MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY

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M.A (English Literature)
First Year
Indian English Literature- II

Prepared by
Dr.G.Vinothkumar M.A.,M.Phil.,Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor
Department of English and Foreign Languages
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore

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INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE- II

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Shiv K. Kumar, *Contemporary Indian Short Stories in English*,South Asia Books, 1992.

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Homecoming- R. Parthasarathy

R. Parthsarthy's poem "Homecoming" portrays a picture of his native state, Tamil Nadu as he returns from his sojourn abroad. He perceives a marked change in his native language. He comprehends that it was his lack of familiarity with the native language that rendered the language alien to his perception. His persistent use of the foreign tongue dispossessed him of his inherently rich native language. His association with English appears to be like imprisonment as he wrestles with English chains. His mother tongue is emblematic of his rich Dravidian heritage that he cherishes. In his chains, that disable him to move freely, he falters, he stumbles. He also stumbles as he has lost his ground.

His native language is now relegated to other concerns. At the time of Thiruvalluvar, the language was a sign of rich cultural heritage. He senses that the language has begun to deteriorate as it is adulterated, and declines owing to lack of use. Language proves to be an effervescent medium with the Savant Nammalvar who handled it as it were a bull held by its horns. She penned several devotional songs par excellence, and therefore favourites with the masses. In the present situation, the language is like a dead animal, infested with fleas at Kodambakkam. This figure of speech enhances the theme of stagnation and decay.

Death of the Past

There appears to be no redemption from this predicament. The present poets do not look for the richness of the past literature for inspiration. Rather, they look up to foreign writers as idols.

Genuine models thrive in their own roots, and native speakers must therefore refrain from imitating alien culture. The poet travels down the memory lane of his childhood when his grandfather used to narrate to him the celebrated poem “Nalayira Divya Prabandham” before going to bed. The poet’s grandfather used to pinch him when he wavered in his attention. The grandfather was sincerely determined to instill in him the literary and cultural values through his rendition of the classic.

After grandfather’s death, they held a ceremony where all the relatives were reunited. Cousins arrived in overcrowded buses. They recognized each other eventually. They witnessed the rituals as they sat on the steps of a choultry. He reflects how they did not dwell in the ‘inside’ of the culture; they were half-way out. The surroundings had not much to offer other than uneventful and undistinguished scenes. Rites and rituals seemed to lose their luster. They were served food sparingly: rice and pickle in the evening.

The poet then records his encounter with a tall woman and her three children. He identifies his childhood friend Sundari, an agile girl climbing tamarind trees. She is forty years now; the poet senses the lack of emotions towards her at this juncture. The memory of her is fresh, but they can no longer relate or communicate with each other as time has changed everything over the years. Similar is his relation with his mother tongue. His childhood friend who is no longer familiar to him stands parallel to his feelings towards his native tongue.

In Section 12 of the poem “Homecoming” from Rough Passage, the poet celebrates the eminence and relevance of The Poet. The poet talks of himself in the most objective manner when he asserts:”I see him now sitting at his desk”.

He claims that he made the mistake of opting for the wrong gods from the start; he had gone for the wrong kind of inspiration. His course of action was erroneous right from the beginning. It began with his experiments with the English language. It started when he set off to England for his English education. Another major obstacle to his career was his having got married. He states that he should have paid heed to the classical poets: it was better to bury a woman than marry her.

Now, as he has failed in his area of interest, namely, poetry; he teaches. Parthasarthy seems to echo George Bernard Shaw who said: "He who can, does. He, who cannot, teaches." He teaches probably as he had learnt from experience that poetry cannot provide him with a source of livelihood. He now tries to prove his mettle by reviewing verse written by others. In other words, circumstances had made him a critic .This label of being a critic had endowed him with invitations to conferences. It had taken him quite some time to realize that he had no talent, and wondered how words flowed so easily. He substantiates this by claiming;"One can be articulate about nothing." Articulate as an adjective signifies "spoken so as to be intelligible", and also means "expressed in articles or in separate items or particulars". The poet means to say that a person can endeavour to sound intelligible about anything or nothing. And one can compartmentalize certain subjects so as to sound like a scholar. Perhaps in this regard, the role of a critic suited him better.

He continues his self -interrogation: Was it that his gods had left him. Was he left with no source of inspiration? Again, at this juncture, we understand what the poet meant by saying that he followed the wrong Gods from the start. He had the wrong sources of stimulation. By "Pedaling his bicycles glasses", the poet implies the progress of his vision. Just as a bicycler peddles to move forward; the poet "peddles" to move his vision forward.

As we go through the poem, one can discern a distinction between the “I” and the “He”. The “I” stands for the current role of the speaker in the present tense-that of a critic. The “He” shows the speaker in a mode of transition: from the poet to the critic.

The answer to the question:”What’s it like to be a poet?” is answered by the speaker in uncertain terms. He first goes on to reprimand himself as a critic. In an act of vituperation, Parthasarthy terms the critic as “the son of a bitch” who “fattens himself on the flesh of dead poets”. To be more precise, the critic is a parasite who depends directly on the Poet. Therefore, the critic who takes himself to be “His Eminence” has no significance, but for the poet. In castigating terms, the critic is likened to a fly that feeds on the dung-heap of old texts and obscure commentaries. “His eyes peel off”: reality presents itself with indubitable clarity. Where would the so-called critic be, if it were not for poets that splashed about in the Hellespont or burned about in the Java Sea? This is a direct allusion to the classical poets and the modern poets. The poem thus drives home the significance Parthasarathy imparted to the Poet.

Points to ponder

- R. Parthsarthy. A famous Indian English poet.
- He comes from the southern part of India.
- Themes –Influence of English on native tongues, etc.
- As the title suggests, this poem is about R. Parthasarathy coming home after spending sometime abroad, but he is not able to fit himself in the current scenario culturally, linguistically, sociologically and psychologically. The poem builds on the idea of the poet feeling exile and isolated, in spite of familiar things that surround him.

Summary:

- Parthasarathy opens the poem by sharing his linguistic instability or inability. He accepts that his tongue is been tied by English and he is not fluent with Tamil, as he returns after his sojourn abroad.
- He expects people to speak good Tamil, as used in good old Tamil literature and scriptures. His expectations are in vain and his hopes vanish, when he hears people use Tamil that is spoken by the characters in celluloid world or cinema.
- His association with English appears to be like imprisonment as he wrestles with English chains. His mother tongue is emblematic of his rich Dravidian heritage that he cherishes. In his chains, that disable him to move freely, he falters, he stumbles.
- At the time of Thiruvalluvar, the language was a sign of rich cultural heritage. He senses that the language has begun to deteriorate now, as it is adulterated.
- In the present situation, the language is like a dead animal, infested with fleas at Kodambakkam.
- This "carcass" of the language cannot provide the poet with the tradition he is seeking. Nammalvar was a famous Tamil Vaishnavaite poet, a devotional hymnologist of the Eighth Century A.D. His verses formed part of the much-celebrated Nalayira Divya Prabandham. The bull refers here to the Tamil language which Nammalvar handled with ease.
- The present poets do not look for the richness of the past literature for inspiration. Rather, they look up to foreign writers as idols. Genuine models thrive in their own roots, and native speakers must therefore refrain from imitating alien culture.
- The poet travels down the memory lane of his childhood when his father used to narrate to him the celebrated poem "Nalayira Divya Prabandham" before going to bed. The poet's

father used to pinch him when he wavered in his attention. The father was sincerely determined to instill in him the literary and cultural values through his recitation of the classic.

- After grandfather's death, they held a ceremony where all the relatives were reunited. They came in crowded buses loaded with dust of many years of memory. They recognized each other immediately. The relatives gather in groups and sit without much formality. They eat the packed food they have brought for lunch.
- He recognizes a girl named Sundari, who he had known during his childhood days and had climbed up and down forbidden tamarind trees in her long skirt every morning with the poet. She is married now and has three daughters clinging to her like three floating planets. The poet cannot relate himself with his relatives and with the circumstances.
- The poet then says that he has become an expert in farewells. When his father died on a November, it was unexpected and a huge hit on him. He and his relations stood in shock as they watched the fire engulf his father's body.
- The agony of 'home coming' to the language and its culture is excruciating. The language and the culture, both are debased. Yet the poet has to come to terms with them in order to realise himself, as a person and a poet.

Jewish Wedding In Bombay - Nissim Ezekiel

Jewish Wedding In Bombay is one of the most interesting poems of Nissim in which the poet as a bride describes what it happened to when he went to marry as per the Jewish nomenclature and protocol, ritual and tradition. The poem though of an autobiographical note hinges on the

anecdote and the art of narration. The confessional detail also needs to be taken into consideration. Though he calls it a Jewish wedding, but the pranks are almost those of ours.

The mother of the bride shed a tear or two, but was not really crying as it appeared to the poet, as he had been marking it at that time and came to notice it himself. It was a thing to do and so she did it enjoying the moment. The bride laughed when he sympathized and noticing it he asked her not to be silly. “Don’t be silly. It’s a prestige matter. What will they say if laugh you? Or laugh I?,” perhaps is the thing. Nissim Ezekiel should mark it that some mothers of the daughters weep and cry in such a way that it will melt the on-lookers. At that time what would he have done?

Her brothers had a shoe of his with them, stolen or hidden by them and for that he paid money to get them back. The game delighted all the children of the neighbours who never stopped staring at him, though felt himself like a reluctant groom of the day. “Don’t mind, don’t mind, it happens in”, should he not add on.

Nissim as a bridegroom never demanded for any dowry nor had been in support of it. A modern man he never liked to take from the father of the bride. A good boy indeed. When the father of the girl asked about the jewellery to be given to him, he said, “I don’t know.” It made him laugh.

There were brass bands out the synagogue. One or two chanting processions followed it thereafter with the people in skull caps and hats and shawls. The grape juice was given to the husband and the wife from the same glass.

The glass was broken and the congregation scattered with a clapping as per the Mosaic Law. Well, that is all about the function, the ceremony on the midway. There was nothing as solemn or beautiful to strike. Everything but was ordinary and interesting. The people including himself had not been sure of their belief which held they, but were participating in the function.

The most orthodox was the taking cheap beef which they ate and some took to pork as the Sabbath was for betting, swearing and drinking.

His father liberal and good never liked those orthodox people drawing their lines in their own way which suited him not. His mother was quite progressive to be clutched along.

After the clapping, the bride and the bridegroom went to the studio of Lobo and Fernandes , world class specialists in making wedding portraits. Lying on the floor-mattress of the wife's apartment kitchen they kept gossiping. They went on saying let us be doing this or that, darling.

Years before she had said that she felt disappointed. Where had he been for so many years? Where had she been is she had to come to? But when quarreled they for the first time, she said it to him to return the virginity he stained, but hearing it he felt amused and perplexed as what to say, but said cutely, curtly? He responded had he known after reading one of the books instructing so, he would have definitely. The lovers' hush is it in this poem; love's secret gossips. All those who love will only be able to say about. Into the lovers' paradise Nissm and his counterpart seem to be partaking of the gossip. The jingling wedding bells of the poem enthrall the readers. Wedding costume, decoration, photography, strange guests, relatives, bands, rituals, prayers, good wishes, occasional gala and gaiety add to the beauty of the poem.

There is something as that of Strange Fits of Passion and Lost Love in Jewish Wedding In Bombay. A lover's words only a lover can take to as love is a matter of the heart. But apart from love and love-making, he uses and applies in fun, humour, joke, caricature and irony.

Her mother shed a tear or two but wasn't really crying. It was the thing to do, so she did it enjoying every moment. The bride laughed when I

sympathized, and said don't be silly.

Her brothers had a shoe of mine and made me pay to get it back. The game delighted all the neighbours' children, who never stopped staring at me, the reluctant bridegroom of the day.

There was no dowry because they knew I was 'modern' and claimed to be modern too. Her father asked me how much jewellery I expected him to give away with his daughter. When I said I did't know, he laughed it off.

There was no brass band outside the synagogue but I remember a chanting procession or two, some rituals, lots of skull-caps, felt hats, decorated shawls and grape juice from a common glass for bride and bridegroom.

I remember the breaking of the glass and the congregation clapping which signified that we were well and truly married according to the Mosaic Law.

Well that's about all. I don't think there was much

that struck me as solemn or beautiful. Mostly, we were amused, and so were the others. Who knows how much belief we had?

Even the most orthodox it was said ate beef because it was cheaper, and some even risked their souls by relishing pork.
The Sabbath was for betting and swearing and drinking.

Nothing extravagant, mind you, all in a low key and very decently kept in check. My father used to say, these orthodox chaps certainly know how to draw the line in their own crude way. He himself had drifted into the liberal creed but without much conviction, taking us all with him.
My mother was very proud of being 'progressive'.

Anyway as I was saying, there was that clapping and later we went to the photographic studio of Lobo and Fernandes, world-famous specialists in wedding portraits. Still later, we lay on a floor-matress in the kitchen of my wife's family apartment and though it was part midnight she kept saying let's do it darling let's do it darling so we did it.

More than ten years passed before she told me that she remembered being very disappointed. Is that all there is to it? She had wondered. Back from London eighteen months earlier, I was horribly out of practice.

During our first serious marriage quarrel she said Why did you take my virginity from me? I would gladly have returned it, but not one of the books I had read instructed me how.

Though we call him a faded romantic, he is very interesting and charming indeed and can amuse to the core which a romantic too cannot do so easily. Nissim is an expert in love-making, as he knows the art and craft of pleasing and winning over.

Jewish Wedding In Bombay is a poem of love and marriage. Outwardly he appears to be faded, but from his inward within he is a very amusing fellow. He dwells in the lovers' paradise and sings of love marriage, birthday parties , late night dances and park meets. The other poem titled Marriage too is just like it. Jewish Wedding In Bombay as a bridal song is remarkable. None ahs depicted in such a way the pleasure and joy of marriage. Andrew Marvell's To His Coy Mistress and John Donne's The Sun Rising can be quoted in this context.

Nissim's Jewish Wedding In Bombay is famous for the whispers of love and love-making, pairing of the couple, meeting of the hearts, playing of the bands and music, dancing of the parties, smiling of the bride and the bridegroom, taking of juice from the same tumbler and doing

of prayers to scatter around. The beauty of the synagogue as the attic of the poem foreshadows it in adding to Maharashtrian Indianness and liberal perspective held in.

Blue Lotus- Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander was a New York-based poet, novelist and essayist. She was Distinguished Professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York where she taught poetry and poetics.

Alexander's work has been widely anthologized and translated into several languages including Malayalam, Arabic, Spanish, French, Italian, Macedonian and Swedish. Her poetry collection, *Illiterate Heart* (2002) won the PEN Open Book Award and her memoir, *Fault Lines* (1993), was chosen as one of *Publishers Weekly*'s Best Books of 1993.

Born in Allahabad, India, Alexander divided her childhood between India and Sudan. When she was eighteen, she went to study in England. Not surprisingly, the themes of identity, migration and memory feature recurrently in her writing. Maxine Hong Kingston writes of her work: "Meena Alexander sings of countries, foreign and familiar, places where the heart and spirit live, and places for which one needs a passport and a visa. Her voice guides us far away and back home."

In 'Blue Lotus', the poem featured in this edition, the poet explores the fraught question of belonging and locates a spiritual residence where the red soil of the Pamba river in Kerala can meet the ash trees on a New York riverbank, where a ruptured identity can be healed by the ancient magic of language, where a piecemeal and broken membership (with all its attendant complications: "tribe, tribute, tribulation") can be restored to a wholeness that is more than the

sum of its parts. It is a place in the heart that is hospitable enough to accommodate a host of trans-cultural and trans-historical literary mentors: Wordsworth, Tagore, Milosz, Mirabai, Akhmatova and Rich.

It is language that makes this resolution possible. It is language that offers sanctuary. And it is language that offers strategy: a way to coax life out of rock, a way to make stones sing.Language in Alexander's poem liberates, empowers and eventually becomes a place in which to live. And thus "a short incantation" ends up becoming a "long way home".

Dalit Women Talk Differently- Gopal Guru

OVER the last several decades women's issues have become a part of global public agenda. While it is due to their ceaseless struggles that women have acquired visibility at the global level, women's assertion assumes particular expression by operating on a particular terrain shaped by forces of a particular country. The scenario of the women's movement in India, particularly in the context of the Beijing conference, is characterized by simultaneous mobilization of women by different autonomous feminist groups and by groups affiliated to formal political formations. In a situation, where the organization of politics around difference has become a major feature of feminist politics, the organization of dalit women around the nation of difference is bound to be a logical outcome. An independent and autonomous assertion of dalit women's identity found its first expression in the formation of National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) at Delhi on August 11. In order to understand the dalit women's need to talk differently it is necessary to delineate both the internal and external factors that have bearing on this phenomenon. Some

women activists apprehend that contingent factors like the upcoming Beijing conference were responsible for the national level meet at Delhi. It may be true that the all India mobilization of dalit women, which is a culmination of such conferences previously held at Bangalore, Delhi and Pune during the last couple of years, was visualized by the dalit women activists keeping in view the representation of dalit women to Beijing conference. However, the issue of representing dalit women, both at the level of theory and politics, has erupted time and again in the discourse on dalit women. Dalit women justify the case for talking differently on the basis of external factors (non-dalit forces homogenizing the issue of dalit women) and internal factors (the patriarchal domination within the dalits). Social location which determines the perception of reality is a major factor- (as we shall see in the context of argument made by dalit women) make the representation of dalit women's issues by non-dalit women But now when Gaslitand has shown who are dutiful and disciplined and who are not, there should be a new start, resurrecting the good old 'half-pants culture' of the collieries with the workers and officers, believing in one another and in the future of BCCL, move hand in hand in a new spirit of solidarity washing away the dead past. less valid and less authentic. But this claim of dalit woman activist does not mean a celebration of plural practices of feminism. However, there are feminists who seek to understand the need to talk differently, keeping in mind certain external factors. For example, Gail Omvedt would link the dalit need to talk differently vis-a-vis the left forces to ther betrayal of the promises given to the dalits by the latter. Rajni Kothari shares the same opinion but rather differently. He says. "With the erosion of institutions, the unsettled controversies over public policies, and the growing uncertainty over ideological issues, as well as the decline of democratic functioning of the political process, faith in the capacity of the modern nation-state to provide a framework of both order and equity has declined, 'and so too the reliance on mainstream

governmental and party political process. The result has been the rise of a series of movements as distinct from the earlier gainer of more specific economic movements such as trade union or cooperative movements." Kothari calls this phenomenon of 'talking differently1 a 'discourse of descent'. But focusing on certain external factors does not provide access to the complex reality of dalit women. For example the, question of rape cannot be grasped merely in terms of class, criminality, or as a psychological aberration or an illustration of male violence. The caste factor also has to be taken into account which makes sexual violence against dalit or tribal women much more severe in terms of intensity and magnitude. This differential experience was expressed by dalit women activists at the Delhi meet and also previously at a conclave organised by Satyashodhak Mahila Aghadi in Maharashtra. However, these activists lament that the caste factor does not get adequate recognition in the analysis done by non-dalit, middle-class, urbanised women activists. Dalit women did appreciate feminist radicalism in the early phase of new peasant movements in Maharashtra. Yet, they did not approve of the ultimate subordination of the dalit voice to the dominant voice of the Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra and the Rayat Sangha in Karnataka. They questioned the populism of these peasant movements, who, representing the interests of rich farmers, entered into direct contradiction with the interests of dalit agricultural laborers over the issue of minimum wages. Secondly, dalit women would not make common cause with the moral economy' advocated by the Shetkari Sanghatana and its feminist supporters. They are of the opinion that the moral economy of the Sanghatana offered no solution to their poverty, instead it sought to naturalize their poor living conditions. Dalit women are also not well disposed to the eco-feminist call for development of environmental consciousness. In fact, dalit men and women from Kannad taluka of Aurangabad district uprooted saplings planted by the social forestry department. Now, some environmentalists might

remark that these dalit women lack ecological understanding. But the fact of the matter is that these dalits have been denied legitimate piece of land from the ceiling land which the village landlords still control. Further, the dalits do not have equal access to common property resources of the village. In fact, the experience of gram panchayats in Uttar Pradesh shows that an egalitarian distribution of landholding is a precondition for tension-free management of forest resources. Thirdly, the claim for women's solidarity at both national and global levels subsumes contradictions that exist between high caste and dalit women. The latent manifestations of these contradictions involve subtle forms of caste discrimination as practiced by upper caste upper class women against dalit women in the urban areas and resorting to slander of dalit women in rural areas. The contradictions also take a violent form as when the Shiv Sena women attacked dalit women in Sawali village of Chandrapur district in 1988. Thus, beneath the call for women's solidarity the identity of the dalit woman as 'dalit' gets whitewashed and allows a 'non-dalit' woman to speak on her behalf. It is against this background that dalit women have of late protested against their 'guest appearances' in a text or a speech of a nondalit woman and instead organised on their own terms. They consider the feminist theory developed by non-dalit women as unauthentic since it does not capture their reality. This comprehension gets clearly reflected in the 12- point agenda adopted by the NFDW and in several papers presented by the dalit women at the Maharashtra Dalit Women's Conference held in Pune in May 1995. Dalit women define the concept of dalit strictly in caste terms, refuting the claim of upper caste women to dalithood. Dalit women activists quote Phule and Ambedkar to invalidate the attempt of a non-dalit woman to don dalit identity. DALIT PATRIARCHY Besides these external factors, there arc certain internal factors that have prompted dalit women to organise separately vis-a-vis the dalit men. In the post-Ambedkar period, dalit leaders have always subordinated, and at times suppressed, an

independent political expression of dalit women. This political marginalisation has been openly condemned by dalit women at the regional conferences of dalit women and at the Delhi meet. It is not only in the political arena that dalit women face exclusion. In the cultural field, for instance, dalit women have criticized their male counterparts for dominating the literary scene. Dalir male writers do not take serious note of the literary output of dalit women and tend to be dismissive of it. Dalit women rightly question why they are not considered for the top positions in dalit literary conferences and institutions. This dissent brings to fore three things: (1) It is not only caste and class identity but also one's gender positioning that decides the validity of an event; (2) dalit men are reproducing the same mechanisms against thei r women which their high caste adversaries had used to dominate them; (3) the experience of dalit women shows that local resistance withrin the dalits is important. The whole situation compels us to defend the claim of dalit women to talk differently. Firstly, defended independent assertion of dalit women should not be viewed by dalit men as divisive; instead, it ought to be seen as carrying positive emancipatory potential. It can lead to a meaningful engagement of their creative energies. Secondly, the autonomous mobilization of dalit women can also be understood from an epistemological standpoint. This perspective maintains that the less powerful members of a society have a more encompassing view of social reality than others because their disadvantaged position grants them a certain epistemic privilege over others. It has to be noted that though there are some non-dalit women activists sensitive to the caste dimensions of women's exploitation, their stand has remained ambivalent regarding the critique of caste. Dalit women's claim to 'talk differently' assumes certain positions. It assumes that the social location of the speaker will be more or less stable; therefore, 'talking differently' can be treated as genuinely representative. This makes the claim of dalit woman to speak on behalf of dalit women automatically valid. In doing

so, the phenomenon of 'talking differently' foregrounds the identity of dalit women. Though it is difficult at this stage to make any definitive comments on the dalit women's movement, one can question the validity of the above assumptions. There is a notable shift taking place in the location of dalit women. Dalit women from Maharashtra are better educated and employed than their counterparts from Karnataka. And it would be the former who would represent dalit women at Beijing. Thus, here too, a certain section of dalit women will be rendered anonymous. That is why the second point in the agenda of NFDW mentions the need to associate with grass roots dalit women Further, for challenging male dominance in politics, dalit women are dependent on the state to create a space for them. This exposes them to the danger of co-option as was the case with their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the process of empowerment of dalit women makes the terrain of nation-state more contested. Also the Indian state is keen on projecting itself as well-intentioned on gender issues and has sponsored the delegation of Indian women to Beijing. The state by incorporating women's movement within the jurisdiction of its apparatus intends to 'domesticate' the movement. Hence, the crucial question which arises with regard to the NFDW is whether it will succeed in evading this trap of domestication. On the basis of available evidence it is possible to argue that dalit women can challenge the state and statemediated dalit patriarchy. This was proved when dalit women of Bodha Gaya in Bihar who opposed the state's decision to hand over land in the names of dalit men sinceit would further marginalise them. Dalit women under the Bahujan Mahila Aghadi and Shetmajur Shetkari Shramik Aghadi in Maharashtra oppose the process of globalization. Incidentally, the newly-formed NFD women also has made clear its intention to fight the Indian state's new economic policy of privatization and globalization. Dalit women, particularly at the grassroots level in Maharashtra, are exhibiting a spontaneous and strong solidarity across caste .Thus, dalit women's perception while critical of

the homogenization of a dominant discourse, does not make a fetish of its own reality, and therefore, prevents the ghettoization of Dalit hood.

FROM PURANA TO NUTANA

A study of the emergence of the novel in India has to be more than a purely literary exercise. The factors that shaped the growth of this genre since the mid-nineteenth century arose as much from the political and social situation of a colonized country as from several indigenous though attenuated narrative traditions of an ancient culture that survived through constant mutation. English education and through English an exposure to western literature were by far the strongest influences at work. It is not an accident that the first crop of novels in India, in Bengali and Marathi, appeared exactly a generation after Macaulay's Educational Minutes making English a necessary part of an educated Indian's mental make-up were passed. Yet to regard the novel in India, as is sometimes done,1 as purely a legacy of British rule—such as the railways or cricket—would be to overlook the complex cultural determinants of a literary genre. When the novel assumed a distinct generic identity in Europe in the eighteenth century its form was quite different from that of the existing structures of earlier narrative such as the epic, the romance and the saga. Since the novel is the second-youngest major art-form today (the film being the youngest), there has been considerable critical and philosophical speculation in the West about why it emerged when it did and whether there was a historical inevitability about its emergence. The co-ordinates taken into consideration by critics as different as Hegel, Lukacs, Steiner, Watt and Todorov include economic and political factors as well as metaphysical assumptions about man's relationship with time, with nature and with other human beings. Realism, regarded as one of the determining characteristics of the novel in its formative

stage, reflected a basic shift in man's view of reality. Of the many theories about the rise of the novel in the West the two major theories emphasize the novel's close connection with the changing economic and moral bases of society and, as we shall see, its members' awareness of the temporal and spatial axes of reality. Stripped to its essence, one theory may be said to attribute the rise of this genre to the growth of the bourgeoise and modern capitalism. That is, the novel is said to be a genre generated and sustained by the middle class in a very broad sense, and to incorporate the values of this class as against the feudal values of the epic or romance. While the epic hero's fate was linked with the destiny of his community and the romance hero followed a predetermined heroic or chivalric code, the protagonist of the novel has to make a choice which is distinctly his own. The second theory suggests a link between the emergence of the idea of individualism and the rise of the novel. But this concept of individualism can also be related to the new social mobility that industrialization made possible, displacing man from his secure traditional niche, making him realize the unique potential of each human being, including himself, outside social hierarchy. These two theories are thus not unrelated. All this is evident to any student of the novel in the West. But how much of this can be transferred to a different cultural and historical context when we study the novel in India? Is it possible to say that industrialization or the rise of the middle class need not be a necessary precondition for the new form because Banabhatta's Kadambari was written in Sanskrit in the seventh century and because tenth-century Japan produced the long narrative in prose fiction well known in English trans¬ lations as The Tales of Genji?Don Quixote, a much more direct ancestor of the European novel, was written in 1605 in a pre¬ industrial Spain steeped in feudal values. The crux of the problem may lie in deciding upon a set of defining charac¬ teristics of the novel which are valid across cultures. However, in the two-and-a-half centuries or more that have elapsed since the

novel was recognized as a distinct genre, it has become increasingly clear that this is the most flexible and elusive of genres, almost impossible to tackle through definitions. The most one can attempt is to describe some of the obvious differences between this genre and earlier forms of narrative. In pre-novel narratives, for example, Kadambari, Panchatantra, Arabian Nights, The Tales of Genji, Legends of King Arthur, Decameron or Canterbury Tales, the narrative structure is often circular—i.e. either there is a larger story which contains a smaller one which in turn contains another and so on, or a number of shorter tales are strung together in the larger thread of the central narrative. In Kadambari Shudraka listens to the account of the Suka bird; the Suka bird listens to Maharishi Jabali's story which contains Mahashveta's story within it. Such cycles or chain tales have existed in almost every language, though not always in prose, and have been variously called sagas or romances. The Persian word daastan, later carried over to Urdu, denotes similar cycles of medieval tales of heroism where a succession of episodes follow one another in endless profusion. Compared to these the structure of the novel is more or less unified. The events grow organically out of each other instead of being loosely strung together through a common thread. On the whole the progression is linear rather than cyclic, even though the order of past and present may occasionally be reversed. The consciousness of time and space is a special feature of the novelist's apprehension of reality. The pre-novel tales have a 'once-upon-a time' ambience where the tensions of time past and time present are absent. Instead of dealing with the unchanging moral verities of life in the abstract, the novelist depicts situations on spatial and temporal axes, employing realism as one of the viable modes of viewing this concrete human reality. Medieval tales could be borrowed by one culture from another (Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale, for example, can be traced to the Jataka stories) but a novel is necessarily bound by its historical and geographical co-ordinates. An organic product of a specific environment in a

particular society at a given point of history, the novel crosses the frontiers of culture less easily than a fable or an allegory.

The third important distinction between the novel on the one hand and fable, legend and all other traditional narratives on the other lies in characterization, which is 'life-like' in the one and stylized in the other. The archetypes of the hero, the heroine and the villain of the romance have been seen by Northrop Frye as the reflections of Jung's libido, anima and shadow respectively. Frye says that 'a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its [the romance's] fringes', whereas in a novel the characters are seen not as representatives of either a class or of moral values but as specific individuals who are required to be convincing in the context of a given time and culture.

A whole new world became available to educated Indians in the middle of the nineteenth century through their study of English literature. The society represented in the novels of Scott, Dickens and Thackeray was very different from the society Indians knew and lived in, which in turn was already different from the traditional agrarian life of previous generations which had been the stable cultural background — a background which the extension of British rule had partially disrupted. Since the early novels in India were all written in urban areas by English-educated people (this remains true even today), this discontinuity was indeed a vital issue. It was responsible for their inability to find a fictional form suitable for the new city society, a form which simultaneously allowed novelists to employ, without doing violence to the reality of mid¬nineteenth century 'Indian life', the realistic mode learnt from the Victorian novel. More influential than Dickens and Thackeray were popular Victorian novelists like Wilkie Collins,

Marie Corelli, Benjamin Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, and a nowforgotten manufacturer of bestsellers called G.W.M. Reynolds. Moth-eaten copies of books by these writers can be found in almost every family library in India which goes back to the nineteenth century. Not all these British novelists used the realistic mode, but for the nineteenth-century Indian it was not very easy to distinguish precisely between fictional modes when the life depicted was so unfamiliar. Colourful, expansive, free—the characters in the work of these novelists seemed to lead lives of infinite possibilities, while the life of the nineteenth-century Indian-politically servile, economically deprived and socially circumscribed—seemed limited in comparison. The picaresque tradition in the European novel had achieved one main purpose—it had liberated the protagonist from the rigidity of a static society into being a free agent who could to some extent shape his own destiny. Robinson Crusoe (1719), Moll Flanders (1722), Pamela (1740), three early examples of the English novel, show how the central character is in each case an active rather than a passive agent challenging his or her fate.' The Indian novelist had to operate in a tradition-bound society7 where neither a man’s profession nor his marriage was his personal affair. His life was mapped out by his family or his community or his caste. In the rigidly hierarchical familial and social structure of nineteenth-century India, individualism was not an easy quality to render in literature. One of the problems of the early novelist was to reconcile two sets of values—one obtained by reading an alien literature and the other available in life. It may be relevant here to quote two passages where two nineteenth-century novelists try to rationalize their predica¬ ments. The first passage is from the introduction to a Marathi novel, Manjugbosha (1868), written by Naro Sadashiv Risbud, who opts out of the realistic mode altogether: Because of our attitude to marriage, and for several other reasons, one finds in the lives of us Hindu s neither interesting vices nor virtues, and this is the difficulty which we find in trying to write

novels. If we write about the things we experience daily, there would be nothing enthralling about them, so that if we set out to write an interesting book we are forced to take up with the marvellous . . .

The second passage is taken from the dedication of O. Chandu Menon’s Malayalam novel, Indulekha (1888), where there is a more direct reference to the essential hurdle—writing in a form that requires individualism as a value and writing about a society that denies it:

As stated at the outset, my object is to write a novel after the English

fashion, and it is evident that no ordinary Malayalie lady can fill the role of the heroine in such a story. My Indulekha is not, therefore, an ordinary Malayalie lady.

This author however goes on to add that if an indulekha ever became possible she would be found among the educated Nair women of Malabar who enjoyed (perhaps because of matrilineal property laws) more freedom than most Indian women. The novel thus projects into the future rather than reflects a society known to the author: Twenty years hence there may be found hundreds of Indulekhas in Malabar who would be able to choose their husbands for pure and sweet love. My narrative of the love and courtship of Madhavan is intended to show to the young ladies of Malabar how happy they can be if they can have the freedom to choose their partners.' Indulekha actually ended up doing a lot more than what the

author naively proposed in his preface and dedication. Starting as a professed adaptation of a

second-rate Victorian novel (Disraeli's Henrietta Temple'), it turned out to be the first authentic novel in Malayalam. This novel is a good example of how, inspite of inhibitions and the perception of one's limitations, the really creative writer transcends his limited model by a firm grasp of his own milieu and time. But the man-woman relationship, one of the staples of the European novel, presented the most persistent obstacle to the Indian writer who lived in a society bound by extremely restrictive conventions of marriage. Where girls were married off by their parents before puberty and marriage was a social institution rather than an act of individual choice, there was very little scope for romantic pre marital love of the kind depicted in the English novels being read by English-educated Indians. Love could be shown in an indigenous setting only in historical romances where the demands of realism were absent. The other alternative was a depiction of illicit love, but this involved the subsidiary problem of juxtaposing individual aspiration and the stability of the social order. In the novels of Bankimchandra Chatterji (1838-94) this conflict between rebellious passion and the accepted social norm sometimes becomes a central concern (for example in Krishnakanter Will and Vis ha Vriksha), but even at the cost of the artistic integrity of the novel Bankim had to accede that the demands of social order were higher. This was consistent with the other effect of English education, namely the desire to reform Hindu society or at least purge it of its excesses. There is otherwise enough evidence of free love between man and woman in ancient as well as in medieval India—as preserved in poetry or carved on stone. A steadfast consciousness of the present is another pre¬ requisite of concrete characterization, because characters in a novel, unlike in myth or romance or epic, exist within a specific time. The awareness of history as an irrevocable process was a relatively recent phenomenon even in the nineteenth-century West. Ancient Greece had developed the spatial sense, and the past in the classical world was of value merely as an

accretion of independent events which were complete in themselves. PostRenaissance Europe began to see an organic quality in the process of history, with one state formed out of another. The development of the European novel coincided with the emergence of this dynamic view of time, and the structure of eighteenth and nineteenth-century European novels was indirectly based on the idea of a linear and sequential progression of events that happened along a temporal axis. This brings us to the question of time, rather of the operation of time within the narrative structure. Mythic time is necessarily different from historic time. While the latter operates in a novel, the narrative structure of conventional kavya works reveals all time as part of a cosmic cycle. Not too much emphasis can however be given to this contrast in a study of the novel in India, because nineteenth-century Indian writers were influenced largely by western concepts. Their conscious models were Scott's and Thackeray's novels rather than Brihatkathaoi Kadambari, Dasakumaracharita or Kathasaritsagara. Yet the unconscious influence of these works, of the puranic tradition of oral narratives and the memory of episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata on which the imagination of most Indian writers was sustained, cannot be ignored altogether. A concept of time that does not put too high a premium on the progress of events or the uniqueness of each moment will in some way affect the novelist's apprehension of reality. It is possible to argue that realism, a characteristic technique of the novel from Defoe to Balzac, reflects a particular world-view at a certain phase in human history. The fidelity to actuality involves a focusing on the immediate, the here and now, on details of the visual world, on specific human action and its verifiable consequences. Indian literature did not have any tradition of this variety of realism because it was based on a rather different view of reality. Even when the nineteenth-century Indian writer started consciously to emulate the western writer, interest in the palpable surface of physical reality was slow to evolve. Descriptions of the sky or

a sunset or a landscape are often found as stylized set pieces in these early novels as well as the elaborate nakha-sikha (literally, ‘from toe nail to the top of the head’) reports of the heroine’s beauty in the Sanskrit kavya convention. But a realistic presentation of actual people or objects, interiors or buildings, was either absent or rare. Without going as far as V. S. Naipaul, who theorizes that Indians are impervious to external details and who cites various examples to show how outer reality is used in Indian writing merely to preserve the continuity of the self, one can suggest that in the Indian literary tradition the perceptible surface of reality never had the same value as in Defoe or George Eliot, Balzac or Tolstoy. It is not surprising therefore that the two eighteenth century novels most popular among the early generation English-educated Indians were Rasselas and The Vicar of Wakefield— both of which emphasized moral qualities rather than narrated amoral adventures in the realistic settings of Defoe and Fielding. Thus the determinants of a literary form can be non-literary. Even religion can influence genre, as Edward Said has pointed out in a different context. Speculating on the absence of novels in the Arabic language until the present century he writes: There was no tradition out of which these modern works developed; basically at some point writers in Arabic became aware of European novels and began to write like them. Obviously, it is not that simple. Nevertheless, it is significant that a desire to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing (which is one motive underlying the novelistic tradition in the West) is inimical to the Islamic world-view. The Prophet is he who has completed a world-view; thus the word heresy in Arabic is synonymous with the verb ‘to innovate’, ‘to begin’.

The situation in India was quite different from the one suggested above, but Said’s observation reinforces what has been argued so far—namely that unexpected extra-literary factors contribute

to the emergence of a literary form or retard its development. Increasing interaction among cultures of the modern world has made it progressively difficult to attempt isolating such factors. Even categorical distinctions between what is Indian and what is western in literature is fraught with danger. All that we can do is note the differences in given conditions, so that in the analysis of actual texts different literary consequences may seem less strange or inexplicable.

Ill While noting that the authentically modern writer in the twentieth century often chooses not to respect the separation between literary genres, Tzvetan Todorov has observed; 'It is because genres exist as an institution that they function as horizons of expectation for readers and as models of writing for authors.' Europe's more stratified nineteenth-century thought is bound to have communicated its respect for genres to contemporary Indians. But were those who wrote our early novels conscious of founding a new genre in Indian literature? Did their readers immediately recognize it as such and adjust their expectations accordingly? Neither the word 'novel' nor any of its Indian equivalents was applied to either Yamuna Paryatan (Marathi; 1857) or Alaler Gbarer Dulal (Bengali; 1858), although in retrospect we can recognize in these works the beginnings of a new literary form. The word upanyas, now current in most north Indian languages as a synonym for 'novel', was first used in 1862 in Bengali by Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay when he named a volume containing two long tales set in the past as Aitihasik Upanyas (Bengali; 1862). The title could be translated as 'Historical Fiction', although the history contained in the tales is not particularly authentic. As for the word 'upanyas', which is of Sanskrit origin—meaning some statement properly presented or arranged in an orderly manner(even today in Telugu the word does not mean 'novel' but refers to a discourse or a speech)—it had never been used before to signify a long prose narrative. So when Bhudeb

Mukhopadhyay employed the word he was obviously trying to coin a term for a new category of story. One wonders whether he was aware of the contemporary importance of his casual coinage—the tales he presented under this label do not appear to have been consciously modelled on European lines—and of its future utility. By the time Bankim began writing his novels in the mid-1860s, the term 'upanyas' was already well established in Bengali and about to be taken over in Hindi as well, as we note from the title Manohar Upanyas of a work of fiction published in 1871. In Marathi on the other hand the term which came to be used for the novel is kadambari, and the novelist is called a kadambari-kar. Such usage obviously pays tribute to Banabhatta's Kadambari and acknowledges it as the first literary work in this genre, an example of a name (such as xerox or frigidaire today) converted into a common noun. The use of the word 'kadambari' in this sense pre-dates the term 'upanyas' because a Marathi dictionary compiled in 1829 under the sponsorship of Montstuart Elphinstone lists 'kadambari' as meaning a fictional narrative in prose. From Marathi the term passed on to Kannada. Urdu resolved the matter differently. When Ratan Nath Sharshar published his Fasana-i-Azad (1868), he claimed that this work was something wholly unprecedented in Urdu fiction and he called it a naval. Since the English word 'novel' for this form implied newness as a feature of the form, the word 'naval' for the Urdu novel—with its approximation in sound as well as sense—was a happy choice. Gujarati extended this choice further by adapting the term naval-katha, which combined the element of newness with a reminder of tradition evoked by the Sanskrit word 'katha' (meaning story). Tamil and Malayalam have borrowed the English term itself. So has Telugu, although early Telugu novels like Narahari Gopalakrishnaiah Setty's Sri Rangaraja Charitram (1872) and Kandukuri Veerasalingam's Rajasekhara Charitram (1878) were known as 'vachana prabandha',. a loose translation of which could be 'prose fiction'. These differences in

terminology do not really matter because whatever term for the novel was adopted in an Indian language, the formal and thematic aspirations of the early Indian novel were the same as those of the English novels read by pioneering Indian novelists. The English-educated generation which came of age in India around I860 was brought up on British Victorian novels of the time and seems to have been influenced by these. Although Lukacs has insisted that 'the primary determinants of such influences are the literary requirements of the recipient country', sometimes the issue was determined by what English novels were actually available in India. The writers most often translated into Indian languages were Wilkie Collins, Disraeli and Reynolds among the Victorians, and Bunyan, Johnson and Goldsmith among the older writers. The popularity of some of these writers in India apparently continued even into the following century. Recounting his Bloomsbury experiences Mulk Raj Anand has recalled Virginia Woolf saying to him that she always thought the only popular writers were Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells, but her husband—who had been a civil servant in Ceylon—said he knew all the while that the really popular writers were W.M. Reynolds and Marie Corelli, 'the low-brow fodder... on which the subalterns chew their cud in cantonments of the empire'. The motivating impulse of the early writers of fiction in India varied greatly. The earliest long prose-narrative in Hindi in the nineteenth century, Rani Ketaki ki Kahani (1801) by Insha Allah Khan, was written as a linguistic experiment. The author wanted to show that a story could be written in a language which was neither Persianized Urdu nor a localized dialect of Hindi. The form was incidental, the language was the challenge. There was no European influence here, nor did the book generate any further experiments to begin a tradition. In 1868 the Gujarati writer Nandshankar Tuljashankar Mehta wrote in the introduction to his historical romance, Karana Gbelo: 'The former education inspector of our State [Surat] Mr Russel has expressed to me his desire to see Gujarati books

written along the lines of English novels and romances. I have written this novel according to that plan.'17 lie was not the only one who followed the initiative provided by a British official. The first Telugu novel was written as a response to Lord Mayo's announcement of a prize to a prose fiction 'depicting the customs and traditions of society'. Many of these early works of fiction owed their origin and survival to official patronage. British officers often helped the authors by prescribing the works as textbooks, thereby ensuring sales, by awarding cash prizes or by arranging for bulk purchase. Pandit Gauri Dutt, the author of DevraniJethani ki Kahani (Hindi; 1870), acknow¬ ledges with gratimde his debt to Mr M. Kempson. the Director of Public Instruction, who bought two hundred copies, and to the Lt. Governor who gave him a prize of Rs 100. British officials also helped by undertaking translations. The same Mr Kempson translated Nazir Ahmad's Urdu moral tale Tabut-un-Nusuh into English as The Repentance of Nusooh in 1884. Nazir Ahmad's earlier novel Mirat-ul-Arus (1869) was translated into English by a retired civil servant, G. E. Ward, as The Bride's Mirror. Indulekha (Malayalam; 1888) was translated into English by John W. F. Dumergue, a civil servant in the Madras Presidency. In some cases the motivating impulse was simply to provide instruction and delight. Nazir Ahmad, in the preface to his first Urdu book, Mirat-ul-Arus, explains that he wrote it to provide his daughters with interesting reading material because they had nothing but sacred texts to read: Purely religious subjects of study are not suited to the capacities of children, and the literature to which my children's attention was restricted had the effect of depressing their spirits, of checking their natural instincts and of blunting their intelligence ... It was then I formed the design of the present tale didactic intentions clearly: 'My object in writing this work of fiction is to supply the want of prose works in Tamil... and also to give a practical illustration of the maxims of morality'. Bankim did not discuss his intentions in the prefatory matter of any of his early

novels. His narrative style and authorial intrusions testify to his having read Scott and Thackeray, but in sonorous passages of nature description and evocations of feminine beauty, conventions of Sanskrit literature are also evident. In almost every major novel of the nineteenth century, behind the obvious European influences can be found the bedrock of a different narrative structure and value systems. Chandu Menon, who proclaimed in the Introduction to Indulekha his desire to write in Malayalam a realistic novel 'in the English style', forgot the intention by the time he finished the story. The concluding lines echo the sentiments with which the oral recital of a purana traditionally ends: 'All the characters mentioned... have reached the summit of human happiness, and now may God bless us and all who read this tale.The last line of this passage reveals the persistence of the pre-novel conventions of narrative in spite of the author's conscious adoption of the European mode and his deliberate debunking of the mythic imagination. On the kaleidoscopic fictional scene in nineteenth-century India it is not easy to impose any pattern. The novel did not develop at the same pace in every language, nor was the influence of English evident to the same degree. Considering the fact that the trading centres at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had an earlier and greater exposure to western ways of life and thought than other parts of India and considering that the three universities in India were established simultaneously in these cities in 1858, at least in Bengali, Marathi and Tamil the development of modern literature should have followed similar lines. But in actual fact the variables were many more than the common factors, and these lay in the religious, cultural and political arenas. While differences in literary trends in different languages are considerable, certain common patterns also become perceptible if we allow for a time lag in the development of these patterns in different regions. There was a sudden spurt of long narrative fiction in most Indian languages in the second half of the nineteenth century, whether these were called upanyas,

kadambari, naval-katha or novel, and at least three dominant strands can be sorted out from the tangled skein. The first strand consists of the novels of purpose which utilized this new literary form for social reform and missionary enterprise. The second is an inclusive category where the apparently opposed tendencies of historical and supernatural fiction merge, the common denominator being the creation of an ethos remote in time. The third strand attempted to render contemporary Indian society realistically in fiction, joining the European novelists 'in that effort, that willed tendency of art to approximate reality. This was perhaps the most important strand and it subsequently came to form the mainstream along which the Indian novel developed in the twentieth century, although the other two streams have never been invisible for too long. These streams are discussed separately in the three subsequent chapters and a few representative texts analysed from each, but in actual fact these often overlapped and merged. In recalling the difficulties faced by nineteenth-century Indian novelists in their attempt to adapt an imported form to suit indigenous requirements, an important point remains to be made: the late emergence of prose literature in almost all the modern Indian languages. Until fairly late in the eighteenth century literature in India was almost synonymous with verse composition. Pramatha Chaudhuri (1868-1948), a Bengali writer with a flair for succinct and witty phrasing, once said that when the British came, rhyme gave way to reason. The development of prose in many regions—at least around Calcutta, Bombay and Madras-happened at the initiative of Christian missionaries who set up printing presses to produce material in regional languages. Before this, verse had reigned supreme for centuries in most Indian compositions, not only in imaginative literature but also in astrological, medical, biographical and philosophical texts. Even until quite late, handbooks on homeopathy, texts of legal procedures and mathematical calculations were, in Bengali, available in verse. Sunitikumar Chatterji regards the year 1800 as a pivotal one as far as

the development of prose writing in most Indian languages is concerned. In Bengali, earlier prose was in the form of letters and documents. Therefore when the first Bengali novels emerged in the 1850s they were written in a medium forged not very long ago. The possibilities of fiction in the new medium were still largely untried. In Marathi there was an earlier tradition of prose writing by the Mahanubhav sect going back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the language in which Marathi novels came to be written in the mid¬ nineteenth century had its beginning only in the same century. The first essays in novel writing in India entailed a two fold adventure: experimenting to create an art form previously not part of the Indian literary heritage, and writing in a medium hitherto largely untested as a mode of literary expression. Compounding all these difficulties was the basic fact that the novel developed in India first in a colonial situation where the absolute superiority of everything published in English was taken for granted. It is perhaps unfortunate that the nineteenthcentury Indian novelist had as his model primarily the British Victorian novel; with hindsight after a century it seems the British model was perhaps the least suitable for the Indian mind in the nineteenth century. The brooding inwardness and philosophical quality of the nineteenth-century Russian novel or the intensely moral preoccupation of the nineteenth-century American writer might have demonstrated to early practitioners of Indian fiction alternative modes of writing novels. A number of creative writers in our own time have remarked how little they have been influenced by English literature and how much by European and American literature, and of late by Latin American literature.23 India’s first generation novelists had hardly any access to Tolstoy, Melville or Flaubert. With total servility they imitated mediocre English novels, often devaluing their own talents in the process. Mention has already been made of O. Chandu Menon trying to adapt a novel (which has almost been forgotten today) by Disraeli and ending up writing a genuine first novel in

Malayalam. Iiarinarain Apte, the first major novelist of Marathi, thought it worth his while to translate a rather trivial novel called The Seamstress by G.W.M. Reynolds. Bengali critics foisted the epithet ‘the Scott of Bengal’ upon Bankim as a supreme honour, while in actual fact Bankim as a novelist, if not as a historical novelist, is more complex and original than Scott. Realism came to be held as the highest mode of perception (see Appendix II) and a good word from the English press the highest conceivable reward. Pearychand Mitra, author of a remarkable early novel in Bengali, cherished ambitions of being published in England but was fortunately dissuaded by his friend E.B. Cowell. Pearychand’s son Chunilal Mitra wrote a satiric sketch along the lines of his father’s Alaler Gharer Dulal and called it Kolikatar Nukochuri (Hide and Seek in Calcutta) (1869), but also felt compelled to call it Mysteries of Calcutta in English on the title page. This consciously echoed Reynolds whose multi-volume Mysteries of London was very popular reading in nineteenth-century India. However, in spite of the limitations of the model, in spite of basic incompatibilities between the English and the Indian temperaments, the novel in India which began under English tutelage soon began to acquire its own distinctive character. Without attempting to arrive at any definition of the Indian novel, it will be our purpose to examine the synthesis of a borrowed literary form and indigenous aesthetic—as well as cultural expectations-in order to determine the extent to which the form has undergone mutation in the process.

The Diaspora in Indian Culture-Amitav Ghosh who is one of the most important Indian authors currently writing in English. The essay you are supposed to read in this unit remains one of his most important contributions to his non-fictional prose writings. In this essay, Ghosh relates to his own experiences as a diasporic Indian writer, his predicaments as a writer in a foreign country and his understanding of his own sense of migrancy. However, in this unit, you

will also find Amitav Ghosh reflecting on the notion of diaspora, on the idea of India and on how a diasporic Indian writer like him are linked with India. **CONTEXT OF THE ESSAY** The Imam and the Indian, in which the essay "The Diaspora in Indian Culture" appears,is a collection of essays on a wide variety of themes and subjects. The piece after which the collection is named was published in 1986. The essays under this collection were published separately in various journals. This book provides an all inclusive impression on the literary preoccupations of Ghosh as a writer in the post colonial situations. But The Imam and the Indian is not a unified work as it consists of essays written over a period of years. As a writer, Amitav Ghosh, in his fiction as well as in his non-fiction is engaged in the political and cultural wars that shape a postcolonial and globalised world. Like in his fictional works, in this book too, Ghosh is concerned with exploring the connections between the past and the present, between historically important events and memories, between people, cultures and countries sharing a common past. It is in the context of his discussion cosmopolitanism, migration and diaspora holds tremendous significance. Written in 1900 as part of a lecture this essay "The Diaspora in Indian Culture" is a captivating and illuminating survey of the meaning of Indian diaspora and how they are innately connected with the idea of India irrespective of the country in which they are living now. This essay can also be easily contextualised in a recent discussion in Indian Writing in English of which Amitav Ghosh is also a part—that the best writing of Indian English literature is coming out of the diasporic Indian authors. Once you finish reading the essay you should find that diasporic writers from India (like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh himself) have helped in spreading the idea of India throughout the whole world.

EXPLANATION OF THE ESSAY

Amitav Ghosh begins the essay by acknowledging the fact that the modern Indian diaspora– which means the huge migration from the Indian subcontinent to other countries basically in the West in the mid nineteenth century—now represents a powerful force in world culture. But this culture Diaspora: it means the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland. Because the literary cultures started by migrant writers like Naipaul, Rushdie, Ramanujan has also become an important socio-political and literary force within India. But it is also true that the Indian State and the Indian political class have not favoured books like Area of Darkness by Naipaul and Satanic Verses by Rushdie. But Ghosh warns that the Indian State cannot repress the richness of ideas inherent in these books. However, he admits that of late even the Indian State has shown some sensitivity towards the writings of the Indian diaspora. Then Ghosh refers to the very phenomenon called 'colonial mentality' of the people in India. He argues that the political class in India is much more sensitive to the writing coming out of England and not to that coming out of New York. Ghosh perceives that there is an over flooding of indobabbles in the form of travel writing, journalism, etc. on India. Along with this many University departments in the Western world are devoted to the study of India. Some of these writings are even critical of the Indian state. This indirectly has also helped in shunning the 'colonial mentality' of liking anything English. Ghosh asserts that the nature of India's cultural relationship with her 'diaspora' has helped in reconsidering the role played by the Indian State in reserving 'some' respect towards the diasporic Indian writing. Ghosh however argues that the relationship between modern India and its diasporic population is not an institutional relationship which is mainly because of the fact that both share a common history of subjection to the British empire. The institutional relationship between them, if they exist at all, are all mediated through Britain. But the important point is that India's relationship with its diaspora is

a very direct relationship even though the whole history is based on different types of mediations. He further states that the relationship between India and its diaspora is very peculiar. We take for granted that there is a close relationship between India and the 'Indians.' But Ghosh considers it to be a 'historical anomaly'. As we have to recognise that such links are not those of language, religion, politics or economics. In a sense, these are the links of culture and they live within the imagination. On the other hand, the 'metaphor of space' is another way to understand this link. Anthropologists and Indologists have shown that a symbolic special structure of India is infinitely reproducible. It can be encapsulated in a microcosm, as in case of Banaras, and can be exported wholesale to be produced in other foreign countries. Then Ghosh makes some observations on the notion of India. Unlike an Englishman who leaves England and feels separated from his 'homeland' in the new country, an Indian always carries his 'India' along with him. We can assume that Ghosh is only telling his readers about his own experiences of leaving India for United States. He writes that the place called India becomes an empty space, mapped purely by words. So the spaces of India travel with the migrant and India too has no such vocabulary for separating the migrant from India. It is therefore not a coincidence that many diasporic Indian writers often choose to write either about India or about Indian communities abroad. Then he argues that "it is impossible to be imperfectly India… Were it possible to be imperfectly Indian, everybody in India would be. This is not merely because India has failed to develop a national culture. It is not a lack; it is in itself the form of Indian culture." Ghosh then reflects on the nature of Indian culture by saying that it "seems to be constructed around the proliferation of differences." And to be "different in a world of differences is irrevocably to belong." Thus, Ghosh says, "any body any where who has even the most tenuous links with India is Indian; potentially a player within the culture." Another interesting feature of the cultural

representation of the space called India is that it has been constituted both by the notion of periphery and center. And Ghosh ends the essay by opining that the notion of periphery has now expanded to include the diaspora too. This is why perhaps the opinions of the diaspora are very much important to India as it works as a mirror in which modern India seeks to know itself. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS Q 1: Say True or False a. Ghosh in this essay refers to the very phenomenon called 'colonial mentality.' T/F b. Ghosh does not make any observation on the notion of India in this essay.

MAJOR THEMES

The various themes which you should find interesting to read have been discussed below:

Indian Diaspora as an Important Literary Force Published in 1990, Ghosh in this essay mainly writes that the modern Indian diaspora is emerging or has already emerged as an important force in world literature which is also increasingly becoming a factor within the culture of the Indian subcontinent. Modern Indian diasporic writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and A. K. Ramanujan have not only given visibility to the body of writing called Indian English Literature but have also asserted the fact that the best writings in Indian English writing are being provided by the diasporic Indian writers only. This is one of the important implicit comments made by Amitav Ghosh in this essay you are reading.

Ghosh's Critique of the Indian State

Ghosh in this essay marvels at the Indian State's sensitivity to the writing of the diaspora and provocatively asserts that "the links between India and her diaspora are lived within the imagination". This also means that Ghosh is not very happy with the role of the migrant intellectual in imagining a nation. On the one hand, "the institutional relationships between

modern India and its diasporic population are mediated through Britain, on the other hand the opinion of the diaspora are so significant to India that it has become the mirror in which modern India seeks to know itself". This helps us in understanding the fact that Ghosh is very much rooted in the idea of India both as a cultural concept and as a modern political state.

Idea of Travel

Himself being a world famous travel writer of the contemporary world, Ghosh in this essay, implicitly refers to his own understanding of travelling which, according to him, has been the cause of migrancy or vice versa. Travel as well as displacement are perhaps the most central issues addressed in both fictional and nonfictional writings by Ghosh. Thus, the departures and arrivals of the characters should necessarily influence the perceptions of the characters regarding their identity and history in most of Ghosh's fictions. Incidentally, the far-east like Cambodia and Burma, to which Ghosh refers in this essay, have always been an obsession with Ghosh because of some personal reference points.

Non Porous Nature of Borders

After reading the text of the essay, you must have realised that central to Ghosh's non-fictional works is the idea that the 'non porous nature of modern borders' which is brought to the forefront when contrasted with the inclusiveness of older communities where no concept of nationality with passports and visas existed. In this essay Ghosh writes that "the links between India and her diaspora are lived within their imagination… the specialists of the imagination—writer— play so important a part within it." They write about their own India from their unique perspective from the outside expressing most aptly the colonial experience. Ghosh feels that it is impossible to be imperfectly Indian and paradoxically defines that the 'perfect' Indian is one

who expresses and reflects the living signs of having been colonised, that unique hybrid that is neither Indian nor British but a product of cultural clash one who is not purely Indian. So, the non porous nature of borders has resulted in ambivalence among the diasporic writers from India.

Nature of Indian Culture

The Bengali bhadralok family, of which Amitav Ghosh is a member, considered knowledge and culture as representing access to the larger world symbolised by a cosmopolitan attitude that was brought to life Himself being a part of that culture, Ghosh in this essay argues if there is any one pattern in Indian culture in the broadest sense it is simply that the culture seems to be constructed around the proliferation of difference. Thus, anybody anywhere who has even the most tenuous links with India is Indian; potentially a player within a culture. The mother country simply does not have the cultural means to cut them off. By saying so, Ghosh not only explores the various layers of Indian cultural forms but also posits a vehement critique of the processes of inclusion and exclusion into what we call Indian culture today.

Notion of Indianness

Reading an essay like this, you should find that a diasporic Indian writer writes about India from a unique perspective, expressing most aptly the colonial experience. When Ghosh articulates that it is impossible to be ‘imperfectly Indian’, paradoxically he also defines the ‘perfect’ Indian as one who expresses and reflects the experiences of colonialism, that unique ‘hybrid’ class of people that is neither Indian nor British but a product of cultural clash, one who is not purely Indian. Thus, locating Indianness in Ghosh’s state of mind also puts light on two other concerns identifiable in his discussion of the interdisciplinary nature of any knowledge system and the

present status of the colonised communities, as they position themselves in various parts of the world.

Conclusion

While you have finished reading the essay “The Diaspora in Indian Culture” you have found that Amitav Ghosh is one of the most important Indian authors currently writing in English. You have realised that the essay you have just finished remains one of his most important non-fictional writings. While narrating about the diasporic Indian writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and others, Ghosh actually relates to his own experiences as a diasporic Indian writer and his predicaments as a writer in a foreign country to which he has migrated. However, in this unit, you have also found Amitav Ghosh reflecting on the notion of diaspora, on the idea of India and on how a diasporic Indian writer like him are linked with India. After going through the different themes you have realised how rooted Amitav Ghosh is in the idea of India and Indian Culture. Moreover, consistant travel has also helped him see the meaninglessness of national borders to be understood in terms of passports and visas. Finally, you find Ghosh writing in style which, although scholastic, also appeals to the common readers a lot.

The Blind Dog - R.K. Narayan

In The Blind Dog by R.K. Narayan we have the theme of struggle, connection, greed, freedom, control and loyalty. Taken from his Malgudi Days collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Narayan may be exploring the theme of struggle. Both the blind man and Tiger have difficulties in their everyday lives. Each day the blind man struggles to get enough money to live on while Tiger struggles with getting food and ends up getting into fights with other dogs just in order to

survive. It is as though both the blind man and Tiger have something in common or something that connects both of them. It is also interesting that at first the blind man is appreciate of Tiger's company and his diligence when it comes to people trying to steal from him. However as time passes the reader soon realises that the blind man is a tyrant when it comes to how he treats Tiger. Tiger for the blind man is not a pet or friend or a helping hand rather he is a simply a work dog that is there to serve the blind man. Any type of life that Tiger had previously known is soon forgotten due to the tyranny of the blind man. If anything Tiger is there to serve the blind man just as a servant would serve their master.

It is also noticeable that the blind man starts to become greedy. He wishes to increase his daily income so he works Tiger more and more. He also starts to lend other people money while at the same time charging them interest. While some may pity the blind man because of the very fact he is blind others might suggest that the blind man is becoming greedy and taking advantage of Tiger's good-nature. The blind man knows he will make more money by walking along the streets with Tiger leading the way and there is a sense that the main priority for the blind man is no longer just survival but he is beginning to be driven by a desire for more money. Rather than treating Tiger with kindness and being grateful that Tiger is helping him. The blind man often beats Tiger which may suggest that the blind man is being cruel.

It may also be important that others notice how the blind man is treating Tiger as by having others notice what is happening Narayan may be using their voices as a consensus to stop what is happening Tiger. The cutting of the ribbon by the ribbon vendor may also be important as symbolically this action acts as a path to freedom for Tiger. He is able to live his life as he had previously lived it. Running free. It is also noticeable after Tiger has been set free how reliant the blind man was on Tiger. He is no longer able to walk along the streets and his income drops

severely. Something which causes great anguish to the blind man. At no stage in the story does the reader suspect that the blind man is repentant about his treatment of Tiger. If anything he wants to beat Tiger should he end up finding him. Which again suggests a servant and master relationship between Tiger and the blind man. Rather than a common bond of friendship between the two. If anything the relationship between Tiger and the blind man is one sided. In favour of the blind man. Yet the blind man never realises that he needs Tiger more than Tiger needs him.

The end of the story is also interesting as Narayan appears to be exploring the theme of loyalty. By returning to the blind man Tiger is showing his loyalty. Even though it is clear to the reader that nothing will change between Tiger and the blind man. Something that is noticeable by the fact that the blind man now has bought a chain to ensure that Tiger does not run away again. There is a sense that the blind man is in complete control of Tiger again. As to why Tiger has returned is difficult to say when as readers we are aware of how badly he has been treated by the blind man. However it is possible that Narayan is suggesting that just as the blind man is blind so too is Tiger's loyalty. He is willing to forgive the blind man's actions towards him even though he has been unfairly treated. It is also possible that Tiger has sympathy for the blind man. Even though he knows he can be cruel to him. However what is clear at the end of the story is that Tiger's freedom has been lost again. He is to spend his days acting as a servant to an ungrateful master. Which suggests symbolically that Tiger may be as blind as the blind man. His loyalty will only end up killing him.

The Window - Ruskin Bond

The window is a screen and the world outside is a picture. This statement briefly sums up the theme of the short story 'The Window' by Ruskin Bond. The narrator takes a room on the roof of a long building. There are no other rooms on the roof; his room is the lone one. The beautiful thing about the room is its window. From the window, the narrator sees the world that lies out and far. He watches sunrise from there, and on the street down he observes people shuttling up and down, like passers-by, tongawallah, cycle-rickshaws, men, and children and so on. Just opposite the window, there is a huge banyan tree on which crows, mynahs, squirrels and other interesting insects live and fidget with each other.

After some days, an eleven-year-old girl called Koki comes to this place, possibly to while away the summer in the hill station. The narrator watches her from the window and says that there is magic in his room. She comes and then he made her watch the world of colors through the window. They become good friends, and she begins coming there every day. From there, they see the fight of birds, like between crow and mynah, children dancing in the rain, women collecting clothes from the line, etc. He says that from the window one can have interest in the world without getting involved. Also, a creep of bougainvillea is passing through the window. To this, Koki says that we cannot close the window as it will affect the growth of the plant. The narrator agrees with her and decides not to shut the window. When summer is over and Koki leaves for her hometown, the narrator, feeling the pain of separation, shuts the window by saying that it will be opened when Koki and summer come again.

The story is a short one, but it instills a powerful message that in life separation is a depressing element, people alter their course of action when confronted with it.

Critical Analysis

In The Window by Ruskin Bond we have the theme of friendship, connection, change, escape and isolation. Taken from his Complete Short Stories collection the story is narrated in the first person by an unnamed male narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Bond may be exploring the theme of connection. Both Koki and the narrator strike up a close friendship and spend many nights looking through the window of the narrator's room. The window itself may be important as Bond may be symbolically using it to suggest the idea of escape. The world that Koki and the narrator see from the window is far different from the environment that both find themselves in. The window also appears to be the centre point of Koki and the narrator's friendship. Though their friendship only lasts a few months they still nonetheless spend most of their time together. Something that is clearer when Koki decides to decorate the roof. This action may be important as it could suggest that Koki dislikes everything she sees in the environment around her. She wants to change it in order to feel better about herself.

Overall the window and its significant cannot be underestimated. Not only does it bring Koki and the narrator closer together but it also helps alleviate any anxiety that both character have when it comes to the world that surrounds them. Though Bond does not give the reader a direct reason as to why Koki or the narrator might want to escape. It is possible that they have outgrown their environment and what is on offer to them. Hence wanting to changes things on the roof. Koki in particularly in a young girl and she may be of the age in whereby she is dissatisfied with life and sees change as being a way to improve her life. The narrator on the other and might already be satisfied with life. For him he has the best room on the roof because he has the window. He has a world in which he can escape into at any time feels the need to. The fact that Koki prefers the window open may also be important as it is as though she manages or is able to connect herself easier to the world she sees.

It might also be a case that Bond is highlighting the importance of a connection between two people. Both Koki and the narrator have one thing in common which keeps them connected. The Window. The struggles that they might feel in life lessen while they stand by the window and look out across the city. It is as though they have their own private cinema in whereby they are able to escape the mundane realities of lie. Though there is no romantic relationship between Koki and the narrator they still share precious moments together in whereby they not only escape from life but they can dream of better things. There is also sense of simplicity in both characters' lives. Which may also be important as neither character may be looking for very much in live. Simple things like growing plants on the roof to help both Koki and the narrator to feel more connected to their environment. It is as though they want the outside world that they see through the window to be nearer them. So near that the reality may be that Koki and the narrator might wish to be able to touch the world around them. Which may leave the reader suspecting that Bond is attempting to highlight the power of nature.

The end of the story is also interesting as it is tinged in sadness. Koki's stay is over and she won't be back for a year leaving the reader to suspect that the narrator knows that he will be lonely not having anyone to share his room or window with. It is also interesting that the narrator closes the window after Koki leaves. Symbolically this may be important as the narrator may be isolating himself from the word. The trigger being that fact that Koki has left. So has Koki's influence on the narrator. Not only was Koki the narrator's friend but she brought joy to him. Koki was the only one allowed into the narrator's room and just as the narrator was excited by the world he could see through his window. So too was Koki. Now that the narrator has nobody to share the window with it no longer has the small pull on him that it previously had. Something that is clearer to the reader by way of the fact that the narrator will not open the woman again till

the spring and when he sees Koki. It is as though the narrator has taken Koki's departure personally. Just as personally as someone who might lose a friend may do. The the narrator may feel as though he has the world at his feet. However more importantly he wants to share this world with someone else.

A Temporary Matter

"A Temporary Matter" is a short story by Jhumpa Lahiri. Originally published in the *New Yorker*'s April 1998 issue, it is the first story of Lahiri's 1999 debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies.* The collection went on to win the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, a rare achievement for a short story collection.The story takes place over the span of five days in the suburban home of a married couple in Boston. Over the week, the couple, Shoba and Shukumar, must cope with a one-hour power outage each evening. This slight interruption in their daily routines works to bring their suffering over their stillborn child to the surface, the grief and alienation that the two have suffered over the last six months building to a climax.Thirty-three-year-old Shoba arrives home at the end of her workday. Her husband, Shukumar, is cooking dinner. Shoba reads him a notice from the electric company stating that their electricity will be turned off every day from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. for five consecutive days so that a line can be repaired. Although the notice seems to have been mailed, the date shown for the first evening of the outage is today's date, March 19.Six months earlier, in September, Shoba experienced fetal death three weeks before the due date of their first child. At Shoba's insistence, Shukumar had gone to a conference in Baltimore. Now, Shukumar often thinks back to the last time he saw his wife pregnant before leaving for the conference, and how he imagined driving in a station wagon with his little family.

Shoba leaves early each morning for her proofreading job in the city. After she finishes work, she goes to the gym. Shukumar, on the other hand, spends half the day in bed, sometimes not leaving the house for days on end. In addition to this, Shoba and Shukumar have started to eat dinner separately, she sitting in front of the TV and him at his computer. The power outage forces them to eat together by candlelight. Shoba reminisces about the power outages in India, and how whenever they occurred at her grandmother's house, everyone in the family had to tell a joke or a story. She suggests that she and Shukumar tell each other something they have never revealed before. Shoba begins by telling Shukumar that early in their relationship she peeked at his address book to see if she was in it. Then Shukumar reveals that on their first date he was so nervous and distracted that he forgot to tip the waiter. He returned to the restaurant the next day and left money for him.The following evening, Shoba arrives home earlier than usual. Once again, they eat dinner by candlelight. Shukumar knows that Soba will suggest that they play the game again, and he wonders what she will reveal to him this time, thinking of several terrible secrets she might come out with.

In reality, Shoba tells Shukumar that she once lied and told him she had to work late when actually she went out with a friend. Shukumar tells her that he cheated on an exam many years earlier. He explains that his father had died a few months before and that he was unprepared for the exam. Shukumar spends the entire next day thinking about what he will tell Shoba. That evening, he tells her that he returned a sweater she gave him as an anniversary gift and used the money to get drunk in the middle of the day. Shoba tells Shukumar that at a social gathering with his superiors from the university, she purposely did not tell him that he had a bit of food

on his chin as he chatted with the department chairman.On the fourth night, Shoba tells Shukumar that she is not a fan of his only published poem. Shukumar tells his wife that he once carried with him the picture of a woman that he cut out of a magazine because he was attracted to her. After he reveals this, the couple goes upstairs and makes love.The next day, Shukumar finds a notice in the mailbox that says that their power will be restored early. He feels disappointed. Shoba says they can still eat by candlelight. She says she has something important to tell him. Shukumar's heart is pounding in anticipation. Finally, his wife reveals that she has signed the lease on an apartment for herself. Shukumar realizes that this revelation was planned from the moment Shoba suggested the game. Shukumar tells Shoba that the baby was a boy and goes on to describe his appearance in detail, including that the baby's hands were closed into fists the way Shoba's are when she sleeps. The two sit at the table together, each of them crying because of what the other has revealed.

Hayavadana -Girish Karnad

Hayavadana Summary

Hayavadana is a play by Indian writer Girish Karnad. The play tells the story of two friends who are in love with the same woman and who accidentally swap heads. A comedy ending in tragedy, the narrative also tells the story of a man with a horse's head who seeks to become human. The play was first published in 1971.The play begins with a worship service, or puja, to the God Ganesha in hopes that the play will go well. The "Bhagavata," or worshipper of Ganesha, introduces the characters. Two friends, Devadatta and Kapila, are the major figures in the play. The first is a poet, and the second is the son of an iron-smith. Devadatta is known for his

sensitivity, while Kapila is known for his physical strength. As the Bhagavata is describing the men, he's interrupted by a horrified actor who runs onstage, claiming to have seen a strange creature. The creature, Hayavadana, comes onto the scene. Hayavadana has the body of a man and the head of a horse, which proves to be real when the Bhagavata tries to pry the horse's head from the human body. Hayavadana explains that his mother, a princess, fell in love with a horse. She lived with him for 15 years until her love broke his curse, and he returned to his true form as a celestial being. She decided not to accompany the being back to heaven, and he cursed her, turning her into a horse. She later gave birth to Hayavadana.

The Bhagavata tells Hayavadana to go to the temple of Kali and ask to become human. Hayavadana leaves. The story begins as Devadatta enters the scene. He asks his friend Kapila to find out the name and address of the woman that he loves. He tells him that he loves her so much that he would sacrifice his head and his arms to have her. Kapila finds the woman's home and knocks. As soon as he sees Padmini, he too falls in love with her. He considers that the clever Padmini would be better off with a strong man like him as opposed to the soft poet Devadatta. Still, he tells Padmini about his friend and how Devadatta wishes to marry her. Devadatta and Padmini marry, and Padmini is pregnant with their son six months later. The two are supposed to go on a trip to Ujjain with their friend, Kapila, but Devadatta is hesitant as he believes that Padmini is attracted to his friend. Because of Devadatta's jealousy, Padmini decides to cancel the trip but changes her mind when Kapila arrives. Along the way, Padmini compliments Kapila and seems to be admiring his muscular body. The party passes a temple and Devadatta decides to make good on the promise he made before that he would give up an arm and his head to have Padmini. He leaves the pair and cuts off his head. Kapila finds Devadatta and decides to cut off his head as well.

Padmini finds her husband and his friend headless and is just about to kill herself when the goddess Kali intercedes. She tells Padmini to replace the men's heads, and she will heal them. Padmini rushes to follow the Goddess' instructions, but as the men are revived, she finds that she's mixed up the heads and placed them on the wrong bodies. On returning home, the two men argue over which is Padmini's husband. Kapila's head states that his body created the child Padmini carries and accepted her hand in marriage. Devadatta's head argues that the head is in charge of the body. Padmini chooses Devadatta's head. Soon after, Devadatta goes to the fair in Ujjain and purchases two dolls in preparation for his child. He tells Padmini about a man that he wrestled with using Kapila's body and how he won. Padmini later gives birth to her child.

The child's dolls narrate some of the action in the household. Padmini is pleased with Devadatta's new body until it begins to look more and more like his old one. She picks fights with Devadatta, and the dolls reveal that she secretly dreams of Kapila. On a trip to the forest with her son, Padmini comes upon Kapila living in the woods. Just as Devadatta's body softened, Kapila has regained his former strength. Padmini tells Kapila that her son is also Kapila's son since her husband has his body. She points out that her son has a mole in the same place that Kapila does. Padmini stays in the woods with him for several days.

Devadatta goes looking for Padmini and finds her with Kapila. The two men fight, and both die. Padmini instructs Bhagavata to take her son to hunters and tell them he's Kapila's son. After five years, take him to Devadatta's father and say to him that he's Devadatta's son. She tells him she plans to commit Sati, lying on her husband's funeral pyre. Hayavadana comes onto the scene,

now a horse. Padmini's son is also there, and the Bhagavata says that the boy doesn't speak or laugh. When Hayavadana asked Kali to make him whole, she made him all horse instead of all human. The story makes the boy laugh, and he sings with Hayavadana, who wishes to have a horse's voice. Hayavadana cries, and the boy tells him to keep laughing. Eventually, Hayavadana's laugh sounds like a horse's neigh. The play ends with a celebration to Ganesha for the success of the play. Karnad based the play on a novella by Thomas Mann called The Transposed Heads and on a Sanskrit text from the 11th-century called Kathasaritsagara. It uses a traditional Indian theatre form called "Yakshagana," meaning that it's music, costumes, dances, and designs are all styled in a particular way.

Hayavadana Critical Analysis

Girish Karnad is a gifted writer, actor and director of films. He is the well-known author of the Kannada plays entitled Tughlaq and Yayati. Now he has translated into English his own work Hayavadana. It is mainly based on the famous Katha Sarit Sagara tale that Thomas Mann made use of, for his short but great novel The Transposed Heads. In all his three plays-whether the theme is historical or mythical or legendary- Karnad’s approach is modern. He wonderfully brings into play the conventions and motifs of folk-art like masks and curtains in order to project a world of intensities, uncertainties and unpredictable denouements.

Devadatta and Kapila are close friends. The former is an intellectual companion, while the latter is of a sensual type. Devedatta is already married to a lady named Padmini. But later Kapila falls in love with her. The two friends, so as to get over the situation, decide to kill themselves. They perform the act. Padmini transposes the heads, while rejoining the severed limbs. It naturally results in confusion of identities and several complications arise from it. It drives them to fight a duel and they kill themselves again. Then Padmini ascends their funeral pyre and performs Sati

(Dying along with the husband). It is a highly tantalizing story, even without the psychological dimension and Karnad very ably makes the most of it. Hayavadana is one of Karnad's most remarkable works. The plot of Hayavadana comes from 'Kantha Sarit Sagara' an ancient compilation of stories in Sanskrit. The central event in the play- the story of Devadatta and Kapila is based on the tale from the "Betal Panchabinsati." But he has borrowed it through Thomas Mann's retelling of the story in 'The Transposed Heads.'

The Sanskrit tale told by a ghost to an adventurous king gains a further mock-heroic dimension in Mann's version. The original story poses a moral problem, whereas Mann uses it to ridicule the mechanical notion of life which differentiates between body and soul. He ridicules the philosophy which holds the head superior to the body.The human body, Mann argues is a device for the completion of human destiny. Even the transposition of heads did not literate the protagonists from the physiological limits imposed by nature. Karnad's poses a different problem, that of human identity in world of tangled relationships. When the play opens, Devadatta and Kapila are the closer of friend's one mind, one heart as Bhagavata describes them. Devadatta is a man of intellect, Kapila a man of the body. Their relations get complicated when Devadatta marries Padmini. Kapila falls in love with Padmini and she too starts drifting towards him. The friends kill themselves in a scene, hilariously comic, but at the same time, full of dramatic connotations Padmini transposes their heads, giving Devadatta Kapila's body and Kapila Devadatta's. As a result Padmini gets the desired 'Man.' Kali understood each individuals moral fibre and was indifferent than the usual stereotypical portrayal of God and Goddesses.

The result is a confusion of identities which reveals the ambiguous nature of human personality. Initially Devadattaactually the head of Devadatta on kapila's body-behaves differently from what he was before. But slowly he changes to his former self. So does Kapila, faster than Devadatta.

But there is a difference. Devadatta stops reading texts, does not write poetry, while Kapila is haunted by the memories in Devadatta's body. Padmini, after the exchange of heads, had felt that she had the best of both the man, gets slowly disappointed of the three, only she has the capacity for complete experience. She understands, but cannot control the circumstances in which she is placed. Her situation is beautifully summed up by the image of river and the scare-crow in the choric songs.

The sword fight that leaves both the friends dead brings to baffling story to end. The death of three protagonists was not portrayed tragically… the death only to emphasise the logic behind absurdity of the situation. The sub-plot of Hayavadana— the horse-man, deepens the significance of the main theme of incompleteness, by looking at it from different perspective. The horseman's search for completeness ends comically with his becoming a complete horse. The animal body triumphs over what is considered the best in man, the 'Utta Maga', the human head's probably to make a point, Karnad names the play 'HAYAVADANA' human's search for completeness.

Brief Candle- Mahesh Dattani

Mahesh Dattani's play Brief Candle: A Dance between Love and Death has a clear Shakespearean echo that is hard to miss. The title alludes to Macbeth's famous soliloquy beginning with "tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow" uttered immediately after the death of Lady Macbeth. Macbeth looks back at the life he has lived, burdens of sin, guilt, disappointment and ingratitude he has carried since the murder of Duncan and comes up with his philosophical assessment of life. He realises the nothingness of life, absurdity of meaningless pursuits for

fulfilment and says, Out, out, brief candle! Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more. It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.The title "Brief Candle" encapsulates the theme of the play. The play deals with the life of cancer patients and is set in a hospital where cancer patients are about to stage a comic play to raise fund for their hospice. The play-within-the-play is a farce containing explicit sexual overtones, jokes and funny dialogues. This farcical play-within-the-play heightens the tragedy as the audience knows that the actors enacting the play are cancer patients. Very soon their 'candle' of life will be extinguished. In using the play-within-the-play technique, Mahesh Dattani is also following a Shakespearean tradition. The Bard of Avon used this technique to perfection in many plays such as The Taming of the Shrew, Love's Labour Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet. Use of comic relief containing lewd, sexually explicit dialogues are present in the Drunken Porter Scene (Act II, scene iii) of Macbeth as well and the Fool in King Lear uses humour to make King Lear aware of his folly. In his seminal essay titled Tradition and Individual Talent T. S. Eliot wrote, "Tradition involves… the historical sense…and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence". Mahesh Dattani makes use of tradition in the Eliotesque sense of the term and uses writes a play that is avant-grade, modern and disturbing. Brief Candle was first performed on 5 July 2009 at Sophia Bhabha Hall, Mumbai by Prime Time Theatre Company. The play was produced and directed by Lillete Dubey. Theatre, for Mahesh Dattani, is not just a medium of entertainment. He acknowledges the close bond that exists between theatre and life. In the Introductory note on Brief Candle titled "A Note on the Play" Mahesh Dattani mentions that he is often asked by people, critics and interviewers the reason behind writing disturbing and serious plays. In answer to this oft asked question Dattani provides a fitting reply. He says, "The

question implies that the theatre is meant for lighter fare and nobody wants to go to the theatre to experience anything ‘heavy’ because life is heavy already. So in response to that question I can only ask another-‘why do we lead such heavy lives?’. Mahesh Dattani uses cancer both in the literal and metaphorical sense. Cancer not only refers to the deadly disease that mutilates the human body and often leads to slow, agonising death but is also used as a metaphor for ugliness, abnormality and perversion of thought. The mask called ‘Face of Cancer’ is present on stage since the beginning of the play to make the audience aware of this truth of life. The ‘Face of Cancer’ is an “androgynous face that is melting. A face that is ravaged by the effects of chemotherapy and is now ready to give up the struggle” . It is more than a stage prop. The use of an “androgynous”, diseased face is highly significant. In the play, both men and women admitted to the hospital are patients of cancer. The use of androgynous face is further symbolic as Shanti and Amarinder suffer from breast cancer and prostate cancer respectively. The mask may also symbolise the masked existence of modern men and women in general and more particularly the mask of normalcy and professionalism that Deepika uses to shove aside her feelings for Vikas. The present scholar is reminded of the second Prelude by T. S. Eliot: With the other masquarades That time resumes One thinks of all the hands That are raising dingy shades In a thousand furnished rooms Amarinder recounts his story. It was during his first stay in the hospital that he discovered that he is suffering from prostate cancer. The disease had attacked his manhood. His sexuality was under threat and it made him feel afraid. The fear of losing his manhood is no less disturbing, psychologically shattering than the fear of approaching death: AMARINDER....I don’t know how I allowed it. They never told me they will be drilling inside my body. At my core. What made me a man? Climbing a mountain, playing a game of hockey, knowing I could satisfy a woman in bed. All that was under attack with a group of needles probing at my prostate,

through the wall of my rectum. Faced with this threat to his manhood, he refused to perform the surgery choosing to eventually die because of the deadly disease. He preferred death over loss of masculinity. Shanti, on the other hand, performed the breast removal surgery and is living with the trauma of losing her left breast, a symbol of her beauty and feminine sexuality. She may come across as more courageous when compared to Amarinder but she has her own mental demons that she must fight every single day in order to survive with her ugly, deformed body. In India, female sexuality is still a taboo topic. Young girls are taught to shy away from it. They are traditionally trained to pay little attention to the curves and contours of their body. Shanti too reveals that she was too ashamed to look at her own breasts in the mirror. "I hadn't seen my own breast in the mirror. In the bathroom, I always took off my blouse when I was away from the mirror. As a young bride, she was quite uncomfortable with the intimate caresses of her husband. Shame, discomfort made her move away from his embrace. Then suddenly she was confronted with blood stains on her undergarment. She recounts her horrifying story: Life as a 'Brief Candle' blown out by Death: A Critical Analysis of Mahesh Dattani's Brief Candle SHANTI. I lay exposed to the technicians, my breast pushed against the X-ray plate. One of them marked my lumps, treating my breast as if it were already a piece of dead flesh...Their job was to invade my body and take out tumours, and they did. But they grew and came back till they took it all out. A part of me that I had barely felt. That I had never seen fully myself. Gone. Shanti never loved her own body. And now when she wants to embrace her sexuality, love the curves of her body she has to accept the reality of living with ugliness and deformity. Vikas, an AIDS patient who dies of cancer during the course of the play pin points the horror of living with one's sexuality under threat. It is a fear that is shattering, traumatising both for men and women. And living in constant fear of losing one's sexuality is no less damaging to the body, mind and soul

than encountering the fear of death: VIKAS. It is the fear of losing something that you have and did not even think of the possibility of not having. But now when there is a real danger of losing it, you begin to understand its true worth. And then you are afraid you will have to live without it for the rest of your living moments Thus, death, fear of death coupled with the fear of loss of normalcy, beauty and sexuality envelops the play. The subtitle "A Dance between Love and Death" further heightens the atmosphere of tension as life is defined in terms of love and death. Vikas wants to spread the message of love, fulfilment, vitality and laughter. He is the ex-lover of Deepika, the doctor of the hospice and had spent his last days in the hospice. He is also the playwright who pens the play-within-the-play titled "Hotel Staylonger". The title is very symbolic as all the patients admitted to the hospice desire to stay alive for long but in reality their lives are cut short by the deadly disease. Vikas wrote a comedy as in comedies, "people don't die" Faced with death, Vikas wanted the inmates of the hospice to forget their fear of death for few hours and live life to the fullest. As a playwright, he makes wonderful casting choices. In reality, Deepika is the doctor in charge of the hospital and Vikas, in his play-within-the-play, makes her the hotel manager who flirts with Mr Kulkarni played by Mahesh. Mahesh was secretly in love with Deepika but could never express his feelings for her as his social status as the ward boy always came as barrier before his emotions. Vikas allows Mahesh to live his dreams although in few fleeting moments of performance. Casting Shanti as Miss Unnikrishnan, a symbol of beauty and object of desire for Mr Malhotra, played by Amarinder, suits both of them as in reality they are pained by their loss of sexuality. Thus, unlike the real world where death is a constant presence Vikas weaves a world full of laughter, love and sensuality. But, there are fissures in the script through which reality seeps in. Amol's credit card limit is about to end in the play. In reality, he has no money to fund his treatment and Shanti's pleasure trip to her

world of fantasy and desire abruptly comes to an end during one of the rehearsals as her towel unintentionally slips exposing her hollowness and bodily deformity. Amarinder recoils in horror and Shanti is left in tears of shame, loss and disappointment. Life has failed to keep its promise and hope has turned into a “foul, deceitful thing” (phrase taken from speech of the Second Chorus in Jean Anouilh’s Antigone). Repeated references to arrival and departure also remind the audience of man’s journey from dust to dust . Music and dance play a very important role in Mahesh Dattani’s plays. It is not just a tool used enhance the mood of the play but has direct thematic links with the text and performance. In Bravely Fought the Queen, the thumri creates an atmosphere of love and romance which is in direct contrast with the lived realities of the two sisters Dolly and Alka. In Brief Candle, the chanting of the Maha Mrityunjaya mantra to keep off death, reference to Hanuman Chalisa to gain freedom from the cycle of birth and death act as constant reminders that death is the predominant theme of the play. Vikas wants victory over death and suffering. He writes the play to establish his victory over death. He lives through his play and he lives in the memories of all the characters of the play and especially Deepika whom he wants to touch through his play. Deepika, towards the beginning of the text, defines his post-death existence as “a hand from the past...A dead hand” and gradually realises that Vikas may be physically dead but he is alive in her memories. As she decides to perform in his play he allows him to touch her from the dead. She had refused to grant him his last wish of dying with her loving touch. But, she finally, publicly accepts her feelings for him. Before the final performance of the play she speaks to the audience and introduces Vikas Tiwari as someone who has taught them to live “life to the lees” (Tennyson) and laugh at human follies. The concluding line, “Vikas Tiwari lives on through this play” marks his victory of death. In “Brief Candle: Life in Death or Death in Life?” Neha Arora writes, “The ‘candle’ of life may be ‘brief’ but it still

lightens the darkness of our world, hence, it should be respected". The presence of Vikas in the play is a master-stroke of Mahesh Dattani. He never associates his presence with ghostliness or with Deepika's hallucination. He lives in the memories of all the characters that people Brief Candle and hence is a presence throughout the play. In "Ravaged Bodies, Embodied Performance: Performativity in Dattani's Brief Candle" Samipendra Banerjee argues that performative possibilities of the post-human body is one of the key concerns of body and performance theory today and Mahesh Dattani successfully makes use of the same in his recent play Brief Candle. Thus, death is the predominant theme of Brief Candle. Faced with the fear of oblivion, Vikas realises the philosophy of life and living and he spreads his understanding of life to everyone onstage and offstage. Every moment lived with enthusiasm, vitality and mirth is every moment denied death. Vikas spreads the message of life and true living which alone can save us. Man has come from dust and will return to dust but in between his journey he can deny choosing death over life, mourning over laughter.

The Journey-Indira Goswami

Introduction Indira Goswami (1942 – 2011) is an iconic figure in Assamese literature who lived and worked as a peace activist with almost motherly concern for humanity. Albeit, there are a great many disputes about the relevance of the biographical references of an author, for a writer such as Indira Goswami, who usually blurs the lines between facts and fiction in pages, it is particularly important. She twice tried to commit suicide after suffering shocks with her father's and husband's demises very early in her life which damaged her psyche and shattered the very foundation of her existence. Her writing was a positive reinforcement, for which she developed an intense passion and essentially made an identity with her emphatic stories, touching the lives of many. Instead of escaping the harsh realities and the cruelties of life, she confronted them

courageously, witnessed them in proximity, experienced and reproduced them through her writing, filtering through her sensitive soul. As President of the Citizens' Peace Forum of Assam, ―Nagarik Shanti Mancha, Goswami even initiated and served as a peace interlocutor – talks between the leaders of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Government of India from 2004 onwards. In a bid to write a short story about the detrimental and dehumanizing impact of brutal political violence on the Assam people, Goswami visited the worst-affected areas of the state where ULFA rebels and government forces inflicted the most destruction during counter-insurgency operations. Experiencing people‘s agony created within an excessively enthralling sensation for organizing and expressing them in a novel structure, as she says herself, "Slowly it dawned in my mind that I should try to disseminate the inferno with a very small capacity instead of writing a novel. I am not a politician. I am not a politician. Nor in my life was I ever interested in politics. I'm just a writer. I will always be grateful to the government of India and ULFA for having honored me by accepting my call to initiate a peace process. Her writings are full of imagery, highlighting the issues of politics and militancy in Assam. Further Goswami, emphatically captures the theme of gruesome horror of insurgency, brutality of militant and endless fear of prolonged obscure violence. It is well felt in the writings of her. Her descriptions of brutality and the characters of the stories seem to be vivid imagery, translating the ordeal in most apt manner. Tracing the themes in the short story „The Journey" The title, The Journey‘, signifies the meaning of the looking into the life of people. It mainly features the struggles of life, which seems to never ending and memories still haunting. Through her writings in the regional language the barbaric practices and abuses committed in the name of faith, tradition and patriarchy have been attacked. She stood against the backdrop of armed militancy, marks a crossroads where various modes of aggression coalesce with a dynamic

pattern of survival instinct. The pseudo-autobiographical story of The Journey‘ begins with Professor Mirajkar who is unnamed and returns to Guwahati from his visit to Kaziranga. It is marked as the brief journey but an eventful one. The story delineates the various types of emergence and moment of exposing multiple types and existence of aggression. They can be experienced as both visible and invisible – as well as the clear and systemic description. The plot also points to the violence faced by women through the character of Nirmali whose legs are broken by her villagers for being in an affair with an Indian soldier. The details of the story contain gender-based violence, political violence and other forms of abuse. The writer illustrates the sense of destruction and social decay caused by the agglomerates of these different types of violence persistent in the world. 'The Journey' is a largely mimetic story that tends to work through practical codes, with the undersigned female narrator and the 'mainlander,' Professor Mirajkar, who is back in Guwahati from a trip to Assam's popular tourist destination, Kaziranga National Park, as a 'late' ambassador. “The Journey”: As A Perception Of Life Short story of Indira Goswami, The Journey is a departure point for researchers, exploring the ambit of violence and social unjust in Assam. 'The Journey' is also known as an account of militant violence in Assam. Interestingly, the narrator lets slip an interesting detail that, while mortally afraid of 'terrorists,' he has a 'heredity of curiosity' about weapons and ammunition. The narrator captures the description of natural beauty witnessed on his return trip. The space in the car acts as a safe 'enclave,' as the protagonist can look at the rapidly changing view without doing something. Far from acting simply as a passage that impresses with pure lyrical elegance, the descriptions from picture postcards like this introduce a subject that is gradually deconstructed throughout the storyline. The National Reserve Park is also a protected location, as is the zoo, aquarium, or exhibition. Both Mirajkar and the narrator can ponder over the natural world from

afar in this regulated space. Mirajkar might not be afraid of wild animals because of the tourist drive's protection. At the other hand, the attacker's bullet could potentially cut a swathe through this "safe" area and pledge dreadful intimacy. To paraphrase Hamlet, "time is about to be thrown out of the joint". This spatial non-synchronicity scenario is inaugurated dramatically when the car stops in the middle. All passengers leave their enclave enclosed, standing in front of a number of small businesses. As the driver, Ramakanta, questions the repairs, the narrator sees a man approaching them suddenly. A person (manavmurti) gradually emerges from one of the rows of shops, which is a bit further from the national road (rashtriya path). ―This personification is used in the well classified way. This Manavmurti has something distinct, different-world and ancient, and seems to emerge almost as a figure from a picture. Unlike the immediate response of the narrator to this Manavmurti (whom she soon starts to speak to as the honorary Aatoi), the physical presence to his wife is slightly delayed. She makes her entrance with a kerosene lamp when the narrator and Mirajkar sit in Aatoi's decrepit store. Gradually, the storyteller noticed her blouse full of patches and her withered flesh�too as she fought to make tea. While Aatoi is hard to identify, his wife is clearly identified as a victim of poverty. This picture of distressed village women accentuates deprivation, pain and shallowness. ―The wife is the rough, insistent note of a bad and terror-scarred present. From her we learn that one of her child, Konbap, joined the rebels while Nirmali, a daughter of her own, broke her leg as a revenge for having an affair with an Indian soldier. She is still afraid of Indian military bullets killing her son. She continues to harangue her husband to see if Konbap, the son who joined the militant party, was seen near the railways. In addition, we hear from her that the annual floods have ravaged much of her land and also killed her eldest son. Aatoi and his wife both mention the absolute misery caused by the slow violent floods and the consequent public and political apathy

towards the problem at various points of the conversation. In the following paragraph, the wife's analysis of sluggish abuse reaches its apogee: it quotes, "I have suffered for seven years. You ought to look at our situation once and tell the government about it. You must also see the plight of our villagers when you go to see the animals in Kaziranga. The utterance of the wife of Aatoi marks the beginning of the cycle of the "bad" statements affecting the narrator and the time of Mirajkar. It is notable that the protagonist loves and sees from afar into the mesmerizing natural beauty of nature. The wife's comment is a shameful indictment of the indifference of this remote, "tourist" eye. The natural world's beauty is apparent but the misery of the people living in this world remains fortified in ignorance. A little while after his wife's scathing criticism of the distant "tourist" feel, Aatoi says: ―But you see some Kaziranga tigers? I hear that in 1966 there were only 20 tigers, but now there are about 60 tigers. Even the number of rhinos is said to have risen from 300 to around 1500, and I believe over 500 elephants are present. This highlights the reality of wild animals, which along with militant violence creates hazards to their lives, who feel themselves helpless and incapable responding to the situation. Theme: Portrayal Of Struggles The crucial point for the initial half of this passage is that the distant vision of a managed area is subtly criticized and combined at the same time with a melancholic awareness of the violence that the time works in the fast-disappearing world. If Aatoi's words condemn the ignorance of the distant gaze oddly compliment the harsh, insistent notes from the realm of need with an unpleasant understanding of catastrophic historical transition. As a result of the conservation efforts made by the state and public, the number of rhinos and tigers has increased. But the devastation caused to the existing worlds of human life by slow violence largely undetermined. Furthermore, rapid modernization, has coaxed a gradual disruption to the existing order collectively. ―Previously, we took turns chasing away elephants; now nobody knows

about a predator coming and taking something away. Things are broken down, the center doesn't hold. After Aatoi finishes telling his stories about the past and singing songs composed by the Vaishnavite saints, time begins to 'speed.' Slowly issues come to the head as the narrator ruminates on what Aatoi's wrinkles mean – Worries, the quest for answers, sorrow. As narrator realizes that the inscrutable face of Aatoi is something elusive that words cannot capture, the narrative remains open-ended. The storyteller and Mirajkar give some money to the couple before they leave. In the meantime, a young woman Nirmali little by little enters the shop. She is regarded as a "miserable bug" by her parents when she limps inside. Yet attention is focused on her "for a moment," which may mean that her abjection has turned into something superficial, commonplace and peculiar in the scarred world of deprivation. She was only heard a short time before she slinked into a corner where utensils were washed. Nevertheless, the "muteness" and apparent invisibility of Nirmali accuse both parents, as it seems they have embraced abuse that their body has undergone in the "ordinary" order of things. Therefore, in earlier exchanges between husband and wife the future of the militant son seems to be the priority. There's hardly any mention of Nirmali. But the brief instant "for a moment," if a "human tornado," Konbap, unexpectedly flies into the scene "accessing an explosion", is even quicker. Konbap is identified as a "young man with awful arms and one-eye shots on his lips". Under his eyelid a strip of his flesh was ripped at his corner of cheek. The "hideous" guy pushes Nirmali into her belly and calls her a "malignant slut," running with the money to buy two U.S. carbohydrates from poachers hunting rhinos, while his parents are telling him to stay and return the money to Mirajkar and his narrator. The essence of the narrative seems to be influenced by these two sequences that speed the perception of time. While the wife is pleading with Konbap, a "smile hint" hovers over the face of Aatoi. The narrator is haunted by this expression. "I never knew that

a human smile could so sear a heart," says the narrator. The two members of enslaved patriarchal societies travel with seated hearts in silence to Guwahati in the wrapping night. I hurriedly suggested that the "seared hearts" and "silence" in the earlier analysis of this story (2012) illustrate an ethical reorientation of the views of the two middle class characters and their world. I don't believe that the text gives us such a direct reaction. I think it would be much easier to think of this situation, in the terms of Nixon's slow aggression, because it "emotionally gives life." Mirajkar had previously a "negative" perception that terrorism has yet to end in the north-east, however later is affirmative of it coming to an end. Nevertheless, both middle-class characters presumably know that the word "terrorism" only deals with the swift, unexpected existence of violence, in chaotic fashion, which, like Konbap, seems to leave only destruction and confusion. Yet the emotional bond between the two middle class observers and the poor couple is much more important than that. Through looking closely at the storyline, we note that this relationship develops in a parallel process of coming out of an "enclave" room .This understanding, reflects the gradual discovery of the impact of long violence on the poor people. Though seemingly imitate and unilinear, 'The Journey' demonstrates how various meanings of experiential time complicatedly merge into a single experience to reveal the impact of multiple types of abuse. Contextualizing the notion of Poverty in „The Journey" and some other works of Indira Goswami Indira Goswami inextricably accentuates on intertwining aspect form of injustice and exploitation in the society, and gives an earning voice to the quest for the independence or freedom, inflicting pain upon humanity. Goswami, empirically captures the plight and grievances of society, especially of the poor and the marginalized women of the society. She highlights the wretchedness the society imposes upon the destitute and the implicated realities of oppressiveness, exploitation and cruelty of the society. Her works are

testimony to pursuit of independence from circumstantial tragedies coaxed by poverty and rigid social structure. Similarly the context of poverty and quest to escape the social realities is also conspicuous in the story of The Journey‘. The condition of Nirmali as being described as a miserable bug testifies the grave deprivation she is subjected to even within her family. Mirajkar‘s repeated mention of middle-class‘, patriarchal society affirm to the prevailing biasness of the society. Further the prolonged violence and terrorism in the state has evidently subjected the lives of poor middle class families , like that of Konbap‘s, to destitution , violence and poverty. In many of her stories like ―Une Khuwa Hoda‖, Goswami highlights, how the plight of poverty can induce sense of desperation and cloud morality and judgments of the poor. In yet another story The Offspring, Goswami captures paradoxical notion of poverty and social order merge to explicate a complex reality. Apart from illustrating on complex social order, Goswami highlights, how scrounge for availing a bare livelihood, in a life wretched by poverty and destitution, can perish social moralities and freedom. The tribal women, and women in rural areas are frequently confronted with challenges prevailing from poor livelihood. The Bluenecked God (Nilakantha Braja), was bold manifestation, highlighting the uglier facade of traditions of Vrindavan. Deprived of any honor and recognition, outside the city walls, and forced by the poor financial state, the widows are endowed with unjust miseries in the name of religion. The characters of Goswami withstand the blemishes upon the humanity, delineating paradoxical realities and grave of unjust in the social order that prevents the poor and the marginalized to live with dignity and freedom. Conclusion Indira Goswami represents an epitomic figure in Indian literature, writing in the regional language. The regional flavor, born and raised in Assam, is a significant backdrop to her fiction. She talked courageously and passionately of those whose voices had been silenced or never heard: struggles for freedom, women, the excluded, the poor

and the downtrodden. She wrote for the intent of bringing about social change. Critics hailed her as a popular literary figure in India Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research and as a woman of exceptional courage and conviction. She represents an important voice in the advocacy of women's rights, who strived to highlight the plight of widows. Her panoptic approach of storytelling themes makes her popular. Her short stories and novels from various locations in India (including Assam) give an insight into the lives of the places. There are numerous themes in her stories such as the social problems of urban life, the poor worker's life and the widows' plight. She expresses her anger at the very subtle orthodox social structure. Goswami 's concern for the society is clearly evident in her writings, she writes not only to state the social facts but to bring about change with zeal.

The Great Indian Novel- Shashi Tharoor

The Great Indian Novel is a satirical novel by Shashi Tharoor, first published by Viking Press in 1989. It is a fictional work that takes the story of the Mahabharata, the Indian epic, and recasts and resets it in the context of the Indian Independence Movement and the first three decades post-independence. Figures from Indian history are transformed into characters from mythology, and the mythical story of India is retold as a history of Indian independence and subsequent history, up through the 1970s. Some critics have identified an element of subversion in the novel . The work includes numerous puns and allusions to famous works about India, such as those by Rudyard Kipling, Paul Scott, and E. M. Forster.

The Mahabharata is an epic tale describing the historical dynastic struggle over the throne of the kingdom of Hastinapur between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two branches of the heirs of the

King Shantanu. In his novel, Tharoor recasts the story of the nascent Indian democracy as a struggle between groups and individuals closely related by their personal and political histories. Through his cantankerous narrator, Tharoor takes an irreverent tone towards figures such as Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who are ordinarily treated with reverence by Indians.The phrase "great Indian novel" is an allusion to the long-standing idea of the "Great American Novel" and is also a pun, roughly translating "Mahabharata" (maha "great"; Bharata "India"). The Mahabharata, which is not a novel but an epic poem, can be understood, according to Tharoor, to represent Hinduism's greatest literary achievement and thus serves as an appropriate paradigm in which to frame a retelling of recent Indian history. A significant characteristic of Tharoor's version of the story is the emphasis on the older generations (e.g., Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, and Pandu) and the resulting de-emphasis on the actions of the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Plot summary

The organisation of the sections and chapters of the novel mirrors the organisation of the Mahabharata and the themes and events addressed in each allude to themes and events of the mirrored sections of the epic. The novel has 18 "books," just as the Mahabharata has 18 books and the Battle of Kurukshetra lasted for 18 days.

The First Book: The Twice-Born Tale

Up to some extent a counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Beginning."

In this section, Ved Vyas ("V.V."), the narrator, recounts his personal history; the seduction of Satyavati by the Brahmin Parashar and his own birth; the origin of Dev Datta from the union of Shantanu and the now absent Maharanee (whom he met on the banks of the Ganga (Ganges) and who had had seven suspicious miscarriages); the marriage of Shantanu and Satyavati and Dev Datta's vow of chastity; the birth of Chitrangada and Vichitravirya and the latter's marriage; Ved Vyas's insemination of Ambika and Ambalika; the vow of revenge against Dev Datta taken by Amba; the birth of Dhritarashtra and Pandu; and the assignment of Ganapathi by Brahm's Apsara Agency to transcribe Ved Vyas's memoir, which V.V. describes as the "Song of Modern India."

The Second Book: The Duel With the Crown

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Assembly Hall." The title of this section alludes to Paul Scott's The Jewel in the Crown. Ved Vyas also compares his memoir to The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian by Nirad Chaudhuri. The British resident's equerry is named "Heaslop," an allusion to a character in A Passage to India. Introduced is the character of Sir Richard, the British resident at Hastinapur, who is complaining about the increasing radicalisation of Ganga Datta, who is still serving as regent of Hastinapur. Ved Vyas discusses the upbringing of Dhritarashtra, Pandu, and Vidur Dharmaputra under the care of the regent, Ganga Datta. Discovering the suffering of the people of Motihari, Ganga Datta embarks on his first protest campaign. Gangaji is arrested and he pleads guilty to defying a police order, but his action results in a victory for the peasants of Motihari.

The Third Book: The Rains Came

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Forest." The title of this section alludes to Louis Bromfield's The Rains Came. Sir Richard is furious about the events of Motihari and Heaslop notes that Gangaji had never formally resigned from the regency of Hastinapur. The regent having committed sedition, Hastinapur can now be annexed by British India. Dhritarashtra and Gandhari's marriage is off to a good start. The devoted young bride has resolved to forever covering her eyes with a blindfold so that she is deprived of whatever her husband is deprived of. Pandu is also enjoying his two sexually expert wives. While enjoying sexual congress with both at once, he suffers a "massive coronary thrombosis" and is prohibited from ever again engaging in sexual intercourse. Pandu joins Gangaji's movement and instructs his wives to seek other sexual partners so that they may still bear him heirs. Kunti reveals that in her youth she bore Hyperion Helios's child but sent the baby boy down the river in a basket. Gandhari the Grim gives birth not to a hundred sons, but to one daughter, Priya Duryodhani, who is to be the equivalent of a thousand sons.

The Fourth Book: A Raj Quartet

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Virata." The title of this section alludes to Paul Scott's Raj Quartet. Hastinapur is annexed to the British Presidency of Marabar (an allusion to the "Marabar Caves," which figure prominently in A Passage to India). The people of Hastinapur are milling in the streets, threatening revolt. There is a rumour that Gangaji will address a rally at the Bibighar Gardens (an allusion to the "Bibighar," which figures prominently in A Jewel in the Crown). Heaslop counsels Sir Richard to let passions dissipate on their own, but Sir Richard instead calls in Colonel Rudyard and the Fifth Baluch, which starts firing on the unarmed gathering in the Bibighar Gardens. Almost 400 people are killed and more than a thousand are injured. After the Bibighar Gardens Massacre, Colonel Rudyard is retired with a half-million

pound pension. An unnamed Nobel Prize-winning poet (an allusion to Rabindranath Tagore) returns his knighthood. Gangaji kicks off the Quit India Movement (an allusion to the Quit India Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi). Bungling assassins kill a Professor Kipling instead of Colonel Rudyard. This Professor Kipling was the racist teacher whom a young Pandu had struck, resulting in the end of Pandu's formal education. Vidur resigns from the civil service but Gangaji and Dhritarashtra order him to rescind his resignation. Dhritarashtra becomes head of the Kaurava Party and Pandu becomes the party's chief organiser.

Kunti bears the sons of Dharma (a young magistrate), Major Vayu of the palace guard, and Devendra Yogi: Yudhistir, Bhim the Brave, and Arjun. Exhausted, Kunti calls a halt to the cuckolding and Madri begs to be permitted to take up the torch. She has an affair with the twins Ashvin and Ashwin and bears the twin sons Nakul and Sahadev.

The Fifth Book: The Powers of Silence

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of War Preparations." The title of this section alludes to Paul Scott's The Towers of Silence. During an epidemic, a Sarah Moore persuades her brother, the manager of a jute mill in Budge Budge, near Calcutta, to offer the mill workers a bonus. After the epidemic, the workers refuse to give up the bonus and are locked out. Sarahbehn enlists Gangaji's aid and Gangaji embarks on his first protest fast. The British Raj directs the Mill Owners' Association to give in.

The Sixth Book: Forbidden Fruit

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Bhishma."

A rift begins to develop between Dhritarashtra and Pandu, both working within the Kaurava Party to further the cause of Indian independence, with Pandu advocating a harder line than that pursued by Gangaji and Dhritarashtra. Gangaji attends the Round Table Conference hosted by the British government. Mahadeva Menon, a Kaurava Party official from Palghat, persuades Gangaji to do something about the tax on mangoes. Gangaji kicks off the Great Mango March, which prompts Pandu to leave the Kaurava Party. In Chaurasta, a Kaurava protest turns violent and Gangaji calls off the mango agitation. Gangaji is called for a meeting with the viceroy and entertains an uncomfortable Sir Richard with the tale of why he drinks goat's milk instead of cow's milk.

The Seventh Book: The Son Also Rises

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Drona." The title of this section alludes to Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises. Ved Vyas describes the divisions in Indian society and their engenderment by colonial policies, an the formation of the Muslim Group under the figurehead leadership of the Gaga Shah, an "overweight sybarite." The arrogant and (literally) brilliant Mohammed Ali Karna, the son of Kunti and Hyperion Helios, educated by the generosity of Indra Deva, the employer of Karna's adoptive father, rises to prominence as a lawyer and as a member of the Kaurava Party. Dhritarashtra insults Karna upon discovering that his (adoptive) father is a chauffeur. Kunti sees Karna and realises that he is her firstborn son. The story is told of how Indra Deva gave him the surname "Karna," the "Hacker-Off," after Karna circumcised

himself with a knife. Karna leaves the movement and goes to England, but the Gaga Shah invites Karna back to India to lead the Muslim Group.

The Eighth Book: Midnight's Parents

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Karna." The title of this section alludes to Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children. The five Pandavas and Priya Duryodhani grow up, each revealing their characters. Priya tries and fails to poison and drown her cousin Bhim. While playing cricket, the Pandavas meet the sage Jayaprakash Drona who tells the tale of his son, Ashwathaman, and his insult at the hands of Ronald Heaslop, which led him to his mission of educating young Indians to facilitate the overthrow of the British. The Pandavas choose Drona to be their tutor. Pandu decides to seek the presidency of the Kaurava Party and Dhritarashtra fears that there is a good chance he will lose the election to Pandu. Gangaji persuades Dhritarashtra to step down in favour of a less prominent figure, and untouchable. Thus, if Pandu wins the election, then Gangaji and Dhritarashtra will not be seen as having suffered a defeat.

The Ninth Book: Him — Or, the Far Power-Villain

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Shalya." The title of this section alludes to Rudyard Kipling's Kim and to M. M. Kaye's The Far Pavilions. Pandu is elected president of the Kaurava Party and a struggle begins between him and Gangaji for control over the direction of the party. Gangaji outmanoeuvres Pandu, who loses a vote of confidence and resigns. Ved Vyas switches

to verse to tell Pandu's story. Pandu forms the Onward Organisation (an allusion to the All India Forward Bloc), the OO. Pandu allies himself with the Germans and the Japanese against the British and forms the Swatantra Sena (an allusion to the Indian National Army formed by Subhas Chandra Bose) to fight against British forces on the Burmese front. Pandu sends for Madri to join him and the sight of her wearing a military uniform begins to break down his control over his carnal desires. While fleeing from defeat in Singapore by air, Pandu and Madri succumb to their passion. Pandu dies of a heart attack and the plane is shot down, killing Madri as well.

The Tenth Book: Darkness at Dawn

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Sleeping Warriors." - title may be an allusion to Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon Ashwathaman joins the Pandavas as the students of Drona in the military, terroristic, and nationalistic arts. When Arjun has to share an academic prize with Ekalavya, the son of a maidservant, Ekalavya admits that he has been sharing in the Pandavas' lessons while standing outside the door. In exchange for payment for his tuition, Drona demands that Ekalavya cut off his own right thumb and give it to Drona. Unlike in the original Mahabharata, Tharoor's Ekalavya refuses and flees in horror. Drona has a good laugh. Karna considers his options after the Muslim Group's candidates are bested by Muslim members of the Kaurava Party in the elections. Karna proposes a coalition government in the legislative assembly of the Northern Province. Vidur urges Dhritarashtra to accept Karna's proposal, even though the Kaurava Party controls enough seats in the Northern Province to rule without a coalition. Mohammed Rafi, a Muslim Kauravaman, urges rejection of Karna's offer and Dhritarashtra and Gangaji concede. Karna is resolved to find other means of gaining power.

The viceroy and Sir Richard consider what to do in reaction to the initiation of the Second World War. Sir Richard relates the story of Sir Francis Younghusband, who inadvertently annexed Tibet. ("He'd really intended just to see the tourist spots and to get a few good pictures of the Potala Palace, but one of his rifles went off accidentally and when he then saw all the notables on their knees cowering he couldn't really disappoint them by not conquering them.") Sir Richard persuades the viceroy to declare war on Germany without consulting the elected governments of the provinces.

Kaurava Party legislators react to the declaration of war by resigning en masse. The absence of the Kaurava Party in the administration benefits the Muslim Group, which takes over the government in three provinces. Gangaji initiates the Quit India Movement and the leaders of the Kaurava Party are imprisoned. The emboldened Muslim Group begins calling for a separate Muslim state, to be called Karnistan (the "Hacked-Off Land").

Amba, planning her revenge on Gangaji, goes to a plastic surgeon for a sex-change operation. Following the end of the war, the Kaurava Party does well in the election, but the Muslim Group's strength is not diminished. The British government charges with treason the soldiers who joined Pandu's Swatantra Sena. Viscount Bertie Drewpad is appointed viceroy. His wife, Georgina, is excited at the prospect of dallying with lusty Indian men. While Dhritarashtra plans to meet the new viceroy, his wife, Gandhari the Grim, lies dying, calling Priya Duryodhani her "son."

The Eleventh Book: Renunciation — Or, the Bed of Arrows

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Women." Lord Drewpad announces the British intent to withdraw from India on Aug, 15, 1947, to Dhritarashtra, Mohammed Rafi, Ved Vyas, Sardar Khushkismat Singh, and Karna. Dhritarashtra and the Kaurava Party agree to the Partition of India. A Mr. Nichols is assigned to draw the border between the two new countries, to the derision of an experienced administrator named Basham. Vidur assists the viceroy in making decisions related to the transfer of power. Gangaji initiates an experiment in eliminating sexual desire by inviting Sarah-behn to sleep in his bed. While violence tears India apart, Dhritarashtra initiates an affair with Lady Drewpad. While India celebrates independence, Amba, now Shikhandin the Godless, assassinates Gangaji.

The Twelfth Book: The Man Who Could Not Be King

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Peace." The title of this section alludes to Rudyard Kipling's The Man Who Would Be King. Ved Vyas refers to "Children being born at inconvenient times of the night who would go on to label a generation and rejuvenate a literature," which alludes to Rushdie's Midnight's Children. Drona's secretary is called Sir Beverley Twitty, K.C.M.G. Jayaprakash Drona, now serving as Minister of State for Administrative Reform, gets his opportunity for revenge against Ronald Heaslop, who has lost everything in the rioting. Drona, instead of answering Heaslop's long-ago refusal to help him with co-ordinate cruelty, he offers Heaslop a job. Georgina Drewpad's affair with Dhritarashtra (now prime minister of India) continues. On 26 January 1950, the day India becomes a republic,

she gives birth to a daughter, who is given up for adoption and given the name Draupadi Mokrasi. Vyabhichar Singh ("Mr. Z"), the maharaja of Manimir, tries to avoid acceding either to India or Karnistan. Mohammed Rafi urges Dhritarashtra to ensure that Manimir remains part of India. Vidur, now Principal Secretary for Integration, counsels patience, hoping that Sheikh Azharuddin, a Kaurava ally, might be able to overthrow Mr. Z. Dhritarashtra decides to let Karna, now governor-general of Karnistan, make the first move, which he does, leaving the Indian government the perfect excuse to send in Khushkismat Singh, the Minister of Defence, with Indian troops. Vidur goes to Devpur to get Vyabhichar Singh to sign the instrument of accession, and persuades Colonel Bewakuf Jan to disturb the maharaja from his sporting with a Frenchwoman. Vidur states his case while the maharaja is fellated under an "enormous silk razai." The maharaja is finally persuaded to sign by his companion, "a steatopygous blonde wearing nothing but a look of panic." Vidur helps the maharaja flee to Marmu, his winter capital.

The Pathans invading Manimir get drunk and the Indian Army parachutes into Devpur. Dhritarashtra snatches defeat from the jaws of victory by halting the Indian Army's advance and calling in the United Nations.Professor Jennings delivers a critique of his student, D. Mokrasi.

The Thirteenth Book: Passages Through India Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of Bhishma's Final Instructions." The title of this section alludes to E. M. Forster's A Passage to India. Drona decides to resign from government and do "constructive work" in rural areas, taking Ashwathaman with him. The five Pandavas they also want to go along and break the news to Kunti, their chain-smoking and still glamorous mother. To secure her blessing, Yudhishtir

promises never to disobey his mother. Dhritarashtra consults Kanika, regarding what he should do about the increasing popularity of Drona and the Pandavas. Kanika counsels Dhritarashtra not to allow the Pandavas to attain too much political power, but Dhritarashtra is too idealistic to take the advice. Priya Duryodhani, however, is listening and she takes Kanika's advice seriously. Vidur, now Secretary of the Home Ministry and head of the Central Bureau of Intelligence, goes to a Drona land reform rally to warn the Pandavas that Priya Duryodhani is plotting against them. Vidur arranges for the Pandavas to hide out in Varanavata with Kunti. Karna, who has not been well, dies when he tries to pull a car out of the mud with his bare hands. Kunti, hearing the news, repeats her firstborn son's final gesture—by shaking her fist at the sun.

The Fourteenth Book: The Rigged Veda

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Horse Sacrifice." The title of this section alludes to the Hindu sacred work the Rig Veda. Purochan Lal, the owner of the hotel where Kunti is staying, is an agent of Priya Duryodhani. Vidur intercepts the cables and sends a coded message explaining that the house is coated with lac and will be set fire. The building is burnt, but Vidur arranges their escape while letting the world believe they have perished in the fire. Vidur tells Dhritarashtra about a joke by Winston Churchill botched by Khushkismat Singh. After discussing the Manimir situation, Dhritarashtra appoints Kanika to replace Singh as Minister of Defence.

The Pandavas wander India sticking up for the rights of the downtrodden. The refuse to take sides between two corrupt landlords, Pinaka and Saranga (whose men attacked a man named

Hangari Das). Dhritarashtra and Kanika start the "non-aligned" movement. They decide to annexe the Portuguese colony of Comea.Bhim saves a beautiful girl from her abusive brother, Hidimba ("a large man with a small goatee"), and weds. The Chairman of the People's Republic of Chakra, watching the annexation of Comea by India, orders the Chakar People's Liberation Army to cross the Big Mac Line and annexe the nation of Tibia, on the Indian border. To enter Tibia from the province of Drowniang, however, Chakar troops must cross into territory claimed by India. Bhim has a baby son, Ghatotkach, who is born in the town of Ekachakra. Sahadev challenges the champion wrestler Bakasura and is trounced. Kunti is annoyed with her other sons for allowing Sahadev to go through with it.The Chakars annexe a piece of Indian territory and the humiliation breaks Dhritarashtra's heart and he dies.

The Fifteenth Book: The Act of Free Choice

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Hermitage." Dhritarashtra leaves nothing in his will to Draupadi Mokrasi and her adoptive father worries that he will not be able to find her a suitable husband. The Kaurava Party's Working Committee appoints the "honest but limited" Shishu Pal to replace Dhritarashtra as prime minister. Ved Vyas convenes a training camp where the Pandavas are captivated by Draupadi. Priya Duryodhani is annoyed that Draupadi is drawing the attention away from her lectures and orders Ved Vyas to get Draupadi married. In Ved Vyas's mind, only Arjun is good enough for Draupadi, but he realises that Arjun will not be faithful to her. Priya Duryodhani decides to match her up with Ekalavya, of whom Drona had demanded his right thumb, and, apparently with whom Priya Duryodhani had had a youthful fling. Draupadi chooses Arjun, but through a misunderstanding, Kunti instructs the Pandavas to share equally the "surprise" they have brought home. All five Pandavas marry Draupadi, Ved Vyas using his father's magic to ensure that she is a virgin for each of the five successive

wedding nights. Bhim's wife leaves him. Perceiving India as weak following its defeat at the hands of the Chakars, Karnistan invades Manimir again. Shishu Pal directs a successful counterattack. Shishu Pal dies of a heart attack after signing a cease fire. Unable to find a successor that is universally unobjectionable, the Working Committee is persuaded by Ved Vyas to appoint Priya Duryodhani.

The Pandavas work out a strict schedule to share Draupadi's bed. Arjun violates the rule when he goes to retrieve the manuscript of a speech while Yudhishtir and Draupadi are together. Under the rules, Arjun is banned from his conjugal rights for a year. Arjun decides to spend the year as a "roving correspondent" for a newspaper and, in addition to witnesses the condition of the people, he finds a new sexual companion in every locale he visits. Arjun ends up in Gokarnam where he meets Dwarakaveetile Krishnankutty Parthasarathi Menon (known as "Krishna"), the local Kaurava Party secretary who has recently unseated the local political machine boss, Kamsa. When Arjun first sees Krishna, he is using a traditional dance form, Ottamthullal, as a medium for social satire. Arjun and Krishna become close friends and Arjun falls for Krishna's sister, Subhadra. Krishna advises Arjun to woo her through abduction. In the dark, a confused Arjun mistakenly abducts Kameswari. A second attempt is more successful and the two are married. Arjun cables Draupadi, telling her that he is bringing home a new maid, making their eventual meeting rather uncomfortable. However, by the time Draupadi and Subhadra give birth to their sons, Prativindhya and Abhimanyu, they are as close as sisters.

The Sixteenth Book: The Bungle Book — Or, the Reign of Error

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Maces." The title of this section alludes to Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book. The Kaurava Party is dealt a blow in state and local elections, although still holding a majority in the national Parliament. Yudhishtir suggests that new leadership is needed. Priya Duryodhani agrees to a national election. Yudhishtir is named deputy prime minister, but is shut out of the Cabinet by Priya Duryodhani and Yudhishtir resigns. Ashwathaman, Drona' son and the leader of a socialist splinter party, is invited by Priya Duryodhani to join the Kaurava Party Working Committee. Priya Duryodhani takes Ashwathaman's side in advocating the elimination of the privy purses of India's former princes. Yudhishtir resigns from the Working Committee. Priya Duroydhani and Ashwathaman then champion a bill to nationalise the banks. Dr. Mehrban Imandar, the president of India, dies. The Kaurava Old Guard thwarts Priya Duryodhani by nominating Ved Vyas as the Kaurava Party's candidate for president. Priya Duryodhani backs Ekalavya as an independent candidate. The Working Committee expels Ekalavya from the Kaurava Party for opposing the party's official candidate. Before the Working Committee can act to expel Priya Duryodhani, Ekalavya narrowly wins the election. Priya Duryodhani splits the Kaurava Party, forming the Kaurava Party (R) ("R" for "real") to oppose the Kaurava Party (O) ("O" for "official" or "old guard"). Priya Duryodhani wins with the support of the Left.

Jarasandha Khan, the military dictator ruling Karnistan, decides to call elections. The Gelabin People's Party, representing the Gelabi people of East Karnistan, wins a majority in the Karnistani Parliament. Zaleel Shah Jhoota persuades Jarashanda Khan to declare the election results null and void and declare martial law in East Karnistan. Priya Duryodhani enters the conflict on the side of the Gelabins and the Gelabi Desh War results in the creation of a new

nation-state. The success against Karnistan boosts Priya Duryodhani's popularity, but her rule grows increasingly oppressive.

The Seventeenth Book: The Drop of Honey — A Parable

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Great Journey." Drona leads the opposition to Mohammed ijas's rule. Priya Duryodhani is convicted of electoral misconduct. Shakuni Shankar Dey, a Bengali lawyer and president of the Kaurava (R) Party, counsels her to declare a Siege and seize dictatorial powers. President Ekalavya concedes to the seizure of emergency powers. Priya Duryodhani orders the arrest of her political opponents.

The Eighteenth Book: The Path to Salvation

Counterpart to the Mahabharata's "Book of the Ascent to Heaven." Ved Vyas refers to the Kama Sutra as the "Great Indian Novelty." Priya Duryodhani calls elections. Ved Vyas chooses Krishna to lead the opposition campaign. Priya Duryodhani thus gets Krishna's experienced Kaurava Party grassroots electoral machine. At a critical moment, Krishna persuades Arjun that he should criticise Priya Duryodhani's administration instead of remaining a disinterested reporter. Bhim, Nakul, and Sahadev stay out of the campaign, refraining from endorsing either party. The People's Front defeats the Kaurava (R) Party. Drona and Ved Vyas consult with the parties of the People's Front coalition to choose the new prime minister. Their ultimately erroneous choice is Yudhishtir. Ashwathaman is appointed head of the party organisation. The People's Front leadership gathers at the Taj Mahal for a ceremonial oath.

The return of Krishna to local politics marks the beginning of the failure of the People's Front. Yudhishtir proves to be "as stiff and straight-backed and humourless as his critics had always portrayed him, and his colossal self-righteousness was not helped by his completely inability to judge the impression he made on others." Yudhishtir becomes a target of fun in the national and international press when he admits to drinking his own urine. The "strongmen" of Yudhishtir's cabinet are locked in squabbles and Yudhishtir "remained tightly self-obsessed, seemingly unaware that half of those who sat on the executive branch with him were busily engaged in sawing it off."

Priya Duryodhani, labelling the faltering government as the "Backward Front," begins to gain political strength again. As Zaleel Shah Jhoota is toppled in another Karnistani military coup, Priya Duryodhani runs rings around her prosecutors while being tried for subverting the constitution. Yudhishtir suffers another publicity blow when he attends a speech by a holy man who uses the word "Untouchables" instead of "Harijans." Ashwathaman criticises Yudhishtir and the party organisation awaits word from an ailing Drona that it is time for Yudhishtir to go. Yudhishtir dispatches Sahadev to tell Drona that Ashwathaman's plane has crashed. When asked Yudhishtir confirms that "Ashwathaman is dead" and Drona dies without throwing support to Yudhishtir's opponents in the People's Front. When Ved Vyas confronts Yudhishtir regarding his lie about Ashwathaman, Yudhishtir says that early that day he had caught a cockroach, named it Ashwathaman, and killed it; thus, his statement to Drona was not a lie. Ved Vyas refuses to accept Yudhishtir's explanation and abandons him. In any case, Yudhishtir's deception is ultimately pointless. The government falls and Priya Duryodhani is victorious in the next election. Ved Vyas sees a vision in which the Pandavas, Draupadi, and Krishna hike up a

mountain. One by one they are killed, except for Yudhishtir, who reaches the top. When Kalaam, the god of time, offers to bear Yudhishtir to the court of history, Yudhishtir refuses to leave his faithful dog behind. The dog reveals himself to be Dharma, Yudhishtir's father, and the three board Kalaam's chariot together. In the court of history, Yudhishtir is stunned to find a place of honour given to Priya Duryodhani.