

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
School of Distance Education



Study material

Indian Writing in English
(Additional Lessons)

M.A. English (Previous)

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Faculty material

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Dear Learner,

Welcome to the Indo-Anglian Drama class. Here is a module of Self-Learning Material on Mahesh Dattani's powerful play Final Solutions, prepared in four Units. As it has been prepared keeping you, your academic level and your learning problems in mind, I am sure you will have no difficulty in understanding the play, provided you are systematic and sincere in your studies. Please try to secure a copy of the play. Remember, however well-written, study materials can never be a substitute for the original text. If you follow the instructions given under each unit carefully, you will benefit through your study. Besides helping you to perform well in your academic career, may these study-materials enable you to widen the horizon of your thought and increase your awareness of the world you and I live in.

I wish you all the best in your sincere attempts to study the play. Hope you enjoy it.

V. UMA

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UNIT ONE

MAHESH DATTANI'S FINAL SOLUTIONS" : AN INTRODUCTION

1. o. Objectives

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Form a general idea of the theatre movements in India:
- (ii) become familiar with Dattani, the man and playwright: and
- (iii) realize the potential of state-plays for goading (forcing) the audience to think.

I. Introduction

Unlike its counterpart, the Novel, Drama is primarily meant to be enacted. Of course a play may be read with perfect enjoyment; nevertheless, its full impact can be felt only when it is represented on the stage with appropriate setting and costume by talented actors endowed with the gift of the histrionic interpretation (ability to act or represent a character through actions and dialogues. You must have read or seen several plays, say, of Shakespeare's, Shaw or even regional writers. Are all the plays alike, or do they differ in theme, intention, tone and manner of presentation? Now in this module we are going to study a modern play by an Indian playwright, namely Mahesh Dattani Writing in English. Before we start studying the play, let us become familiar with an outline of Indo-Anglian Drama.

1.2 Modern Indo-Anglian Theatre

Indian Drama is of ancient origin and has an exclusive tradition. Just as Greek drama had its origin in the fertility rites and frenzied (excited, mad) worship of Dionysus (the God of fertility), classical Indian drama also originated from the folk theatre of the country. You may read World Drama by Allardyce Nicoll or Bharata's Natyasastra for details. In course of time, play in India came to be written in regional languages too. An appraisal (estimate) of Indian Drama illustrates that while drama in various languages has shown a marked development, it has not done so in Indo-Anglian writing. In this literature, it has been a plant of poor growth.

Since the nineteenth century, there has been a demand for plays in modern Indian languages including translations in English. What do you think are contributing factors? The introduction of English education, greater exposure to western culture including their literature and the fascination for modernism may be cited as certain causes. A few theatres came to be built. For example, the Bombay Amateur Theatre, the Grant Road Theatre and a host of others. Can you mention a few prominent figures in Indo Anglian drama of the pre-Independence period? Perhaps you are familiar with such noteworthy playwrights like Sri. Aurobindo, T.P Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai and others. There are several books you may read to know more about them.

English plays are occasionally staged in metros like Delhi, Madras, Calcutta and Delhi. Visits of foreign troupes are arranged from time to time by the British Council and the American Centre. These have exerted much influence on the Indo-Anglian drama of the post-Independence period. Can you mention a few outstanding modern Indian playwrights or theatre personalities? Asif Currimbhoy, Nissim Ezekiel, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and of course Mahesh Dattani are a few of them.

Visits of foreign troupes are arranged from time to time by the British Council and the American Centre.

As a dramalyst of the public event, Currimbhoy mostly deals with themes like partition, refugee woes, filthy politics with all its dishonesty and hypocrisy in his plays like The Refugee, Inquilab etc. His tone is satirical, even sarcastic. Ezekiel explores complex urban relationships, the exploitative attitude of the Imperialists, the subservient (slavish) mentality of Indians to anything foreign in plays like Nalini, Marriage Poem, etc. Karnad is a multi-faceted personality who has boldly experimented with the living folk forms (and therefore the classical Indian drama indirectly) with success. His plays Yayati, Hayavadana, Tuglaq, Nagamandala etc. deal with themes like the existential dilemma of a hungry, anquished soul, the search for completeness and so on. Tendulkar is another major Indian playwright in whose plays like Silence! The Court is in Session a 'clash of wills' becomes central. We shall deal with Dattani separately in the next section.

Regional drama in India is slowly passing the way for a "national theatre" into which all streams of theatrical art seem to converge. But as far as the Indo-Anglian playwrights are concerned the rich Indian tradition of stage plays appears to have been almost neglected. In the view of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "Modern Indian dramatic writing is neither rich in quality, nor on the whole, of high quality". There are several obstacles and causes for this. First of all, we may state the want of a living theatre, for, as we all know, the success of a play is to be judged mainly by its stage-worthiness. Theatre-production is expensive and unless there are generous sponsors and efficient organisers, staging a play may have to remain an unfulfilled dream. Let us not forget that Shakespeare and Kalidasa enjoyed royal patronage, while defraying (bearing) the expenditure of staging Greek plays was considered a religious duty. The English language poses several problems to the modern playwright. What sort of English should he use? Should there be a blending of the local vernacular? Will it be intelligible to a heterogeneous audience? Well all such questions can pose problems. There is a greater inclination towards the use of the spoken tongue; in fact, many of the above mentioned playwrights have succeeded rather well in utilizing the spoken language including slang and local expressions in their plays. Despite set backs and lapses, the works of modern Indo-Anglian playwrights clearly reveal that they are the symbols of the now resurgence in their own areas and that they have made bold innovations, fruitful experiments such as mini-plays and the brief presentation of a single situation etc, thereby giving new directions which go down in the history of Indian drama as a significant march of achievement.

Kusum Haider's observations on this matter are quite apt:

"Indian writing in English is so lively that scarcely a year goes past without the discovery of yet another dazzling new talent. Led by Salman Rushdie, Indian authors have laid claim to high awards and prizes all over the world. They have a global reach and acceptance, and the dynamism of the present suggests unlimited possibilities for the future."

However, while the novelists have been so conspicuously successful, India's English language play-wrights are yet to emerge in anything like the same strength. Indian plays in English of any quality are few and far between. Note that there is much demand, even hunger for such theatres: numerous stage-struck groups keep up the quest, sometimes striking it rich, more often making do with rather unsatisfactory material. In the composite art of the theatre, the playwright must depend on the actors, director, stage, audience and all the paraphernalia of a theatrical production. Only seldom does it all come together, and uncommon perseverance is required of all involved in the enterprise.

You may refer to W.H. Hudson's book "An Introduction to the Study of Literature" to know more about the elements of the novel and the drama, and the differences between the two art forms. Let us become familiar with Mahesh Dattani's life and work.

1.3 Mahesh Dattani : A Brief Introduction

Mahesh Dattani was born on 7 August, 1958 in Bangalore. He studied in Baldwins and St. Joseph's College, enjoying the affection of his parents and two older sisters. All through his academic career, Dattani was neither a student of literature, nor did he display any traces of literary creativity. He was involved in his family business and in the advertisement-field in his initial years. Thus the stage was set for a stunningly ordinary life spent in helping to run his father's business.

However, in one of life's dramatic twists, Dattani did not melt into the backdrop. Instead he started writing plays, and once he started there was no stopping him. His play group Playpen was formed in 1984, for which he directed many Greek classical and contemporary plays. His first play Where There's a Will was penned in 1986 and staged in 1988. From then on, he turned out one play every year, until he paused for breath in 1993. He then commenced scriptwriting for the Cinema, the Television and the radio, while his plays were getting published, translated and staged in India and U.K. as well. Besides being fully engaged in theatrical work, Dattani teaches Summer sessions at Portland University, U.S.A, and also contributes to B.B.C. Radio.

Let us take a brief look at the plays written by Dattani.

1.4 Dattani's Plays

Colleges and theatre groups in urban India are beleaguered by countless problems primary among them is the fact that these theatre groups do not have too many plays written in an Indian setting. Little wonder therefore that the works of Karnad, Sircar, Tendulkar and Dattani are welcomed with open arms. Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions and Other Plays is a collection of four plays written around 1988 to 1993 and they address various concerns, anxieties and issues of 20th century India in a very complex and compelling manner. In Where There's a Will, the ghost of an autocratic old man who has willed his property to his mistress overhears the unpleasant truth about what his nearest and dearest really think of him. Dance Like a Man harks back to a time when dancing was considered a harlot's (prostitute's) pursuit (profession) and reveals the duplicity of society's moral standards. Bravely Fought The Queen is a bleak play depicting (describing) the stunted lives of the members of a joint family and the troubled relationships that dishonesty breeds.

Final Solutions, a play about Hindu Muslim conflict, was slated for the Deccan Herald Theatre festival in Bangalore in December 1992. A week before it was scheduled to be staged, the Babri Masjid was demolished. The festival organisers fearing calamitous repercussions (terrible consequences) rejected the play. It was finally staged the following year in Bombay and Bangalore. I'm sure, you are all familiar with the sudden upsurge (rise) of Hindu-Muslim riots and communal violence in recent times. Is it escalating (increasing)? Have you thought why?

In Tara, a mother is forced to choose her son's welfare over her daughter's well-being, and this wreaks havoc (destroys) in the lives of the whole family. It is noteworthy that the famously selective Ravi Dayal should have chosen to bring out Tara in a hard-cover edition. Night Queen was written for the 1996 annual literary supplement of The Telegraph in Calcutta. His latest play is Thirty Days in September, which, besides being the most serious of his plays, is also Dattani's shortest full length play, all of 95 minutes. Closer to production is Do the Needful which will be aired on BBC 4 and which Dattani plans to stage in Bangalore next year (2002).

So we have before us a talented playwright and director with a keen sense of the theatre and its efficacy (efficient use) in driving home (conveying) social, political and psychological issues that concern us.

Let us now become familiar with the characters of the play Final Solutions, before we begin to study it in detail.

1.1 The Characters in "Final Solutions"

- a) Daksha: The earlier self of Hardika, a 15 year old girl, whose father had died during the Partition (1948) and who was married off to Hari.
- b) Hari: Daksha's husband, whom she considers silly. He does not appear on the stage.
- c) Gaju, Wagh: Daksha's in laws, whom she hates but cannot oppose. They do not appear on the stage.
- d) Kanta: Maid in the household of Daksha's in-laws, who causes her much trouble by carrying tales. She does not appear on the stage.
- e) Zarine: Daksha's dearest friend, who later causes her much sorrow and bitterness.
- e) Hardika: Daksha's present self, about forty years older (in 1988). She is an elderly, embittered woman, a miserable product of all her past humiliations and harassments.
- f) Ramnik Gandhi: Son of Hardika, who claims that he is liberal-minded. He own a shop.
- g) Aruna: wife of Ramnik Gandhi, A typical, conservative Hindu woman very proud of her inheritance (religion).
- h) Smita: daughter of Ramnik and Aruna. A rebel at heart, she has suppressed her love for Babban, and feels too stifled or suffocated by the rituals of her religion.
- i) Bobby: or Babban, who is actually ashamed of his religion
- j) Javed: Bobby's friend, a very impulsive Muslim youth who volunteers as a riot rouser.
- h) Tasneem: Javed's sister whom Bobby intends to marry. She does not appear on the stage.
- i) Noor Mohammed: father of Javed and Tasneem. He does not appear on the stage.
- j) Mob/Chorus: It is a group of five men with five Hindu masks and five Muslim masks which they wear alternately according to the context.

Go through the above list and become familiar with the people whom you are going to meet or hear about shortly, as also the relationship that exists between them. That will help you to understand and enjoy the play better. Also remember the name Alyque Padamsee. He is a well known stage – personality and media person. He has directed Final Solutions and also Tara.

Now, what is the primary goal of drama? Is it for reading or for representations on the stage? A play is primarily meant to be staged. Each kind of drama has it won theatrical or stage conditions. The Greek Theatre was very different from the Elizabethan theatre (for which Shakespeare wrote his plays). You may consult Allardyce Nicoll's World Drama for details. The modern theatre is a hot bed of all sorts of improvisations, modifications and innovations. Dattani is not an exception. You should have some acquaintance with the major devices and dramatic techniques that he employs in Final Solutions. Let us briefly discuss some of them in the next section. However, I suggest that you refer to a standard book of critical terms like M.H. Abrams' A Glossary of Literary Terms for details.

1.6 Some technical terms explained

- a) Chorus: Associated with ancient Greek tragedy, the Chorus was a group of people wearing masks who sang while performing dance like movements. To predict the future, comment on the present, to interpret actions and characters are some of the functions of the Chorus. T.S.Eliot had made effective use of the classical chorus in his plays "Murder in the Cathedral" "Family Re-union" etc. The mob is a sort of Chorus performing similar functions.

b) Three Unities: The Unity of Action, given by Aristotle, presupposes that the play should contain only one main plot so that unity and concentration of effect can be achieved. The Unity of Place implies that the stage must represent the same location or scene of action throughout the play. The Unity of Time means that the time represented on the stage say, three to four hours should coincide with the time taken for the events to happen in real life. At the most, events requiring twenty four hours to happen may be shown in a play. The Unities of Time and Place were added later on. Modern criticism does not consider these ancient conventions highly. Shakespeare, as a rule, avoided them.

c) Well-made play: It is a play having a clear structure, with a solid plot, characters and other accessories so that there is an organic unity about it.

d) Stream of consciousness: In this method the free flow of thought, emotions, ideas, motives etc that pass through the character's mind are described by the dramatist as they occur. The result is that often there is an apparent lack of coherence (connection) of order. Flashback, interior monologue etc are related to it. It is a way of flitting between the past and the present.

Revise the Unit thoroughly before your go on to the next one.

UNIT TWO

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF ACTS I & II

2.0 Objections

- At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:
- (i) form a general idea of the first two Acts of the play:
 - (ii) become familiar with Dattani's dramatic technique: and
 - (iii) understand how dangerous and horrible communal hatred can be.

2.1 Introduction

Read the previous Unit thoroughly before you begin to study this one. Next read Act I Final Solutions and jot down whatever thoughts, ideas, impressions or emotions come to your mind. Now we shall study the Act in detail. As it is a stage play, setting assumes great significance. Try to imagine the scene the set-up, the characters etc as you read the play. That is the best way to enjoy it - in your 'pocket theatre'! I mean your mind. Let us begin.

2.2 Act I: Notes and Explanation

Like Bernard Shaw, Dattani gives us very elaborate stage-setting details. The stage is dominated by a horse shoe or crescent-shaped ramp with the ends sloping to stage level. (A ramp is a sloping way from one level to another, usually used instead of stairs). Most of the action of the Mob/Chorus takes place on the ramp. They are to remain on the stage in a crouched or stylized position throughout the play.

What constitutes the Chorus? Five men with ten masks - five Hindu masks and five Muslim masks. The audience is being introduced to the sensitive theme of the play quite effectively. The mob is dressed in black. Can you guess why?

Within the confines of the ramp, there is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhis with just wooden blocks for furniture. However, upstage, possibly on a raised level, there is a detailed kitchen and pooja room. On another level there is a room with a roll top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one, suggesting that the period is the late 1940s. Do you think that this period is significant in the history of modern India? in what sense?

So we are in front of a large multi-level stage. Let us come to the characters. Who are Daksha and Hardika? They are one and the same person - in two different periods of life. Hardika is the grandmother appearing in the play now; Daksha is her former or earlier self, as a girl of fifteen Hardika is so positioned and lit, that the entire action is seen through her eyes. Each time Daksha appears, we should understand that the old woman is reminding or remembering her old days.

How does the play begin? We find Daksha reading aloud what she has just written in her diary Hardika is seated motionless, on the same level. What is the significance? Why do people write diaries? Do you? What does Daksha read out? See how she

addresses the book as "Dear Diary". Perhaps you have heard of Anne Frank who called her diary "Kitty". It is today that young Daksha has dared to express her thoughts in writing. The date is 31 March, 1948. What is its importance in the history of Modern India?

We come to know that Daksha invented the diary in order to reveal her secrets. Listen to her words, choked with emotion: "All my dreams have been shattered.... I can never be a singer, like Noor Jehan." Why? "Hari's family is against my singing film songs". We learn that she got married to Hari only last August. She is treated as a total non-entity. Daksha then goes on to write about the Partition that immediately followed Indian Independence. She recollects how her father had fought for our freedom and was happy they were rid of the British. "He said that before leaving, they had let loose the dogs." What do you think Daksha's father meant? At that time she hated to think that he was referring to her friends' fathers ---- the Muslims.

That night in Hussainabad in their ancestral house, there was so much commotion stone-throwing and wanton (wasteful) damage, that the young girl was forced to see for herself that the Muslims too hated the Hindus. See how bitter "experiences" can destroy "innocence" Are you familiar with William Blake?

Daksha slowly closes her diary and leaves it close to Hardika's feet. She rises and stands behind Hardika, her back to the audience. What does her action signify? Hardika's first speech that follows is significant: "After forty years..... I opened my diary again. And I wrote. A dozen pages before. A dozen pages now. A young girl's childish scribble. An old woman's shaky scrawl. Yes, things have to changed that much". Can you infer the significance of these lines? Does Dattani have any special reason to make Hardika utter them?

Our attention shifts to the Mob. Note how light and dark play a key part in shifting emphasis from time to time. The mob wears Hindu masks. You have to read or hear the dialogues to appreciate the effect. What do we understand from their frenzied (excited) speech? It is that as the rath or chariot passed in procession through the lanes as it had done in the last forty years, they (the Muslims) stoned it and broke it; moreover some one stabbed the poojari in the stomach. How do you react? Perhaps, you remark in a dull, resigned manner, "Oh, such things happen every day, that one hardly notices," Well Dattani's intention is to rouse the audience from its inertia and smug complacency. Also, can you now guess the year of action?

Obviously it is $1948 + 40 = 1988$

Lights now focus on the living room of the Gandhis. Note how the T.V. and the phone serve to define the modern set-up in contrast to Daksha's old fashioned desk. We meet Ramnik Gandhi and his daughter Smita. We learn that following the 'chariot' incident, curfew has been clamped. Smita's friend Tasneem has phoned to say that the Muslim girl's hostel was bombed; the police did not come; however no one was hurt etc. Note the way Ramnik tries to reason with his daughter; "Smita, I think your friend is over-reacting." The girl is made to realise that she herself was quite excited. Ramnik's words that follow are apt: "Now you know how these things get started. Very true, panic or extreme fear can make our imaginations too far-fetched and thus we see things in highly exaggerated or horrible forms. That's mob psychology for you!

Note how the phone gets disconnected as Ramnika explains to Tasneem's father Noor Ahmed that his daughter is safe, invites him to his place and so on. The line goes dead as soon as he utters the words "even in your community". What do you infer? What follows? Well, this time it is the Chorus with the Muslim masks. We here their indignant, emotional outbursts. The chariot fell in their street, a manufacturing defect, and they were being unjustly blamed. "We are neither idol makers nor breakers". See how the communal tension is slowly building up.

Our focus is shifted to Hardika. She contrasts the present commotion with the past one. "It was those two boys running away who frightened me". Whom is she referring to? Wait a little more for the plot to unfold. The old lady observes the wretched pride in the eyes of those two boys who were begging for their lives. It brings back old memories to her mind. Why?

We are now in Ramnik's living room. We meet Ramnik's wife Aruna for the first time. Observe the conversation between husband and wife. Aruna wants Smita to spend some time with her grandmother (Baa or Hardika). Ramnik opposes. "I don't want her telling my daughter that those people are all demons". Do you suspect any resentment between mother and son? See the way Aruna reacts when a lizard falls on the milk vessel. "We will have to throw the milk away.....knowing that ugly creature was so near it". What impression do you form of her character? One bit of exchange is of particular significance. Listen:

Ramanik: I don't like the way you impose things on Smitha.

Aruna : How will she learn otherwise? She will end up like you.

Note how the couple is presented in the matter of religion. When Aruna says, "My head is going round, round, round", her husband retorts, "Nobody is asking you to pray all day".

Aruna : Who do you think is protecting this house?

Ramanik : Who do you think is creating all this trouble?

This indeed is a very pertinent (relevant) point of debate. Is religion good? Or does it lead to hatred and destruction? Haven't you heard of religious fanaticism?

We are now in the pooja room area. The Chorus with the Muslim masks fade in while Smita and Aruna are preoccupied in their religious rites---putting the idol of Lord Krishna to sleep, reading the Gita etc. Aruna tells Smita to be pure in mind and deeds. What effect, do you think, is produced when the Chorus whispers, "We are neither idolmakers not idol - breakers"?

Hardika enters the living room. She is unable to sleep. Why? She cautions her daughter to be careful. "The dogs have been let loose". What makes her say so? There is a noise in the street. Aruna and Smita exit in a hurry. We are once again shown Daksha waiting away furiously in her diary. We come to know to her maid servant Kanta; her mother-in-law-Gaju who walks like a baby elephant, splashing plenty of water while bathing not allowing anyone to touch her after her bath and before her pooja; her father-in-law Wagh who never bathes, but snores; her husband Hari "who has the brains of a silly goat"; her friend Zarine, very pretty and good; Daksh's love of film songs, her lack of freedom to sing aloud, and so on.

A Noor Jehan song is being played. The Hindu Chorus is shown. The song ends abruptly with the sound of a stone breaking the record. Try to figure out the effect of

such devices. Two young men appear on the other side of the ramp. Who are they? Yes, they are Javed and Bobby. Are you suddenly reminded of the two boys who frightened Hardika? The encounter between the two youngsters and the angry Hindu Chorus that follows is very dramatic. We learn that the two men have come from *jeevnagar*. Now they are at *Amargaon*. Do the place names strike you as having any special significance? Note the way the mob attacks them, snatches their possessions, suspects them leaving the two young men terribly frightened. Chorus All. You pray to a god you do not know! you pray to a nothing.....And you seek to destroy your gods! Drive them out! Kill the sons of swine.

Is the allegation fair? Is it natural? You can imagine what follows. The two men are chased and hit; they rush to Ramnik's house, pound at the door crying out desperately for help. Who opens the door at last? It is Ramnik. Remember, this a significant point. The quick altercation (exchange of words) between Hardika and Daksha is both excellent and highly dramatic. Hardika is angry that her unfeeling son let in the two men (Muslims) into her house, after they had killed her father. The young Daksha who loved her best friend Zarine suffers due to communal hatred.

The tempo (pace) of the scene suddenly rises. The mob clamours (shouts) to Ramnik to open the door and throw the two traitors out. Aruna wants the police to be called. Javed and Bobby plead to be protected. Smita is asked to leave. And Ramnik refuses to open the door. When his wife asks him "What are you trying to prove?" he says, "I have to protect them I need to protect them." Why do you think he says so? Read on and you will know why. Meanwhile observe how Hardika responds to the two youngsters; "I didn't like the one called Javed. The minute I saw him, I knew he was no good. And the other one. I was frightened of him.....What was he thinking? Of us? That we were all the same? Javed didn't think, I hated him." Why is the old lady so resentful (angry)? Has it anything to do with her father's death?

We learn that the two young men are slightly injured; the mob had beaten them up. To Ramnik's enquiries, they say that they are from *jeevanagar*. Bobby has just finished college. Javed is a school drop-out. A stone comes crashing in. A Voice shouts "*Haram Ki aulad*" meaning bastard, a derogatory expression. Ramnik is undisturbed, whereas Aruna is agitated Listen:

Aruna (to Ramnik) Why do you bring so much trouble on our heads?

Ramnik: What do you want me to do? Throw them out so they, all be butchered Pause.

Aruna (Softly) No.

What does this passage tell you about Aruna's character? Is she cruel? Is she rear natural?

She agrees with her husband that they should at least try and be civilised. But when Ramnik asks her to bring the two men a glass of water, Aruna stares at him as if he has asked her to go and kill someone. Bobby becomes defensive and says they are not thirsty. Javed remarks sarcastically that he is not thirsty. And what does Aruna do? She goes to the matka (earthen pot) and quickly pours out water into two glasses and places them very delicately in front of the two men. Javed and Bobby quickly gulp down the water. Clearly they were thirsty. Then why did they lie? Aruna is aghast (shocked).

She was sure they would not drink. She asks them sarcastically if they would like to have some more water? Observe the way she told the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers on the sides? which have not been touched by their lips. She takes them away and keeps them separate from the other glasses. Do you think Dattani is exaggerating Aruna's rigidly religious and orthodox attitude to caste and community? I don't think so. Sad to say, but there do exist, even in modern times several Arunas especially among the older generations. Dattani gives us one more illustration in the same scene. She refuses to believe that the two youngsters have been divested (robbed) of all their money by the mob. "They might have knives.....Don't go near them." She cautions Ramnik. Listen to the next dialogue:-

Ramnik: Have you eaten? (Pause) Are you hungry?

Aruna stands between them. It is quite obvious she won't give them any food.

Ramnik: I asked you a question (Pause) Are you hungry?

Bobby (fighting tears, but with dignity) Please! Don't Don't do this!

This is an excellent instance of telling dialogue. It is particularly effective when rendered on stage with apt histrionic interpretation (ability to act and talk). The two utterances of Ramnik are similar in construction and content, yet there is all the difference in tone---- a movement from a routine question asked out of politeness to urgency and deep concern. What about Bobby's reaction? Is it this that Hardika earlier refers to as "their wretched pride?" Let me recall some of her words in the same passage: "They will hate us for protecting them. Asking for help makes them feel they are lower than us.... They want to be superior." How do you react to these statements? Is it that people like Bobby are made to feel inferior by the likes of Aruna?

The Act ends quite dramatically. Hardika enters. The two youngsters stand up. The shouting in the street continues. The spotlight is shifted to Daksha, banging on a door. Listen:

Daksha: (Sobbing) I promise! I won't do it again I promise! Let me out!

Hardika: Why did you let them in? Why?

Hardika: Why did you let them in? Why?

Once more, here we have another piece of brilliant stage-dialogue with all the undertones of contrasts in context, situation and station in life. As the Chorus addresses Ramnik as a mad man warning him that the youngsters will stab him in the back and rape his daughter, Smita makes a cool, dramatic entry. She exchanges greetings with Javed and Bobby. As she listens to the mob screaming "Throw them out", Ramnik looks at the two men uncertainly. What do you think he doubts or suspects? You will have to read the rest of the play to find out.

We come to the end of Act I. All the characters have been introduced. We have at least a rough idea of each person's nature. What about the theme? Has it been clearly stated? The atmosphere of communal hatred is effectively prepared. But we are yet to

between the past and the present through the "Daksha-Hardika perspectives". Similarly the same set of persons representing Hindus and Muslims in turn is an innovative technique.

Let us now pass on to Act II.

2.3 Act.II: Notes and Explanation

Act.II is a continuation of the previous Act. The characters are all in the same positions as at the end of Act.I. The mob sits here and there on the ramp. From their utterances we understand that uncertainty still prevails, there is heartache; decisions have not yet been taken, the mob doubts their leaders' intentions. Don't you realize that such disturbing, discouraging attitudes are experienced during every riot, public protest, strike. How does media describe such a state of affairs? The situation is tense but under control!

We are back in the living room. Ramnik and Aruna are obviously agitated that Smita did not tell them that she knew the two youngsters. When Smita says evasively that she had met them in college, Aruna screams, "Stop her studies! From now on, she can stay at home!" A typical technique adopted by commercial films and over-excited parents, one might comment! Even Hardika makes matters worse with her cross-questioning. Smita blurts out that Javed is Tasneem's brother and Bobby, actually Babban is Tasneem's finance (lover). She adds: "They used to go out quite often... There's no harm in that, they are getting married any way." Do you observe that Smita is revealing a hidden part of her nature? Try to find out.

Javed says that he does not live with his parents. Hardika wants to know what the two youngsters were doing there in their neighbourhood. She does not believe them when Bobby says they got lost. She does not believe Javed when he apologises for being angry and ungrateful. Listen to the words:-

Hardika: No! He wasn't speaking from his heart... He said it as if he was throwing a weapon at us.

Do you think she is again referring to the "wretched pride" of the victim? However she allows the two men to spend the night in their house adding, "Tomorrow morning get them out of my house!. That is the way I feel." What do you make of her attitude? Is she embittered? She is a little shaky with excitement. "Where were our own people when we needed them?" Her question is pathetic. She is reliving the trauma of her father's death in Hussainabad soon after the partition. Now listen to this speech of hers:

Hardika: that night, I couldn't sleep. I listened. I was angry, that Ramnik was blinded by his ideals. Why did he offer that boy a job in our shop?... Couldn't he see there was more violence in that boy's eyes than those stone throwers' threats? He wasn't just saving two boys from getting killed. This was something else Ramnik was trying to do.

Does the above passage make complete sense to you at this juncture? Perhaps you guess that the boy referred to is Javed. But has Ramnik offered him a job yet? Remember Hardika is reminiscing what has already happened. See how effectively Dattani employs the stream of consciousness method and freely juxtaposes (places side by side) the past and the present. Things will become clear when we come to the end of the

We are back in the living room. Hardika's speech quoted above has to be considered as a sort of soliloquy, for the benefit of the audience. Ramnik holds the floor. He tells Javed, "Old people are so rigid . . . So are the young." He insists that the two youngsters should like the milk he offers. Remember how the lizard had fallen on the milk vessel, much to Aruna's disgust Ramnik's speech is meaningful "Perhaps the offering could have some symbolic significance . . . I have always maintained that if you want peace . . . that is, if you treat peace as a commodity and you go looking for it, you will find it hidden in the armpits of the majority." Do you agree with him? How does he impress you? Idealist? Liberal?

Bobby says that his actual name is Babban. His friends in college used to call him 'Baboon'. Do you know what a baboon means? It is a sort of monkey. Javed remarks that it must feel good to belong to the majority. He explains;

Javed : But sir, it is in your every move. You must know. You can offer milk to us. You can have an angry mob outside your house. You can play the civilized host. Because you know you have peace hidden inside your armpit.

Ramnik : I understand you and I feel sorry

This piece of dialogue is important as it voices the sentiments of the minority group in a multicultural set-up. You might recall how former Indian skipper Mohammed Azharuddin bemoaned that he was being harrassed by the media, because he belonged to the minority. Are such allegations genuine or imaginary?

Ramnik remarks that they have never had this sort of trouble ever before. "My mother tells me there used to be just one Muslim family there before. And now they've never bothered us, until now." Remember, this is an important piece of dialogue Ramnik explains to Javed that the rath yatra started as it does every year from the Vishnu Mandir a few hours before midnight. When it reached Kareem Bagh (note the Muslim connotation) after passing Shanti Road and Nehru Gardens, the trouble started unawares. Some one allegedly threw stones at the idol. Unfortunately the axle of the chariot broke and the idols were broken. Violence followed. Another chariot was to be brought there to pick up the broken idols, but was refused entry. Curfew was imposed and for some reason the idols have been lying there for four days. There were rumours that a poojari was killed, but nothing was mentioned in the news.

In the course of the conversation Bobby remarks that they had come to Amargaon because Javed was looking for a job. See How Ramnik responds:

Ramnik: Perhaps I can help him . . . I have a saree shop in Kapda Bazaar. . . . I could use your help. The shop is all we have now. We had a mill but I got rid of it. I should have gotten rid of the shop and kept the mill You'll like the job What do you say? I would be happy if you say yes it will be my pleasure to give you that job.

What is your response to the above passage? Doesn't it appear that Ramnik is pleading, almost craving to make Javed accept the job? Why? Read on, and it will become clear And how does Javed react? He is overwhelmed, but before he can open his mouth, Smita pounces on him verbally. It's a brilliant piece of dialogue which ought to

be read, no heard on stage for best effects. She blurts out what she has learnt about Javed from his sister Tasneem.

Listen:-

Smita: His father threw him out.... Those.....parties! they hire him! That's how he makes a living. they bring him and many more to the city to create riots. To throw the first stone.

What a bombshell! You can imagine the momentary stunned silence that inevitably follows. Javed moves towards Smita. He starts sobbing and sits down. Hear the rest of the dialogues:-

Javed (to Smita) You betrayed her after all.....You promised her you wouldn't tell... She told you only because you promised.... She was so sure you wouldn't.....(Barely audible) Traitor!

Bobby (to Smita) I had won him over. I had.... almost won him over.

How does the Act end? Smita is horrified (Shocked) at this truth. She cannot speak. She rushes out. Javed knocks down the glass of milk and in frustration pounds his forehead with his fist. Ramnik advances towards Javed. Bobby steps in front of Javed protectively.

What a fantastic closing! It bears testimony to Dattani's theatrical skills. Analyse your feelings when you come to the end of Act II. What do you feel about Smita? Is she justified in exposing Javed? Or is it sheer meanness? She seems to be the proverbial woman who cannot keep a secret! In contrast, how does Bobby rise? A true friend, isn't he, trying to reform Javed. Let me recall two of his earlier utterances in the scene, just before the mob confronts them.

Listen:-

Bobby: I can't believe you didn't know what you were doing.... Listen? I like you. You are my friend. Promise me you will never meet any of those people again.

Javed: I promise. Now just shut up.

Is it clear to you now? Well, we have come to the end of Act II. Study the Unit carefully. We shall continue in the next Unit.

UNIT THREE

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF ACT III

3 o. Objectives

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- (i) form a complete idea of the play:
- (ii) appreciate Dattani's theatrical devices: and
- (iii) discuss the problem of communal disharmony and suggest solutions.

3.1 Introduction

Hope you enjoyed the first two Acts of the play. By now you are familiar with the theme of the play, the various characters etc. But perhaps you still don't know fully about the complex relationships that exists between them. The final Act which we are going to study in this Unit will tie all the loose threads. But before you begin to study this Unit, read the previous Units thoroughly. We shall begin.

3.2. Act III : Notes and Explanation

When the Act begins, we find Javed and Bobby sitting on the floor looking troubled. The Muslim Chorus is on the highest level of the ramp, seated in a prayer position. "Should we be swallowed up . . . melt into anonymity so that they cannot hound us ?" they chant. The Chorus finishes praying and rises to a slow drumbeat. Listen to this poignant utterance of the Chorus !: " A drop of oil cannot merge with an ocean of milk. One reality cannot accept another reality." What is the purport (meaning) of this observation ? Do they mean that no final solution can be found to the Hindu-Muslim discord ? What is your opinion on this issue?

Bobby observes, "Nobody will believe that you have changed." Recall the ending of Act II. Javed seems to suffer the fate of the over sweeping statement: "Once a criminal, always a criminal."

Now Daksha's spotlight fades in. As before she is reading from her diary . She observes that the world may change, but her own in-laws Gaju and Wagh remain where they are. "But things are changing around them." Her husband is a "silly goat" because he wants to stop his studies and join his father in his cloth mill, thereby pleasing his parents. Daksha wants to encourage him to enjoy himself while he is in college. "Not that the world is going to miss a great scholar, but at least I can get some news from him about what is happening with young people nowadays." Note the speaker's sarcasm and contempt for her husband's inferior brains, as well as her natural curiosity to know what is happening in the outside world. There must be some one who is thinking about the country's future. Daksha paints a dull uninspiring picture of her male-dominated household with the brainless and boring men-folk leading an animal existence, looking pompous and speaking intelligently like a complete human being only when their community people come to collect donations for building temples and celebrating festivals. "His whole day of money-making will have meaning for him."

Daksha goes on to mention the financial problems of her friend Zarine's family. Daksha's maid Kanta told her that Zarine's father's dry fruits and mithai shop had caught fire a few months ago. Nobody knows how the fire started. They lost thousands of rupees

Zarine's father had gone to the mill the previous day to ask Wagh for a job. Daksha hopes it will materialise, for then she can march into Zarine's house freely, listen to all her gramophone records and enjoy herself. Note the unexpected fall in the family fortunes of Zarine.

We are back in the living room. Bobby is lying down. Javed is walking about. Ramnik is trying to control his feelings. He questions Javed as to why he became a riot-rouser. "I believed it was a cause for my people", replies Javed, adding sarcastically that he got lakhs for doing it. Do you think he means what he says? Bobby pleads and defend his friend who remains defiant. He refuses to believe when Ramnik tells him that he really cares for him. The job offer is still open. Listen:

Ramnik : But you will have to promise to change your ways

Javed: If I say I have changed, will you believe me?

Recall Bobby's utterance at the beginning of the Act: "Nobody will believe that you have changed."

Can you imagine Javed's predicament? He is not sure that Ramnik (a Hindu) trusts him. When Ramnik tells him that he does not go about throwing stones, note what Javed says:

Javed : But you do something more violent. You provoke! You make me throw stones! Every time I look at you, my bile rises!

Does Javed use the pronoun "You" in a personal sense to mean Ramnik, or does he refer to all Hindus? Ramnik's reply is equally powerful and thought-provoking. Listen:

Ramnik: How dare you blame your violence on other people? You have violence in your mind. Your life is based on violence. Your faith is based.

Now, if this is not "provoking", what else would you call it? Recall in Act I, Ramnik refers to "your community" while talking over the phone to Tasneem's father Noor Mohammed, and he is immediately cut off. Often, subtle violence is more dangerous and hurting than open violence or attack. Are you familiar with the Bhagavad Gita? An expression "Udaseenah" (unconcerned attitude) appears in Chapter XII. 16. Try to find out what it means and how it is relevant in this context.

The verbal fight culminates in (leads to) Ramnik suddenly slapping Javed amidst abuses; and Javed retorts: "You don't hate me for what I do or who I am. You hate me because I showed you that you are not as liberal as you think you are. Do you see Javed's point? Ramnik still feels disturbed that Javed is a riot-rouser and a "hired hoodlum". Javed goes out saying, "I need some air" He looks very vulnerable (weak, open to harm) with his defences down.

Now it is Bobby's turn to explain matters. He tells Ramnik that Javed did not do what he did for money. "They didn't hire him. He volunteered." Ramnik reiterates (repeats) that what he has done is unforgivable. Bobby wants to know why Ramnik repeatedly offers Javed work in his shop, though he condemns him outright (openly), Ramnik evades the question. Bobby goes on to explain that he and Javed grew up together, went to school together. At one time, Javed was smart and cocksure; he was a hero in school. Pathetically he has changed. Bobby tells Ramnik: "If you found his actions repulsive, you are also ---- in some way ---- partly responsible.

Bobby then describes how a minor incident changed Javed for the worse. Once while the boys were playing cricket on the street, the postman, who was in a hurry, asked Javed to deliver a letter to their neighbour. Javed took the letter and opened the gate,

When a voice ordered him to leave it on the wall. The boy backed away, rather frightened. "We all watched as the man came out with a cloth in his hand. He wiped the letter before picking it up, he then wiped the spot on the wall the letter was lying on and he wiped the gate!" Obviously, the boys were shocked, confused. The postman came out of the next house, grinned and told them not to mind, adding, "That man is slightly cracked." The boys heard a prayer bell ringing continuously. It usually meant nothing to them. "But at that moment..... we all heard only the bell". The next day, the neighbour came out screaming on the streets. He was furious (very angry), tears running down his face. Why? "Someone had dropped pieces of meat and bones into his backyard." It is anybody's guess who did it. Tit for tat, one might comment. Bobby says he did not speak to Javed for many days after that "I was frightened of him". They avoided speaking about the incident. "And for Javed he was, in his own eyes--- no longer the neighbourhood hero".

Bobby then explains that though angry, he did not throw meat into the neighbour's backyard. "That's because I was ashamed of being myself. He wasn't." Do you realise how that makes all the difference? And why is Bobby ashamed? "For being who I was. And pretending that I was not a part of my community. For thinking that I could become superior by not belonging." See what complexes religion and caste can plague (trouble) people with. Ramnik is forced to agree that they (Hindus) are at least partly to blame. "You make me feel a criminal in my own home.....We both feel shame." Note the stage directions at this juncture: "Fade out on Ramnik and Bobby, Javed whistles a tune, lost in thought. There is a great sense of pride in him which is at this moment absent in Bobby and Ramnik." What sort of pride? Is it hurt pride?

We come back to Daksha. She recounts her visit to Zarine's house on the pretext of giving a sari to Zarine's mother for embroidery. Zarine's father spent most of the time collecting all his community people. Daksha learnt from Kanta that the man was actually telling people that his shop was burnt down purposely, but he had no proof. "Anyway, I can't really feel sorry for them if he is going to blame his misfortune on others." Why do you think Daksha is so unsympathetic? Is it because she does not know all the facts? However, she has a pleasant time listening to her favourite film songs played on the gramophone, dancing and spinning in delight. She observes that Kanta does not approve of all this. Daksha also knows that Kanta is capable of repeating everything to her in - laws.

We are now in the living room. Bobby and Javed decide to leave. Ramnik refuses to let them go. "There's one important thing I cannot forget.... That you are a criminal." Now, isn't he provoking the boys again? When Ramnik seriously says that he wants to turn Javed over to the police, the boys burst out laughing. See how Javed explains the police action in such cases.

Javed: Arrest me? When they have been looking the other way all along. How do you think we got into the street? In their vans. They will arrest me. Don't worry. To please people like you. And a few innocent (Muslims to please everyone.)

Dou you agree with Javed's portrayal of the police? Is he distorting facts? Or is there a grain of truth in what he says about police-apathy (indifference) or dishonesty? If so, who is to blame? The police force? Who else? Those in power? Ramnik tees that he ought to throw Javed to the mob. This gives the young man a fine chance to unwind himself.

Javed explains to Ramnik that he is a part of the mob. He is no different from them, "I do what they are doing---only on a different street!" When the rath yatra came, he shouted". I had permission to do exactly what I had been asked not to do all my life!

Raise my voice in protest." He now realizes bitterly that "The first screams are of pleasure. Of sensing an unusual freedom. And then.....it becomes nightmarish.....and suddenly you want to get off. But you can't, you don't want it any more.

.....Everyone is alone in their own cycles of joy and terror..... The joy ride gets over and you get off. And you are never sure again". What a brilliant summing up of the frustration and regret of people who turn into rebels and revolutionaries due to circumstances, but who are really good at heart, very human! Do you agree? Javed openly confesses that he hates himself for having been swayed by what now appears to him as cheap sentiments. "They always talked about motherland and fighting to save our faith and how we should get four of theirs for every one of ours".

We come to know that Javed volunteered in the bus. On reaching the outskirts of the city late in the night, they got drunk on country liquor. There were several youths along with him. And I became a hero once again". They arrived at Kareem Bagh minutes before the rath arrived. They took their positions in the crowd. In an Impulse " I hit them hard with stones", I had power", "I moved forward holding the knife close to me not letting go", I moved to the chariot.... I saw the poojari's frightened face.... There were screams all around, and I was screaming too, but no longer with joy, as fear came faster and faster confusing me.... I got nauseous..... I could have..... I let go of my knife..... The knife fell on the ground..... And I watched someone pick up the knife and pierce the poojari"

And what did Bobby do all the while?

Listen:

"I had to stop you... I called out to you! But you were in a trance!.... I pushed the crowds.....I was near him! He was possessed.... I hit him hard!..... He was insane..... I had to stop him..... I was dragged by his force..... I pushed him aside....we escaped in the panic and confusion.

Can you imagine what a terrific effect such powerful dialogues, well-rendered, can have on the stage? How well Dattani brings out mob-psychology! Perhaps you are familiar with the mob in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, How does Bobby emerge in this scene? A sincere friend? See how Ramnik reacts. He moves towards Javed, gently puts his hand on his shoulder and then moves away.

Ramnik: You are brave. Not everyone can get off. For some of us it is not even possible to escape.

The Muslim Chorus is shown carrying one of the Chorus like a dead body being taken for burial. "Is there anyone more unsure, more insecure than us? Oh what a curse it is to be less in number". What is the impact on the audience of this utterance soon after Javed's outpouring?

What function does the Chorus perform here?

Back in the living room, we find Smita and Aruna also. Aruna stares angrily at Javed. Smita apologises to Javed for having betrayed him. Aruna wants to go out and fill up drinking water from the outside tap. Javed offers to help. Note he moves to take the bucket from Aruna, who steps back. He notices her expression.

Javed: Oh, I'm sorry. When will I learn?

What a slap on the cheek for orthodoxy! Can you now understand Javed's predicament? Even when he wishes to reform his past negative attitudes, little things like this can put him off.

Aruna tries to explain her stand to him. Listen:

Aruna: We have nothing against you. It is only that, we have our ways and customs and we are all equal . . . We respect your religion and we wish you well . . . All religion is one. Only the ways to God are many.

How do Aruna's words impress you? Do you feel she is frank? Is she being liberal or broad-minded? Well, we shall see. Listen further:-

Aruna: We don't allow anyone to fill our drinking water. No outsiders . . . We bathe our gods with it . . . It has to be pure. It must not be contaminated.

Imagine you are Javed or Bobby. How would you feel? Note the words "pure" and "contaminated" Are "outsiders" germs or virus? Smita is squirming (feeling uncomfortable). She tells her mother point-blank:

"You are making it worse by explaining". However Aruna is not a person to give in in this matter. In fact she does not feel there is any need to feel offended. Listen to a stretch of important utterances:

Aruna (to Ramnik) How we feel in our house is our business. If they cannot respect it, they must learn to tolerate it.

Bobby: Yes, of course. We understand.

Ramnik: (to Aruna). When I can't tolerate it, how can they?

Smita: Mummy, thank you for making me feel like a rat in a hole.

Observe how this passage brings out different attitudes and perspectives on the issue of caste and religion. In her plain, trusting, orthodox fashion, Aruna expects total freedom in sticking to her views and customs. Is she a bit insensitive to the feelings of the others, of even her husband's and daughter's? Smita, belonging to the younger generation and therefore more exposed to the outside world obviously feels uncomfortable at the blunt manner in which her mother (perhaps unknowingly) humiliates the young men. And observe the ironic understanding of Bobby.

Aruna's attitude to her religion is elaborated further in the following words:

Aruna: It's all very well to have progressive ideas. But are you progressive, or are you drifting? God knows, I don't want all this violence.....For so many generations we have preserved our sanskar (culture) because we believe it is the truth...We must know no other path. And I will not have it all perish to accommodate someone else's faith. I have enough faith and pride to see that it doesn't happen.

Can't a similar speech be made by a spokesman of any religion? Remember, it is such rigid, one-sided, biased ways of thinking that pave the way for religious fanaticism, fundamentalism and communal violence; and this applies to every religion. Aruna proudly says that she won't even harm a goat or a chicken; but she has no compunctions (prick of conscience) about hurting the feelings of Javed and Bobby. This hypocritical, callous attitude also applies to all religions.

Mother and daughter argue hotly. Aruna criticises Smita of not being proud of her inheritance. Smita hits back: "How can you expect me to be proud of something which stifles everything else around it?" Yes! May be I am prejudiced because I do not belong.....I can see so clearly how wrong you are." She explains to her mother that living like a Hindu, praying, fasting and purifying herself all day, does stifle her terribly. Her mother feels threatened and insecure in front of the two young boys because they don't share her faith. Smita is glad she got a chance to speak out at last.

Aruna: (hurt) I never knew I stifled you.

Smita: I didn't mean to hurt you. But I can't help it if you are. I am not sorry I said it. I'm glad.

Aruna is forced to accept defeat. The Hindu Chorus echo her insecurity and frustration: "Our future is threatened. There is so much that is fading away. We cannot be complacent about our glorious past seeing us safely through.....Our bellowing pales in comparison to the whisper of a pseudo - secularist who is in league with the people who brought shame to our land....He is still a threat."

Now, this is a very important speech. Who is a pseudo - secularist? One who pretends not to believe in any particular religion, or one who pretends that all religions are one and so on. Dattani seems to suggest that if religious fundamentalism is a curse, pseudo- secularism also is a big threat. Both are dangerous attitudes, being opposed to each other, and therefore threats to peaceful co-existence. Do you see the point?

We are back in the living room. Ramnik has thought over what Javed had said. He now realises that the youngster is an angry impulsive rebel on the one hand, but a hero on the other. "You have every right to protect your interests." Aruna is lost in her brooding. "Where do I go from here?" She asks her daughter, adding that it is all her karma. Smita makes her stand clear at last. Listen to her:

Smita : I tolerated your prejudices only because you are my mother please don't burden me any more ! I can't take it.

See how Bobby responds:-

Bobby: (to Smita) I never could express my feelings as well as you do. May be my religion oppressed me far more.

Anything that is imposed or thrust on a person---whether it is studies or work or marriage or religion or what not--- is likely to have a negative outcome. Sensitive souls like Smita and Bobby seem to refer to that predicament.

Smita further explains that she did not reveal her feelings to her father, though she knew he would have understood her, because it would have been a victory for him over her mother. "And I couldn't do that to her." Her mother would have felt so weak and frustrated. Bobby and Smita stand on the ramp, he with the bucket and she with the pot. Javed's utterance at this juncture is revealing:

Javed (to Aruna) you said the same thing. To her. What I told Babban.....she was not proud of her---what did you call it? inheritance. I said religion.....We are not very different. You and me. We both feel pride.

See how the situation is well balanced. There are fundamentalists in all religions, and pseudo-secularism too is universal.

Daksha is reading from her diary. Her husband and in-law seem to be keeping a secret from her. Hari did not appear happy when she suggested that they should help Zarine's father. He abused her when she wanted to know why Zarine's father had come to their mill.

Now we have Bobby, Smita and Javed on the ramp. We come to know that Bobby and Tasneem intend to marry. Javed had precisely come to Amargaon to meet Smita.

Javed: To me, my sister's happiness means more than anything else....So I just wanted to ask you whether there is anything between you and Bobby----still.

Smita assures him that there isn't much between the two. It was just one evening. "A conversation that got a little personal. Nothing more."

Bobby: I want to ask you something too. It didn't work between us. Was it for personal reasons or.... are we trying to make it more convenient for ourselves.

Smita: you mean....because of the problems it would create.....No.

Bobby: That is relief.

Smita insists that Javed should fill "God's water" to prove that act is not going to put an enternal curse on their family". The three of them are relaxed and happy. Then follows a short scene between Hardika and Smita. The old lady tells her that she has been listening to everything happening there. She remarks that Smita is very lucky because she has freedom but adds that the girl is also very foolish think. She can create her freedom.

Smita: Daadi, it must have been different in your times.

Hardika: It was but I was lucky. I said what I felt. Went where I wanted to go... Chose my own friends.

Do you note a strain of similarity between Smita and her grand mother? This similarity is particularly evident as it follows soon after often confrontation with her mother (whom she loves very much). Recall some of her utterances.

Smita: Come on mummy. This is time for strength! I am so glad these two dropped in. We would never have spoken about what makes us so different from each other. We would have gone on living our lives out with our petty similarities.

We now see Daksha looking very troubled. We come to know that she and Hari haven't been talking for days after their previous 'fight'. Daksha has lost faith in Kanta. One day she goes to Zarine's house to find out what is wrong. "I could tell by their faces that something had happend." The women folk were going to have meals. "Come, sit with us!" Zarine told her and Daksha noticed that her eyes were red. Her mother never looked at her. "How cruel could she be! Asking me to..... sit with them. She knew I wouldn't. She wanted me to go away, I couldn't. I sat with them.....my hands not touching the table. I couldn't bear the silence and I asked them what the matter was. They wouldn't answer. My head started spinning from the smell and I could feel my stomach churning". Daksha goes on to say that she vomitted. Instead of helping her, Zarine only scremed, "Are you happy?" It was only later that she learnt from Kanta that Wagh and Hari had felt sorry for them and even offered to help them by buying their burnt up little shop. Zarine's father wanted much more for it. It was not possible to give him what he demanded and hence the resentment. Daksha is totally disillusioned with those" wretched people".

Do you observe how small and big events can bring out people's fangs and spite? Can you imagine Daksha's "humiliation" when she is asked to sit with meat-eaters? Remember the poojari who screamed and wailed because pieces of meat were thrown into his backyard. Even such incidents are enough to spark off [start] animosity [enmity] and communal violence. Why do you think Zarine asks her close friend "Are you happy?" Could there be deeper reason for her bitterness? Recall that Zarine's father feels that their shop has been purposely burnt down? If so, so by whom? And why? Well we'll wait and see.

Now we see Hardika in the living room. Smita is not present. Bobby and Javed enter while Daksha's "horrible people" can be heard a few times. What is the implication? Is Hardika transferring her resentment from Zarine's family to all Muslims including Javed and Bobby? During the conversation Hardika tells the boys: "Have you ever

thought of going to Pakistan?... There you can live the way you want. Without blaming other people for your failures."

What do you think about Hardika's suggestion? Do you think it is a final solution? What if all Muslims went to Pakistan, and all Hindus stayed back in India and so on, will clashes and conflicts end once and for all? For instance, what about caste conflicts? Don't they exist in the same religion? Think.

Hardika tells them that they should have done that years ago just as her family had left Hussainabad soon after Partition. When she says, "My father died in Hussainabad. Do you want to know why?", Bobby retorts angrily, "It doesn't concern us" Three times. Now listen to a fine piece of revealing dialogue:- Javed [quietly] You blame us for what happened fifty years ago. Today, if something happens to my sister, can I blame you?

Hardika: What happens to your sister doesn't concern me... she deserves it! Zarine deserves.... What did you say your sister's name was?

Javed: Tasneem.

Hardika: Oh. I thought it was Zarine.

Is Hardika's transferred resentment clear to you? Have you heard of the fable of the wolf and the goat-kid, where the wolf tells the kid that he is going to eat him up for having stirred the puddle of mud water? When the kid pleads that it had not been born then; what does the wolf say? "It must have been your grand-father then. So you deserve to die! Fables seem to repeat themselves, don't they?"

The spotlight is now on Hardika and Daksha. Daksha is barely seen as she enters her room, terrified. We understand that Kanta had lied that Daksha had eaten in Zarine's house, for which Hari is hitting her. Daksha's live dialogues are juxtaposed with Hardika's most bitter memories through a quick exchange of short speeches. Read them and enjoy the effect. Hardika's words are full of simmering hatred and resentment towards a whole community. Listen: "I lost forever in the eyes of my husband because of the pride of your people. I was ruined..... confined..... like a dog that had gone mad....I hate the way you look! I hate you the way you dress! I hate the way you eat!"

Do you realise how utterly dangerous such transferred anger and hostility can be? Now compare this with what Javed experienced because of the poojari. Is there any difference? Transferring resentment and ill will on scapegoats appears to be a universal phenomenon. When Ramnik advises his mother not to blame Javed and Bobby for her suffering and humiliations, Hardika says, "I cannot forget. I just cannot forget." Unfortunately, human beings have a very sharp memory for all the wrong and undesirable things. The two boys look visibly defeated.

Next follows another powerful scene. There is an ominous silence. Aruna enters, her hair wet and loose, looking fresh after a bath. She moves to the pooja room and opens the door. Smita enters. Aruna rings the prayer-bell, shattering the silence. Javed stops. He stiffens. Bobby realises what is happening to him. Do you realise too? Remember the "letter" incident.

Bobby: There is one final deed to be done, Javed. He deliberately removes his footwear and advances towards the pooja room slowly. "God knows, my intentions are pure...It has to be done to prove to them..... that we also believe. Amidst Aruna's cries and protests, Bobby suddenly picks up the image of Krishna which is tiny enough to sit in his palm. Listen to some of Bobby's words as he shows the image to every one.

Bobby : Your God ! My flesh is holding him ! Look Javed !... He does not burn me to ashes ! He does not cry out from the heavens saying He has been contaminated !... He knows I cannot harm Him ... I don't believe in Him but He believes in me ... He smiles at our trivial pride and our trivial shame ... See, Javed ! He doesn't humiliate you He welcomes the warmth of my hand ... I hold Him who is sacred to them, but I do not commit sacrilege. [To Aruna] you can bathe Him day and night, you can splash holy waters on Him , but you cannot remove my touch from His form. You cannot remove my smell with sandal paste and attars and fragrant flowers because it belongs to a human being who believes, and tolerates, and respects what other human beings believe. That is the strongest fragrance in the world !

!! The action freezes. Bobby slowly and tenderly replaces the image in the pooja room. As you may expect, Aruna breaks down lamenting "Is there nothing left that is sacred in this world?" Bobby gives her a fitting, reassuring reply:

Bobby : The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing, can be destroyed [To Hardika]. And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate.

Study the above scene carefully . Think over Bobby's ideas. Ask yourself: Is there a Hindu God and a Muslim God, just as we have Hindus and Muslims? Who created them? Man ? Are they mere mental projections ? What is the essence of any religion ? Is it the external elaborate rituals or the underlying faith in the one source of all living beings, as children of the same Father, as immortal souls ? Perhaps such thoughts can help us to arrive at a final solution.

Hardika slowly walks to the living room. Bobby and Javed have left. She continues in the old vein "I still am not willing to forget. Days have passed since that night and not one of us has forgotten." So we come to know that nothing has apparently changed . The final scene is between Hardika and Ramnik. The mother asks the son why he has not gone to his shop. After years of suppression, Ramnik confesses at last. Listen:

Ramnik: I just can't enter that shop any more. I can't bear thinking about it. ... I didn't have the face to tell anyone. For me there's no getting off It's their shop. It's the same burnt - up shop we bought from them, at half its value And we burnt it. Your husband. My father. And his father. They had it burnt in the name of communal hatred. Because we wanted a shop. Also they learnt that ... those people were planning to start a mill like our own... When those boys came here... I wanted to tell them that they are not the only ones who have destroyed. I just couldn't. I don't think I have the face to tell anyone.

See how well the suspense has been maintained right up to the end. Can you understand Ramnik's predicament? Do you think he is to blame? I am sure you will agree with me that it takes a very large heart and abundant courage to own up (accept) one's mistakes. How many can, that is the question.

And now to the last part of the play. Ramnik explains to his mother that it was not that Zarine's people hated her because of false pride or arrogance (recall Daksha's outburst about those wretched people) It was anger.

Hardika (crushed) : Why didn't you tell me? All these years.

Ramnik : You have to live with this shame only for a few years now.

Hardika : Do you think... do you think those boys will ever come back?

Ramnik : If you call them they will come. But then again -- if it's too late -- they may not.

The lights fade out slowly and go off last on Javed and Bobby who have been standing up the ramp amidst the Mob/Chorus and their masks.

So, how does the play end? Do you think a final solution will emerge? No harm in trying, isn't it? if there is mutual willingness to forget and tolerate, don't you think things will improve?

Hope you enjoyed reading/seeing the play. Study the notes carefully. We shall discuss various aspects of the play in the next Unit.

UNIT FOUR

"FINAL SOLUTIONS" --- A DISCUSSION

4.0 Objectives

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to :

- i) discuss various themes and techniques with respect to the play.
- ii) answer different questions based on the text: and
- iii) think very seriously about the problems of communal violence and suggest remedies.

4.1 Introduction

Hope you have been gone through the previous Units carefully. I'm sure the play has made you think, to react to the problems presented in it. Now, what sort of world do we live in today? Is it much different from the world presented in the play? Again, are such conflicts exclusively found in our country? Or is it a universal phenomenon, a tragically ugly one? If so, what are the basic causative factors? Hatred? Fear? Intolerance? Why? Well, in this Unit we shall discuss these and other related topics based on the play. Let us see if we can thrash out (find) any definite solution or at least some preventive measure for this global problem.

As you would have noticed, the method of narration has not been chronological, that is, in the order in which the incidents happen. So, let us summarise the plot so as to get a clear picture.

4.2 Brief Outline of the Play

Daksha was a young girl of fifteen in 1948. During the Partition following Independence, her father was killed. So they had to leave their ancestral home in Hussainabad and come away to India. She was married to Hari. In Daksha's view, he was silly as a goat, but due to convention, she was afraid of her lord and master. She did not think highly of her in-laws Waugh and Gaju, but again, she could not stand up to (oppose) them. In short, she was a non-entity in their house. Their servant Kanta would report all her doings and non-doings to them and get her into trouble.

Daksha loved to sing film songs. She had frequently visited a Muslim household. The eldest daughter Zarine was her best friend. Daksha would listen to Zarine's gramophone records and enjoy herself. All on a sudden things changed. Zarine's father's shop was burnt down and her family was in financial trouble. Daksha heard (she had no way of knowing for certain) that her father-in-law had offered to buy the shop in order to help them, but that Zarine's people wanted a higher amount.

One day, before she knew all this, Daksha went to Zarine's house to find out what their trouble was. The atmosphere was rather hostile. Zarine asked her to sit down at table while they ate, a thing she would never have done usually. Daksha felt humiliated. The smell of their food made her vomit. Zarine would not help. Later Kanta reported that Daksha had actually eaten in Zarine's house. Her husband hit her and locked up in their house.

When the play opens, it is the year 1988. Daksha has grown into Hardika, an elderly lady in her late fifties. Her father's death, Zarine's insult and her sufferings in her husband's house have made her a rather hard, embittered, resentful and totally intolerant woman. The entire play is presented as her reminiscence. She is living in Amargaon with her son Ramnik Gandhi, his wife Aruna and grand daughter Smita.

One evening, violence erupts (starts) during a rath yathra. Some riot-rousers stone the chariot making it slant, the idols break; some one stabs the poojari. Cufrew is imposed. That night two Muslim youths Javed and Bobby come to Ramnik's house seeking asylum (shelter) from the furious mob. While Ramnik obliges, Aruna is adamant. She does not want to invite trouble. Smita is forced to admit that she knows them, much to her parent's tension.

As the play proceeds there are lots of allegations, counter allegations, arguments and outbursts. We come to know that Javed had been a hero at school. Once while they were playing cricket, the postman asked him to drop a letter into his neighbour's house. As he opened the gate, a voice ordered him to leave it on the wall. The man came out took the letter with a cloth, wiped the spot on the wall where Javed had placed it etc. All this bewildered and angered the boy. The next day he threw pieces of meat in the man's backyard. Gradually, he became a school drop-out and volunteered to throw stones during riots for he believed he was doing it for the sake of their religion.

It now turns out that it was Javed who had stoned the chariot. Naturally the entire Hindu household is indignant. On learning about his past, Ramnik offers him a job in his shop in spite of Smita's protest. Aruna makes it very obvious that she treats the two boys as outsiders. Hardika is hostile throughout. She tells them that if they had gone to Pakistan, they could have been happier.

From a conversation between the boys and Smita, we understand that Javed's sister Tasneem and Bobby are going to marry. Javed wants to know if there is anything between Smita and Bobby, for he is concerned about his sister's happiness more than anything else. Smita reassures him that there is nothing at all.

Early next morning, Aruna opens the pooja room and starts ringing the bell. Javed stiffens. Bobby deliberately enters the pooja room (after removing his footwear) takes the little idol of Krishna in his hand to the shock of Aruna. He proves that God is too great to bother about our petty prejudices and narrow-mindedness. He and Javed leave later on.

A number of days and nights have passed. Hardika asks Ramnik why he has not gone to his shop. At last Ramnik confesses that he cannot bear to enter his shop. It is actually the shop which his father and his grand father (Hari and Wagh) had deliberately burnt down in the name of communal hatred, because they had wanted a shop. He had not told his mother in order to spare her all the shame. To her question whether they will come back he gives a positive reply, however adding that it is too late, they may refuse.

Compare the chronological summary with the play as it stands and see what changes of techniques Dattani has used. Also ask yourself what effects he has achieved as a result. Let us discuss the various themes presented in the play and the innovative techniques used by Dattani with great effect.

4.3 Themes and Ideas

1. We have already noted that because of the troubles in Ayodhya and Bombay, the organisers of an annual theatre festival in Bangalore, eased off (eliminated) Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* from their programme as they felt it was a touchy subject- the issue of communal tension. Though the play is ostensibly (on the surface) a depiction (description) of the events that take place one night when two Muslim boys take refuge from a furious mob in a Hindu household, it is actually a remarkable examination of the prejudice and deep-rooted mistrust and hatred which lie just beneath the skin of our liberal secular attitudes, and which have a constant tendency to surface and shock us unawares. I shall quote a few lines from *Vivek Benegal*, who is a psychiatrist, theatre-person and a roving or occasional critic. Listen:

"Dattani takes the action out off the streets and brings the tension into the home. The viewer can no longer view the spectacle (scene) of faceless lumpen (heavy) mobs slaughtering one another and go home catharsized (purged or relieved of excess feelings) and feeling comfortably superior".

If Javed hates all Hindus, Hardika hates all Muslims for the same reason. Both are equally prejudiced and resentful because of their past experiences. As *Alyque Padmasee* aptly remarks in the note to the play: "The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street..... ... they are lurking inside". Similarly Ramnik considers himself highly for his secular or liberal attitudes. He reminds us of Sen Gupta in Asif Currimbhoy's powerful play *Refugees*. Have you read the play? When the inflow of refugees into his house increases, Sen Gupta is not able to keep up his magnanimity and generosity. Similarly, Ramnik criticises Javed of being a riot rouser, slaps him and wants to hand him over to the police. And what about his past? He owns a shop which his ancestors had cunningly snatched from a Muslim. Does he have the moral right to criticise Javed? "The distance is discomfitingly reduced as the characters who commit abhorrent(hateful) acts speak the way we do, give voice to the dark thoughts we are ashamed to think we think." (Benegal)

2. The play illustrates Dattani's *preoccupation with power*, the power of one mind to influence and impose itself upon another--personal campaigns for control and domination over oneself, over others and over one's world. As *Kasthuri Kanthan* remarks: "In *Final Solutions*, we see the frenzied (mad) demonic power of blind faith and superstition-- the power of prejudice, hatred and resentment dominates the play". If Javed is a religious zealot or a fanatic proud of his *religion*, what about Aruna? Is she not equally rigid in her blind belief in her inheritance, her Sanskar? Ramnik cannot tolerate her too enthusiastic religious ways; Smita finds it stifling to live with her mother as a Hindu. If she has not protested so far, it is only because she does not want to hurt her mother. The worst thing is that Aruna does not realise that she is hurting the Muslim youngsters by the way she behaves towards them. Little wonder that Javed sees a striking similarity between himself and Aruna. "You and me, we both feel proud". Also recall how he felt "I had power" when he held a stone in his hand. Does it not symbolise the power of religious fundamentalism to kill and destroy?

3. "This is a play about transferred resentments" remarks Padamsee, Everyone is looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when he or she feels let down, harrassed or humiliated.

Hardika, the grandmother builds up a deep rooted hatred for Zarine, her best friends, and the entire Muslim community, because she herself could not stand up to or defy her husband and in-laws. Also her father had been killed during the partition. She lashes out mercilessly at Javed and Bobby and even identifies Javed's sister Tasneem with Zarine. Javed transfers his anger for the man who had insulted him in his childhood by displaying caste distinction in bad taste, to the entire Hindu community. The ringing of the bell becomes a symbol of communal hatred goading (provoking) him to become a voluntary riot-rouser, to fight a holy war or jehad against all Hindus. Upsetting the rath yatra, being at least indirectly responsible for the poojari's death,, suddenly stiffening on hearing Aruna ringing the bell are all instances.

Ramnik is another victim of transferred hostility. He transfers his resentment towards his father and grandfather for the mean manner in which they had cheated and snuffed out (destroyed) Zarine's people, to his own mother. The irony in his case is that had she known about the foul deed she would certainly have resented it, Zarine was her best friend, and Daksha never liked her husband or her in-laws.

Smita is yet another case-study. She lashes once and for all at her mother Aruna, when is not able to cope with her hidden love for Babban, an outsider. She resents her mother's too rigidly religious ways, which she knows will pose a real stumbling block on her romantic path. She is forced to resign herself to her smouldering bitterness and frustration.

Aruna and Bobby are free from this complex. While Aruna is very proud of her inheritance and has complete faith in her religious beliefs, Bobby prefers not to belong to his religion, it makes him feel ashamed. But neither of them is bitter or resentful. In fact they are comparatively more mature than the others. If Aruna entertains blind beliefs, it is because she has not been exposed to the modern world. She is generous enough to tell Javed that they (Hindus) have nothing against them (the Muslims). It is only that each one has different ways and customs. Similarly Bobby who is rather tolerant tries to pacify and unite. His taking the tiny idol of Krishna in his hand and announcing that God cares nothing for our trivial (silly) pride and prejudices is a bold attempt in that direction. After all, someone has to take the initiative to demolish the adamant (hard) prejudices and baseless hostilities, and Bobby does exactly that. It is to Dattani's credit that taboos residing under logs are picked up once and for all and placed on the stage for an open discussion.

4. Another idea that Dattani explores very sensitively is this idea of "being a man", "What is manliness?" "Who is man enough?" -these questions resound through all his plays. Note the title of one of his plays: *Dance like Man*. It is very suggestive, isn't it? *Final Solutions* approaches this idea with a wider perspective of humanness. The characters in this play have to become not just man enough but human enough to come to terms with their pride, anger and impetuosity. Insensitivity and intolerance will have to give away to a greater faith and understanding". (*Kasthuri Kanthan*). If you compare the play in question with the other plays of Dattani, you find that Dattani's horizon has widened: In the place of individual conflicts, gender-issues, artist versus society' problems etc., this play deals with a much larger, graver and urgent issue, namely the potency (power) of hatred and prejudice to wreak untold havoc. Javed and Hardika are type characters in the sense they symbolise the blind fury of ill will and hostility prevalent in their respective communities. Bobby is easily the most

manly, the most sensible, the man who can show the others the way. He tells Hardika "And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate"

Ramnik is another character who finally reveals that he can be human. All through the play, he poses as a secularist, a liberal minded person hiding the black deed of his father and grand father. It is only in the last part of the play that he becomes man enough to speak out to his mother about how they had burnt down Zarine's people's shop. He is terribly guilty and wants to make amends, though very late. His insistent offer of a job to Javed is symbolic of Ramnik's discovery of his manliness.

Liekwise, Hardika is another hard core hater of the entire Muslim community for the 'crimes' of a few individuals. Even she shows a faint movement towards tolerance and humanity when she asks Ramnik, "Do you think the boys will ever come back?" And what about Javed? Though he has been goaded into become a riot-rouser, in his heart of hearts he suffers from self-reproach and disgust. Throughout the play, we get the potimistic impression that he is trying to change, to become manly, human, less stupid, and that with Bobby's sincere efforts and Ramnik's readiness to help him, he is likely to rediscover his long lost self-image as a hero.

5. Dattani's early plays including *Final Solutions* seem to end on a note of hope, optimism and affirmation. It is marked by a regeneration, a certain get-togetherness of a happy reunion in plays like *Dance Like a Man*, *Where Ther's A Will* etc. To quote *Kasturi Kanthan* again: "*Final Solutions*, powerful and disturbing as it is, ends with the redemptive power of Bobby whose touching of the idol cauterises (burns/destroys) the wounds of a society divided by communal and religious violence. The play ends on a note of hope with Ramnik telling Hardika, "If you call them, they will come." Aren't you reminded of the ending of Shelly's *Ode to the West Wind* : "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?". Also, you are familiar with *Shakespeare's Romances or Last Plays*, aren't you? What is their underlying philosophy? *Forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption*. Don't you see that is what Dattani too is trying to convey through *Final Solutions*?

I think we have more or less exhausted the main ideas and themes dealt with by Dattani in *Final Solutions*. However, I shall reserve one significant issue to the end. Meanwhile, let us discuss the techniques, devices and means employed by the playwright to drive home his ideas to his audience.

4.4 Dattani's theatrical techniques

Dattani's plays are primarily meant for representation on the stage, and much is lost by treating them as literary efforts to be read in the study. At best, we can try to analyse them and pick out some of the main characteristics of the author's method. These have a tendency to get repeated, with variations from play to play. So we shall try to examine the theatrical techniques Dattani has used in *Final Solutions*.

i). Stage: For playwrights like Shaw and Dattani, the design of the set comes in for their special attention as something integral to the action. Both take great pains in their stage

directions to experience space layout and clearly expect those who perform their plays to adhere to (follow) them in detail. Dattani's stage is carefully segmented into different areas which are associated with one or more character, or the same character at different points of time, or narrator addressing the audience directly, to name a few of the many variants. Recall Act I. We are told that the stage is dominated by a horse shoe or crescent-shaped ramp sloping to the stage. Most of the action of the Mon/Chorus takes place on the ramp. Within the confines of the ramp, there is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhis with just wooden blocks for furniture. However, upstage, perhaps on an elevation, is a detailed kitchen and a pooja room. This is where all the actions on that night in Ramnik's house in the year 1988 (that is, the present) takes place.

On another level there is a room with a roll top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one, suggesting that the period is the late 1940's. This is the area where Daksha, who is in fact the grandmother, appears as a girl of fifteen. Lighting plays a significant role on Dattani's stage. The areas or groupings of characters are lit (faded in) or faded out dexterously (skillfully) so that we get a feeling of continuity. Note that there are no drop curtains or scenic background. Since a change of scene only involves a change in the focusing of the light, there is absolutely no time-lag, and hence the director can aspire to a tremendous theatrical impact through constant shifting with fine precision.

There are several instances when Hardika, the grandmother, and Daksha the young bride are on the level of the room with the roll top desk, simultaneously, *although they are the same person*. Hardika should be so positioned and lit in such a way that the entire action of the play is seen through her eyes. The simultaneous portrayal of the same single person is a revolutionary technique employed by Dattani to analyse and compare the thought patterns of that person over a gap of time. Working within the structure of the "well made play" Dattani has achieved a magnificent blend of *Time and Space* within the same scene. Time shifts between the past and the present with great ease when Daksha and Hardika speak short lines which alternate (Refer Act-III)

Kusum Haider makes a few relevant remarks in this context: "Through such meticulous arrangements (segmented stage and carefully ordered lighting), a typical Dattani play (like *Final Solutions*) presents its theme in a multiple narrative, shifting back and forth across time, highlighting now this person now that, building dramatic tension through a technique reminiscent of cinema as it cuts rapidly from one scene to another. At times, this method can appear somewhat contrived (artificial) but at its best... it generates genuine excitement and builds up to a powerful climax. Dattani's method contains numerous echoes from the works of several modern and contemporary playwrights. What is borrowed is thoroughly absorbed, while setting the author within a longer theatrical tradition".

ii) Plot: Like Ibsen and Shaw, Dattani has written "plays of ideas", and the way the plot unfolds tends to follow a particular pattern. In *Final Solutions*, matters proceed by the introduction of two outsiders – Javed and Bobby – into the seemingly ordinary family setting of Ramnik Gandhi. This catalyses a series of events. The presence of the strangers stirs up many uneasy sentiments hidden behind apparent normality. Veils obscuring the past are lifted, culminating in the exposure of an ugly family whose deep infection is not to be

cleansed. Once the action begins to flow, the interest of the audience is sustained and strengthened as a number of lesser revelations lead us to the final theatrical coup. "Looking back, with cooler judgement one may find something occasionally stagey or forced in the process, but there is no denying the energy and drive. The audience will be held by the drama." (*Kusum Haider*).

iii) Mob/Chorus and Masks: An important feature of the play is its Mob or chorus which comprises five men and ten masks on sticks. There are five Hindu Masks and five Muslim masks. These are scattered all over the ramp. Note Dattani's instructions: The player "wears" a mask by holding the stick in front of him. At more dynamic moments as for instance, when they molest and beat up Javed and Bobby, they can use it as stylized weapons. The players of the mob do not belong to any particular religion and ideally should wear black. They wear Hindu or Muslim 'Masks' according as which community they represent. Listen to what *Alyque Padamsee* remarks about them in his note to the play: "The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia (madness). Each member of the mob is an individual yet they melt into one seething (boiling) whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties". They strike at the cogitative faculty (ability to think) of every reader as if they are sharp arrows. No one can wink at reality when the Muslim chorus say as in Act III: "A drop of oil cannot merge with an ocean of milk. One reality cannot accept another reality".

By making the same players represent both communities in turn, Dattani seems to suggest that the public or the common man is basically the same anywhere and in any age. They represent Everyman's fears, desires, motives, reactions and opinions. *The black costume is indicative of the denseness, danger and violence that mark mob-psychology.* A fine point of comparison can be found in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. It is the chorus that gives a structural cohesion or an organic unity to Dattani's plot.

The Chorus used in *Final Solutions* is reminiscent of the Greek chorus and the poetic drama of T.S. Eliot, in the sense that it airs the views and reactions of the characters to the developments makes dramatic statements, interprets happenings and so on. It also smatters of (tastes of) the folk tradition. *Mario Relich* has a few illuminating remarks to make on this score:

"The energy of the folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them stand literally on their head. The various conventions - the *Chorus*, the *masks*, Permit the simultaneous presentation of alternate points of view, of alternate attitudes to the central problem. To use a phrase from *Bertholt Brecht*, these conventions then allow for "complex seeing" The same can be said to Mahesh Dattani.

iv) Language and Dialogue

Dattani writes his plays in English because like many of us, especially those who have lived or studied in urban settings, he says he thinks in it. His characters invariably speak the homogenized "convent" - learned language of the urbanized Indian middle classes, limited in range and nuance (fine differences in tone). His English is not at all embellished (decorated) with ornamental frills, it is the plain, simple English of ordinary people, which

of course can become intense or emotional according to the situation. The staple form of dialogue is closer to the everyday diction of India's drawing rooms, and this works well most of the time. The dialogue is assured and easy flowing. There is a great deal of smart repartee (quick answering back). Try to recall examples from the play. However, as *Kusum Haider* notes, "There are linguistically more ambitious moments when the play wright explores deeper emotions and his characters grapple (struggle) with difficult, almost inexpressible realities. This is especially so in *Final Solutions*". The utterances of Javed when he regrets having turned into a riot-rouser (Act III). Bobby's serious dialogues especially when he explains how Javed ceased to be a hero (Act III) or when he takes the idol of Lord Krishna in his hand and proves that none can take the fragrance of that touch etc; Daksha's bitterness at being humiliated and badly let down by her friend Zarine and "those horrible people" (Act III), Ramnik's final confession (Act III) etc. are just a few examples. All these dialogues have to be heard in order to actually feel their emotional quality.

v) Unities: Contrary to the anti-conventional method, Dattani has maintained the three *Unities of Action, Time and Place*. The play is about the simmering emotional undercurrents in a family which surface horribly following the unexpected arrival of two outsiders and the outpourings of pent-up negative emotions and confessions it leads to. The main action starts late one evening with the sudden entry of Javed and Bobby and ends with their exit early next morning. Of course there is a suggestion that a few days passed before Ramnik makes his final confession to his mother. The entire action takes place in Amargaon in Ramnik's house with the mob in the streets outside. Far from the cribbed (limited) uneasy feeling that plays adhering to the unities evoke in us, this ancient device as employed by Dattani serves to achieve a telling effect, a terrific concentration of dramatic effect.

vi) Diary: Each time Daksha appears on the stage she is seen writing or reading out from the diary. This helps to lend a personal tone or intimacy to the plot. It is a means juxtaposing (placing side by side) the past and the present. It executes the function of the Chorus in recounting the past incidents. When Hardika and Daksha (with the diary) appear simultaneously the effect is superb.

Let me cite *Vivek Benegal* in summing up this section: "The play *Final Solutions* illustrates the writer's progressive ease with form as he shifts from a decidedly naturalistic style to experiments with different innovations: playing with the unities of time and place through flashbacks, flashforwards and working on the physical realities of staging using split-level stages, hidden rooms etc. The play is crafted meticulously and the dramatic tensions carefully build up and regulated with small give away hints dropped from time to time leading up to the climatic revelation which makes it much more credible. In short, Dattani uses the devices of the "well-made play" but gets away without becoming predictable. It there is a criticism it is perhaps that the plays are verbose with too little scope for actual business".

Let us now take a brief look at Dattani's characterization in *Final Solutions*.

4.5 Characterisation

Dattani excels in very sharp dialogue (as we have seen), an unerring instinct for behavioural gestures and realistic characterisation. Conflict and complexity mark his characters:-

- a) Ramnik appears to be the most tolerant face of Hindus among the whole cast, but later his true colours come out. His secularistic, liberal-minded façade (exterior) hides underneath a deep-rooted guilt. He realizes he has been a moral coward all these years. However it should be mentioned to his credit that he owns up at last and really desires to make amends for the family's foul deed.
- b) Hardika is presented as a rigid embittered character, a solid mass of resentment and humiliation formed as a result of the sufferings undergone by her earlier self Daksha. Yet she too turns out to more misguided (due to ignorance of facts) than cruel. That is why she wonders whether the two boys will return.
- c) Javed like Hardika appears as a riot-rouser, a religious zealot, a hard-core, assertive violent misguided youth who is bent on fighting a holy war in the name of religion. But even he turns out to have a vulnerable, more human nature beneath his rigid exterior. He truly loves his sister.
- d) Bobby actually Babban is good, concerned friend of Javed. He has the average tolerant face of Islam. It is he who takes the initiative in all important matters like trying to change Javed, proving that communal hatred is meaningless and so on. However he is ashamed of his religious identity and minority status.
- e) Aruna is presented as a typical traditional Hindu lady, complacent in her religious beliefs and superstitions, non-interfering, not aggressive, but unfortunately little concerned with the feelings of outsiders. However she is the most adjusting of them all. She is shocked to know that she has been stifling her daughter with her religious ideas.
- f) Smita represents the typical member of the present generation, who, on the one hand cannot bear the rigours of orthodoxy and religious conventions, but on the other hand cannot protest due to filial love and devotion. But she too bursts out at last shocking her mother beyond words.

We see that the play presents a post modern world without heroes of heroines. At the end of the play, every character without exception is battered and baffled. As *Kussum Haider* observes, the play is something of a theatrical *tour de force* (a skilled feat) from within which the characters do not always emerge fully. It is not character that drives the action, rather a series of hints and revelations lead us into secrets that the protagonists would prefer to conceal. By the end, they stand exposed, their defences stripped away.

Let us discuss the title of the play and consider whether the play does offer any viable (possible) solution to the tragic problem of communal tension.

4.6 Title of the Play

We have seen that *Final Solutions* is a rather somber (serious, grim) play in which strategic excursions into the past, via, flashbacks expose the roots of intolerance within a middle class Indian family in an urbanized background. It is a sincere attempt to absolve or eradicate the anti-secular face of India. The deep roots of Hindu - Muslim animosity are

exposed in the play which is set against a background of communal hatred. For *Alyque Padamsee* who directed it, the play is summed up by the following apothegm (short, pointed saying): "The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street... they are lurking inside ourselves. "The inherent message seems to be that every religion is intrinsically oppressive. Fundamentalist elements and fanaticism are characteristic of every creed.

The play poses a question to us: Can we ever shake off our inherent prejudices and hatred or are they embedded in our psyche like genes? Have we cabined and confined our original free spiritual selves in the totally meaningless combat between Hindus and Muslims the blacks and the whites, the Jews and the Germans, U.S. and Taliban, so on and so forth? Is there any panacea (remedy) for this mass hysteria, this global paranoia (madness)? Bleak as the prospect may seem, Dattani does seem to suggest solutions. Hardika suggests that if the Muslims had gone to Pakistan just as Hindus had fled to India during the Partition all this problem of Hindu-Muslim conflict could have been avoided. Aruna too advocated a policy of mutual non-interference in matters of religions and customs. The principle underlying such suggestions I certainly sound, but the question is how far it is practical?

Dattani is a spokesman for all the marginalized people and minority groups wherever they exist. All of us, he says, "want to be part of society, of the mainstream, but we must acknowledge that it is a forced harmony". Forced harmony is an expressive phrase which implies what E.M. Forster means by the word "tolerance", implying putting up with people whom we do not like, who are different from us, because higher wisdom teaches us that it is the only way out. It is mutual contract to forget and tolerate as Bobby tells Hardika. If some of us were to comment that such a solution is not practicable, we have only to recall Martin Luther King's observation that no nation can exist half free half slave.

"I'm no crusader; I'm a theatre person," declares Dattani. For him, *Manisha Vardhan* notes, the class structure and the location of his audience is important. He insists that he is writing for the Indian urban middle classes and upper classes of audience, because "the more your basic needs are taken care of, the more space you have to reflect on certain things". Evidently Dattani puts the onus (responsibility) of solving the problem of communal tension on their shoulders. Moreover he feels that the best way to put his ideas across is to pick his main characters from among the marginalized people. He says: "If you are marginalised, that's the only time you question the present state. That's when you really want to create ripples, when it affects you". So having protagonists who face marginalization helps the playwright to push forward his final solutions.

Through the medium of the play, Dattani also pleads for a broader definition of religion, its function and utility. Religion as it is often practiced today stifles, suppresses, causes rifts, estrangements (separatism) and culminates in meaningless rituals and much cruelty toward those who oppose it. Ample examples can be picked out from the play. (Read the earlier units). The true purpose of religion and spirituality is to make man more humane, more tolerant, more broadminded, more accommodating to the higher needs of society and so on. To sum up, Dattani's "*Final Solutions*" advocates the elimination of the cancerous elements of religious fundamentalism through a policy of mutual forgiveness and tolerance.

Hope you have understood the play well. Ponder over the key ideas presented in it

and contribute your mite to mitigate (decrease) communal tension.

Writing examinations is an inevitable part of any course. You can answer any question based on *Final Solutions* if you study the text as well as the study material thoroughly. I shall give you a few model questions. You can frame your own answers with the help of the notes.

4.7 Model Questions

(A) Essay Types

- i) Dattani's innovative dramatic techniques.
- ii) The structure of Dattani's *Final Solutions*.
- iii) *Final Solutions* as a portrayal of the problems of marginalized sections of humanity.
- iv) *Final Solutions* as a plea against fanaticism and fundamentalism.
- v) *Final Solutions* as a play of ideas.
- vi) Characterisation in *Final Solutions*.

(B) Objective Types

1. directed *Final Solutions* [Alyque Padamsee]
2. Daksha's father died at [Hussainabad]
3. Gaju and Wagh are Daksha's[in-laws]
4. The two characters in *Final Solutions* who are actually the same person[Daksha, Hardika]
5. The place where the play takes place[Amargaon]

More questions will suggest themselves to you as you read the play and wonder over it. Let us wind up the lesson.

I wish you all the very best.

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THE FINANCIAL EXPERT

R.K. Narayan is a prolific writer who produces a book every two years. He was born on 10th October 1906. He started his life as a teacher in a village school. He is not a fashionable writer at all. His themes are not particularly contemporary or provocative. He does not touch upon politics or sex. He depicts the middle class life in India. The family is the immediate context in which the novelist's sensibility operates. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar sums up his novelistic career thus:

"He is a master of comedy who is not unaware of the tragedy of the human situation; he is neither an intolerant critic of Indian ways and modes nor their fanatic defender, he is, on the whole, content to snap Malgudi Life's little ironies, knots of satiric circumstances and tragic-comedies of mischance and misdirection".

Narayan's strength lies in quick observation and ironic recording of human oddities and eccentricities. He is an implicit moralist. Narayan is primarily a good story teller, nothing less and seldom more. His plots are thin and there is nothing spectacular about them. There are no subplots. His prose is clear and correct. The major characters are also essentially flat characters even though their experiences normally could bring out change.

Malgudi; the imaginary town that Narayan creates, happens to be the venue of all his novels. It grows and changes in the same way that a small and conservative town in that part of India would. He does not give a detailed description of it at any time, but there are landmarks of the town catching the reader's attention-banks of the river Sarayu, Nallappa's grove, Memphi Hills in and around Malgudi and the railway station, Lawley Extension, Market Road, Statue of Fredrick Lawley in the town are the notable locations. Malgudi's Town Hall, Reading room, Public library, Clock Tower, Two high schools and several industries are a few more landmarks. In *The Financial Expert*, Vinayak Mudali Street, The central co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, Lawley Extension, Memphi Hill Estate, Anand Bhavan-all are specifically mentioned. Malgudi seems to be a microcosm of Indian society and Narayan's novels are an amused survey of the life in Malgudi.

Summary

The novel belongs to the second phase of Narayan's novelistic career. Here Malgudi is haunted by eccentrics and pornographers. It is the story of success and failure of a ludicrous father Margayya and a foolish son Balu. It is a biographical novel as it describes the chronological events in the life of Margayya and his son. The novel is divided into five parts corresponding to the five phases in the development of the hero, Margayya.

In the first phase, Margayya begins as a financial advisor sitting under the banyan tree, opposite to the Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank. He helps the villagers to fill up the forms and to raise funds by simple adjustments, for a small commission. His first failure is when he is driven away from there by the Secretary of the Bank. This is paralleled by the spoilt childhood of his only son Balu. The violent willful child throws the account book into the gutter ruining his father's financial business. That insult acts as a catalyst and he thinks of ways and means to become the richest man in Malgudi. He plays with the idea of manufacturing snuff, tooth powder, soap, etc. The priest in the Hanuman temple suggests propitiating the Goddess Lakshmy for forty-one days. Getting the red lotus and ghee from

the milk of the grey cow for the Pooja, he meets Dr. Pal, the sociologist and journalist. Dr. Pal offers his manuscript on "Bed life". Margayya takes it and gets it published as "Domestic Harmony" in collaboration with Mr. Lal and becomes rich. That is first success and next phase in development. With that he also gains a respectable position in society and becomes a Board member in School administration, guiding the smoothening of the life of his son, who turns out to be a failure as a student. In the third phase, Margayya sets up an office in Market Road. He becomes the financial wizard, accepting deposits and giving fabulous interests. This third success is juxtaposed by the utter failure of his son who fails miserably in the matriculation examination, throws away his SSLC certificate and runs off to Madras and sticks cinema posters there. Margayya traces him out and brings him back and marries him off to a docile girl, Brinda. The final phase, Margayya is in his glorious peak and the son is defriended by Dr. Pal who leads him on to evil path. Dr. Pal instigates Balu to ask for his share of the property. Margayya finds out the brain behind it all and also detects Pal's evil influence. In an instant of rage, Margayya attacks Pal and Pal in turn ruins his financial business. All his customers withdraw their deposits and Margayya becomes and 'insolvent'. Balu refuses to start from scratch, his father's business at the banyan tree and Margayya's failure is complete. Balu comes back home with his wife and child.

Between the father and prodigal son, Meenakshy, the docile Hindu wife remains to be the 'embodiment of endurance and love'. She exemplifies that domestic harmony depends not on moneybags represented by Margayya or bed-life represented by Pal; but on family discipline and affections.

Ironic Perspective

The Financial Expert gives a farcial picture of the social life of the middle class in India. The family feuds based on division of family property among the brothers are an everyday occurrence. Margayya and his brother's family are divided by a wall across the well. Yet the brother spies on the activities on the other side of the wall. The sisters-in-law are at loggerheads with each other. Yet the brothers come together on significant occasions. The brother runs to the help of Margayya when the false news about Balu's death is heard. Margayya, while showing off his wealth remembers to invite his brother for the ceremony of putting Balu to school. The astrologer is called in to compare the horoscopes for a marriage. Narayan ironically satirises that he will fix the marriage as per your wish, if you pay him enough, as is done by Margayya in the case of Balu's marriage. The caste and profession of a great grandfather is still s significant factor in fixing up the marriage. In this case, the superstitious spirit of the traditional on the threshold of modernity is a source of humour, satire and irony. Margayya's great grandfather is a corpse-bearer and he is worried that people will remember this when marriage alliances come up for Balu. Margayya's interest in 'shaping the future of his son' is another lash against the educational set up where political and social influence have a role to play. Just to make his stupid son pass the matriculation, Margayya manages to get into the governing body of the school and keeps the teachers under his control to get preferential treatment for his son. The relationship between Balu and his home tutor is a mockery of the sacred teacher-student relationship.

The very title is ironic because Margayya as the very name indicates is a person who shows the way for the villages to tackle their financial problems. For improving his own

finances, to make himself the richest man in the society, he goes to Dr. Pal, to the temple priest, etc., for suggestions and ideas. He is the financial expert to others; but in his own life, he ends up as a failure.

Comic Vision of R.K. Narayan

There are also hilarious and facial situations in the novel. It is quite humorous to see Margayya being quite ignorant of so many things; yet he is trying to conceal his ignorance. He does not know the story of Markandeya but pretends to know it. He does not understand the term "sociology". When he deals with the leading publisher, Mr. Pal he is totally ignorant of the techniques of printing; yet manages to pretend that he is fully aware of the intricacies involved in the trade.

"All Narayan's comedies have had the undertones of sadness", says Graham Greene. All these ironic, humorous portrayals have a touch of pathos underneath. In spite of all its hilarity, it is basically a morally serious tale. The story has its ironic theme that a fortune can be destroyed in a moment and by nothing more substantial than a rumour. The story also illustrates the corruption of the innocent by the desire for easy wealth.

The fundamental innocence of Margayya responds in strange ways to the different forces in the society. But there is an underlying sadness about him. Even at the peak of his success, he betrays a pathetic helplessness of a fond father. Margayya's faults and weaknesses are not subjected to moral judgement by Narayan, but with a sympathetic understanding of life's predicament. As a result, the bitter string of irony is reduced to a mild disapproval of tragic-comic touch.

Through these hilarious, ironic conditions, Narayan also puts forth his philosophy of life on wealth, sex, etc. Regarding people's belief in poojas, the priest declares: "the result cannot be our concern. It's Karma" (p.26) Margayya did not believe "that man was victim of circumstances or fate but that man was a creature who could make his own present and future, provided he worked hard and remained watchful". (p.152) That's Narayan's "mixed up philosophy of life". (p. 152) There is also a hint that children should not be spoilt, but chastised and brought up with care:

Character of Margayya

Margayya is a prominent comic hero, whose ego is trimmed and he matures from innocence to experience. Through sheer wit and effort, he gains material wealth; when the wheels of fortune turns the whole edifice crumbles and life begins a new with a different set of values. Margayya climbs the social ladder by dubious means such as publication of a pornography book an dishonest banking business. His stupendous rise calls for our admiration as well as censure. Till Margayya reaches the summit, no moral question troubles him. In his cravings for material wealth, lies an ego problem. Margayya's poverty and his inferior social status made him challenge his fate. Arul Doss and the bank Secretary wound his pride. Money first becomes as essential problem; then it grows as an obsession and later perversion. Successes boost his ego-when he gains wealth, when he becomes the member of school committee, when he becomes a financial wizard. His ethical degeneration born out of this inflated ego leads to his downfall through the moral corruption of his spoilt son. The comic challenge of a poor aspiring man of his fate culminates in the moral suicide of this

apparently invincible characters looks both ridiculous and pathetic. The comic tension between tradition and modernity provides the comic situation. Graham Greene is his preface rightly remarks: "The juxtaposition of the age-old convention and the modern character provides much of the comedy". Margayya successfully manages things to suit his convenience. His down fall is brought out by Balu's modern way of living, which his traditional view of life cannot approve. But he has long since followed the modern materialistic approach for his own promotion. This comic incongruity marks the character of Margayya. He gets back to his original position, but chastened by his experience, gaining wisdom and humility.

Role of Dr. Pal

Dr. Pal is an ironic villain in the novel. An unmarried man, Dr. Pal claims to be a sociologist and has written a pornographic book on Science of Marital Happiness. Dr. Pal declares that he treats money as dirt and that he is a man who cares for work, human relationships and service to mankind. But Dr. Pal who generously parted with his own manuscript for nothing, and later helps Margayya to get clients for his banking business finally for no reason ruins the entire business by setting the very same clients against him. He spoils the marital life of Balu and Brinda by introducing him to club life and whores. He also instigates Balu to turn against his father and ask for his family property.

Use of Myth

The novel has both Indian and Western myths as the basis for the story. The story of Margayya is like the myth of Midas whose golden touch leads to his own failure. The plight of his son Balu could be read as the Biblical myth of the prodigal son. The novel abounds in reminders about a number of stories from Hindu mythology like the story of Markandeya, and story of Kubera. We find Margayya propitiating Lakshmy, the Goddess of Wealth, forsaking the Goddess of Knowledge, Saraswathy. Lots of proverbs are also sprinkled throughout the novel.

The novel has a cyclic structure. We begin the novel with Margayya at the foot of the banyan tree with his tin box. After all the ups and downs, Margayya ends up in the very same spot.

Topics for Discussion

1. Margayya, as a comic hero.
2. Satire and irony in the novel
3. Picture of Malgudi
4. Role of Meenakshy
5. Role of Pal
6. Use of myth in the novel

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Rohiton Mistry: *Such a Long Journey*

Author and His Works:

Born in Bombay in 1952, Mistry is a Parsi. He migrated to Canada in 1975. His departure from India-his migration abroad is a common routine we find in that period among the aspiring youths. Bombay is the venue for his novels. If the pre-independent novelists chose to write about life in villages, the post-independent writers mainly dealt with urban life. His collection of short stories *Tales from Firozsha Baag* presents the tribulations and idiosyncrasies of Bombay Parsis. Mistry is a writer of "double displacement". That is as a Parsi Mistry finds himself at the margins of Indian society and resists the Hindu-glorifying culture of India. After partition, some Parsis migrated to England or America. *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is Mistry's maiden novel. His recent novel *A Fine Balance* (1995) deals with the Emergency period in India.

Such a Long Journey: A Summary

It is a novel of family saga. Indian culture and family life is the focal theme, against the back ground of post colonial politics. The action takes place in 1971 in Bombay during the India- Pakistan War. It is based on real facts pertaining to the conspiracy case of the Nagarwala, which landed Sohrab Nagarwala, the chief cashier of the parliament street Branch of the State Bank of India, New Delhi, in jail and which earned him four years 'imprisonment' leading to his death.

The protagonist is Gustad Boble, a Bank employee living in Khodad Building. He is a God-fearing gentleman with two sons, Sohrab and Darius and daughter Roshan. Gustad finds an intimate friend in his colleague, Dishwaji, a jovial person. Major Bilimoria is another character, who is close to the family and whom Noble considers as his own brother. The society is represented by other inhabitants of the Khodad building. Miss Kutpidia is a lonely mysterious character with her sorcery and magic. She is a close friend of Noble's wife, Dilnawaz. There is a mentally retarded character, Tehmul Langara, who is also physically handicapped after a fall from the neem tree. He had some annoying idiosyncratic habits. His speech was also very peculiar-he spoke in abbreviated form at breakneck speed and it was often difficult to comprehend: "Gustadgustadchickenrace. GustadGustad Chickenranfast". He had a special respect for Gustad Noble. Malcolm Saldaha was Gustad's college friend who in his younger days entertained and enlivened him. He belonged a family of musicians. Gustad enjoyed their music Malcolm also gave him practical hints about choosing the best beef and also about Christian religion. Gustad's father was a carpenter and had an excellent furniture market "Noble & Sons" He went bankrupt and the entire thing was emptied by the bailiff. Malcolm helped him to retrieve a few pieces.

In the very first chapter all the major characters are introduced and similarly the main themes and events are also hinted at. The novel opens with the realization of Gustad's dream of sending his son Sohrab to IIT. The admission results are out and Sohrab has got admission. Gustad, the fond father wants to celebrate this occasion along with Roshan's birthday celebrations. If it is the pivotal issue in his private life, there is the public or political event that is narrated side by side. That is Major Bilimoria's sudden disappearance from Khodad

Building and Gustad has reviewed a letter from him after a long time saying that he is working for RAW and asking for Gustad's help in a matter of national interest. Gustad keeps this secret even from his wife and the suspense is built around this.

For the party Gustad plans, he was invited Dinshwaji and he has bought a live chicken from Crawford Market. Dilnawaz is worried that live chicken is never bought home and killing it at home could be an ill omen. The novel tends to prove her superstition right since Gustad's troubles start with that. The party breaks up even before it warms up. Mainly Sohrab, an intelligent boy refuses to go to IIT and that is a terrible blow for Gustad. There is a rift between the father and son.

Mistry takes the readers back to the immediate past of Gustad's life when he met with an accident. He was taking Sohrab for a treat and it was raining heavily. He got into the wrong bus and had a row with the bus conductor. He was thrown out of the bus and as they stepped out, Sohrab was about to be run over by a vehicle and Gustad pushed him at the right moment, but he himself fell and broke his hip. A generous and kind-hearted taxi driver picked him up and brought him home safe, free of cost. Only later the identity of the driver is revealed to be Gulam Mohammed, an associate of Major Bilimoria. Later Bilimoria takes Gustad to Madhiwala Bone-setter for the miracle cure of his fracture.

That brings us back to the present where the taxi driver appears again when Gustad sees him being hit by a vehicle. The gory scene makes Gustad sick and he is not able to rush for his help. Gustad feels bad that he missed helping this man who helped him once on a similar occasion. Dilnavaz and Sohrab feel that Major Bilimoria's request may be dangerous and their premonition turns out to be right, as the novel's plot evolves. Bilimoria, affectionately called Jimmy is working on the RAW which is the Indian secret service. Jimmy's letter gives instructions to collect a parcel from a stranger waiting at Chor Bazaar. The person can be traced from a book shop with a prominently Complete Works of Shakespeare with the line "Put money in thy purse" in Othello I, iii, underlined in red. Sohrab warns him that the Prime Minister uses RAW like a private police force to do all her dirty work. But Gustad in all his nobility believes that Jimmy is working for a noble cause, the affair with East Pakistan. Gustad follows the guidelines and meets the contact person who happens quite to his surprise, the kind-hearted driver who met with the accident. Gulam Mohammed reveals how he is a close associate of Bilimoria who saved his life in 1948 in Kashmir. He also gives him the address for Peerbhoy Paanwalla to leave any message for him.

At the home front Dilnawaz is taking the help of Miss Kutpidia to soften Sohrab and his temper against his father. Kutpidia suggests her own remedies to remove the spell. First trial is to circle seven times round Sohrab's head with a lime and make Tehmul drink the juice of it. Meanwhile Gustad opens Jimmy's bundle and finds that it contains currency notes-ten Lakh rupees. Jimmy had asked Gustad to deposit it in the bank as he as savings supervisor can overlook the rules about large deposits. Dinawaz is again perturbed at doing unlawful things and asked him to excuse himself by saying that he is transferred. The strange parcel, Jimmy's unseemly request, filial disrespect on the part of Sohrab all upset noble Gustad. Finally Sohrab left the house. Darius also started creating problems, getting close to Rabadi's daughter, Jasmine. Rabadi was for ever fighting with Gustad and he had already smelt the mischief and warned Gustad. Further Roshan was down with diarrhoea. His home remedies did not cure her. Gustad was also bothered about the compound wall being used as public

latrine giving out terrible stench and breeding mosquitoes. But the municipality was planning to knock down the wall to broaden the road and the inhabitants were collecting signatures in a petition against it.

Gustad finally passes on his excuse to Gulam Mohammed through the Paanwallah. A week later he woke up to find a bandicoot with its severed head thrown into his vinca bush. The next day there was a cat with its head cut off. Inspector Bamji told him that somebody with a grudge is harassing him. But the next time he gets a note from the bush: "Stole Bilimoria's rice, we'll take a stick and beat you". Gustad understands the threat, is puzzled at its coming from such a good friend like Bilimoria. So he decides to deposit the amount little by little taking the risk. He talks to Dinshwaji and makes all arrangements. Dinshwaji is suffering from Cancer and he is forgetting his illness through his buffoonery. Neither does he have a smooth marital life with his wife whom he refers to as "my domestic vulture". Dinshwaji jokingly tells the typist Laurie Coutino about being in charge of a big sum to equip Mukthi Bahini Guerillas, Gustad gets worried. Tehmul also carries the tale of "heap of money" to other inmates and the Inspector, Gustad gets anxious and warns Dinshwaji about the danger of their being caught. Dinshwaji changes himself and acts as a serious man and that probably hastens his death.

Gustad finds a very good solution to the ecological problems of Khodad Buildings. He brings a street painter whom he met casually. The painter is a scholarly person well versed in religious stories, miracles etc. He cleans up the compound wall and starts painting gods and goddesses of different religions on the wall so the public stop desecrating the wall and the wall with all the divine paintings becomes a place of worship.

Meanwhile newspapers report that Najor Bilimoria is arrested for corruption. It is reported that he had taken 60 Lakhs rupees impersonating Prime Minister's voice on the telephone. Gustad Mohammed wants him to return the deposited amount urgently. At this crucial juncture Dinshwaji is hospitalized and is passing through a critical stage. Gustad finds time to spend with his ailing friend in the hospital. Dinshwaji passes away soon after and Gustad gives him a decent funeral.

Gulam Mohammed insists that Gustad should go to Delhi and meet Bilimoria who is also in a critical condition. Gustad is in two minds and is totally disgusted to read the news about his friend. Finally he goes to Delhi and meets Bilimoria who is serving the prison term and is in a hospital bed in a very pathetic condition. Bilimoria confesses to him the reality behind all his experiences and how he was tricked by the Prime Minister. Gustad listens to his unbelievable story about the fraud of sixty lakh rupees in which the Prime Minister herself is directly involved and how they made Bilimoria a martyr. Bilimoria is asked to get the money from SBI Director on an emergency basis to finance the guerilla training, pending official sanction by impersonating the Prime Minister's voice on telephone. As soon as the money was drawn, the Prime Minister's office intercepted the money, when Bilimoria realized that he kept ten lakh rupees for distribution to his friends. But he was made to write a confession with a promise to save him and he landed up in prison and was tortured cruelly. The P.M.'s people were after ten lakh rupees and only after getting it back they relaxed the cruelty in prison. Bilimoria in his condition wanted to clear the misunderstandings of his best friend. Soon after Bilimoria passed away and Gulam belonging to a different religion.

Dilawaz is for ever in consultation with Kutpidia to effect the return of Sohrab and to cure Roshan's sickness. She performs all the magicoreligious rites suggested by Kutpidia. To restore Sohrab Kutpidia makes her bring Tehmul's nails; she shuts him up in the room and burns the lizard tail. She says that it is dangerous to look at it burning. Tehmul is left in the closed room to watch the burning lizard skin. Tehmul is full of excitement of the fun of seeing the lizard tail wriggling and burning. The burning tail had wriggled out of the glass and fallen on the exercise book on the table and caught fire. The fire destroyed all the precious grief-nurturing reminders of her beloved brother and his son. Dilnawas and Darius helped her to clean the debris. Kutpidia became a changed new person. Bangladesh war had started and people prepared themselves for the air raids and black outs.

The public are taking out a protest march against the Municipality under the leadership of Dr. Paymaster. Malcolm as a Municipal official comes to Khodad Buildings to knock out the compound wall to broaden the road. The protesting public attack these municipal workers and try to thwart the official actions. There is violent fight between the striking public, Municipal authorities and the police. Stones were pelted and the excited Tehmul gets hit by a stone and is killed. Gustad takes the body to his residence and prays for him. Sohrab also arrives there at that moment and father and son reunite.

Themes of the Novel:

i. Secularism

Such a Long Journey is an absorbing book, providing fun, mystery, suspense and serious matters as well. Life in and around Khodad building gives a panoramic view of the life of the Parsi Community. Secularism and religious harmony seems to be a prominent theme socially with the compound wall full of pictures of gods and goddesses. The pavement artist is introduced into the novel mainly to propagate this message. Gulam Mohammed caring for the Parsi, friend, Bilimoria is yet another instance. Even though he has no entry into the Tower of Silence, as a person belonging to another religion he seen to it that a decent burial is given to Bilimoria according to his religion. Malcolm the college friend of Gustad talks to Gustad about Christian religion but not with a view to convert him. Again when Gustad is beset with worries and misfortunes, he takes him to Mount Mary to pray for the recovery of Dhinshwaji and Roshan by miracle. Among the characters, there is representation from all religions and there is good interactions and close sincere dealings among them.

ii Inter personal Relationship

With the different families occupying the Khodad building, the novel gives a picture of social life with an emphasis on interpersonal relationships. The close-knit family of Gustad Noble is the basic unit. Here Gustad's interest in his children is highlighted. The hostility between the father and son, the father's increased attachment to the daughter and the mother's attempts to bring about reconciliation between the father and son are all depicted vividly. There is jealousy and rivalry between Rabadi and Gustad. Rabadi uses sorcery and black magic against Gustad. Dilnawas finds out that Roshan's illness is caused by the evil eye and magic worked by Rabadi. The strong bond of friendship between Gustad and Dhinshwaji, Gustad and Bilimoria, Bilimoria and Gulam Mohammed, Gustad's relationship with his boyhood friend Malcolm and Gustad's kindness and sympathy to Tehmul are the signposts of ideal personal relationships. The indifference of Dhinshwaji's wife and his jocular reference to his wife, Alamai as "dear domestic vulture" is another side of life.

iii Parsi Life:

As a novel delineating the life of the Parsi Community, it gives vivid picture of their prayers and *kusti*. There is a very descriptive account of their funeral rites. They have four day prayers at upper *bungalee* one day prayer at lower *bungalee*. It has a little verandah in front leading to the prayer hall and a bathroom at the back, where the deceased would be given a final bath or ritual purity. The traditional method is sponging the corpse with *gomez*, bull's urine. The *dustoorji*, the priest burns the licence and says out the prayers. The funeral notice is given in *Jam-E-Janshed*. On the day of the funeral, the *Doongerwadi* dog is led to the bier. The *char-chassam* dog detects the evil of death and assists the forces of good. At the conclusion of the prayer, the wife places *loban* and sandalwood on the *afaargan* fire. All present at the funeral pay their last respects - they bow and touch the ground three times. The four *nassasalers* (professional pall bearers) carry the bier to the tower, to the well of vultures. They are treated as outcasts and untouchables. They are clad in white from head to toe with white gloves and white canvas shoes. Men follow the bier in procession linked together with white handkerchiefs in hand. Women line up on the verandah. At the tower the bier is placed on the stone platform the face uncovered. The men in two's and threes bow three times in unison without letting go the handkerchiefs. The four *nassasalers* climb the stone steps to the tower and shut the door behind them. The body is placed on a *pavi*, on the outermost of the three concentric circles. Using special hooked rods, they tear off the white cloth without touching the body. Vultures alight on the stone wall of the tower. The chief *nassasaler* claps his hand three times-that is the signal to start prayers for the ascending soul. While mourners pray, the vultures descend in great numbers. The mourners wash their hands and faces and return to the world of the living.

iv Politics in the Novel:

Like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* the personal life of Gustad's family is intricately interwoven with India's political history. It is a kind of institutional history where understatement and euphemisms are used in order to describe political crimes. The Nagarwalla case is one such incident. Major Bilimoria is ticked and like Nagarwalla is imprisoned and dies in the cell. (refer summary for details)

Mistry makes use of the party thrown by Gustad as an occasion to make comments on Indian politics directly. The discussion touches on the nationalization of banks by the Indira Gandhi Government, Indira Gandhi's encouragement to make a separate Maharashtra state that caused bloodshed and riot, creation of Shiv Sena to divide people on caste basis etc. Mistry attacks Indira Gandhi directly on many more issues-like her financing her son's maruti car manufacture, secret Swiss Bank accounts and the like. He also criticizes her misuse of RAW as her private police force to spy on her cabinet ministers. Sohrab also mentions about the way she manipulated the elections - hemically treated ballots and crosses appearing and disappearing automatically, making a mockery of democracy.

Mistry does not spare Nehru also. He talks about Nehru fighting a war of "humiliating defeat" about the Indo-China war of 1962. Mistry hints about Feroze Gandhi, his son-in-law being "the thorn in his political side". Mistry also mentions about Nehru's obsession concerning Indira, "his darling daughter" who left her "worthless husband". Mistry's grudge

against Indira or Nehru is not because of some principle or political learnings but probably because they were unfair to Feroze Gandhi, a Parsi. He even says: "People say Feroze's heart attack was not really a heart attack".

Lal Bahadur Shastri who succeeded Nehru as Prime Minister is praised in the novel: "Short in height, but tall in brains, is our Lal Bahadur". In his sudden death in Tashkent, beside the possibility of a Pakistani or Russian plot, the role of Indira Gandhi is suspected. Congress party, Congress government at large - "are called a rouge's gallery". Pakistani President Yahya Khan's boozing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and general Tikka Khan have been referred to.

Sohrab suggests two reminders to get rid of the Congress crooks- Communism and military dictatorship. Immediately Gustad snaps at him; "Be grateful this is Democracy. If the Russiawala was here, he would pack you and your friends off to Siberia".

Mistry is giving a realistic picture of the degenerating political scenario on the international level. His novel is a naked truth literary representation where everything is displayed.

Along with this descriptive approach, Mistry also employs "Neo-Realism" in his artistic expression of a historical period that represents an important revolutionary moment.

The entire novel can be reread as symbolically and metaphorically representing Indian history. Gustad's insistence for the IIT course stands for Nehru's emphasis on technological improvements. Sohrab's refusal to join IIT reminds us of Rajiv's initial unwillingness to enter politics. Darius with name literally means Priyadarshini. Dilnawaz, the name literally means Priyadarsini. Dilnawaz with her interest in black magic probably represents Indira Gandhi who frequented Yogis. Cavasji is for ever complaining to God for his generosity to the Tatas and the Birlas and so stands for Communists. His Nickname Kalingar-watermelon, which is red in colour, testifies to it.

Mistry's presentation of Indian politics can be compared with Arundati Roy's treatment of politics in her *God of Small Things*. She criticizes Communist leader E.M.S Namboodiripad. But Arundati has fictioned the real political characters, getting away from actual facts. But the political situation in Kerala is graphically portrayed.

v. Ecology:

Mistry in this novel is also conscious of environmental pollution. Khodad Building with sunlight barred by neighbouring sky scrappers, admitted neither light nor air. The sewage system is broken and overflowing. Rats, garbage and public nuisance make the place miserable. The Mosquito menace and the stink from the compound wall used as a public urinal, is Gustad's headache. With the help of the pavement artist, he redeems the place and elevates it to a place of worship. Gustad's vinca and subjo bushes with their medicinal values carry the ecological consciousness. People living in flats near the Tower of silence complain about the vultures dropping remnants of flesh on their terraces and balcony, as they fly by, as their ecological problem.

Role of Kutpidia :

Kutpidia is a witch like character and is ready to help and advice on unexplainable matters. She knows to cast and remove magic spells. She has a thorough knowledge of omens, dreams and interpretations. In her personal life the sudden death of her brother and his son in an accident engulfed by a gloom of three deades. She has a mysterious closed room and carries out magico-religious rates there. She offers Dilnawaz suggestions to cure Roshan's diahorrea which she attributes to a spell. She prescribes some remedy with lime and chillies to ward off the evil. All the difficulties of the Gustad family, she attributes to the superstition that 'killing a bird in the house is ominous. So the live chicken brought for the party brings misfortune. Kutpidia suggests a very drastic remedy to bring Sohrab back home and she uses Tehmul as a bait or victim. In the end Roshan is cured; Sohrab rejoins his father; Tehmul dies. Amidst the magic rites Kutpidia's past is burned up and she is transformed into a new person, casting off her gloomy past. So does it mean that Mistry, in this scientific and technological age is an advocate of such superstitions and magic? Any way he conveys his concept of faith directly through the words of the pavement artist: "Miracle, magic, mechanical trickk, coincidence - does it matter what it is, as long as it helps?..... Looking closely is destructive, makes everything disintegrate. As it is, life is difficult enough. Why make it tougher? After all , who is to say what makes a miracle and what makes a coincidence?"

Title of the Novel:

The title of the novel is taken frp, T.S.Eliot's "Journey of the Magi". In the poem the journey of the three wise men to see Jesus Christ is symbolic of man's spiritual quest that consists of a number of hardships the novel describes Gustad's journey of life. Like the journey of the magi, Gustad also faces a lot of hardships and went ahead with faith.

Structurally Mistry has used the journey as a motif. The funeral procession to the Tower of silence is a long journey and it is described with emphasis on the ominous sound; "Crunch, crunch, crunch. Grinding, grating, rasping". Dhinshwaji also jokingly refers to the journey of life: Thussook - thussook, my cart rumbles along". Gustad undertakes another long journey to Delhi to meet Bilimoria in jail, full of suspense, anxiety and he wonders: "Mistry also uses the journey motif to comment on the life of the wandering pavement artist: "Over the years, a precise cycle of arrival, creation and obliteration". Overlong sojourn and procrastinated departure beame his routine. As far as he is concerned "The journey - chanced unplanned, solitary - was the thing to relish".

Narrative Technique:

1. Quite contrary to the contemporary novels, *Such a Long Journey* belongs to the realist, naturalist tradition. It criticizes corruption, war, environmental pollution etc. It gives graphic descriptions about the life of the Parsi Community.
2. Being one of "Rushdie's Children" like Rushdie we find parallel renderings of personal incidents and public life or national history.
3. Symbol and metaphors are also used at times to present his political attacks.
4. Use of humour: The gloomy as well as horrible events are punctuated with humour that varies from sheer joy to gross vulgarity. Humour largely provides comic relief. Dhinshwaji is as pathetic as Falstaff.
5. Mistry uses quite a lot of Gujarati expressions.

Topics for Discussions:

1. *Such a Long Journey* as a political novel
2. The part played by Tehmul.
3. The role of Kutpidia.
4. The picture of the Parsi Community.
5. Symbolism and Metaphor employed in the novel.

Book for reference:

A.G.Khan, *Canadian Literature and Indian Literature: New Perspectives.*

R.S.Pathak, *Recent Indian Fiction.*

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Sashi Deshpande *That Long Silence*

Author and her Works :

Sashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary women writers in English. She was born in Dharwad. She is the daughter of the famous dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Shriranga. She had her education in Bombay and Bangalore and also did a course in journalism. Primarily a housewife, her writing career began only in 1970 initially with short stories. Besides a few books for children, she has published four volumes of short stories: *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1986), *It Was Dark* (1986) and *It Was Nightingale* (1986). She has five novels to her credit: *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up And Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1988). Like her predecessors Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai or Nayantara Sahgal, Deshpande is also concerned about the social and psychological problems of the educated middle class woman. Going a step further than the earlier women novelists, Deshpande presented the dilemma of the Indian woman and reincarnated the new Indian woman. Unlike Anita Desai is heroine who commits suicide, Deshpande's women do not suffer stoically, but their disillusionment leads them on to the ultimate realization of the self. Their "womanly self" is trapped and suffocated within the family. In these novels, Deshpande presents the Indian woman in harmony with her cultural and natural roles.

Summary :

That Long Silence narrates the story of Jaya and Mohan - the tale of seventeen years of their wedded life. The novel begins with a crisis in their life. Mohan has indulged in some malpractice at the work place in collaboration with Agarwal and is under suspension facing enquiry. Luckily their children Rahul and Rati are away on tour with their family friends Rupa and Ashok. Mohan goes into exile at the flat in Dadar which belonged to Jaya's uncle. While waiting for the verdict in this flat, Jaya ruminates over her past, her relationship with Mohan, her associations with other members and self criticism of her failure as a wife, a mother and as an individual.

Structurally the novel is divided into four parts and the entire story is narrated through the memory of Jaya. The first part, talks about Jaya's connections with Kusum, the deserted woman, Mohan's boyhood and his father's ill treatment of his mother, his sister dying of ovarian tumour etc. Part 2 presents Jaya's family circle. The Dadar flat where they lived in the beginning belonged to Jaya's uncle. Makarandmama. He became an actor, against the wishes of the family. Whenever he was in trouble, Jaya's father helped him out and so he left his legacy of the flat to Jaya's mother who in turn bestowed it on her son. Dada, Jay's brother, being abroad gifted it to Jaya. The old servants and neighbours are still there. Jeeja, the servant maid was basically a realist. Quite unlike the educated Jaya, she knew what her purpose in life was- it was to go on living. Enduring was part of it and so she endured all that she had to (p.51). Her husband was a drunkard and he engaged in wife-beating. He married again since Jeeja did not conceive. Jeeja understands the circumstances and is not angry with anyone. Once her husband died, his two children by the second wife, who succumbed to TB became her responsibility. The son repeats his father's story and Tara and her children also become Jeeja's wards. Mukta, the amiable neighbour and her daughter, Neelima are also introduced. Jaya also analyses her relationship with Mohan here.

Part 3. Ravi, Jaya's younger brother meets her in a restaurant and apprises her of the situation at home, where all the old members of the family are huddled together. Ravi was irresponsible and Dada also escaped leaving the entire responsibility on Jaya's shoulders. Vanithamami is supposed to have uterus cancer. Ai has her own health problems. Asha has walked out on Ravi and Jaya is expected to patch up their quarrel. Ravi had known about Mohan's problem at the work place. Mohan's complaint is that Jaya is indifferent to his problems. Jaya is made to feel that she was a failure as a wife. But she has nothing to reply except when Mohan says, "I've never come in your way". Then Jaya reports by saying how Mohan did not let her be a writer. At the end of their quarrel Jaya becomes hysterical and she laughs hilariously. Mohan left the house without informing her. Jaya after a few lonely days goes to their flat in Bombay in search of Mohan and there she happens to get a call saying that Rahul has gone away and they all want Mohan to go and sort things out. On her way back to the Dadar flat Jaya sees a girl getting caressed by two young men openly in the bus stop. Jaya intervenes but the girl was enjoying the game and it shocks Jaya. By the time Jaya reaches home she is wet in the rain, sick and delirious. Neelima, Muktha and Mohan look after her. The thought of desertion by the husband unnerves Jaya for she has not cast off the role of a traditional Indian woman. Soon Rahul comes with Vasant. Mohan also has sent a telegramme saying that he would return the next day and has sorted out everything. When Jaya finally comes out of her emotional upheaval, she has sorted out a few problems with herself. She puts down on paper all that she had suppressed. What she had written is evidently this novel. She resolves to exercise her choice and learns the truth that "Life has always to be possible."

Theme:

The novel is basically a critique of marriage and family in the Indian context. Deshpande in fact questions the institution of love and marriage. The married couple is compared to a pair of bullocks yoked together "So the very simile reflects the fact that man and woman joined together for practical purposes to share the burden in a mechanical manner. The love or emotion between the persons is not a matter of concern at all. The happy contented family on the advertisement visual was only as illusion or dream. Jaya found "family life unendurable," with the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unending monotony." Marriage is a career for Jaya. She is repeatedly reminded by her elders: "a husband is like a sheltering tree," So naturally without the tree, you're dangerously unprotected and vulnerable. This followed logically and so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies," this gives a dominating power for man and the wife becomes marginalised other. Deshpande pictures marriage as "a children's game of playing 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,' which have been substituted by labels like 'doctor, engineer, government official, college lecturer' (91). For Jaya "love is a myth, without which sex with the same person for a lifetime would be unendurable. "She confesses: "If my feelings for him (Mohan) had their beginning in the act of sex, they had grown, like some monster child, way beyond." She believed that even if love as an emotion is absent," there was the habit of being a wife." Deshpande through the experiences of Jaya and Mohan seems to point out that the husband and wife should know each other well physically as well as emotionally. For Deshpande, the concept of love and marriage is not metaphysical, but psychological and social: "marriages never end, they cannot-they are a state of being."

The image and role of Woman:

In the patriarchal power structure, the woman always has the subservient role. After marriage, the woman effaces her identity." Mohan's wife. Rahul's and Rati's mother. /Not myself," says Jaya . The man or husband is always after his ambitions: "his ears filled with the triumphant sound of his own march onwards- Jaya, we're going to Bombay, Jaya , I'm promoted, Jaya, I'm being sent abroad. "In contrast to this, the wife Jaya is always saddled with " drab houses, dusty roads, pregnancy, a baby's wails and sleeplessness". The woman's name changes after marriage symbolising the effacing of her identity. Jaya is the name in her mother's house meaning victory. It is changed to Suhasini in her husband's house.

The woman is always silenced in the first quarrel between Jaya and Mohan, Mohan tells her how his mother never talked back or raised her voice against his father however badly he behaved to her. "No question, no retorts, Only silence ." Jaya, before marriage gets the warning: " Look at you for everything a question, for everything a retort. What husband can be comfortable with that . " In her married life Jaya also learns that "anger made a woman "unwomanly ". The woman's role in the family was sharply defined like in Mohan's family women are "well trained in their duties, so skilful in the right areas, so indifferent to everything else." A missing button in the husband's shirt, a meal cooked badly or delayed- all were a matter of shame to the wife. Jaya sums up the position of women in the household when she tell Kamat: " I almost wag my tail, a dog that's been patted by its master," when she is praised for something . Similarly she feels guilty when something goes wrong with the prescribed role. By sticking on to these conventional ethics, Jaya feels sure of " if not happiness, at least the consciousness of doing right, freedom from guilt." From the decision about the choice of the bride, every thing is the man's decision . The woman only has to acquiesce: " the truth is that it was Mohan who had a clear idea of what he wanted, the kind of life he wanted to lead, the kind of home he would live in , and I went along with him," feels Jaya.

Jaya is never free. " His looks, his thoughts followed me about . "Jaya feels" the burden of his wanting, the burden of his clinging . "Mohan feels that Jaya is indifferent to his trouble - to the crisis in his career . He forgets his role in stopping Jaya's writing career. When Jaya gets an award for her short story, Mohan is afraid that people may mistake it to be their own life story. Jaya realizes that it is not Mohan who is responsible for ruining her writing career but her own fear that their marriage will be endangered . Jaya is obsessed with the "women are the victims theory . She has already like a worm, chosen " a hole to crawl into " - "as Mohan's wife, as Rahul's and Rati's mother ." In spite of all her frustrations and hysterics, when Mohan leaves for a while, she finds her life meaningless. I had shaped myself so resolutely to his desires, all these years yet what was I left with now ? Nothing, just emptiness and silence. " Jaya, the new Indian woman questions this age old dictum but is not able to shirk off. So Deshpande's women are torn between "staunch rebellion and meek acceptance"- between tradition and modernity . Deshpande herself characterises her heroines as " middle of the road kind."

Feminism in the Novel:

Sashi Deshpande rejects the label of "feminist." But she consciously pinpoints the secondary position of women, in her fiction. She points out to the craving for a male child.

She warns that the girl will only suffer because of men all her life. While talking about Mohan's boyhood, she paints the pathetic picture of his mother. Mohan's father, coming late to the house would not eat the "children's disgusting leavings" and the mother prepares food afresh. Mohan the man appreciates and admires "the strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire." But Jaya the woman "saw despair ... a despair so great that it would not voice itself... a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender." Deshpande summarily pictures the stereotype of a woman: "nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support." Mukta observing fasts for keeping widowhood away, even after she has become a widow and Vanithamami continuing her Tulasi Pooja and other rituals in order to get a baby even when she is to be operated for uterus cancer, are ironic portrayals of women's conditions. Deshpande also makes use of Kamat to attack the "woman as victim" theory. Kamat criticises the attitude of women when he says: "Making others dependent on you. It increases your sense of power. And that's what you really want, all you bloody looking after others caring for- others women."

Deshpande also touches upon the subject of sex, which is taboo in Indian novels by women writers. He talks about Nilima considering her "monthly curse" a hated enemy." Jaya also talks about her experiences of getting the control over her body with the pill: "I am a free woman now, I had thought, I've assumed control over my own body, over its clumsy, cumbersome processes." But the after effects of it- the stimulated pregnancy and all other discomforts reminded her the futility of her resistance to the biological role assigned to her a woman.

Jaya's relationship with Kamat, the man upstairs is also significant and ambiguous. Kamat is a widower with a son abroad and feels terribly lonely. Jaya is able to openly discuss her problems with him. He acts as a catalyst in awakening her self awareness and to inspire the writer in her. But when she finds him dead in his flat, Jaya simply walks away since the society does not approve of any kind of relationship between a man and a woman other than in wedlock.

In the family tree prepared by Jaya's uncle, Jaya's name does not figure because after marriage she belongs to the husband's family. But in Mohan's family also she has no place. So also, Aji or even "ajji, who single handedly kept the family together" does not figure in the family tree.

Jaya remembers the bed-time story of the sparrow and the crow. The foolish crow built his house of dung and there was a wise sparrow who built the house of wax. When it rained the crow's house was washed away. The crow, drenched in rain, knocks at the door of the sparrow. The sparrow spins out her excuses about busily minding or feeding the baby, finally lets the crow in and points to the warm pan to warm himself. The crow hops on to it and is burnt to death. In this sadistic tale the victim crow is male and to it and the winning sparrow is female. Jaya avoids narrating this story to Rahul. She also feels that it is not good for Rati either as the story contains the moral that "Stay at home, look after your babies, keep out the rest of the world, and you're safe." This is Deshpande's resistance against the cultural role assigned to woman.

Title of the Novel :

The novel highlights the age-old tradition in which the women are silenced. Mohan's mother suffers silently and never raises her voice against his father. Mohan's sister dies of ovarian tumour in silence. Jeeja is silently enduring her callous, drunkard husband. Jaya follows the model set by her elders and learns to acquiesce, to be silent. But finally when Mohan things at her a series of charges - proving her to be a failure as a wife - she is struck dumb, when she feels that there is a change in Jaya when she knows that Mohan is likely to lose his job. To sum up Jaya loved and approved only the man with a promising future. That touches Jaya and she breaks her silence and bursts out into a hysterical laughter. Once she breaks her silence, the situation takes a worse turn and Mohan leaves her. That gives her an opportunity to examine her inner self and she decides to speak out. She writes out all her heart's frustrations to steer clear of her mental confusion. So the title is quite suitable for this novel about the traditional silence and the silence broken.

One-word Answer Questions:

1. Who is the man upstairs? (Kamat)
2. Name the mad, deserted woman (Kusum)
3. What is the pseudonym Jaya adopts as a writer? (Seeta)
4. Who are the silent suffering women? (Jeeja, Vimala, Jaya, Kusum)
5. Name Jaya's children (Rahu and Rita)

Topics for Discussion:

Predicament of Indian Woman

Man woman Relationship

Narrative Technique.

Books for reference:

R.K.Dhawan, *Indian Women Novelists*.

R.S.Pathak *Recent Indian Novel in English*

Viney Kripal, *The New Indian Novel*.

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ARUNDHATI ROY : THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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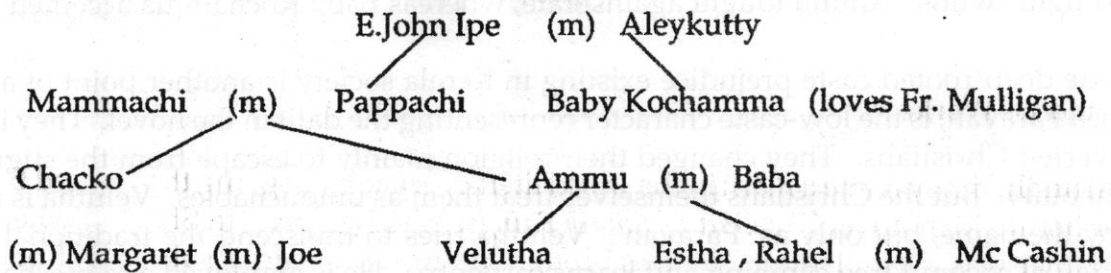
Author and her Works

Arundhati Roy made a mark in the world literary scene by bagging the coveted Booker prize for her maiden novel *The God of Small Things*. She was born in Shillong where her Bengali father was a tea planter. She was brought up in Aymanam, a suburb of Kottayam after her parents separated. Aymanam turns up as Ayemenem in her novel. Her mother Mary Roy who is at present running a school in Kottayam broke with tradition by marrying and then divorcing a Bengali and then made history by fighting the provision of the Christian Succession Act all the way upto the Supreme Court. The favourable verdict allowed Christian women an equal share with their male siblings in their father's property and this created a ripple in the society. A product of a broken home, Arundhati left home at the age of 18 and set up in a tin shed in Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla. She made a living flogging empty beer bottles. Later she joined the Delhi School of Architecture. She married her classmate Gerald Da Cunha and after waiting for an hour for the Registrar to make it legal went home without completing the procedure. After four years' life with this partner in Goa she left him and came to Delhi and got a job in the Institute of Urban Affairs. A film director, Pradeep Krishen noticed her and married her. She also acted in his film *Massey Sahib*. She also wrote script for *In which Annie Gives it to Those Ones* and another screenplay for *The Banyan Tree*, a television serial and also for *The Electric Moon*.

Summary

The God of Small Things is a saga novel that depicts life, destiny and fluctuating fortunes of four generations of a Syrian Christian family in Ayemanam. E. John Ipe belongs to the first generation and he is blessed directly by the Patriarch of Antioch Rev. Ipe. He has a son and a daughter - Pappachi and Baby Kochamma. Baby Kochamma originally called Navomi Ipe falls in love with Father Mulligan, an Irish priest who wants to learn about Hinduism. Navomi becomes a Roman Catholic just to be near Fr. Mulligan- but her wishes do not blossom. She was sent abroad for two years for studies. She learnt Ornamental Gardening, came back and shut herself up with the television. Even after Fr. Mulligan's death, she continues to love him and leads a meaningless life. Pappachi marries Mammachi and they have two children Chacko and Ammu. Ammu got fed up with life in Ayemanam, goes to Calcutta and after five days' courtship marries a Bengali Baba. She begets twins Rahel and Estha. Soon after she finds Baba is a terrible alcoholic, divorces him and comes to Ayemanam. Chacko started his career as a teacher in Madras Christian College - was a Rhodes Scholar. In London, he met Margaret in a cafe and married her. Margaret later divorced Chacko after the birth of Sophie Mol and married Joe. Sophie while on a visit to Ayemanam with her mother gets drowned in Meenachil River. Ammu is drawn to Velutha, the untouchable in an illicit relationship, is caught red-handed. Velutha arrested by the police, dies in lock-up. Ammu died in a room in Bharat lodge in Alleppey, where where she had gone for an interview. Rahel meets McCashin in Delhi and marries him. Later they were divorced. Rahel gives up her job in USA and returns to Ayemanam. She has incestual relationships with Estha. The family tree is pictorially represented as follows.

Ayemanam House



This is the tragic story of four generations, in a nutshell.

Image of Kerala's social milieu projected in a novel.

The novel presents a cross section of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala. Arundhati is exposing the wealthy, estate owners - the business-minded Syrian Christians. Pappachi for example is a typical member of an upper middle class Christian family. He has ambitions of getting anglicized. After retiring from his post of Joint Director, Entomology he comes to Ayemanam to settle down. There he creates an exotic and outlandish little England. He is in a well-pressed three-piece suit and gold pocket watch. He buys a sky-blue Plymouth car from an Englishman. He has problems coping with the ignominy of retirement.

Chacko is another snob. He had been a Rhodes scholar. On Pappachi's death, Chacko resigned his job and took charge of the pickle factory with Mammachi as the "sleeping partner". Chacko, the capitalist projects himself as Comrade Chacko, to exploit the woman workers of the factory. He is the self-proclaimed Marxist who professes to teach them labour rights and trade union laws. He represents the high caste feudal mentality.

Patriarchal domination and female subalternity and the clash between the two are rooted in the social reality of Ayemanam. Ammu is denied college education, as it is considered "an unnecessary expense" for a girl. Marriage also becomes a problem with the dowry becoming unaffordable. She waits at home domesticated. The only escape for Ammu was through marriage. She marries a Hindu Bengali, but there again she is a victim of his drunken rages. The worst part of it is her husband even demeans himself to pass her on to his boss. Then Ammu gets back to her parental home with her twins. But there again she has no place, being a divorcee who had married a man from another caste....

Mammachi is a good violinist and is a success at the pickle manufacture. This instils frustration and jealousy in her husband, who is a wife-beater even though he is an anglicized man of high position.

Baby Kochamma is another frustrated woman who is fated to live her life backwards. Her suppressed urges seem to surface when she adorns herself in bridal attire and takes part in soap operas.

Legally Ammu has no claim on the property. So even though she also puts in equal effort, the pickle factory is solely Chacko's. Chacko's secret relationships with the women workers of the factory is approved and encouraged by Mammachi, as a man's biological needs whereas Ammu's liaison with Velutha is condemned. For Mammachi, Chacko's

irregularities seemed trivial in comparison to Ammu's erotic involvement. Ammu challenges the androcentric notions of her society. She is not ready to accept motherhood. She smoked, had midnight swims. Ammu fought against fate, whereas Baby Kochamma accepted fate.

The deep-rooted caste prejudice existing in Kerala society is another point of attack. Velutha, a Paravan, is the low-caste character representing the dalit in the novel. They in fact are converted Christians. They changed their religion mainly to escape from the stigma of untouchability. But the Christians themselves treat them as untouchables. Velutha is never called by the name, but only as 'Paravan'. Velutha tries to transcend the traditional caste occupation of coconut tree climbing and learns carpentry. He is employed as a mechanic in the pickle factory. But his co-workers do not approve of him. The Marxist Party is believed to take care of these downtrodden people. Velutha is a cardholder of the party. The paravans are not supposed to wear a shirt, and this nakedness is a visual symbol of the debased position of the lower caste. In short, his technical expertise and his religious status as a converted Christian and not even his position in the Communist Party save him from victimization in a casteist society. Velutha's relationship with Ammu is vested in strong emotion, if not sincere love. But his liaison with Ammu is in a way his anger against a rigidly stratified caste ridden society.

The novelist also satirises Marxism, a political philosophy aiming at creating a classless society. K.N.M.Pillai is presented in the novel as the local leader of the Communist Party. As a local party leader, he holds study classes and interacts with the workers. Even though he parades himself as a champion of the downtrodden, at the subconscious level, he is a class-conscious man of the upper class community. He cannot approve of Velutha and refers to him by his caste name. He is rather afraid of this party cardholder overtaking him and tries to get rid of him. He hides from the police Velutha's connections in the party. Even though Velutha had called on Pillai, he does not refute the charge of attempted rape alleged against him, though he knew it to be untrue. He has no qualms of conscience about it and dismisses as "the consequence of Necessary Politics". He manipulated things to his personal advantage without letting anybody know of his precise role. His attachment to Marxism is not based on any political ideology or conviction, it is just a means to promote his own vested interests. The hypocrisy about Comrade Pillai's commitment to the Communist ideology, is satirised in the reference to his son, Lenin who is serving a foreign capitalist embassy and changes his name to P.Levin to avoid the marxist touch of his original name. The leading Communist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad is also attacked.

Arundhati also satirises the puritanical attitude of Christian institutions. Inel's school does not acknowledge breasts as "they weren't supposed to exist". Baby Kochamma and Jesuit Priest make use of the Bible discussions as an excuse to be together, to foster irreligious emotions. Fr. Mulligan is also reported to be studying Hindu scriptures "to be able to denounce it intelligently".

Environmental pollution is also represented in the novel in the presentation of the beautiful landscape of Ayemanam and the Meenachil River. She comments about the bad-smelling river-banks. She ironically refers to the World Bank loans that pollute the river with the pesticide effluents and plastics. The effect of promotion of tourism by the establishment of five-star hotels for the sake of foreign tourists is also criticised, through the presentation of

the five-star hotel, which is a converted form of Kari Saippu's house. Kathakali performers putting up short shows in front of these hotels is degrading our cultural tradition. The Police department is also exposed to highlight their cruelty. Velutha's suffering and death is a version of the death of the Naxalies in police custody.

Narrative Technique and style :

The novel is presented by an omniscient author from shifting points of view with authorial comments. The story is revealed through the eyes of 17 year old twins. The novel opens with the arrival of Rahel at Ayemenam to see her twin brother. The actual story is told through Rahel's memory and the narrator's information. It is a child's view of the adult world.

Arundhati remarks about her own novel: " the book is not about what happened but how what happened affected people." The most part of the novel is about the past and the present occupies only a little space in the novel. Like the conventional plot, it does not have a beginning, middle and end. The novel starts in the present when Rahel comes to Ayemenam after 23 years - *in media res*. We have a collage of the past and the present, major and minor incidents in the first chapter itself: Sophie Mol's funeral (Past), birth of the twins, Baby Kochamma's past, Velutha's death, Estha's silence, Rahel's marriage and divorce, Ammu's death, Comrade Pillai- all these find a place in the opening chapter, in an intricate and intriguing design. As the author herself says, she has hinted at the entire story in the first chapter itself and all these events are elaborated later in the novel. The story is not told in the chronological order.

Roy uses a number of cinematic techniques - fast forwards, flashbacks and reversals. The novel opens with Rahel's coming to Ayemenam; followed by a flashback about her childhood and a fast forward to picture ammu's death. Then again back to Rahel's birth in a bus. Besides this zig-zag narration through the juxtaposition of the past and present from multiple point of view, the narrative structure gets complicated as these events in the frame work are not narrated in the chronological order.

Arundhati Roy's "linguistic inventiveness" is another major strength of this award winning novel . The work is full of new expressions

Eg. Margaret Kochamma told her her to stop it. So she stopped it.

The singing stopped for what is it ? What happened ? And for a furrywhirring.
And sariflapping
She uses unconventional images:

"To Ammu her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company , lopping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic."

"A carbreez blew, Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows . Still birds slid by on moving wires like unclaimed baggage in the air -port." Repetitive and balanced sentences enhance the style.

Adoor Bhasi wasn't trying to attract attention. He was only trying to deserve the attention that he had already attracted."

"Her own grief grieved her. His devastated her."

Curious spelling, capitalisation, punctuation and spacing are also some of the literary gimmicks she employs:

Their Prer NUN sea ayshun was perfect"

Repetitiveness bottomful feeling", and backed writing as in ehT serutneved A fo eishS lerriuqS" are some of the nuances of her style of narration. Malayalam words are freely used. She makes an imaginative use of language, mainly to illustrate how children see the world. eg. Nap become "gnap" and Barn owl becomes "Bar Nowl".

Child's world presented in the novel

The world of Estha and Rahel's childhood is a tragic and unfortunate one. The stigma of mixed parentage, the disgrace of a divorcee mother make their position awful in the orthodox society. In the early childhood they learnt that they were unwanted and a burden. Their own mother Ammu used to remark: "If it weren't for you I would be free. I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day you were born. You're the millstone round my neck." This traumatic experience had its own psychological effect on the kids.

Ammu expects good behaviour and unquestioning obedience as her due for loving them. Baby Kochamma insists on perfection in English and expects them to learn a car song. A visit to the Cochin Airport to receive Sophie Mol, a visit to the film house to watch the film Sound of Music are some of the entertainments they are offered by the adult world. The procession of the Marxist intrude upon the fist and Estha's unpleasant encounter with the "Orangedrink Lemondrink Man," the latter. The children were delighted with small things- when they caught a dragon-fly or when they found an eggshot from hen. Their backward reading habits is symbolic of their learning and maturing in the wrong or reverse direction.

Sophie Mol is presented as a contrast to the twins, from the adults world. But Sophie Mol gangs up with her cousins, quite to their surprise. The adult world even holds Estha and Rahel responsible for the death of Sophie Mol by drowning. The children get affection and comradeship from Sophie Mol, who rejects Baby Kochamma's advances, turns down Mamachi's offer of the privilege of plaiting her night's pigtail and told Chacko that she preferred Joe to her real father. She also joins the twins on their misadventure to Velutha. It is to the mysterious world of Velutha on the other side of the river that they escape. They dress up as adults, in sarees and Velutha also participates wholeheartedly in their role-playing and treats them as adults. He let them paint his nails with the red cutex that Ammu had discarded. He repairs the boat for them. But finally Estha is made a major witness in the case against Velutha. Baby Kochamma under threat makes him say "Yes" in front of the police officer. Estha is forced to give false witness in order to save Ammu, he betrays his friend. And this weighs on his conscience. Estha becomes a silent and reticent man. Velutha was beaten to death by the police in front of them. Except for a few golden moments like the ones they spent with Velutha they were miserable. The children are precocious and malicious innocents. They rise upto the adult level sometimes and Estha keeps uttering prophetically: "Anything can happen to anyone. It is best to be prepared.", "Sorry doesn't make dead man alive."

Autobiographical Element:

The story of *the God of Small things* resembles Arundhati Roy's personal life in many ways. Her mother was very poor. Arundhati had a Bengali father. At the age of 18 she left home and went to Delhi to study architecture, where she met her husband. She had a brother younger to her by 18 months and not by 18 minutes as in the novel. Probably Arundhati's own declaration that "the texture is autobiographical, the incidents are not." is the right summing up. The real life Estha, Lalit Kumar Christopher Roy also says: "Of course it has experiences and incidents that happened during our childhood." The Aymanam house with its scenic beauty and its regional legends, Meenachil river is a realistic representation of the parental home of Arundhati and it has been immortalised by the author like Hardy's Wessex or Narayan's Malgudi.

Topics for Discussion :

1. Feminism in the Novel
2. Social Satire
3. Critique of Marxism
4. As a novel of Protest
5. Language and Style
6. The portrayal of Dalit characters
7. Presentation of the Child's World

Short answer Questions :

1. Who is the "God of Small Things"? Velutha
2. John Ipe is popularly known as Punnyan Kunju
3. Who are the rice Christians? Converted untouchables
4. What is the real name of Baby Kochamma? Navom Ipe
5. Which is the five-star hotel criticised in the novel? Coconut Lagoon
6. Name the pickle factory run by Mammachi.
7. How does Arundhati Roy technically refer to the twins?

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Raja Rao : The Serpent and the Rope

Life and Works:

Dr. P Geetha.

Raja Rao was born in Hassan, a small town in Mysore in a traditional Brahmin family on 5.11.1908. The family moved to Hyderabad where Raja Rao had his education and later higher education in Aligarh University. Then he went to France at the age of twenty to do research on the impact of Indian thinking on the mysticism of the West with reference to Irish literature. He married a French lady interested in translating the Bhagavad Gita into French. His wife was his primary literary critic and she is basically responsible for the Indianness of Raja Rao's English work in the sense that she pointed out to him that it is 'rubbish' to write in 'Macaulayan English'. So he even tried to write in Kannada; but his Kannada works have no intrinsic value in them. A short story, *Akkayya* was his first publication in English.

Raja Rao is not a prolific writer like R.N. Narayan or Mulk Raj Anand. He has only five novels to his credit. His first novel, *Kanthapura* appeared in 1938. It describes the resistance movement led by the women of a South Indian village in the struggle for independence. Raja Rao returned to India in 1940 and spent time looking for the spiritual traditions of India. He was tempted to become a sanyasi and Swami Atmanand advised him to continue his literary career. This spiritual conflict in him is clearly pictured in his autobiographical novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960). It is "a major epic legend in miniature" *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) is a comic version of *The Serpent and the Rope* Besides *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), Raja Rao has published many short stories *The Policeman* and *the Rose* (1978), *the Cow of Barricades*, *The Chessmaker* and *His Moves* (1988) and *On the Ganga Ghat* are a few of his short story collections.

If Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of reform, and Narayan the novelist as a moral analyst, Raja Rao is the novelist as a metaphysical poet. Raja Rao firmly believed that the Indian novel could only be metaphysical in nature. In his hands, the novel was "an instrument of metaphysical consciousness". He himself declares that certain aspects of his life are emphasized in each novel so much that they are an accurate statement of his life. He visited Gandhi's ashram in the 1930s and was involved with Indian's political problems. He was interested in the Progressive Writer's Movement and had connections with socialist leaders. This national experience finds place in *Kanthapura*. *The Serpent and the Rope* was written following a very troubled period in his life. He had even thought of renouncing the world and becoming a Sanyasi. On the advice of guru, he wrote the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* as a therapeutic exercise to purge his system of worries. In this novel he talks about his failure in marriage and the search for his guru.

Summary

The Serpent and the Rope is a first attempt to make Indian mysticism and Vedantic philosophy a subject of a regular novel. The story element in this novel is almost nil even though it is packed with his reflections to such an extent that the whole novel becomes mystifyingly dull.

Ramaswamy is the protagonist . Like Raja Rao himself, he went to France to do research on Albigensian heresy. There he falls in love with Madeline, a lecturer in history and marries her. Their first child dies at the age of seven months of bronchopneumonia. The story begins with Rama returning to India upon the death of his father. He takes his stepmother and little brother to Benares and Himalayas. On his way to Benares to perform the obsequies for his father, we get flashbacks of his marriage and the death of his son. With his visit to India, there is a reawakening to his Indian heritage , and it brings about a transformation in his inner being. During his visit he also meets Savithri who is the daughter of Maharaja, and is detached. She becomes for him an ideal of Indian Womanhood and they become lovers when she comes to England for her studies. She is half-heartedly engaged to Pratap, a dull young man entering a diplomatic career. Ramaswamy was to coax her into this marriage while she was in London.

Rama and Savithri recognize in one another an eternal love and they consecrate their love in a sort of ritual marriage. Yet without disturbing the order of things finally Savithri marries her fiancée. There is also the story of Saroja, Ramaswamy's step-sister, who by her own choice marries a commonplace son of a vulgar family. Perhaps, Saroja's story is a criticism of the position of women in India . She would have liked to continue her studies; but her sad choice is a mixture of youthful perversity and the acceptance of the role of woman within the Indian society.

The French world of Madeline consists of her uncle Charles and aunt Zoubie with their daughter, Catherine. Georges, the Russian convert to Catholicism and Lezo, the Spanish Sanskrit scholar whom Madeline dislikes for his deep sensuality belong to the Madeline-Ramaswamy company . They indulge in a discussion on Christianity and Vedantic philosophy. Catherine marries the physically handicapped Georges. Madeline's second child is still born while her husband is in India. She turns to Buddhism and little by little renounces Ramaswamy . Their marriage ends up in divorce. Rama is filled with a mysterious yearning - the longing for the guiding light of a Guru . He finds his Guru in Swami Atmananda in Trivandrum.

Theme :

The Serpent and the Rope is a work on several levels . It is not a narrative fabricated in order to preach a message or include passages of philosophy. The novel presents the living experience of the author's very real and finely depicted characters, whose lives are the expressions of their thoughts and modes of being . The main theme is the futility of man's existence when he has no deep quest or thirst for the ultimate. Man's life here is a mission to find the Absolute. The Absolute, according to Indian tradition , is incarnate, the main theme of true love, marriage and womanhood paves the way to the illumination of the wider theme.

The Serpent and the Rope ultimately deals with the question of the metaphysical self. This is presented with the resonance of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy . The Brahman is immutable reality; the world is illusion:

"The world is either unreal or real - the serpent or the rope....."
The Advaita philosophy introduces the concept of Maya in discussing the question of the

relationship between Brahman and the World. Maya is the power by which the Brahman is concealed and the apparent world, which is in fact, a distortion, comes into being. According to Advaitins, higher knowledge is not a form of subjective knowledge as reality as object. It is the identity if the knowing subject is realized to be identical with the essence of the objective world. In other words, knowledge merges with reality. Then the question arises- if the essence of the subject, Atman, is to be identified with reality, how is that we are ignorant of this identity? This ignorance is because of "superimposition". Sankara defines it as an apparent presentation to the consciousness, in the form of resemblance of something previously observed in some other thing - like the mistaking of a rope for a snake. We superimpose on the self what does not properly belong to the self, and superimpose on the nonself properties, which belong to the self. In other words, ignorance constituted of ignorance in that they involve false superimposition. As per Advaita Vedanta, the ultimate goal of life is emancipation (moksha). This consists of the higher knowledge i.e. the knowledge of the identity of the self with Brahman. Ramaswamy in the novel does not search for the ultimate reality by following the path led by ancient ascetics, instead he approaches reality by examining the meaning of womanhood. He sees the reality in terms of two women who enter his life.

Concept of Marriage and Womanhood

Madeline, Little Mother, Savithri, Saroja, Catherine and Lakshmy are the different women characters in the novel.

Little Mother's actual name is Visalakshy. She is the third wife of an elderly widower with grown-up children. With her devotion to the family, her husband, his first three children and her own little son, she follows a life that is bound up with the duties of a woman to her family. She is compared to the Ganges. She is the classic instance of male victimization, ignorant of the harm done to her life and personality. In spite of becoming a widow with a few months old son she is at peace with herself and the world. She is traditional and believes that "a woman must marry. Her womb is her life". Her life illustrates the more balanced and sober view of the marriage in tradition.

Raja Rao seems to be convinced that the heterosexual relationship is essential to the Truth Seeker and so he has explored various ways of defining and delineating how the masculine and feminine principle work in man's search for the oneness of Shivoham.

Raja Rao presents three types of women-i) the idealized Hindu woman who is the incarnation of Sakthi, the feminine principle. ii) non Hindu woman who is intelligent and sensual yet flawed in some essential way.

Rama's attitude to womanhood is subjective. He sees Woman in all the women who move within his orbit. For him, all women are essentially one and the same at different times, different factors of Shakthi. Saroja who is mean and prejudiced and stubborn is Shakthi in her primordial form Savithri is idealized out of all proportion. She is modernized, smokes, is clumsy and is happy with everyone. She is herself. But Rama the idealist lover is stone blind to facts and sees only woman-beautiful, virtuous, perfect. According to Hindu belief Shakti, parted from Shiva, has been incarnated on earth many times but her

spirit is eternally with Siva, and her body even when earthy, has never been another's. Raja Rao extends this to say that Shakti appears in mortal man with whom she unites is also for the time being an incarnation of Siva. In other words when the divine in woman rises, the divine in her man also rises, and thus a man is made Siva by the Shakti in his woman. This idea is more explicitly brought out in *The Cat and Shakespeare*.

Rama has his own convictions about marriage and the love of woman. Man can love woman for her personal self and he loves her for the self within her. Rama believes in salvation for man and life for a woman. Her salvation lies in the salvation of the feminine principle which is Divine Mother/Shakti. Shiva and Shakti are two aspects of Paramatman and the reality of both is acceptable. The Absolute and the creative merge in each other, while remaining independent.

The entire novel abounds in statements honouring womanhood.

"A bad son may be born, but a bad mother never"

"Man must lead woman to the altar of God"

"What a deep and reverential mystery womanhood is"

"It makes all the differences in the world whether the woman of your life is with you or not; she alone enables you to be in a world that is familiar and whole. If it is not his wife, then for an Indian it may be a sister in Mysore, or Little Mother in Benares".

The woman therefore is the priestess of God. Madeline comments about Indians.

"You worship women even if you torture them"

"To be a woman is to suffer, to bear the yoke of man"

"Man needs a woman to stand on his pedary bones;" feels Rama.

"Man sees himself in woman as essence, the fact of womanhood is the meaning of life. If there were nothing other, you could not know that you are.."

"If Parvathi has not sat and prayed that Shiva would open his eyes, Shiva would never have opened his eyes and there would never have been a world."

"The husband does not love his wife for the wife's sake, but the husband loves the wife for the sake of the self in her."

"To worship woman is to redeem the world, ie., redemption lies in its dissolution so that essence can return to its primordial form."

"For women possession is knowledge. To hold is to be; to love is to submit.

Bondage is her destiny."

"To be a woman, she knew was to be absorbed by a man"

"All women are perfect women, for they have the feminine principle in them, the yin, the prakriti.

In short, Raja Rao believes that the sexes are complementary. Just as the man worships the Shakthi in every woman, a woman worships the latent Shiva in her man. There are two forces in this Universe. Shiva and Shakthi. Shiva is the essence and Shakthi is the power that gives form to the essence. Woman's worship of her man makes him Shiva so that he can

absorb her and thus take them both back into primordial formlessness. Woman is sometimes an impediment to be overcome in one's quest for self-realization. This is exemplified by Rama's liaison with Lakshmy, the wife of Prof. Shyam Sundar with whom Rama indulges in a momentary sensual union in Allahabad.

Savithri combines the practical pleas of Saroja, the mystical hold of Little Mother and her own physical and spiritual charms to become the female principle to whom Rama makes a pilgrimage. Savithri is in a sense a Guru to him before he sets out to seek his Guru proper in the end. Their ritual marriage between Rama and Savithri is symbolic of individual self (Rama) uniting with Purity and power of devotion (Savithri); Here the masculine principle wedded to the feminine principle resulting in self-realization and illumination. True marriage is a mating of the two souls, which is only a preparation for the ultimate union of the soul with God. The love between Rama and Savithri succeeds as Savithri seeks her Rama through whom she sees the whole experience and beyond.

Rama-Madeline marriage fails as Madeline seeks her own God. Their marriage proves barren, both children dying which is symbolic of Madeline's failure to be the true feminine principle. In Madeline, Rama sees woman in various forms many aspects of Shakthi-child, mother, bride and mistress. Their marriage fails because of lack of interaction. Through his interaction with her, Rama could have reached out for self-realization. In his serpent world, Madeline for a time was a rope, the only rope, but Rama ignored it. In Madeline's serpent world, there was no rope at all any time. They hold opposite views of womanhood. Madeline believes in the original sin and sees only bestial sensuality in her approach, but for Rama physical union is divine.

The Serpent and the Rope as a Spiritual Autobiography

Raja Rao himself declares that certain aspects of his life are emphasized in each novel so much that they are accurate statements of his life. At the surface level, *The Serpent and the Rope* deals with the failure of marriage between Madeline and Rama. Even though Rama like Raja Rao comes in the Brahminical tradition, goes to France to do research and marries a French woman, Rama is not a carbon copy of the author. At a deeper level the novel is Rama's quest for authentic selfhood. It is a spiritual autobiography as the story narrates the progress of Rama's mind and objects of his study.

The novel deals with knowledge of the self as its theme and the action takes place in the thought process and psyche of the hero. As the hero-narrator is interested not so much in the physical action as in the philosophical meditations, the novel turns out to be his spiritual autobiography.

Metaphysical Novel

The Serpent and the Rope is metaphysical in the sense that the poetry of John Donne is a metaphysical. The novel deals with the questing self in search of Truth. The main theme of the novel is quest for self-knowledge and it is based on the non-dualistic philosophy of Sankaracharya. It is presented as an exposition of the dialogue between the characters. Serious metaphysical truths of appearance and reality, self and non-self possession and liberation in an abstract manner.

Narrative Technique

The novel *The Serpent and the Rope* is mainly narrated through the consciousness of Ramaswamy. Raja Rao is praised for his innovative contributions to Indian English pioneering a distinctive Indian subgenre of fiction referred to as metaphysical novel. Literary experimentation with language, idiom, symbolism, etc. abounds in the novel. Departing boldly from the European tradition of the novel, he has indigenised it. The novel does not have any chapter headings, not even numerical indicators. All central concerns of the western novel-social relations, psychological motivation, characterization are all absent. Unalloyed autobiographical method of narration with the purely fictional "I" is a modern Western fictional device used. The use of extracts from the hero's diary is the influence of Rilke's notebook. Long epistles, diary entries, parables, and legends also become a narrative media. He generally follows the method of blending the story with reminiscence and reflection. Ordinary situations in the novel seem to furnish an excuse for launching into intellectual and metaphysical discussions.

Raja Rao himself says that *The Serpent and the Rope* like all his writings is an attempt at Puranic recreation of Indian story telling - the story is conveyed through a thin thread to which are attached many other stories, fables and philosophical discussions the interspersing of the narrative in mixed prose and verse.

Raja Rao uses a lot of stories and legends. (e.g) the legend about founding the city of Hyderabad, story of Jagannatha Bhatta and Shahjahan's daughter, Chinese fable of Wang-Chu and Cahng-Yi, Lakshamma's story of the princess who comes out of the rolling pumpkin.

He has used myths and legends to highlight the situation of characters or the relationship between them and to substantiate or concretize the abstract thoughts of the hero; (e.g) myths of Parvathy, nandi and Shiva; Radha-Krishna and Durvasa, classical myths of Demeter, Poseidon and Ulysses. At some places the legend of one civilization is blended into that of another or the mythical incident is related to the historical one. The love of Iseult for Tristan is analogous to that of Radha and Krishna or of Savithri for Sathyavan. The story of Karna and Uttarqa is paralleled by Hugue de Noyers. As Ramaswamy goes on the Indian pilgrimage through Banares, Allahabad and also visits places in England and France, we get poetic descriptions of nature and holy places, as in the Puranas. The Puranas extolled a particular God at the expense of the others. In a similar vein, various philosophies of life and religious like Buddhism, Catholicism, etc. are considered and the victory of Advaita Vedantism is proclaimed at the end. The novel has room for reflections on all subjects like Nazism, Marxism, Feminism, imperialism, industrialization, culture, law language. Various forms of Sanskrit literature are adopted. The symbolism in Savithri's character reminds us of the Dharma katha or the didactic narrative in which each character symbolizes a moral quality. Savithri in *The Serpent and the Rope* is at once a symbolic character and a real life character. The short pithy dialogues are in the style of the Upanishads. The diction is full of Latin and French words.

Sanskrit rhythm is also maintained in the language. Indian idiom and phraseology, proverbs translated into English, similes and archaisms of Indian flavour mark the stylistic features. The puranas are objective and impersonal narratives, but *The Serpent and the Rope* is

semi-autobiographical. All these narrative devices make the novel "meditation, but a dramatic one".

Title of the Novel

The title "The Serpent and the Rope" is derived from the novel's central concept of illusion and reality, based on the non-dualistic philosophy. The popular myth is artistically elucidated in the novel. This metaphysical theme is delineated through the Upanishadic dialogues between the characters. According to Sankaracharya, the world's fundamental unreality can be understood only in relation to the ultimate mystical experience of an illumined soul. In that state of consciousness, the world as we know disappears and the self shines forth the Truth, the Brahman, the basis of the world. This apparent world is like an imagined snake which on closer examination proves to be a rope. Then the world vanishes into Brahman i.e the world of thought and matter is superimposed on Brahman, the absolute reality. As long as we remain in ignorance, we experience this apparent world. When we reach that consciousness, the superimposition ceases. The self is regarded as the individual soul, owing to the ignorance of the self. After the instruction by Guru, one finds not the individual soul, but the Brahman himself. Throughout the novel, the protagonist, Rama patiently guides the reader through the channels of his worldly ego, his self and finally realises that he has been absorbed with the serpent (illusion) instead of the rope (reality). The novel thus is an illustration of the concepts of Maya and Brahman, of illusion and reality: Rama, an incarnation of Brahman, the world around him as an expression of Maya and his own actions the joyful play of Brahman.

Topics for Discussion

1. Title of the novel
2. *The Serpent and the Rope* as a metaphysical novel.
3. the use of myth
4. As a spiritual Autobiography.
5. Symbolism in the novel.
6. Indianess.
7. Narrative technique.

Short Answer Questions

1. Which is the sequel to *The Serpent and the Rope*? - (Cat and Shakespeare)
2. Name the Guru Ramaswamy identifies. (Atmananda Guru)
3. Topic of Ramaswamy's research. (Albigensian Heresy)
4. Real name of Little Mother. (Visalakshy)
5. Savithir's wedded husband. (Pretap Singh)
6. What is the name of Madeliene's son? (Pierre Krishna)

Books for Reference

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2. Arnold Heinemann Series on Raja Rao
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4. Esha Dey. *The Novels of Raja Rao.*
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Englishing Indulekha : Translation, the Novel and History

Susie Tharu is a senior Professor in the Central Institute of English and foreign languages, Hyderabad. She has edited the well known Anthology *Women's Writing in India* in two volumes. She has published a number of books and articles. The prescribed Essay "Englishing Indulekha" is originally a paper presented at a seminar in the School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University in May, 1994. Subsequently it was published in a journal *Haritham* (issue No.6 1995). As the sub title indicates, the essay is about the problem of a novel translation and history, with special reference to Chandumenon's *Indulekha*.

Susie Tharu begins the essay commenting about the scope of prefaces in general. A Preface is a brief account before you get into the text wherein the author gives direct autobiographical information. It has an informal tone but provides circumstantial or confessional information. In short "prefaces frame and cite the main text for historical readers". New prefaces are written to recite the text. Benjamin calls it "nchbriefe" and Derrida names it "survival of a book", Susie Tharu cites the example of 1889 and 1890 prefaces to the first and second editions of *Indulekha*, so also the 1890 preface to the first translation and 1965 preface to the recent edition of the translation, acting as a reading of cultural history of Kerala.

II

The 1889 preface is a confession about the personal explanation for writing the novel and also about its reception. First English translation in its preface assesses the merit of the book as literature and as resource for colonial ethnography, linguistics and administration. However here the author and the translator prove to be complementary to each other.

Susie Tharu goes on to comment on the story of the writing of the story, *Indulekha* by Chandumenon. Chandumenon's *Indulekha* passed through five stages in its origin as a well made narrative. First of all the author is distracted from the company of his friend/friends or lover/wife because of his reading of English fiction. When they demanded a share in his pleasure of reading, Chandumenon attempts pithy plot summaries which do not evoke interest. As the next step, Chandumenon accidentally begins to translate *Henreitta Temple* and his friend insists that he translate whatever he reads, for her. Thus the personal wish in this case, culminates in historical demand—that is demand for "afterlift" for English fiction in a Nair society that is searching out a modernity. "After-life" is a term referred to by Benjamin regarding translation.

When Lakshmikuttyamma asks for a novel in script that she can read for herself, Chandumenon attempts a full scale translation of *Henreitta Temple*. Then he realises that the differences between the culture depicted in the novel and the target culture makes it difficult to translate the actual word on the page. In other words, the strangeness of the source text is to be domesticated for familiarity in the target language. This process involves the question of "supplement" first in Chandumenon's translation and Dumergue's retranslation of it to English.

Chapter 18 of *Indulekha* is the problematic portion taken for discussion. Here there is an after-dinner discussion about English education and atheism, among three Nair men.

One Character, Govindankutty Menon translates a book by Charles Bradlaugh for support of his arguments prefacing it with that social context. But when that social context. But when it is translated into Malayalam, the context is different-it is an after-dinner argument among three men regarding modernisation of their traditional beliefs. The translation is interspersed with the discussion, Govindankutty Menon in his translation presents the radical point of view, but Govinda Panikkar holds on to his "stubbornly traditional view."

Chandumenon decides to write a Malayalam novel "more or less after the English fashion," to fulfill his wife's desire. The attempts to regulate and normalise Nair marriage, sexuality and their matrilineal inheritance laws give inspiration to fulfil his wife's demand for a Malayalam novel. He creates a young, beautiful and intelligent Nair girl as his protagonist, who with her English education attempts to change the traditional style "Sambandam" and introduce new man-woman relationship based on mutual attraction and consent.

Chandumenon is anxious about the reception of his book, which he expresses in his preface. In the preface of the second edition, he expresses his pleasure about the reviews and publicity. W. Dumergue C.S. in the 1965 preface to his English translation of Indulekha appreciates the "fascinating novelty" of presenting the trite romance story in a changing contemporary social life. Susie Tharu's article proposes to discuss this question on the basis of Derrida's gloss on Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" and Tejaswini Niranjana's reading of Derrida and Benjamin.

III

Benjamin's theory of translation rests on the dictum that translation as a mode is obscure if we take translation as mere transmission or reproduction of meaning. In translation, the mode of significance of one language interacts with that of the other exhibiting mobility/instability. In the original text, content and language closely fit like a fruit to the skin. But in translation, the language being "inadequate, forced, and foreign" drapes it like a royal robe in many folds.

Translation should never be a mere repetition. It represents the "afterlife" of the work as it goes through a process called "Nachbrief" gaining new life, as it grows, matures and is supplemented. Benjamin points out that this act of supplementing should be done through the more encompassing life of history (i.e) Life of history that constitutes the afterlife or survival of a text in translation.

Derrida has his reading of Benjamin's concept of translation. For him, "to translate is necessarily to shift away from the idea of transfer. "Transmission of meaning is impossible. In that case the translator can attend to the mode of signification or representation - ie., the text as writing and difference and history.

So translation is an "exchange in the currency of signification. The translator, according to Derrida is "a survivor, with an obligation to decipher the original and make its writing legible le (again); that translations represent successive stages in the "maturation" of the original seed; that the translation contract is an alliance between two foreign (different) languages 'with the promise to produce a child whose seed will give rise to history and growths.

According to Benjamin the historian creates a configuration/constellation of the past and the present, where the past is a concern with its revolutionary potential. Similarly Niranjana finds the translator setting up a cancellation between the original and the translation. Niranjana believes pure language to be a necessary fiction. Translations aim at pure language, but can never attain it. Thus we arrive at history mapped as initiatives and struggles in the field of representations. So translation becomes an act of history. *Indulekha* exemplifies this idea.

IV

Chandumenon's aim in writing *Indulekha* is two fold: (i) To fulfil his wife's desire to read a novel in her own language in the English model. (ii) To create a taste for the novel genre among the Malayalee readers. Here Chandumenon deconstructs/supplements "his original, to remake his word, his reader and himself." His novel in other words, reshapes, refashions the codes and subcodes of philosophical assumptions that constitute the body of the English novel or the Sanskrit-Malayalam reader. He is creating a novel for a Nair reader subject. The translator is representing the text for historical subjects and historical projects." It is not a mere retelling of the gist of the story. It brings out a plurality in the text. Fictional narrative in this case acts out the historical struggle of resignation, involving representation and production not simply reflection.

These novels original as well as translation involve in cultural re-organisation. The European novel naturalizes the process embedded in transparency and realism. Chandumenon's translation novels break a breach in European realism. Nair domestic life is the context of new reality. The author himself declares that a character like *Indulekha* can not exist and she acts as a catalyst. He is setting up an imagined Malabar with its Nair Tharavad as the centre of recasting the Nair-Namboodiri relationship and advocating English education etc.

V

Dumergue praises *Indulekha* for its realism and the authenticity of its prose and its picture of modern Malabar in the present day language. Dumergue considers meaning transparent, transferable, specially with the author's help. For, example, the Sanskrit stanzas in Malayalam text were translated in consultation with Chandumenon. He has made literal translation as far as possible. But for the occasional idioms that would be unintelligible or discordant in English. Certain passages relating to social and family system peculiar to Malabar are explained away in notes, thus using discourse of ethnology. Thus things are naturalized for all cultures and historical periods. As for the literal idiom. Wherever there is difference between the English of the translation and the Malayalam of the original Dumergue has neither the courage nor the wish to tamper with the order of his language. This makes it a successful, readable translation. The translation rewrites its original into the dominant discourse of the target language. This transparent translation makes the reader at home in another history and another culture. In Dumergue's translations, Chandumenon's original objectives are blurred and T.C. Shankara Menon in his preface to the 1965 translation rightly pinpoints the success of the novel on its simple plot and language. The story is of interest to ethnologists and social historians and its literary value is only secondary. Hence Chapter 18 were skipped by the reader.

Susie Tharu arrives at the conclusion that present day translations should pave the way for a literary/cultural history set in the scene of representation and scanned as resistance. The migration of signs, struggles of signification, reconstituting effects of citation, the interdependence of languages and discourses, the historical contracting of subjects and objects contribute this effect.

Points to Remember:

With Chandumenon's *Indulekha* and its translation into English by Dumergue as focal point, the author is analysing theories of translation and its relationship with history. The article discusses the concepts of translation and its relationship with history. The article discusses the concepts of translation put forth by Benjamin, Niranjana and Derrida for the purpose.

1. Is translation a mere transmission or reproduction of meaning? Dumergue says, yes; but for Benjamin, no.
2. Translation as a mode of signification
3. Nachbrief - supplementing-encompassing life of history.
4. According to Derrida, transmission of meaning is impossible.
5. As per Niranjana, translation is an act of history.

When we apply these to *Indulekha*, a translation of *Henreita Temple* in the Malabar context and its English translation.

6. It is not a mere retelling but a cultural re-organisation.
7. Dumergue's translation, a matter of ethnology.

Topics for Discussion:

1. Different views on translation
2. Chandumenon's *Indulekha*
3. Dumergue's translation of *Indulekha*.

Short Answer Questions:

Who translated *Indulekha* into English? (W. Dumergue.C.S)

Who are the critics referred to by Susie Tharu for analysing the concept of translation? (Benjamin, Derrida, Tejaswini, Niranjana)

Who is the author of *Heinritta Temple*? (Lord Beaconfield)

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Ashis Nandy (b.1937) *The Intimate Enemy*

Ashis Nandy is internationally known for his writings on culture and psychology. He is based in the Centre for the Study of Developing societies, Delhi. His *The Intimate Enemy* is a thought provoking statement on the psychology and culture of colonialism.

The book consists of two essays: *The Psychology of Colonialism* and *The Uncolonized Mind*. They deal with the "ordinary Indian's psychology of Colonialism." It is a study of "postcolonial consciousness."

The essay "Uncolonized Mind" is originally lecture at a meeting on Culture, Power and Transformation, organized by the World Order Models Project at Poona in July 1978. Ashis Nandy begins with an analysis of Kipling's ambivalence towards India. Rudyard Kipling was born in India and brought up by Indian servants. He had a close affinity with everything Indian and similarly a distance with his Victorian parents. His mother Alice Kipling was quite unemotional and very formal. Together with his sister, Kipling was sent to South sea in England where Aunt Rosa Holloway was his mentor. Quite contrary to his idyllic childhood with the kindly, warm, non-parental figures in India, Mrs. Holloway's establishment was a "House of Desolation". His later sojourn in a public school was equally unpleasant "harrowing experience". The bicultural Sahib that he was with alien looks distanced him from English society. He had to disown his Indianess as he grew up and learnt not to identify himself with the victims. So there are two Kiplings - the "hero, loyal to Western civilization and the Indianized Western who hated the west within him. "Between this" hero who interfaced cultures and the anti-hero who despised hybrid cultures, "lurks" blind violence and hunger for revenge". Kipling wants to be the ideal victim who fights back the tormentor. But he remains to be the victim who is "passive-aggressive", effeminate and fights back through non-co-operation, irresponsibility etc., though he hated to be that. The British rulers of India being the self confident cultural groups used a violence that was direct, open and tinged with legitimacy and authority. The Indians subjugated in India, on the other hand, also involved in a kind of violence of the weak and the dominated. This violence contains a touch of non-targeted rage as well as despair and fatalism. It is a response to the ruler's violence. The concept of colonialism as an instrument of progress supported the victor's violence of overwhelming advantages. Kipling was in search of an India, the opponent of the West. He has two voices - saxophone and oboe. Saxophone is Kipling's martial violent, self-righteous self with spells of depression. The oboe was Kipling's Indianess.

In section II, Kipling's dilemma is presented. He had to choose between the avowed western values and his rejected under-socialized Indian self. As an effect of colonialism the western man is studying and interpreting the East as his negative identity. But there are also westerners who believed that they had more to learn from the civilization they ruled than they had to teach. On the other hand, the creation of the Indian self image in opposition to the western counterpart became a Western construction. Thus colonialism also universalized and enriched its ethnic stereotypes by appropriating the language of defiance of its victims. India is not non-west but India. His choices are limited and he emphasises the culture that is recessive in the west. Both the Indians and the westerner try to set up the east and west as natural antipodes". In this culture conflict, we have fully defeated east and fully subjugated

west. That is why Malcolm Muggeridge once said "Indians are the only surviving English men".

The west does not involve the culture of the east. But India with its western education incorporates the west, and hence we have ethnic universalism and westernized India becomes a subtradition - a difested form of another civilization. Everyday Indian in being Indian is both Indian and western. The Westerner cannot be considered as a total intruder. Even though there is the problem of rootlessness lurking, the conflict between the East and the West is not the central issue in Indian life. Duncan M Derrett in 1979 commented on how the Indian uses the English ways for his own purposes as long as he is in need.

The colonial culture organised itself around violence and counter violence. People like Kipling believed that the ideology of Kshatriyahood was true Indianess and Westernisation is an extension of kshatriyalization.

The third section presents the crux of the argument. Indian is the antonym of the western man. The western man is the legitimate conqueror and a ruler. The experience of Colonialism has forced the westernised Indian to split the Indian self-image and then reconstitute it by showing one part of the image to be false. The British believed the Indians to be spiritual. At the same time they believed them to be greedy, self-centred and money minded. the society does give importance to spirituality; yet underlying the spirituality you have realistic materialism. Both the ideologies are products of Western intrusion. These contradictions can be reconciled by unmasking the false image.

In section IV, Nandi contrasts the visions of Kipling and Sri. Aurobindo. Sri. Aurobindo is a counterpoint to Kipling. Kipling is culturally an Indian child, whereas Aurobindo is culturally a European child. Both are products of the psychopathology of Colonialism. Aurobindo never rejected the west in him, to be an Indian. But Kipling had to disown his Indianness in order to conform to his notion of the European. Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose - the middle name is Western, third son of an Anglicized father Krishnadhan and an orthodox Hindu mother Swarnalatha, who suffered from hysterics. He was brought up in a westernized convent in Darjeeling with an English Governess and later in England in western ways of the English and Aurobindo himself refers to it as "decolonization". He delivered fiery speeches and stated pursuing the cause of Indian freedom. After 14 years in England, he returned to India and learnt Gujarati and Marathi. His divine associations also developed and he saw the living presence of Kali.

In 1901, he married Mrinalini Devi but Aurobindo soon renounced the world and Mrinalini died a lonely, childless death. He in the meanwhile also became a revolutionary national leader. His political ideology bestowed faith in the proletarian. He firmly believed that he is sent to earth in order to deliver his fallen country with "the power of knowledge, Nrahmatej founded in gnana". He was also imprisoned for sedition.

In 1910, he started his ascetic life in Pondicherry with a few followers. In 1914, Mira Paul Richard of France joined Aurobindo and she was given the title Sri. Ma, the Mother. Even after Aurobindo's death, the Mother became the absolute power. Here the freed East met the non-oppressive West symbolized by the Mother. the West had once separated him

from love and nurture and now with the help and co-operation of Mother mainly West, he is recovering his own self. Mother protected him from the failure of intimacy and nurture, meaningless silence and emptiness.

In the case of Aurobindo there was an inner pain in the forcible destruction of his cultural self by imperialism. But in Aurobindo, his education and upbringing effected this and so rebellion was out of question and he turned to mysticism when rebellion became impossible.

The suffering, dominated society under colonial rule is torn between traditional values and imposed values. But ultimately the oppressor and the oppressed become co-victims in this struggle. The victor believes that he is morally and culturally superior to the defeated but the victim even while conforming to the values of the victor, hides his defiance.

As for people like Kipling, colonialism as a means of progress and the colonizing power gave them cultural superiority. But Gandhi felt the life style of the modern West is only one of the many and it is baneful considering its power and spread. In the colonial set up, you have two possibilities: (i) radical critique of the West (ii) aggressive affirmation of Indianness.

Indian culture has learnt to deal with political defeat and instability. The sense of community is not an important constituent of Indian selfhood. The culture has rejected the national self consciousness. The Indian is compromising in the sense he is ready to absorb the ways of the civilized people unconditionally, if the learning is profitable. He does not protest openly; but he has rebelliousness and others' stereotyped views serve as a screen for survival. The uniqueness of Indian culture lies not in unique ideology but in the society's traditional ability to live with cultural ambiguities and to use them to build psychological and metaphysical defences against cultural invasions. That's the clue to India's post colonial world view.

Ashis nandy concludes by summing up four sets polarities with reference to colonialism: the universal versus the parochial, the material versus the spiritual, the achieving Vs non-achieving and the sane versus the insane. These polarities meet if the central issue is coping with/resistance to oppression and not the scholarly understanding of a civilization

Points to Remember:

1. Colonialism as an instrument of progress supports the ruling class' violence. But the dominated people also resort to another kind of violence which is a response to the violence of the ruling class.
2. For the Westerner, India is his negative identity. India is not non-west but India. Thus we have fully defeated the East and fully subjugated the West.
3. The West does not involve the culture of the East. But Westernised India becomes a sub-tradition-a digested form of another civilization.
4. The two streaks of Hinduism are both products of Western intrusion.
5. The Indian culture has rejected the national self consciousness. The Indian is a compromising type.
6. If the central issue is coping with/resistance to oppression, the polarities meet

Topics for Discussion:

1. Concept of Colonialism and Kipling.
2. Aurobindo and Colonialism.

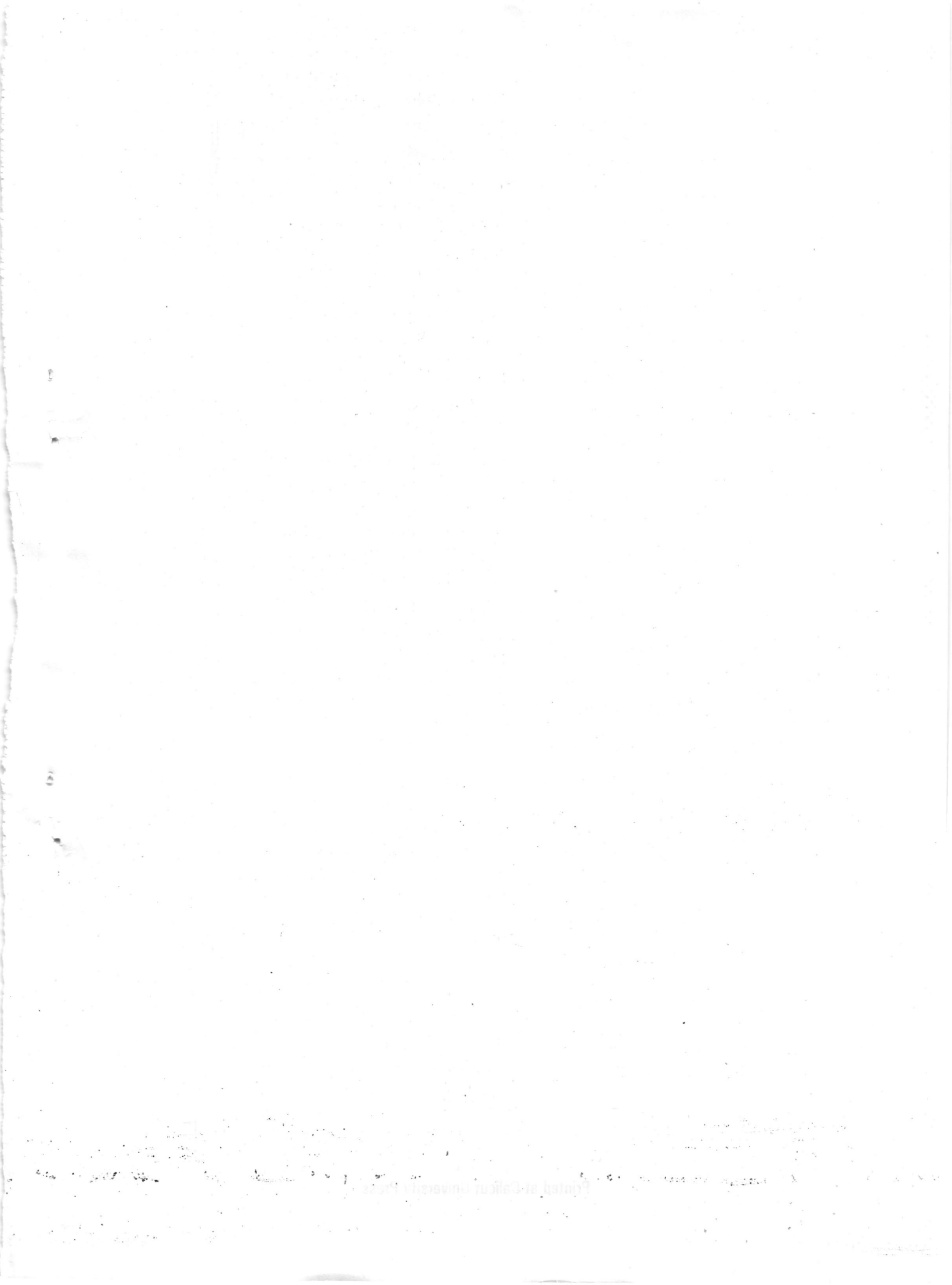
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- 1. Concept of Colonialism and Imperialism
- 2. Arabists and Colonialism

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