a sudden fear, as if she was becoming one of the stone women.

### 3. "Real Time" by Amit Chaudhuri

#### Analysis.

In *Real Time* by Amit Chaudhuri short story has the theme of discontent, appearance, tradition, selfishness, self-importance and acceptance. Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator the reader realises from the beginning of the story that Chaudhuri may be exploring the theme of discontent. There is a sense that Mr and Mrs Mitra are unhappy or discontent with one another as they are travelling towards the Talukdar's home. This discontent is compounded by the fact that Abdul does not know where the Talukdar's live. It might also be significant that Mr Mitra feels obliged to go to the Talukdar's home. If anything he seems to be keeping up appearances more than anything else. Though Mr Mitra barely knew Anjali there is a sense that he may not be too interested in following tradition (shraddh ceremony). It is as though he is in attendance in order to be seen by others. To be seen as somebody who has adhered to tradition but may not himself really believe in it. Something that is also noticeable when Mr Mitra doesn't know as to whether or not to bring flowers to the Talukdar's home. Even though it would be traditional to do so. It is also noticeable that the only person that Mr Mitra seems to be thinking about while he is in the Talukdar's home is himself. Which may suggest that Mr Mitra is selfish.

How selfish Mr Mitra might be is noticeable by the fact that he spends less than an hour in the Talukdar's home with his primary concern being to get home so that he can have dinner. It is the same with Mrs Mitra. Fearful that there will not be a traditional shraddh ceremony she has ensured there will be food available for her when she gets home. Both Mr and Mrs Mitra know that they have to be seen to go to the Talukdar's home but when there Mr Mitra is more concerned with being able to leave as soon as possible. It is as though modernity is more important to Mr Mitra. He does not seem to have the patience to stay any longer than an hour and adhere to the ritual that is a shraddh ceremony. Though Anjali may have lost her way in

life the Mitra's also don't seem to feel anything for her. Mr Mitra doesn't see why Anjali would want to come back (as a crow and as part of tradition). He is looking at life through modern non-religious eyes while the Talukdar's firmly believe in Hindu tradition.

The fact that Chaudhuri puts the focus on Mr Mitra throughout the story may be important as he may be suggesting that Mr Mitra is an individual who believes in his own self-importance. He forgoes any belief in the benefits of tradition. Though at the same time he knows that he must be seen to participate in order to keep up an appearance and quell any fears that he might have that he will not be accepted by others due to his modern beliefs. It is also noticeable that if something does not interest Mr Mitra he will devote little or no time to it. Which may help explain as to why he and Mrs Mitra spend less than an hour in the Talukdar's home. The reader is left feeling as though both Mr and Mrs Mitra are just being obliging to the Talukdar's. They have no real feelings for what has happened Anjali nor does Mr Mitra really believe in the shraddh ceremony.

The end of the story is also interesting as the reader gets another insight into just how selfish Mr Mitra is. As soon as he leaves the Talukdar's home he tells Mrs Mitra that he is 'ravenous'. Again the reader is left aware that the most important person in Mr Mitra's life is himself. Even though there was food available at the Talukdar's home which Mr Mitra could have eaten he choose not to have more than one sandesh. As far as Mr Mitra is concerned he has done his part in adhering to tradition by going to the Talukdar's home and making an appearance. It doesn't dawn on him that he has spent less than an hour there. Though the reader is aware that Mr Mitra thinks that is enough time. For Mr Mitra he has done all he has had to do in order to keep up appearances however at the same time it is clear to the reader that Mr Mitra has not committed himself or believed in the tradition of the shraddh ceremony. For him he sees no purpose in it and most likely considers himself to be a modern man who is not swayed by religion. Unlike Mr and Mrs Talukdar who have followed tradition and have had to endure the tragic loss of their daughter. The Talukdar's accept there is a process or tradition that must be followed. Yet the Mitra's particularly Mr Mitra think differently.

Mr Mitra eats a sandesh, drinks a Fanta, has a chat with an acquaintance, urinates and, at the end, catches his wife's eye to indicate that it was time to leave and that it had all been a waste of time. No sympathy, no condolences, no real concern about the tragic loss suffered by the Taluktars. That is all that happens in the story of Real Time. Not very much action-wise, you'd agree, I'm sure. Although, the detail that Chaudhuri does give as Mr Mitra's experiences in and observations of that short time at the shraddh seems to add tedium to the texture to the slow passing of time. Chaudhuri manages to create a real sense of time moving on – as it must – and people experiencing what it is they do, see or encounter – as they must – with the hugely significant (e.g. death and loss) sitting alongside the incidental (the desire to urinate, observing a mickey-mouse pencil-box, etc.).

Mr. Mitra - He is an uninspired, bored, middle-aged, and professional man. Along with his wife, they're going to Anjali's funeral. Which he doesn't seem too convinced about the relationship with Anjali and his wife. He also, seems to have an unsatisfying feeling when he leaves the Shraddh.

Mrs. Mitra - She is the curt wife of Mr. Mitra and distant relative to Anjali. Seems to be more convinced than her husband about the culture of the funeral. She has very different views, than her husband's. However, she is also uninterested on going to the funeral.

Anjali - She is an unhappily married young woman that committed suicide. She didn't really know Mr. Mitra and Mrs. Mitra, but nonetheless her relatives were there for her funeral.

Mr. Talukdar - He is a tall, heavy, and old man who is a professional business man and the father of Anjali. Has three kids, two sons who live in America, an Anjali, the only daughter.

The story takes place in the late 1940s , at an unknown location in India, where a couple is driving to the Shraddh of Anjali.

"They passed an apartment building they knew, Shanti Nivas, its windows open but dark and remote. [...] Usually, it's said that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and Saraswati, or learning, two sisters, don't bless the same house; but certainly that wasn't true of the Poddars, who had two bars-at-law in the generation preceding this one, and a social reformer in the lineage, and also a white four-storeyed mansion on a property near Salt Lake where they used to have garden parties" (Chaudhuri, Lines 34-41).

The Shraddh seemed out of place, and so did the people who attended. Especially Mr. Mitra, who felt like "The hubbub common to shraddh ceremonies was absent" ( Chaudhuri, Line 141). Also, he felt that there was no point for his presence or for the funeral, if this culture wasn't around everybody, this is why the setting didn't feel right for him.

The point of view in this story, is third person omniscient. The narrator knew everyone, and what they were thinking or feeling in the Shraddh. However, the main focus was on Mr. Mitra, although the narrator would talk about the other characters, they would always seem less important to the narrator than Mr. Mitra.

"As they passed a patrol pump, Mr. Mitra wondered what iew traditional theology took of this matter, and how the rites accommodated an event such as this- she had jumped from a third-floor balcony- which couldn't, after all, be altogether uncommon. Perhaps there was no ceremony. In his mind's eye, when he

tried to imagine the priest, or the long rows of tables at which people were fed, he saw a blank. But Abdul couldn't identify the lane" (Chaudhuri, Lines 43-48).

A man and his wife, Mr. Mitra and Ms. Mitra, are on their way to a Shraddh. They are attending Anjali Poddar's funeral, a young woman who has an unhappy marriage and who committed suicide by jumping off a balcony. They get lost while on their way to the Shraddah, and Mr. Mitra already is uninterested in attending. Throughout the whole ceremony, he finds it pointless to be there. Indian culture revolves around this story, however it seems absent in the funeral. Mr. Mitra in the end, decides to leave with an unsatisfying feeling.

When on their way to the Shraddh, Mr. Mitra and Mrs. Mitra, were lost trying to find the apartments where it will be headed. "What preoccupied him now was not getting there, but the negotiations involved in how to get there" (Chaudhuri, Lines 62-64). They eventually found their destination, but it was a hard one to find.

As for Anjali, her destination was never found. She "had been living with her parents for a month after leaving her husband. She'd left him before, but this time she'd said her intentions were clear and final" (Chaudhuri, Lines 202-204). She didn't have a destination since she was back and forth living with her parents and then her husband. As a result, it was rumored because of her unhappiness life, she committed suicide and that was her ultimate destination.

## UNIT-V- FICTION

### ANITA NAIR'S *LADIES COUPE*

Anita Nair is one of the most leading novelists not only in the realm of Indian English literature but also in world literature. She has authored some well known novels such as *The Better Man* (1999), *Ladies Coupe* (2001), *Mistress* (2005), *Lessons in Forgetting* (2010), *Cut Like Wound* (2012) etc. Most of her novels deal with the women's issues such as gender inequality, gender difference, victimization of women, seeking self, equality, liberty and independence in the male dominated society.

*Ladies Coupe* is one of the most appreciated novels in the realm of Indian writing in English. It narrates the tale of the chief protagonist Akhila along with her five fellow travellers traveling in a ladies coupe of a train. The novelist delineates beautifully the predicament and dilemma of modern woman through the six female characters who belong to different social and economic background. Akhila is the chief protagonist who sets on a journey to Kanyakumari. She is the woman of twenty first century where each and every woman demands equality and liberty to lead her life according to her wishes but Akhila is deprived of it. She wants space in the society where she could take decision about her life and livelihood. The novelist introduces the protagonist in the opening chapter as "Akhila, forty- five years old. Sans rose coloured spectacles. Sans husband, children, home and family. Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to connect." (*Ladies Coupe*, 2). Akhila is the eldest child in the family so after the death of her father, all the responsibilities come on her shoulder. She joins a job as an income tax clerk to meet her needs as well as for the whole family. She is the breadwinner of the family and takes care of each and every member but no one thinks about her life and future. One day she comes to know the interest of her mother in music and persuades to teach music like her neighbour but it is not possible because of social order. When Akhila talks about the equality in marriage her mother remarks— There is no such thing as an equal marriage. It is best to accept that the wife is inferior to the husband. That way, there can be no strife, no disharmony. It is when one wants to prove one's equality that there is warring and sparring all the time. It is so much easier and simpler to accept one's station in life and live accordingly. A woman is not meant to take on a man's role or the gods would have made her so. So what is all this about two equals in a marriage." (*Ladies Coupe*, 14) Even in modern society women are deprived of the status of equality in relationship. They don't have asked to present their views about the marital relationship and the decision taken by the male members of the family. Sunita Sinha remarks "Nair's India suffers from a patriarchal system which has tried in many ways to repress, humiliate and debase women. The questions she poses in the novel not only shake the ideological ground of man's patriarchal role in our traditional society but also imply the existence of an alternative reality." (148-149) Akhila meets the five other travellers in the coupe—Janki, Margaret Shanti, Prabha Devi, Sheela and Marikolanthu. They all have some stories and share how they cope with the ups and downs in their lives. When they come to know that at the age of forty-five, Akhila is still unmarried, they express different views about women's life. The narrator uses the flashback technique to depict Akhila's past. Akhila is thinking about how she has spent her life to fulfill the requirements of her family and never thought about her own life. It was not her wish to live like spinster but the circumstances made her to do so. She remarks—

I didn't choose to remain single. It happened that way. My father died and I had to look after the family. By the time they were settled in their lives. I was much too old to marry. (*Ladies Coupe*, 20) All the travellers

in the coupe are very curious to share their experience and views happening in their lives. They meet for the first time and they are aware of that they will never meet again. Even though they differ in age, educational backgrounds and cultural upbringing, but their stories have a common thread: the tragic predicament of Indian women in a patriarchal social order. Akhila hears the story of her fellow travellers and the most debated term is the marriage system and marital relationship. Each and every one has different views regarding the institution of marriage and importance of men in women's life. Akhila remarks "As far as I am concerned, marriage is unimportant. companionship, yes, I would like that. The problem is, I wish to live by myself but everyone tells me that a woman can't live alone. Can woman live by herself?" (*Ladies Coupe*, 21) The question "can a woman live alone and by herself"? is a question which requires a new definition of marital relationship and its stability to maintain human culture and civilization. Simone de Beauvoir defines marriage as "The destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (*The Second Sex*, 445). In the modern perspective only marriage is not the destination of a woman. The feminist movement has added a new dimension regarding the rights and modified women culture. Modern society has many examples that a number of women don't believe in marriage and lead their life according to their wishes. They don't want to be bounded by the customs and rituals of the society. They talk and discuss about their physical relationship freely and if they desire a child they use alternatives. Akhila's mother represents a Hindu ideal wife for whom husband is everything and god for her. She leaves every decision on her husband as she thinks her husband knows the best. Akhila's mother remarks "We have never had to regret any decision that he has taken, even when it was on my behalf" (*Ladies Coupe*, 14). But in the modern perspective the concept has changed and the traditional mannerism is replaced by the participation of women in making decision at all levels. In this context of woman psychology, Beauvoir remarks "Woman is bound in a general way to contest foot by foot the rule of man, through recognizing his overall supremacy and worshiping his idols" (*The Second Sex*, 622). It is a matter of fact that being a supreme or rational creature human beings can't survive without carrying a relationship. The novelist characterizes the chief protagonist as a spinster and a single woman carrying the burden of her family. It doesn't mean that she lacks optimism towards life. Akhila had a love affair with a North Indian boy, Hari. It was a diminutive love affair though they made physical love several times. Both enjoy their life without getting marriage even Hari was very younger to her. This type of living culture shows that relationships are not bounded by time and age in the modern perspective. In Indian culture, it is the rigidity of the society that male should be older than female. So, Akhila suddenly broke this relationship and says "Hari, this is goodbye. I will never see you again" Because he was younger than her and she was anxious about the reaction of the society. She remarks "Every time I look at someone watching us, I can see the questions in their minds: what is he doing with an older woman? That bothers me very much, Hari. It bothers me very much that we are not suited". (*Ladies Coupe*, 153) So she decides to remain single. Janki is the oldest fellow traveller among the six passengers in the coupe. She believes in traditional marriage system and rituals. In India marriage is considered as an institution and pillar of Indian society. Janki believes in arranged marriage as her marriage took place. She is of the view that in arranged marriage there is no insecurity and one can find the solution of any problems by the help of family members. Her relationship with husband is very friendly. She is a pampered wife. She remarks "I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there was my father and my brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son... women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princesses. And because of that we look down upon women who are strong and who can cope by themselves" (*Ladies Coupe*, 22-23). Janki represents the dedicated traditional wife for whom the duty of a woman is to get married and follow the beliefs and rituals instructed by the society since the ancient time. She has been taught since childhood that a husband is equal to god and her duty is to serve him according to his wishes. Her aunts says "He is your husband and you must accept whatever he does" (*Ladies Coupe*, 25). With the passage of time she realizes that her life is wholly dedicated to her husband and son. She wasn't aware of the unfavourable circumstances and her daily life swings between home and society. "Indian women are deeply linked to social, cultural, religious and regional features and their identity is thus multilayered" (*Nubile*, 1) Margaret Shanti is another fellow traveller in the coupe. She shares her suppression and dilemma and how she is dominated by her husband. Ebenezer Paulraj represents the male chauvinism. Margaret is a well educated woman and colonized by her husband. She is a chemistry teacher and to show the power and importance of woman she classifies herself as water among five elements that constitute life. Ebenzer Paulraj has restricted her independence and treats her as a woman who could only fulfill his male desire. But in the modern context a well educated woman is aware of her rationality and rights by which she could survive with respect and glory. Margaret remarks "He dismissed me as someone of no significance. So I had no other recourse but to show him what the true nature of water is and how magnificent its powers are" (*Ladies Coupe*, 96). Margaret wants to carry her further study and complete doctorate but Paulraj is not agree with her. Paulraj rules on her and tells her to cut her long hair because it doesn't suit her. She always carries the order of her husband without questioning as the Indian women do but how far a woman can be suppressed in modern society where each and every information is accessible. With the passage of time she conceives and wants to give birth to her first child but Paulraj persuades her to abort. He forces Margaret for the abortion which was against her wishes and fills hatred for Paulraj.

Regarding abortion Beauvoir remarks "Abortion is considered a revolting crime to which it is indecent even to refer" (*The Second Sex*, 502). Paulraj doesn't have any repentance for the idea of abortion but it was very painful to Shanti. Beauvoir remarks "Men tend to take abortion lightly. They regard it as one of the humorous hazards imposed on women by malignant nature" (*The Second Sex*, 508). After abortion Margaret wants to take revenge for her insult. She wants to divorce but the social norms and conditions are impediments and don't allow her to do so. She chooses another way to destroy his self respect and ego. She starts feeding him with oily food till he curves into a stout and becomes fatty. Margaret is a modern woman and modern educated woman doesn't know to surrender before male chauvinism. She celebrates and accepts the idea of taking revenge successfully. She remarks "God didn't make Ebenezer Paulraj a fat man. I did. I, Margaret Shanthi, did it with the sole desire for revenge. To erode his self-esteem and shake the very foundations of his being" (*Ladies Coupe*, 96). Prabha Devi is another fellow traveler who is an accomplished woman. The narrator weaves the story beautifully to delineate the male chauvinism and the attitude of man towards the girl child in the modern society. The birth of Prabha Devi doesn't make her father happy because her father wants a son who could carry his business further. His father remarks "Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, addled your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance" (*Ladies Coupe*, 169). On the contrary her mother is happy for the girl child. She remarks "I have someone to leave my recipes to. Someone who'll treasure my jewellery. Someone who'll want to be like me. Someone who'll say – in my mother's house, this is how we did it" (*Ladies Coupe*, 169). Prabha Devi visits New York where she is impressed by the western culture and the rights of equality and liberty given to women in European society. She uses swimming costume and baths in swimming pool. She learns how to swim and doesn't suppress her desire. She has her own opinions and plans for her life. She is a conscious lady and talks freely to her husband, Jagdeesh about his marital life. She discusses about the first child plan and talks how it can be avoided until they want. She remarks "There are ways in which pregnancy can be avoided. Jagdeesh stiffened in shame and embarrassment. What kind of a woman was she? My parents are getting impatient. They talk of a grandchild all the time. We have been married for almost a year now, he said, caressing the side of her neck" (*Ladies Coupe*, 179). The novelist portrays Prabha Devi as the changing and confident woman who is capable of running the livelihood and carrying the responsibility of the family as well as the society. Life's experience shared by Prabha Devi impresses Akhila. The glimpse of a swimming pool and her decision to learn swimming transformed her life. The novelist remarks "She felt the years slip away from her. This body that had been the cause of much unhappiness, first with its excessive demands for gratification and then with an abrupt deadening of nerve ends, now melted. She was the blue of the pool and the water was she" (*Ladies Coupe*, 195). Sheela is the youngest fellow traveller among the six travelling in the coupe. She is only fourteen years old and hardly recognizes the meaning of masculinity and femininity. She is afraid of man's behaviour as her friend Hasina's father tries to seduce her. He touches her upper lips passionately. Sexual exploitation of a girl child displays the dark side of masculinity. Modern society is considered a well developed and cultured where everything is guided by logic and human values. In the traditional society most of the girls didn't share the shameful experience with anyone. Even today they are afraid of the society that society will raise questions at her character that would not be bearable to them. Sheela loves her grandmother very much. Her grandmother is still self confident and courageous at the age of sixty nine. She represents the strong femininity and every night she adorns herself before going to bed. Beauvoir remarks "Woman is haunted by the horror of growing old" (*The Second Sex*, 587). In Indian culture there is a set of norms for the people of every age and it is considered that in old stage all the materialistic desires should be given up. Sheela is represented as a rebel character who doesn't follow the traditional customs and rituals. She defies traditional ideas about women by symbolically making her dying widowed grandmother look like a bride. Marikolanthu is one of the most pathetic characters among the six traveller in the coupe. She is the victim of rape and is facing the problem of identity and survival in the society. She has a son but hasn't right to call the man, the father of her child. She remarks "I have a son and no husband". She listens patiently to all her fellow travellers, at the end she is angry about the fuss made by the other traveller what she thinks that these are little things compare to her tragedies. Her mother warns about the male attitude towards women in the society. Her mother states "You give your heart too easily, child. They'll break it into a thousand pieces and leave it on the ground for others to trample into the dust" (*Ladies Coupe*, 216). Through the portrayal of Marikolanthu, the novelist opposes a fiction of idealized and contented femininity with the brute facts of sexual experience and female suffering. Women are seen as victims, victimized by both men and society. After listening to the stories of the five women living in a patriarchal world, exploited by men, Akhila introspects that she can live alone independently without being a parasite to anyone. The novel renegotiates and textualizes the problems of women which revolve around the socio-economic conditions and more significantly, situations that embellish the oddities of human relationships. Each character in the novel realizes in some way the blighted nature of her existence yet her triumph lies in overcoming the social barriers to create an alternative existence. There is an evolving awareness of the self as a victimized woman followed by a gradual development that breaks the barriers of discrimination only to emerge as a stronger woman to fight the world alone.



