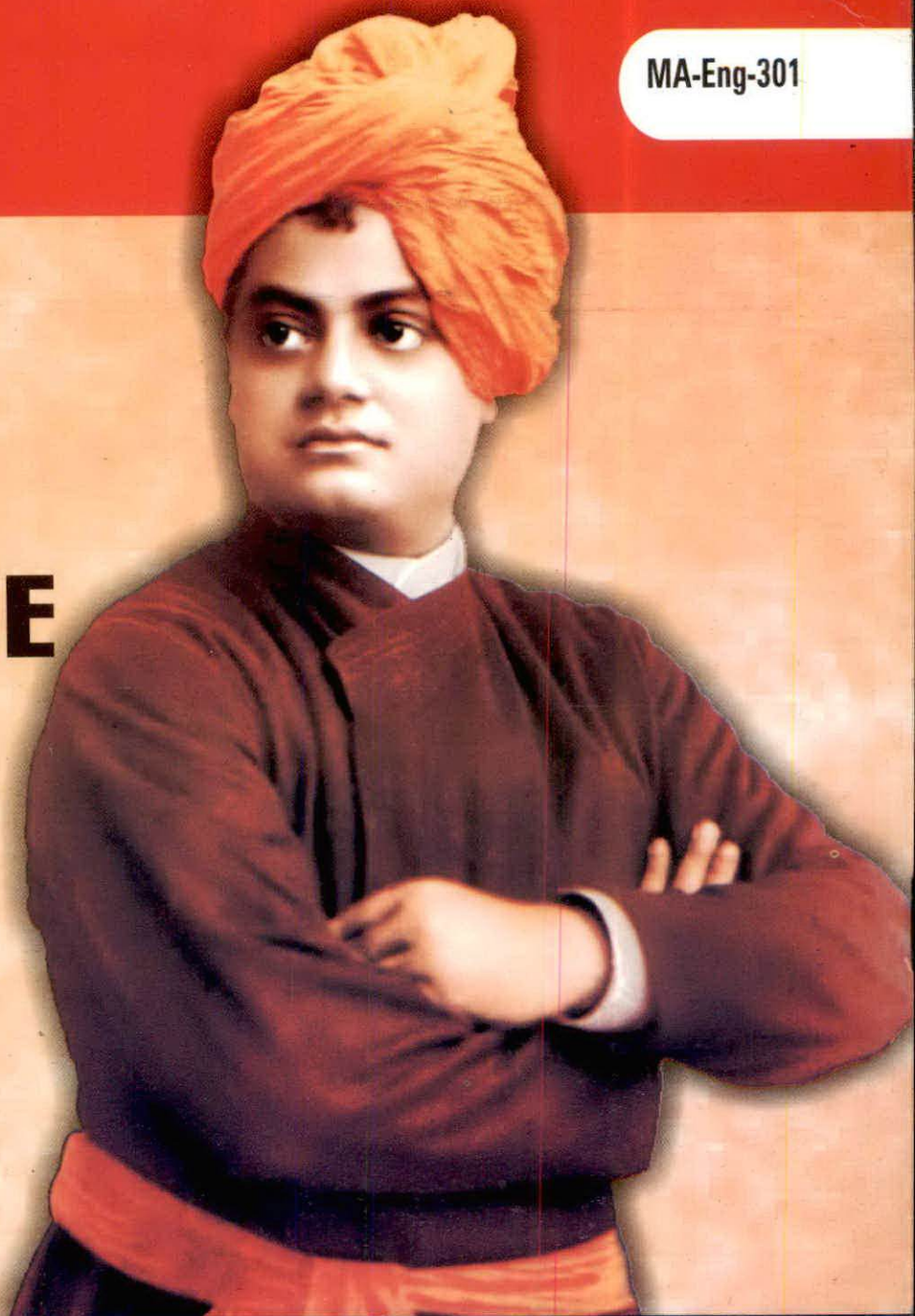


MA-Eng-301

INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE



DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

**SWAMI VIVEKANAND
SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY**
Meerut (National Capital Region Delhi)

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PREFACE

In this course, we shall deal with various aspects of Indian English Literature

- o RABINDRANATH TAGORE
- o NISSIMEZEKIEL
- o A. K. RAMANUJAN
- o KAMALADAS

SYLLABUS

Semester-III

Indian English Literature

(MA-Eng-301)

Unit-I: Tagore:

Gitanjali

Unit-II: Nissim Ezekiel

Night of the Scorpion

The Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher

Unit-III: A.K. Ramanujan

“Looking for a cousin on a swing”,

“A River”, “of Mousers”, “among other things”,

“Small scale reflections on a great house”,

Unit-IV: The old playhouse and other poems – Kamla Das

My Grandmother's House

The Old Play House

UNIT-I

Rabindranath Tagore

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

STRUCTURE

This chapter shall cover the following main points:

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- Gitanjali
- Summary
- Key Words
- Answers to Check Your Progress
- Review Questions
- Further Readings

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the theme of Tagore's "Gitanjali"
- describe the features of Tagore's "Gitanjali".

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861 — 7 August 1941), was a Bengali poet, novelist, musician, painter and playwright who reshaped Bengali literature and music. As author of Gitanjali with its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he was the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (1913). His poetry in translation was viewed as spiritual, and this together with his mesmerizing persona gave him a prophet-like aura in the west. His "elegant prose and magical poetry" still remain largely unknown outside the confines of Bengal.

A Pirali Brahmin from Kolkata, Tagore was already writing poems since he was eight years old. At age 16, he published his first substantial poetry under the pseudonym Bhanushingho ("Sun Lion") and wrote his first short stories and dramas in 1877. Tagore achieved further note when he denounced the British Raj and supported Indian independence. His efforts endure in his vast canon and in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

Tagore modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to political and personal topics. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced), and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and contemplation. Tagore was perhaps the only litterateur who penned anthems of two countries - *Jana Gana Mana*, the Indian national anthem and *Amar Shonar Bangla*, the Bangladeshi national anthem.

The youngest of 13 surviving children, Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata of parents Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and Sarada Devi (1830 —1875). Tagore family patriarchs were the Brahmo founding fathers of the Adi Dharm faith. He was mostly raised by servants, as his mother had died in his early childhood; his father travelled extensively. Tagore largely declined classroom schooling; preferring to roam the mansion or nearby idylls: *Bolpur*, *Panihati*, and others. Upon his upanayan initiation at age eleven, Tagore left Calcutta on 14 February 1873 to tour India with his father for several months. They visited his father's Santiniketan estate and stopped in Amritsar before reaching the Himalayan hill station of Dalhousie.

There, young "Rabi" read biographies and was home-educated in history, astronomy, modern science, and Sanskrit, and examined the poetry of Kalidasa. He completed major works in 1877, one long poem of the Maithili style pioneered by Vidyapati. Published pseudonymously, experts accepted them as the lost works of Bhanusimha, a newly discovered 17th-century Vaishava poet. He wrote "*Bhikharini*" (1877; "The Beggar Woman"—the Bengali language's first short story) and *Sandhya Sangit* (1882)—including the famous poem "*Nirjharer Swapnabhanga*" ("The Rousing of the Waterfall").

A prospective barrister, Tagore enrolled at a public school in Brighton, East Sussex, and England in 1878. He first stayed for some months at a house that the Tagore family owned near Brighton and Hove, in *Medina Villas*; in 1877, his nephew and niece — Suren and Indira, 'the children of Tagore's brother Satyendranath — were sent together with their mother (Tagore's sister-in-law) to live with him. He read law at University College London, but left school to explore Shakespeare and more: *Religion Medici*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; he returned degreeless to Bengal in 1880. Nevertheless, this exposure to English culture and language would later percolate into his earlier acquaintance with Bengali musical tradition, allowing him to create new modes of music, poetry, and drama.

Nevertheless, Tagore neither fully embraced English strictures nor his family's traditionally strict Hindu religious observances in either his life or in his art, choosing instead to pick the best from both realms of experience.

In 1890, Tagore began managing his family's vast estates in Shilaidaha, a region now in Bangladesh; he was joined by his wife and children in 1898. In 1890, Tagore released his *Manasi* poems, among his best-known work. As "Zamindar Babu", Tagore criss-crossed the holdings while living out of the family's luxurious barge, the *Padma*, to collect (mostly token) rents and bless villagers, who held feasts in his honour. These years-Rabindranath Tagore

1891-1895: Tagore's *Sadhana* period, after one of Tagore's magazines — were his most fecund. During this period, he wrote more than half the stories of the three-volume, 84-story *Galpaguchchha*. With irony and gravity, they depicted a wide range of Bengali lifestyles, particularly village life.

Santiniketan (1901-1932)

In 1901, Tagore left Shilaidaha and moved to Santiniketan to found an ashram which grew to include a marble-floored prayer hall ("The Mandir"), an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, and a library. There, Tagore's wife and two of his children died. His father died on 19 January 1905. He received monthly payments as part of his inheritance and additional income from the Maharaja of Tripura, sales of his family's jewellery, his seaside bungalow in Puri, and mediocre royalties (Z 2,000) from his works. By now, his work was gaining him large following among Bengali and foreign readers alike, and he published such works as *Naivedya* (1901) and *Kheya* (1906) while translating his poems into free verse. On 14 November 1913, Tagore learned that he had won the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature, becoming the first Asian Nobel laureate. The Swedish Academy appreciated the idealistic and for Western readers, accessible nature of a small body of his translated material, including the 1912 *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. In 1915, Tagore was knighted by the British Crown. He later returned his knighthood in protest of the massacre of unarmed Indians in 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh.

In 1921, Tagore and agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst set up the Institute for Rural Reconstruction, later renamed Shriniketan or "Abode of Welfare", in Surul, a village near the ashram at Santiniketan. Through it, Tagore bypassed Gandhi's symbolic *Swaraj* protests, which he despised. He sought aid from donors, officials, and scholars worldwide to "free village[s] from the shackles of helplessness and ignorance" by "vitalis[ing] knowledge". In the early 1930s, he targeted India's "abnormal caste consciousness" and untouchability. Lecturing against these, he

penned untouchable heroes for his poems and dramas and campaigned successfully to open Guruvayoor Temple to Dalits.

Works

Though known mostly for his poetry, Tagore also wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; indeed, he is credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from deceptively simple subject matter: common people.

Novels

Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them *Chaturanga*, *Shesher Kobita*, *Char Odhay*, and *Noukadubi*. *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World)—through the lens of the idealistic zamindar protagonist Nikhil—excoriates rising Indian nationalism, terrorism, and religious zeal in the Swadeshi movement; a frank expression of Tagore's conflicted sentiments, it emerged out of a 1914 bout of depression. The novel ends in Hindu-Muslim violence and Nikhil's (likely mortal) wounding. *Gora* raises controversial questions regarding the Indian identity. As with *Ghare Baire*, matters of self-identity, personal freedom, and religion are developed in the context of a family story and love triangle.

In *Jogajog* (Relationships), the heroine Kumudini—bound by the ideals of Siva-Sati, exemplified by Dakshayani—is torn between her pity for the sinking fortunes of her progressive and compassionate elder brother and his foil: her exploitative, rakish, and patriarchal husband. In it, Tagore demonstrates his feminist leanings, using pathos to depict the plight and ultimate demise of Bengali women trapped by pregnancy, duty, and family honour; simultaneously, he treats the decline of Bengal's landed oligarchy. The story revolves around the underlying rivalry between two families — the Chatterjees, aristocrats now on the decline (Biprodas) and the Ghosals (Madhusudan), representing new money and arrogance. Kumudini, Biprodas' sister, is caught between the two as she is married off to Madhusudan. She was brought up in a sheltered home where she had followed the traditional way of life and observed all the religious rituals like all the other womenfolk in the family.

Others were uplifting: *Shesher Kobita* (translated twice as *Last Poem* and *Farewell Song*) is his most lyrical novel, with poems and rhythmic passages written by the main character, a poet. It also contains elements of satire and postmodernism; stock characters gleefully attack the reputation of an old, outmoded, oppressively renowned poet who, incidentally, goes by the name of Rabindranath Tagore. Though his novels remain among the

least-appreciated of his works, they have been given renewed attention via film adaptations by Satyajit Ray and others: *Chokher Bali* and *Ghare Baire* are exemplary. In the first, Tagore elaborately records early 20th century Bengali society, through his central character, the rebellious widow, who wants to live a life of her own. In writing this novel he exposes the custom of perpetual mourning on the part of widows, who were not allowed to remarry and were condemned to a life of seclusion and loneliness. It is a melancholy, stirring tale of the deceit and sorrow that arise from dissatisfaction and sorrow. Tagore has said about the novel, "I have always regretted the ending". Their soundtracks often feature rabindra sangit. In the latter work, it illustrates the battle Tagore had with himself, between the ideas of Western culture and revolution against the Western culture. These two ideas are portrayed in two of the main characters, Nikhil, who is rational and opposes violence, and Sandip, who will let nothing stand in his way from reaching his goals. These two opposing ideals are very important in understanding the history of this region and its contemporary problems. There is much controversy over whether or not Tagore was attempting to represent Gandhi in Sandip but many argue that Tagore would not even venture to personify Sandip as Gandhi because Tagore was a large admirer of Gandhi and Gandhi was anti-violence while Sandip would use violence in any respect to get what he wanted.

Non-fiction

Tagore wrote many non-fiction books, writing on topics ranging from Indian history to linguistics to spirituality. Aside from autobiographical works, his travelogues, essays, and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including *Europe Jatrir Patro* (Letters from Europe) and *Manusher Dharmo* (The Religion of Man). A brief conversation between him and Albert Einstein, "Note on the Nature of Reality", is included as an appendix.

Poetry

Tagore's poetry—which varied in style from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic—proceeds from a lineage established by 15th- and 16th-century Vaishnava poets. Tagore was awed by the mysticism of the rishi-authors who—including Vyasa—wrote the Upanishads, the Bhakti-Sufi mystic Kabir, and Ramprasad Sen. Yet Tagore's poetry became most innovative and mature after his exposure to rural Bengal's folk music, which included Baul ballads—especially those of bard Lalou. These—rediscovered and popularised by Tagore—resemble 19th-century Kartabhaja hymns that emphasize inward divinity and rebellion against religious and social orthodoxy. During his Shilaidaha years, his poems took on a lyrical quality, speaking via the *maner manus* (the Bauls' "man within the heart") or meditating upon the *jivan devata* ("living God within"). This

figure thus sought connection with divinity through appeal to nature and the emotional interplay of human drama. Tagore used such techniques in his *Bhanusimha* poems (which chronicle the romance between Radha and Krishna), which he repeatedly revised over the course of seventy years.

Tagore responded to the mostly crude emergence of modernism and realism in Bengali literature by writing experimental works in the 1930s. Examples works include *Africa* and *Camalia*, which are among the better known of his later poems. He occasionally wrote poems using *Shadhu Bhasha* (a Sanskritised dialect of Bengali); later, he began using *Cholti Bhasha* (a more popular dialect). Other notable works include *Manasi*, *Sonar Tori* (Golden Boat), *Balaka* (Wild Geese — the title being a metaphor for migrating souls), and *Purobi*. *Sonar Tori*'s most famous poem, dealing with the ephemeral nature of life and achievement, goes by the same name; hauntingly it ends: ("Shunno nodir tire rohinu pora / Jaha chhilo be gelo shonar tori" — "all I had achieved was carried off on the golden boat — only I was left behind."). Internationally, *Gitanjali* is Tagore's best-known collection, winning him his Nobel Prize. Song VII of *Gitanjali*.

Tagore's poetry has been set to music by various composers, among them classical composer Arthur Shepherd's triptych for soprano and string quartet, Alexander Zemlinsky's famous *Lyric Symphony*, Josef Bohuslav Foerster's cycle of love songs, Leos Janacek's famous chorus "*Potulny silenec*" ("*The Wandering Madman*") for soprano, tenor, baritone and male chorus, JVV 4/43, inspired by Tagore's 1922 lecture in Czechoslovakia which Janacek attended, and Garry Schyman's "*Praan*", an adaptation of Tagore's poem "*Stream of Life*" from *Gitanjali*. The latter was composed and recorded with vocals by Palbasha Siddique to accompany Internet celebrity Matt Harding's 2008 viral video. In 1917 his words were translated adeptly and set to music by Richard Hageman (an Anglo-Dutch composer) to produce what is regarded as one of the finest art songs in the English language: *Do not go my love* (Ed. Schirmer NY 1917). The second movement of Jonathan Harvey's "*One Evening*" (1994) sets an excerpt beginning "As I was watching the sunrise..." from a letter of Tagore's, this composer having previously chosen a text by the poet for his piece "*Song Offerings*" (1985).

GITANJALI

Tagore was a poet, composer, novelist, short story writer, playwright, philosopher, lecturer, educator and painter. He wrote poetry as child and he was only fifteen when he published some of his poems. His first book appeared in 1878. In that year he also went England to study law but returned soon, giving up the idea. It was as a poet and as the author of *Gitanjali* he came to England in 1912 and met Rothenstein, Yeats and others. In 1913, he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Tagore is well known as a Founder of Viswa Bharathi University at Shantiniketan.

Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore as an Indo - Anglian

A.C. Bradley said on reading Gitanjali, "It seems as though we have a great poet among us again". We may have good poets often but not great ones who can lift us off our feet to a state of sublime vision. Stopford Brooke meant the same thing when he declared that he "read them (Lyrics in Gitanjali) with more than admiration: with gratitude for their spiritual help, and the joy they bring and confirm and for the love of beauty they deepen and for more than he could tell". Ezra Pound, a personality entirely different from Bradley and Brooke, one of the chief leaders of modern poetry, struck the same note though in a different key, when he said, "the appearance of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by himself from Bengali into English, is an event in the history of English, is an event in the history of English poetry and world poetry and world poetry". Readers of different tastes and temperaments were compelled to recognize the lofty experience in the work.

This happened though they were reading only prose translations in English of exquisite Bengali Lyrics whose subtle rhythmic effects and master harmonies could not even be shadowed forth in the slightest way. For Tagore is not an Indo-Anglian in the same sense as Sri Aurobindo is. We have only one work by Tagore written in English, "The Child". All the others are English renderings from the original Bengali, sometimes by himself, often by others though mostly under his personal supervision.

And yet Gitanjali, in the prose rendering of Tagore remains a masterpiece. Some tried to attribute the success of the English version to W.B. Yeats who introduced Tagore's work to English audiences. Rothenstein to whom Tagore has dedicated the English version of Gitanjali says in his Autobiography, "I knew that it was said in India that the success of Gitanjali was largely owing to Yeats's re-writing of Tagore's English. That this is false can easily be proved. The original of Gitanjali in English and Bengali is in my possession.

Yeats did here and there suggest slight changes, but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore's hands".

Tagore's English was found fault with for his wrong use of prepositions and the like. But his sense of rhythm never left him even in English. His imagery is always bold and original. That is what makes him the first true Indo-Anglian writer.

W.B. Yeats giving an account of the various images used by Tagore to present God, comments. "A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seem to have been taken up into this

imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's Willow Wood, or heard for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream".

Gitanjali-An Introduction

Gitanjali is a sequence of 103 Lyrics translated from selected Lyrics in his own Bengali works - *Naivedya Kheya* and *Gitanjali* and a few lyrics published only in periodicals. The English version approximates to a familiar Sanskrit form called *Shotaka*, a bunch of verses, independent meditation on a related theme.

The term *Gitanjali*, rendered as "Song Offerings" by Tagore, brings out the central theme of the work. "I know that only as a singer I come before your presence", says Tagore in Lyric 2 and "I am here to sing thee songs" in Lyric 15. We have here the Singer, the Sing and the Lord who is sung. The 103 Lyrics are variations on the three subjects. The singer is also the beloved who loves, the Supreme Lover. The beloved sees the Lover in, through and behind, the various aspects of Nature and among men, the tillers of the soil, "the poorest, the lowliest and lost". But the dominant image which includes and subsumes all the others is that of the singer who approaches his love who himself is the master musician. Sometimes as in Lyrics 3 and 13 we have diffidence and the dissatisfaction "I know not how thou singest master!.. My heart longs to join in the song, but vainly struggles for a voice". "The song I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days stringing and unstringing my instrument". Sometimes song becomes synonymous with life and it is the Lord who infuses life and music into the poet who is no more than an instrument. Lyric 7 which open with the words "My song has put off its ornaments" conclude with the singer's prayer to make his life "simple and straight like flute of reed for thee to fill with music". The very opening Lyric he "Song Offerings". "This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new".

An Analytical and Critical Summary

The first fifteen Lyric may be classified into four groups according to the way which the poet present the approach to God, the soul's relationship with Him. The poet speaks of himself and the relationship in four ways.

1. He is a singer, as we have noted in the introduction, offerings his songs to the Lord who Himself is the Supreme Singer or a humble instrument, a flute or reed into which the Lord infuse endless life and music. Life and music are identical as both are effusions of harmony. The Song that the poet speaks of is at once the song he sings literally and all life and colour and beauty that constitute Nature created by the Lord and

therefore is his song. His Song — offering is one sense the offering of his whole life. We see the poet, the Singer, his Song and the Supreme Singer to whom he offers his own song and life in Lyrics 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 13 and 15.

2. He is a lover and devotee seeking the company of the lover and delighting in it. The Lyrics that speak of the poet as a singer, especially Lyrics 5 and 7 imply the lover and the devotee. But Lyric 4, 6, 9, 10 and 12 are solely about that aspect of the poet's personality.

3. The lover of God sees the other seekers of God who approach him wrongly. The beloved knows the lover and how his love can be won, Lyric 9 and 11 ridicule the seekers on the wrong path.

4. The poet sees the human soul hampered by the external fineries and luxuries or life in its approach to the Divine. The child in his princely robes and ornaments coming in the way in his reaching the earth symbolizes the soul's state entangled in the shackles of outer life.

Group I

Lyric-1

The opening Lyric of the sequence of poem called Gitanjali as pointed out in the introduction strikes the key — note of the whole work. The poet's soul is addressing the Maker. The soul is a vessel filled by the Lord with eternal life, a flute of reed filled with songs ever new. Life and music to the poet are not different from each other. The opening lyric therefore shows how the sequence is concerned with making an offering of not only songs but his life itself to the Lord.

The opening word like the poet's address to Lord throughout the poem is in the second person singular, the form avoided when we talk to persons superior to ourselves. In English as in our own languages in India 'God' is addressed with the form 'Thou' because God is at once far above us and yet very near — the human soul seeks identity and unification with Him. The simultaneity of difference and love cannot be brought out in the forms of respect we show to lesser creatures — the mortals. God is above our common concepts of respect and disrespect.

It is the Lord's 'pleasure' to make the poet's soul endless. 'Pleasure' in this context suggests will. But His will is not divorced from joy. The central experience of the whole Lyric is joy and harmony as suggested by music, with which the Lord fills the humble flute of reed that the poet is and carries it to heights and depths (hills and valleys).

When the Lord touches him, his heart loses its finiteness, becomes one with the soul and gives rise to a heavenly expression in words. It is his little finite hands that receive the Lord's infinite gifts. Yet there is space in them to receive endlessly what the Lord continues to pour age after age.

Lyric-2

The Lord, who fills him, as he fills a flute of reed, according to Lyric I, commands him to sing. His heart appears to burst in pride; tears come to his eyes as he looks upon the Lord's face. All disharmony in him melts into one sweet harmony. His loving worship rises high like a happy bird that seeks to fly across the sea.

The Lord takes a delight in his beloved singing. It is only as singer the poet can go before Him. It is with the edge of the wing of his song that he can touch the feet of the Lord. The intoxication of his singing, he says, - makes him forget distinctions and calls Him friend who is truly the Lord.

Actually he feels the nearness of the Lord. God is once Master, Lover, Friend, Father, all rolled into one.

The image of the bird, its wing the flight takes us above the earth to a heavenly state when the poet is face to face with God.

Lyric-3

In this Lyric, the poet presents the Lord as the Supreme Singer. He is not intellectually aware how the Lord sings though he listens with a silent wonder. The world shines in the light of the music; the wind that blows across is the life — breath of the music. The music is a sacred stream that runs and rushes on, breaking all obstacles. In other words, the whole world is the expression of the harmony flowing music of his Master, the Lord.

The poet struggles in vain to join the Lord's music. His words fail. He can only cry utterly puzzled. He finds himself caught in the endless threads of the net of the music of his Master, the Lord.

Lyric-5

Song is possible only in silence and leisure. The poet wants to sing; dedication of his whole life to his Master and Lover. He therefore asks the lover to allow him to sit by his side for a moment. He can attend to his worldly duties later. Away from the face of the Lord who is his king, his heart, the seat of love is troubled and has no rest. The work he has to do become endless labour without a purpose. (Shoreless sea suggests a voyage without a goal).

Summer, the season of blossoms sought by bees and other creatures, visits him the window. The poet views the summer blossoms through the window but sees the season and flowers and all creatures as endowed with a personality. The flowering grove is the royal court and the bees as the Minstrels. The minstrelsy of the bees makes him desire to sing his own song.

Lyric-7

The suggestion of the relationship between the poet and God as that between the beloved and the lover is suggested in lyric 5 but made explicit in lyric 7. His song, his harmonious life, has thrown aside its external vain show of ornament and dress. The poet as bride and God as lover cannot achieve their union with the ornaments coming in between them and the tinkling sound of the ornaments preventing the sweet loving whispers of the Lord pleasing the bride.

The second part of the lyric takes up the idea of the song. The Lord is a Master Poet and the poet's own vanity dies in His presence.

The lyric ends with the identification of song and life back to lyric 1. The poet prays that his life may be made simple and straight, "like a flute of reed for thee to full with music".

Lyric-13

The singer and lover feel the agony that he has not met the Lord nor sung the song that he came to sing. He has only been stringing and unstringing his instrument to the accompaniment of which he wants to sing. The rhythmic beat (time) is false, the words are wrongly set; they do not answer the wish in the heart. The blossom of his heart has not been opened. The wind that blows become the sigh heaved with grief.

He has the sense of the presence of the lover ("I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house") but has seen his face or heard his voice.

The beloved has spent the whole day in preparing of the lovers visit but cannot ask him to come. The beloved hopes to meet the lover one day, and that day is yes to come.

Lyric-15

The poet wants the Lord to command him to sing because that is his mission in life. He has no other function; his otherwise useless life can only break into tunes without a purpose. At midnight (which is spoken of as a dark temple because of its stillness, is most conducive to worship) and in the morning air in which the harp or the musical instrument of golden light turned into a harmony) he wants to be summoned into the Lord's presence to fulfill his mission.

Group II

Even in Group I, God as the lover and the human soul as the beloved have been more than suggested. In Group II, there are two lyrics with the continuation of the theme and there are two where we have the picture without any hint of what is known as "bridal mysticism" or the experience of the union of the human soul and God in terms of the union of lovers.

Lyric-4

The Lord is the life of the beloved at all levels — physical, mental, emotional and moral; the living touch of the lord is on the beloved limbs. The truth is that the Lord has kindled the light of reason the mind. The Lord has been the seat in the inmost shrine of the heart and the Lord gives strength to act. The beloved must therefore keep the body pure, all untruths away from the thoughts, all evils away from the heart and endeavour to reveal the Load in every action.

The beloved as a flower to be plucked by the lover is a well known images in Indian poetry. The flower, though little wants to be taken by Lord without delay. It fears it may droop and drop into the dust. It may not find a place in the Lord's garland but yet wants to be taken by force because it may not offer itself to Him, The flower may not have a deep colour or strong smell. Yet it is ready to be at the Lord's service and therefore may be plucked before it meets the time of its end.

Lyric-10

A much anthologized and oft quoted lyric, it clearly brings out the Poet's conception of the Lord. The picture, though apparently modern with its concern for the common suffering humanity has its basis in tradition - God has been named anatha — rakshaka, deena — dayapara (Protector of orphans: "companionless", in the poem one full of sympathy for the humble and low (the poorest, lowliest and the lost).

The poet presents himself as one well - placed in life with a sense of social pride offering a footstool to the Lord OD which he cryald place His feet for the poet to bow down and make obeisance. But the Lord's feet rest far deep among those who are economically, socially and personally below the last rung of the ladder of life. The Lord dresses like them and lives with them and the pride of position can never approach Him, and His nature is too deep to fathom for a heart steeped in worldly values and considerations.

The lyric shows that the lover and seeker of the Lord cannot go anywhere near Him unless he becomes humble like the Lord himself. Another poet Sri Aurobindo in a different context said, "Therefore we know by that humility that thou art God".

Lyric-12

The Lord and the Lover is within the heart of the beloved and the highest adoration is in the simplicity of a tune. To arrive there the beloved has to traverse all the worlds and planets. The poet presents the experience in terms of a chariot pursuing an endless voyage, a traveler knocking door and eyes straying far.

One remembers the Jewish parable of a rabbi living in the Chetto of Cracow proceeding all the way to Prague, the Bohemian capital, to discover a hidden treasure. On reaching her he learns from the captain of the Guards that the treasure is hidden in his own gardens at Cracow. He returns to discover it.

Lyric-14

The beloved must desire nothing other than the Lord and what He wills because in His will is one's peace and joy. When the beloved asks for things that come in the way of such a joy, the lover refuses to grant it rightly. Every such refusal is to make the gifts given by the Lord more valuable and saving the beloved from greed (over much desire) which is also "weak and uncertain" because one is not conscious of what one really wants.

Group III

Lyric-9

In lyric 14, the poet speaks of the Lord's refusal of desires in order to give the beloved great gifts. The poet here tells a devotee how not to desire anything egoistically or carries any burden of worry of responsibility on his own shoulders. It is like carrying oneself. There is the Lord to bear all. A devotee has to trust in him and be without any sense of regret. The desire of the devotee being self-centered quenches the light of love. Desire is unholy and the gifts of God are not to be received in unclean hands. When the Divine offers gifts of his own accord by sacred love, those alone must be accepted.

Lyric-11

It has been repeatedly pointed out that Gitanjali is a song offering and that the poet as a singer approaches God as the Supreme Singer. There is however one king of chanting and singing along with telling of beads which ignores the nature of God and his universal love. God as seen by Tagore, the mystic, is one who has not only provided the feast of life through the beauty of nature etc., but also one, who as he says in lyric 10, is with "the poorest, the lowliest and lost." A person who isolates himself from God's creature amidst whom he dwells isolates himself from His love. The seeker who wants to meet God sitting in the dark corner of a temple ignoring "the path maker who is breaking stones and tiller who is tiling the ground" will never find him. God himself is with them on the dusty soil.

He who talks of "Deliverance" forgets that God himself is bound by His own creation. The poet asks such a devotee to come out of his meditations leaving aside his flowers and incense and asks him to get his own clothes tattered and stained among the humble in order to meet his Lord in toil and in sweat of his brow.

The poet wants to emphasize the fact that the Lord is not far away but even with the humblest of his own matures. It is the attitude that distinguishes the ignorant devotees singing and chanting in the corner of temple and the poets singing in his own corner "in the hall of thine" (Lyric 15).

Group—IV

Lyric-8

The child is often a symbol of the human soul. The soul has come to this world to take part in the sport of life. The external bonds prevent the soul from the play.

The princely robes and ornaments of the child symbolize the outer bonds of life. The world is the mother who binds us with the finery that shuts the child off from the healthy dust of the earth. The common human life is the great fair and the princely robes prevent the child (the soul) from its entrance into the fair.

Tagore as a devotional and mystic Poet

The main theme of Gitanjali is the relationship between the human soul and God. The soul's direct experience of the Transcendental Reality goes by the name of mysticism. Devotion is the human heart's love and longing for such a mystical union with God. Religion indicates life with faith in God and with certain conceptions about the nature of God. The word "religion" is often used to include the devotional and mystical experience. There is a tendency to consider religious experience as being exclusive and as denying the chief concerns of life.

Eliot in his Essay on "Religion and Literature", while smissing the senses in which he does not use the word "Religion" refers to the so called religious poetry and comments:

"For the great majority of people who love poetry, religious poetry is a variety of minor poetry. The religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit; but a poet who is dealing with a confined part of his subject matter; who is leaving out what men consider their major passions".

Tagore's religious, devotional or mystical poetry is far from being a variety of minor poetry because his work deals with the whole gamut of human emotions within the framework of man's seeking of God. Love and longing, despair and sense of separation, indignation and ridicule and all other feelings and passions enter into the structure of the work.

Gitanjali is centred in life and the Lord is not only whin oneself though to seek whom one has not to travel for and knock at every door but in the very midst of men and women, among the tillers of the soil and Vac; path

makers who break the stones wearing the tattered dress and working in the dust. Social pride, pride of position can never take one anywhere near Him who lives "among the poorest, the lowliest on lost". The same Lord is also the lover and Supreme singer courting the beloved, expressing his multinational harmony in and through nature.

The poet's devotion to the Lord, therefore, does not draw him away from life or make him 'renounce' it, but accept it in all its beauty and variety if also with its dust and labour and drudgery.

Yet in the midst of everything it is God who sought, loved and longed for and the poet's soul seeks no other delight than in and through Him, singing His praise, desiring to be plucked like a flower or be like a flute of reed filled with life and music.

Nature and man to the poet are only means of approaching God and are not important for their own sake.

Tagore's Humanism

When critics talk of Tagore's humanism, they tend to equate him with a philanthropist or a socialist forgetting the central mystical experience which includes all life and therefore, the humblest human life. Even as Milton, Spenser and Fulke Greville are called "Christian Humanists", Tagore could be called "Religious or Mystical Humanist". (It is both wrong and unnecessary to associate and creed or denomination with Tagore because he was a universal religion unbound by any dogma. It is possible, though, to link his experience with the Vaishnavite tradition and the Upanishad Vedanta. The lyric in Gitanjali are also sometimes likened to the Psalms in the Bible). The emphasis is on, God and not on man.

Lyric 10 and 11 bring out the religious humanism fully. Lyric 10, the poet is the devotee and beloved but with a sense of social pride placing a footstool for the Lord and Lover to rest His foot there. But the feet reach far down to the humblest creatures in economic, social and moral life. The Lord's humility, unlike man's is endless and boundless. The Lord wears their dress and lives their life. Or to put it differently, the Lord abides with the humblest becoming one with them.

In lyric 11, the poet addresses a conventional religious person whose chanting and singing and telling of beads of beads in the corner of a temple is opposed to a spontaneous singer, to the master of song, the Master who also does not deem it beneath his dignity to become one with the breaker of stones and tiller of the soil. The Lord has bound himself with love to every creature and the poet deprecates the narrow conception of the so-called deliverance.

Tagore's divine humanism, therefore, is God-centered and his conception of God includes God's Humanity.

Tagore's Lyricism (Tagore as Lyric Poet)

Lyric literally means a song poem. Words set to music are called a lyric. The word is derived from "Lyre", a musical instrument to the accompaniment of which a composition was sung in the past.

The title Gitanjali and the central theme of the whole work (see Gitanjali an Introduction) brings out the lyrical quality.

A lyric as a literary or poetical composition, creates the musical effect through the sound values of word and i, iythm, alliteration and assonance, refrain and such other devices.

The English version, unlike the original Bengali is in prose. (see paras 2 and 3 of "Tagore as an Indo-Anglian"). But it is cadenced prose, highly rhythmical rising to sublime heights of presenting the experience of seeing God face to face, yet capable of bringing before us different shades of emotion from the highest to the humblest. The prose—poetry of Gitanjali resembles what is known as Free Verse. But is freer than the free, verse because these Verse implies some kind of set pattern.

The masterpiece of prose poetry that one remembers when reading Gitanjali is the King James's version of the English Bible. One remembers particularly the Psalms which have a thematic as well as a format kinship (Psalms = Gita = song: psalms are also a sequence of songs) with Gitanjali.

Lyric as a poetic composition even when the medium is prose reveals a phase of the personality of the poet in and through emotion. The rhythm varies according to the emotion and the phase of the personality expressed in the line. It is needless to say that the true personality of the poet seen in the whole work is the God lover and seeker in union with, separated form, near and far from the Divine. The general feeling is one of joy and ecstasy and even contemplated pain and agony or any other feeling for the matter, affords only joy. (An example of sheer ecstasy is the line in Lyric 2).

"Drunk with the joy of singing I forgot myself and call friend who are my lord".

The implied antithesis in call thee friend who art my lord reminds one of the Hebrew melody advised in the King James' version of the Psalms. A similar rhythmical structure is also seen in,

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, the lowliest and lost".

The sheer sense of ecstasy is expressed in different ways. The Hebrew device of parallelism in the English translation of the Bible 1. seen in lines like.

"The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The ugly stream of music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on".

"This frail vessel...

"The little reed

"My little heart...

"These very small hands of mine

But there are kinds of rhythm "I ask for a moments' indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have on hand I will finish afterwards".

"I am here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat".

As noted already there are various emotions other joy tho-as also even agony becomes joyful in poetry.

Here is a lyric cry of absolute agony.

"The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days in stringing and unstringing my instrument".

"The time has not come, true, the words have not been rightly set only there is the agony Of wishing in the heart".

A contempt, not without sympathy breathes in the lines ...

"O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door!"

The tone sometimes rises to one of commandment ...

"Leave all thy burdens on his hands to bear all, and never look behind in regret".

The commandment also becomes an admonition.

"Leave this singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of temple with doors all shut! Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee".

An emotion in the case of the following lines sympathy may be thoroughly restrained but its poignance is not unseen even with the apparent statement of face:

"The child who is decked with prince's robes and who has jeweled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play: his dress hampers him at every step".

Tagore's lyric poetry springs from a deep sense of joy but covers the whole gamut of human emotions and utterance is the subject of rhythms and it touches scriptural sublimities while appealing to the tenderest of human emotions.

Images and Symbols in Gitanjali

When one experience is presented in terms of another, bringing a picture before our mind's eye, we use the word "Image". In lyric the words

"The dark temple of midnight" constitute an image as the description of the colours of the sky after sunrise does in the words, "When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned." When the image becomes more concrete standing for particular experience it is called a symbol. The little flower in lyric 6 stands for the beloved to be possessed by the lover. The symbol rises to the level of a myth when we are taken to a level of life beyond the forms of nature, without merely being made to see a form or an object stand for something else. The relationship between the human soul and the lord being treated in terms of that between a singer who approaches the master singer with his song, we are bordering on the province of myth.

The little vessel and the flute of reed of lyric 1, the poet's adoration spreading wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea in lyric 2, the words "My song has put off her adornments" in lyric 7, the fool trying to carry himself upon his own shoulders in lyric 9, the whole of lyric up to the words "The blossom has not opened; only the wind is singing by" in lyric 13 are all examples of images. There are others not quoted here.

In lyric 8 the word 'child' symbolizes the human soul. The child with his princely robes being hampered by his dress and ornaments is a symbol of the human soul shackled by the bonds of outer life. Lyric 12 presents the symbol of journey to the poet (God) that appears far but is far too near within oneself through a number of images.

The lover-beloved, the singer-Master Musician relationship not only take us to the borders of a myth but present a mystical experience which cannot be expressed in any other language.

The poet's imagination and intuition help him, indeed, to express the inexpressible, describe the indescribable. The whole of Gitanjali in the words of the poet is "an utterance ineffable".

Tagore's Greatness and Achievement

Critics often speak of Tagore's limits and limitations and even faults. They find that the subject matter of his work lacks variety. They see monotony not only in the use of image and symbol but even in the rhythmic effect. There is a tendency to consider mysticism wisely. They feel they miss in his work the tastes of common human life and experience. Critics from the time of Edward Thompson find fault with his English idiom.

It is not remembered that Tagore is unlike other mystics in embracing all life and its basic emotions and feelings. There is nothing mystic or vague in his experience because every detail is presented with sensuousness rare

among mystics. The charge of monotony in baseless and those with an artistic sensibility can see a complex web of interweaving in the repetition of word and phrase.

It is possible to see Gitanjali inferior to his own later work if not to the work of seer-poets. Yet it does not bring down the value of Gitanjali which brought Tagore the rare honour for an Indian the award of the Nobel Prize in 1913. But even before the award, he received the noble praise of the best minds of the day- A.C. Bradley and Stop ford Brooke, W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, Rosenstein and Evelyn Underhill, Edmund Gosse and Mary Sinclair.

The prize and praise were bestowed for the blend of the scriptural sublimity with the simplicity of the folk songs. What are local and temporal are presented with a universal and lasting significance.

Gitanjali as a Devotional Work

According to K.R.S.Iyengar, the Gitanjali songs are mainly the poems of bhakti in the great Indian tradition. Iyengar speaks about the Vaishnava poets and Saiva poets who seek God as a child seeks its mother, or as a lover seeks his beloved. Such poets are God-intoxicated. They are obsessed by the love of God, and they turned this love into the purest poetry. Tagore re-oriented the traditional poetry of religious devotion but he did not alter its essential quality. The imagery, the conceits, the basic experience, the longing, the trial, the promise, and the realization in Tagore's Gitanjali possess the unique, traditional, Indian flavour and taste. To the West, this poetry seemed to be something new or novel; but to the Indians themselves this poetry was something with which they had always been perfectly familiar. True religious poetry tends to become poetry for prayer and pleading, also poetry of thankfulness and gratitude to God for the blessings which he has showered upon human beings, as well as a poetry which asks for more blessings and more grace. The songs in Gitanjali certainly contain plenty of prayer, pleading, and joy at the thought of the writer's imagined proximity to God. However, in these songs the author does not ask for any blessings and for favours except the blessing of the petitioner's spiritual communion with God. Here is no entreaty for forgiveness of sins, or for worldly prosperity and material comforts this poetry is therefore slightly different even from traditional religious poetry because of a slight shift in the emphasis. Here the poet simply, but repeatedly and insistently, asks for, anticipates, visualizes, and hopes for a spiritual communion with God and even for an ultimate merging of his soul with the Divine spirit.

The Opening Piece, a Prelude to the Poems of "Bhakti"

The very first poem in Gitanjali strikes the keynote of the whole volume. The poet expresses his happiness at the thought that God has been

looking after him throughout his many lives, and that his body is like a little flute through which God has been breathing melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of God's hands, the poet's heart loses its limits in joy. Furthermore, the poet recognizes the infinite gifts which God has always been bestowing on him through the ages. Here is, then, a poem of genuine thankfulness to God, a poem of devotion, or a poem of bhakti. In the third poem, Tagore says that the light of God's music illumines the world, and that the life-breadth of God's music runs from sky to sky. The poet would himself like to join God's music runs from sky to sky. The poet would himself like to join God's music. But his effort to do so is futile because, after all, he is only a human creature having too high an aspiration. In the next poem, Tagore addresses God as "life of my life", and says that he would ever try to keep his body pure and to keep all untruths out of his thoughts because God is that truth which had kindled the light of reason in his mind. Tagore also assures God that he would drive all evils away from his heart and keep his love for God fresh like a flower because God has his seat in the inmost shrine of Tagore's heart. The intensity and the genuineness of feeling in this poem mark it as one of the most fervent poem of bhakti.

Tagore's Desire for God's Company and for a Spiritual Contact with God

The next poem again shows the same spirit of devotion. The poet wants God's indulgence to be able to sit by God's side, saying that the tasks which he has undertaken to do can wait. He then goes on to say that, away from the sight of God's face, his heart knows no rest or respite. Here the poet speaks in terms of a personal God whose face he can visualize. In another poem, Tagore says that his song would discard all ornamentation because adornments would mar his union with God by coming between him and God. The jingling of these ornaments might drown God's whispers to him. Here another poem, Tagore urges himself not to receive God's gifts in his unclean hands, and to accept only that which is offered to him by God's love for him.

The Longings of a true Devotee of God

Tagore would not like to look for God in the wrong places. He does not believe in idol-worship or in the chanting of hymns and the telling of beads. In order to seek God, one should go and mingle with the tillers of the soil; the road-builders, and similar other labourers. Then he admits that he has never been able to see God's face or to listen to God's voice. However, he has heard the sound of God's gentle footsteps from the road before his house; and he therefore lives in the hope of meeting God, though this meeting cannot take place soon. Here we have the poet's hope of a communion with God, and also a sense of his own unworthiness which would prevent that communion from taking place at this stage. In the very next poem,

Tagore expresses the view that, day by day; God is making him worthy of being accepted by God in the fullest sense. In the poem which follows. Tagore says that his whole business in this world is to worship God and to sing songs in honour of God: "I am here to sing the songs": Then in the next poem, he asks God if the time has come at last when he may go and see God's face and offer to God his silent salutation. And in one later poem, Tagore says that, if God does not show His face to him, he would not know how to pass these long, rainy hours, adding that he keeps gazing at the distant gloom of the sky while his heart wanders wailing with the restless wind. Here we have the intense longing of the devotee for God's darshan.

The Intensity of Feeling, and the Fervour: the Despondency and the Exultation

In one of the poems, Tagore says that, while knowing it well that there is priceless wealth in God, and that God is his best friend, he yet does not have the courage and the resolve to conquer his worldly desires which obstruct his union with God. Here the true devotee shows his consciousness of his own deficiencies and handicaps in his quest for God. In another poem, Tagore admits that his baser self stands in the Way of his progress towards a communion with God. Then, in another poem, he says that, even though he does not call out to God in his prayers, God would yet wait for his love to express itself because God loves him despite his forgetfulness of God. Here the devotee acknowledges God's indulgence towards his worshippers even when they become oblivious of his presence near them.

In another poem, Tagore prays to God to give him the strength to endure his joys and sorrows, the strength never to disown the poor, the strength never to bend his knees before arrogant and powerful persons, and the strength to surrender himself completely and lovingly to God's will. Here, once more, it is the devoted worshipper of God asking for a greater determination and a stronger will-power to serve God and God's creation. In another poem, Tagore says, in the true voice of a devotee "That I want thee, only thee — let my heart repeat without end". In another poem, he prays to God in the following words; "O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder". Here God as the source of light and God as the punisher and avenger is being invited to come to the petitioner. In a later poem, Tagore addresses God as "the beloved of my heart", and says that the morning light, which is flooding his eyes, is God's message to his heart; and Tagore further says to God: "Thy face is bent from above, thy eyes look down on my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet." Religious fervour could not be stronger or deeper or more simply and forcefully expressed than has been done in these poems of Gitanjali. The devotee here sometimes wails and feels sad because of his separation from God, and sometimes feels overwhelmed by joy because he either perceives God's

presence close to him or anticipates a spiritual communion with God. It is this intensity of the religious feeling which must have appealed to the Christians in the West and also to the judges of the Nobel Prize committee.

A Devotee's Realization of his Deficiencies and his hope

In one of the most spontaneous and simple poems, Tagore expresses his certainty, though in a very humble tone, that he would one day stand before God face to face. In each verse of this poem (No.76), Tagore expresses this conviction. Here is the final verse of this poem: "And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of Kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face". In the poem which follows, Tagore recognizes God not only as his father, but also as his brother and as his friend. But he admits at the same time that he has failed to treat his fellow human beings as his brethren: "Thou art the Brother amongst my brothers, but I heed them not, I divide not my earnings with them, thus sharing my all with thee." Here we have Tagore's recognition of the fact that the true service of God consists in the spirit of sympathy and service towards God's creature. The service of God implies the service of mankind; such is the message of this poem, as of several others in *Gitanjali*. In one of the poems, Tagore also expresses the view that it is never too late to worship God. Even a man, who has been spending all his days in the pursuit of worldly goods and possessions, should not lose hope of being accepted by God as a worshipper. This is the message of poem No. 82.

In another poem, Tagore says that it is the pang of separation from God which spreads throughout the world and which gazes in silence all night from star to star. Here Tagore expresses his feelings with regard to death. These poems are also poems of *bhakti* because in them Tagore expresses the view that death is a divine messenger deserving full respect from human beings. In other words, a true devotee of God would never protest against death but would bow his head reverently to God's will when death approaches. *Gitanjali* ends with a poem which sums up Tagore's feelings towards God in salutation.

Tagore's Beliefs as a Mystic, Fully Expressed in "Gitanjali"

About *Gitanjali* there can be no doubt at all. It is a great mystical work; and its mysticism will always endure. Here is a book in which mysticism is to be found in its purest and most unalloyed form. Here is a book in which Tagore expresses his firm convictions about God, about the human soul, and about the ultimate goal of the human soul. Here is a book free from all kinds of material considerations and worldly desires or ambitions. Here is Tagore seeking a communion with God, and feeling sure that he would succeed in his aspiration. The mystical life is a contemplative life; and it is a life in which the individual shows a complete detachment from all worldly

concerns and worldly pursuits. A mystic need not renounce the world altogether; but an attitude of detachment is absolutely necessary. No true mystic can be a politician or a professional businessman, or an industrialist. A true mystic has no desire for worldly power or pelf or prosperity or social influence. A true mystic tries only to develop himself spiritually; and this means that he must rise above all worldly considerations. What is a mystic's reward? Well, his reward is the spiritual strength which he acquires through his adoration of God and through his identification with God who represents perfection of all kinds including the perfection of beauty, love, and virtue.

A Condition for the Appreciation of Tagore's Mysticism in "Gitanjali"

All the elements of mysticism are to be found in the poems of Gitanjali. Indeed, Gitanjali is steeped in mysticism thought, in order really to appreciate its mysticism, we must set aside our worldly concerns and materialistic preoccupations, and also forget for the time being that the author of Gitanjali was himself a man very much involved and even entangled in political and social activities and was, besides, a great traveller who undertook many foreign tours and delivered numerous lectures on secular subjects.

The Soul's Immortality; the Desire for God's Company; and the Need of Purity

The very opening poem shows Tagore as a mystic. Here Tagore asserts the immortality of the human soul even though the human body is mortal. "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure", says Tagore to God. In the third poem, Tagore says to God: "The light of thy music illumines the world. My heart longs to join in thy song." And Tagore here adds that God's music has made a captive of his heart. Here God is imagined as a musician so that music becomes the controlling power in the universe and it also captivates God's worshippers such as Tagore. In the next poem, Tagore the mystic acknowledges the need of purity in life and in one's conduct; and it is this realization which makes him promise to God that he would always try to keep his body pure, to keep all untruths out of his thoughts, and to drive all evils away from his heart. The sanctification of one's conduct in real life, as we have already noted above, is one of the essential beliefs of the true mystic. In the poem that follows, Tagore expresses a strong desire for God's company. Here Tagore says to God: "Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee....".

Not Necessary to Renounce the World

In one of the poems, however, Tagore makes it clear that complete renunciation is not at all necessary in order to get closer to God. A mystic

himself may renounce the world; but renunciation is not the mystic's message to other people. In poem No.11, Tagore urges God's worshippers to seek God not in temples and churches but in the fields where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and on the roads where the path-maker is breaking stones. Thus here Tagore teaches us the lesson that we should seek God in the midst of the common workmen and labourers. In the next poem, Tagore utters his affirmation or his "Yea". Here he says that the question and the cry of "Where" melt into tears which flood the world with the assurance: "I am". Here we have the mystic's assertion of his individual identity. This is not egoism but only self-assertion, and recognition that the mystic is an individual in his own right.

Tagore's Longing for, and his Conviction, of a Communion with God

Then, in poem after poem, Tagore looks forward to meeting God, to standing before God face to face, or to having a spiritual communion with God. Many are the poems in which he expresses this longing, this hope, and over this conviction. For instance, in one poem (No.16), Tagore asks if the time has come at last when he may see God's face and offer to Him his silent situation. In the next poem, Tagore says: "I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into His (God's) hands." In the next poem, Tagore says to God: "If thou showest me not thy face, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours." In the poem which follows, Tagore says, in moving words, long, rainy hours". In the poem which follows, Tagore says, in moving, to God: "If thou speakest not, I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure it."

Tagore's Perception of God's Presence: and his Faith in God's Love

In another poem, Tagore discovers that a perfect sweetness has blossomed in the depth of his heart. This sweetness has undoubtedly been caused by God's proximity to him. In other words, here Tagore emphasizes the divinity within himself. In the next poem, Tagore experiences a thrill passing through the air indicate God's presence. In the poem that follows, Tagore feels that God is coming towards his house, and so he says: "Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house — do not pass by like a dream." In another poem, Tagore says to God: "I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend." In yet another poem, Tagore expresses his certainty that God loves him; and so he says that even if he does not call God in his prayers, and even if he does not keep God in his heart, God's love would still wait for his love. In another poem, Tagore asks God why he stands behind the whole crowd of people, thus hiding himself in the shadows, instead of coming to him as his lover. In the next poem, Tagore asks God if the time for a meeting between them has still not come: "Is the time not come yet? Are there works still to do?" In

another poem, Tagore says that God's steps press upon his heart, and that it is the golden touch of God's feet which makes his joy to shine. In the next poem, Tagore says that God's feet which makes his joy to shine. In the next poem, Tagore says that God has been coming nearer and nearer to him ever since the beginning. All these utterances are the utterances of a mystic.

Tagore's Glimpses and Visions of God

In poem No. 47 Tagore says that he wants God to appear before his eyes as the first of all the lights and all the forms. This shows his longing for a visit from God. In the next poem, he feels that he is actually meeting God. Here he says: "At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me." In the poem that follows, Tagore again sees God close to him, and so he says: "You came from your throne and stood at my cottage door". In another poem Tagore says to God: "Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full", and he further says in this poem that God's love for him has lost itself in his love for God, so that a perfect union between them has taken place. Tagore's heart here overflows with mystic fervour. In another poem, Tagore acknowledges the fact the morning light, which is flooding his eyes, is God's message to his heart. In another poem, Tagore says: "Thou givest thyself to me in love, and then feelest thin own entire sweetness in me". In the very next poem, Tagore assures God that he has kept his soul pure in order that he might be in a position to make an offering of it to God.

Tagore's pantheistic belief finds a clear expression in the poem in which he says that the same stream of life which runs through his veins runs also through the world, that the same life shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numerous blades of grass, that the same life is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and death, and that he feels his limbs being made glorious by the touch of that same stream of life. Pantheism, as we have noted above, used at one time to be an essential ingredient of mysticism in the West though subsequently a separation between pantheism and mysticism was brought about by a German by the name of Mr. Tayler. However, pantheism has continued as an ingredient of mysticism in the Orient. In another poem, Tagore refers to God as the creator of this universe, saying that it is God who weaves the web of this maya. Then there is a poem in which Tagore, in the guise of a maiden, goes towards the river where, in a little boat, an unknown man plays upon his lute. This unknown man is undoubtedly God in the grab of a human being, most probably Lord Krishna. In poem No. 76, Tagore explicitly speaks like a mystic. Here he says that he would stand, day after day, before God face to face, and that he would stand there with folded hands. Tagore repeats this idea three or four times in this poem which concludes with the following words: "And, when my work shall be done in this world concludes with the following words:

"And, when my work shall be done in this world, O, King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face."

Abundance of Imagery, Especially Nature-Imagery in "Gitanjali"

There is an abundance of imagery of various kinds in Gitanjali; and most of it is concrete and vivid, though there is plenty of abstract imagery too. Indeed, the profusion of imagery, both concrete and abstract, is one of the most striking features of this collection of poems. Predominant is the imagery of natural objects, natural phenomena, and natural processes; and this imagery is perfectly vivid so that we feel as if we have been transported to the countryside where we are actually witnessing the scenes of Nature; and sometimes we feel transported to the oceans, to the rivers, and even to the sky and the stars. However, Nature-imagery does not occur in Gitanjali by itself or for its own sake. Nature-imagery is here interwoven with the poet's expertising his pantheistic belief. As for abstract imagery in Gitanjali, it relates mainly to Tagore's perception of God and of the Divine spirit within his own heart. Imagery of one kind or another is essential, and almost indispensable, to every form of literary writing because it is only through imagery that a writer can impart a visible shape to what he has to say. Sometimes imagery is essential to build up the setting in which a writer has to place his characters or his ideas. No writer can write in a vacuum or in a void.

Vocabulary and Diction

Tagore makes no use of what is known as poetic diction in Gitanjali. The language of these songs is as free from poetic diction as the language of the Lyrical Ballads (1798) was from the artificial and bombastic language of much of the eighteenth century English poetry. The language of Gitanjali is not ornate, not high-flown or high-sounding, not grandiose, and certainly not inflated. Gitanjali is written in simple, unadorned language which comes straight from the writer's heart and which therefore conforms to what Tagore says in poem No.7: "My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration". Below are a couple of quotations from Gitanjali to illustrate the utter simplicity of language:

1. Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gayest to me unasked — this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind — saving me from perils of overmuch desire. (Poem No.14)

2. Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart — this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idols clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead. (Poem. No. 59)

Besides being simple, this style is, in most poems, a model of conciseness and economy. Sometimes this style becomes epigrammatic too.

There is no kind of extravagance in this style, no superfluity of word or phrase, no surplusage, and no rhetorical flourishes. At the same time, it should be noticed that Tagore does not use exclusively simple and ordinary vocabulary all the time. We do have in Gitanjali verses couched in language which breaks the monotony of utter simplicity and plainness. Here are a couple of examples of the use of uncommon vocabulary:

1. Colours, tunes, and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment. (Poem No. 70)

2. Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. (Poem No. 71)

Check your progress

1. Write a short note on Shantiniketan.

2. Write thnut the works of Tagore.

3. Can we consider Gitanjali as a Devotional Poem?

4. How do we notice Tagore's Glimpses and vision of God in his Gitanjali?

5. Write a note on the application imagery and natural imagery in Gitanjali.

6. Examine the vocabulary and diction carried out in Gitanjali.

SUMMARY

- Gitanjali is a collection of 103 English poems, largely translations, by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. This volume became very famous in the West, and was widely translated.

- Gitanjali is also the title of an earlier Bengali volume (1910) of 157 mostly devotional songs. The word gitanjali is composed from "git", song, and "anjoli", offering, and thus means - "An offering of songs"; but the word for offering, anjoli, has a strong devotional connotation, so the title may also be interpreted as "prayer offering of song".
- The English collection is not a translation of poems from the Bengali volume of the same name. While half the poems (52 out of 103) in the English text were selected from the Bengali volume, others were taken from these works (given with year and number of songs selected for the English text): Gitimallo (1914, 17), Noibeddo (1901, 15), Khea (1906, 11) and a handful from other works. The translations were often radical, leaving out or altering large chunks of the poem and in one instance even fusing two separate poems (song 95, which unifies songs 89, 90 of naivedya).
- The translations were undertaken prior to a visit to England in 1912, where the poems were extremely well received. A slender volume was published in 1913, with an exhilarating preface by W.B. Yeats. In the same year, based on a corpus of three thin translations, Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize.

KEY WORDS

1. Gitanjali

The word gitanjali is composed from "git", song, and "anjoli", offering, and thus means - "An offering of songs"; but the word for offering, anjoli, has a strong devotional connotation, so the title may also be interpreted as "prayer offering of song".

2. Devotion

Devotion, devotional or devotee refers to the worship of God or worshipper of God.

3. Lyric

Lyric poetry is a form of poetry that expresses personal and emotional feelings.

4. Imagery

Imagery is a collection of images. It is the usage of details and descriptions in order to create a sensory experience for the reader.

5. Poetic Diction

Poetic diction is the term used to refer to the linguistic style, the vocabulary, and the metaphors used in the writing of poetry.

1. In 1901, Tagore left Shilaidaha and moved to Santiniketan to found an ashram which grew to include a marble-floored prayer hall ("The Mandir"), an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, and a library.

2. Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; indeed, he is credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from deceptively simple subject matter: common people.

3. According to K.R.S. Iyengar, the Gitanjali songs are mainly the poems of bhakti in the great Indian tradition. Iyengar speaks about the Vaishnava poets and Saiva poets who seek God as a child seeks its mother, or as a lover seeks his beloved. Such poets are God-intoxicated. They are obsessed by the love of God, and they turned this love into the purest poetry. Tagore re-oriented the traditional poetry of religious devotion but he did not alter its essential quality. The imagery, the conceits, the basic experience, the longing, the trial, the promise, and the realization in Tagore's Gitanjali possess the unique, traditional, Indian flavour and taste.

4. Tagore says that he wants God to appear before his eyes as the first of all the lights and all the forms. This shows his longing for a visit from God. In the next poem, he feels that he is actually meeting God. Here he says: "At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me." In the poem that follows, Tagore again sees God close to him, and so he says: "You came from your throne and stood at my cottage door". In another poem Tagore says to God: "Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full", and he further says in this poem that God's love for him has lost itself in his love for God, so that a perfect union between them has taken place.

5. There is an abundance of imagery of various kinds in Gitanjali; and most of it is concrete and vivid, though there is plenty of abstract imagery too. Indeed, the profusion of imagery, both concrete and abstract, is one of the most striking features of this collection of poems. Predominant is the imagery of natural objects, natural phenomena, and natural processes; and this imagery is perfectly vivid so that we feel as if we have been transported to the countryside where we are actually witnessing the scenes of Nature; and sometimes we feel transported to the oceans, to the rivers, and even to the sky and the stars.

6. Tagore makes no use of what is known as poetic diction in Gitanjali. The language of these songs is as free from poetic diction as the language of the Lyrical Ballads (1798) was from the artificial and bombastic language of

much of the eighteenth century English poetry. The language of Gitanjali is not ornate, not high-flown or high-sounding, not grandiose, and certainly not inflated.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can we consider Tagore as an Indo-Anglian Poet?
2. What are the themes of Gitanjali?
3. Write a note on the form and structure of the poem.
4. Bring out the mystical and devotional qualities of Gitanjali.
5. Show Tagore's greatness as a lyrical Poet.
6. Attempt an appreciation of the images and symbols in Gitanjali.
7. In what ways is the title Gitanjali appropriate?
8. How far do you think it is right to speak of limits and limitations of Tagore as a poet?

FURTHER READINGS

- Gitanjali—Rabindranath Tagore
- Gitanjali: Offerings of Songs & Art—Mark W. McGinnis
- Studies on Rabindranath Tagore Rabindranath Tagore — Mohit Kumar Ray.

UNIT-II

Nissim Ezekiel

NISSIM EZEKIEL

STRUCTURE

This chapter shall cover the following main points:

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- Enterprise
- Philosophy
- Night of the Scorpion
- The Visitor
- Poet, Lover, Bird Watcher
- Summary
- Key Words
- Answers to Check Your Progress
- Review Questions
- Further Readings

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the theme of the poem, "Enterprise"
- discuss the view of the poet in the poem, "Philosophy"
- examine the style of writing in the poem, "Visitor"
- state the theme about family relations in the poem, "Night of the scorpion"
- write down the summary of "Poet, Lover, Bird Watcher".

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Anglian poetry is said to be essentially Indian and everything else afterwards. It expresses the essence of Indian personality and is also very sensitive to the changes of its national climate and it voices the aspirations and the joys and sorrows of Indians.

It has been opined, that the Indo-Anglian poets are of two factions. The neo-modernists and the neo-symbolists. The outlook of the former is

coloured by humanism and irony and that of the latter is imbued with mysticism and sublimity, but a perfect blend is achieved by the two groups in the realms of beauty. A perfect example, of anglo - Anglian poet, who was able to arrive at a synthesis between the two factions of poetry, is none other than Sarojini Naidu, for she took her stance in the neutral, middle ground, between the sacred and profane sphere of poetry. She was at home in both the worlds and found them united in the realms of poetry.

It is possible to gain a proper perspective of the development of Indian feminine poetic tradition, only if it is considered with reference to the changing position of women in India. The very term Women poets implies an attempt to isolate women poets from men poets, and consider them in a group only on the basis of sex, some critics have wondered as to whether there is anything like feminine sensibility, feminine experiences and feminine ways of expression. The feminine character is made up of certain psychological traits as well as certain socially conditioned ones.

All these features set them apart as a group. They moreover do not accept the duties which are traditionally allotted to women, in the male dominated society, and assert their new identity as independent, individualistic and conscious participants in experience. Thus these women poets do mark the evolution of the Indian feminine Psyche from the tradition to modernity.

Nissim Ezekiel occupies an important place in post-Independence Indian English literature. He has wielded a great influence as a leading poet, editor and an occasional playwright. Besides, he is a well-known critic. Sometimes he also emerges as a politician in the guise of a fighter for cultural freedom in India. Ezekiel held many important positions. He was for many years a Professor of English in Bombay University. He is a noted name in the field of journalism. In this capacity he was editor of many journals including Poetry India (1966-67), Quest (1955-57) and Imprint (1961-70). He was an Associate Editor to the Indian P.E.N., Bombay.

Life and Works of Nissim Ezekiel

As a man of letters Nissim Ezekiel is a 'Protean' figure. His achievements as a poet and playwright are considerable. K. Balachandran writes, "The post-Independence Indian poetry saw its new poetry in the fifties. Among the new poets A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar, Kamala Das, Monica Verma, O.P. Bhatnagar, Gauri Deshpande, Adil Jussawalla, Ezekiel occupies a prominent place. His versatile genius can be found in his poetry, plays, criticism, journalism and translation."

Nissim Ezekiel has done a good work in Indian writing in English. He has written many volumes of poems—A Time to Change (1952), Sixty Poems (1953), The Third (1959), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact

Name (1965) and others. His plays *Nalini*, *Marriage Poem*, *The Sleep-Walkers*, *Songs of Deprivation* and *Who Needs No Introduction* are already staged and published. He has also edited books *Indian Writers in Conference* (1964), *Writing in India* (1965), *An Emerson Reader* (1965), *A Martin Luther King Reader* (1965) and *Arthur Miller's All My Sons* (1972). His literary essays published in magazines and papers are innumerable. The notable among them are 'Ideas and Modern Poetry' (1964), 'The Knowledge of Dead Secrets' (1965), 'Poetry as Knowledge' (1972), 'Sri Aurobindo on Poetry' (1972), 'Should Poetry be Read to Audience?' (1972), 'K.N. Daruwalla' (1972), 'Poetry and Philosophy,' *Hindu Society* (1966). He has written essays on art criticism 'Modern Art in India' (1970), 'How Good is Sabavala?' (1973), and 'Paintings of the Year 1973' (1973). His essays on social criticism 'Thoreau and Gandhi' (1971), 'Censorship and the Writer' (1963), 'How Normal is Normality' (1972), 'Tradition and All That a Case Against the Hippies' (1973), 'A Question of Sanity' (1972) and 'Our Academic Community' (1968) are varied and auto telic of his wide interest.

Nissim Ezekiel as a Poet

Ezekiel is a dedicated person to the rhyme, the extremes and pitfalls. No other Indian-English poet has today shown the ability to organise his experience into words as competently as Ezekiel. The remarkable aspect of his poetry is his sincerity and individuality. His poems generalise his own felt experience. It is neither repetitive nor shocking, but 'simple, introspective and analytical. He treats poetry as a first-hand record of the growth of his mind. He loves simplicity. His love of the genuine is explicit in the following: Life in the city, sexuality, and the problems of marriage, the need to overcome alienation and to create integration among the various aspects of his character are Ezekiel's early and continuing themes. There is a distinct personality expressed in the voice, themes and style. Life is seen as a quest for wholeness, for intellectual and spiritual satisfaction, for maturity.

Ezekiel showed that it was possible to write about oneself without being self-consciously Indian and that an Indian poetry could express the experiences of the educated and urbanized and need not be obsessed with mythology, peasants and nationalist slogans with him a post-colonial poetry started which reflects the lives and identities that an increasing number of educated Indians knew or would seek.

Ezekiel is a poet of many a theme and one finds wider range of subjects and variety in his poetry. His poetry is not born out of dogma and he does not confine himself to a particular type, theme or technique in his poetry. He has an open mind and therefore he changes the subject matter of his poetry from time to time. He makes this clear in his poem 'Theological': Ezekiel's poetry is marked by both a natural sense of Indianness, and an

even level of language and craft the real source of creative tension in his poetry is between his pervasive philosophic preoccupation and an insistent awareness of the ties stemming from the surrounding milieu. Ezekiel never postulates a truth but works out, in terms of irony, an answer which is purely tentative. In effect, even in regard to ostensibly philosophic issues, the residue of significance lies not in the validity of the speculation but in the ironic stance of the contemplation. The new poetry (i.e., Indian English poetry after Independence) demanded a new use of language and called for the use of everyday speech rhythm in poetry. Thus there is a demand as it were, for the creation of an Indian English idiom, to give an identity to modern Indian English Poetry independent of and different from the world literatures written in English including Anglo-American literatures. Ezekiel has succeeded in creating a new Indian English idiom to a great extent.

Nissim Ezekiel accepts the established linguistic framework but his art lies in so changing a unit of expression as to make it expressive of a state of mind. He is capable of turning words into a metaphor, image or symbols as the situation demands. It is only rarely that we come across poetic counters of expression but there is a strong undercurrent of poetry in the seemingly prosaic words. This is his characteristic mode which demonstrates his command over language and saves his poetry from degenerating into bare statement. Ezekiel is fond of using 'paradoxical language in his poetry for greater poetic effect.

Ezekiel is a conscious poet 'looking before and after'. To him poetry is not a gift to be adorned but a craft to be studied seriously. He believes in the revision of a poem and works hard on it, till it achieves a kind of perfection. A poet like a woman 'must labour to be beautiful'. Ezekiel's clarity of thought, clinical precision of words and phrases and employment of imagery make his poetry distinctly Indian. The poet in Nissim Ezekiel is too self conscious of artistic excellence while the man in him strives to explore the real meaning of existence through art. The poet, as a result, does not either get prolix or make poetry the text of his aesthetic vision.

Metaphorically speaking, every doctrine, dream or ideal, whether realized or not, is analogous to the invention of a right poem or the writing of a real poem amounts to the discovery of a metaphysical truth. Poetry does not merely extenuate the pains of living in the poet but much more than that, his search for the real idiom as expressed therein. Ezekiel brought a sense of discipline, self-criticism and mastery to Indian English poetry. He was the first Indian poet to have such a professional attitude.

Ezekiel's poetry is centred on a study of his conscious craftsmanship, his mastery of rhythm and diction and his treatment of modern urban life and the existential questions it generates.

These I have dwelt upon, listening to rain,
 And turning in, resoled
 That I must wait and train myself
 To recognise the real thing,
 And in the verse or friends I make
 To have no trunk with what is fake.

Ezekiel's greatness lies in his effort to avoid the mistakes, which his fellow poets committed. He is a serious poet. His originality lies in his typical poems, which are firmly rooted in Indian soil. Ezekiel's impersonalizing is another landmark. Indeed David McCutcheon's observation is a tribute to this great Indian poet: "Ezekiel belongs with Thom Gunn, R.S. Thomas, Elizabeth Jennings, Anthony Thwaite, and others like them. He has their cautious, discriminating style, precise and analytical, with its conscious rejection of the heroic and passionate as also of the sentimental and cosy. The technique is immaculate: rhymes, and carefully varied yet regular rhythms, lines that run over with a poised deliberateness. But behind the casual assurance one senses the clenched fist, the wounded tenderness."

Ezekiel's concept is that writing poetry is not just a matter of inspiration but studying the skill of writing carefully. This study demands a lot of patience from the poet. Only when unskilled poets try their hands in poetry, poetry turns out to be self-advertisement. Many of Ezekiel's poems express his view that poetry can be built in resolving the tension between two opposite forces and trying to maintain an equipoise. About this aspect Linda Hess remarks, every mature poet finds his art demanding again and again that he synthesizes certain powerful and apparently opposite forces within himself.

Introduction to the Poems

"Enterprise" is a symbolic poem. It presents life and problems in terms of a journey. The journey is a metaphor standing of life. It gives a brief and succinct account of a journey undertaken by a group of young people which is marked by physical and emotional disturbances and worldly distractions. At the end of their journey they do not reach their meaning because they do not care for "what the thunder said" (Give, sympathize and control). In other words, the man is expected to practice the ideals of giving, sympathizing and controlling the senses and the mind. They do not even try to understand the meaning of these ideals. "Night of the Scorpion" is a memory poem which illustrates Ezekiel's effective use of the ironic mode. In a lighter vein Ezekiel conveys a serious message — "without compassion for the suffering religion is a sham and philosophy, farce." The poem "The

Visitor", based on a superstitious belief, is noted for the poet's keen observation and vivid description of an ordinary event. The poem states that most of the happenings are ordinary ones but it is the mind of man that gives significance to it. Miracles happen only in the human mind.

ENTERPRISE

Ezekiel is no philosopher but the poem "Enterprise" has philosophical overtones. The poem says one thing but means another. The poem "Enterprise" is full of deeper meaning. The surface meaning — the literal meaning satisfies the ordinary reader. But below the superficial level, there is a deeper meaning — the symbolic meaning — which satisfies the discerning reader. As in Robert Frost, the American poet, this poem is inspired by the delight of the journey undertaken. But towards the end, the poet weaves a philosophy arising out of the disillusionment at the end of the journey.

Poem

It started as a pilgrimage,
Exalting minds and making all
The burdens light. The second stage
Explored but did not list the call
The sun beat down to match our rage.
We stood it very well, I thought,
Observe and put down copious notes
Or things the peasants sold and bought,
The way of serpents and of goats,
Three cities where a sage had taught.
But when the differences arose
On how to cross desert patch,
We lost a friend whose stylish prose
Was quite the best of all our batch,
A shadow falls on us — and grows.
Another phase was reached when we
Were twice attacked, and lost our way,
A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group, I tried to pray,
Our leader said he smelt the sea.

We noticed nothing as we went,
 A straggling crowd of little hope,
 Ignoring what the thunder meant
 Deprived of common needs like soap,
 Some were broken some merely bent.
 When, finally, we reached the place,
 We hardly knew why we were there,
 The trip had darkened every face,
 Our deeds were neither great nor rare
 Home is where we have to gather grace.

Structure of the Poem

The poem "Enterprise" as a whole is to be interpreted as an allegory of the pilgrimage theme. "As Chetan Karnani says, "It treats journey as a metaphor for life. There are six stanzas each having five lines with alternated rhyme scheme. The thematic progress in the stanzas corresponds to the progress of the pilgrimage from morning till evening. The poem "Enterprise is an exploration of the psychic experiences of the poet-persona".

The poem describes how a romantic trip of exploration is undertaken by a group of people including the poet-persona. The poem charts the difference stages in the progress of the journey. Differences arise; a friend is lost; defeatism sets in; the group, twice attacked. Loses its way; a section claims its liberty until only "a straggling crowd of little hope" is left. The concluding line of the poem brings out the futility of man's efforts to seek satisfaction in the world that lies outside himself. A philosophical solution born out of the wisdom of suffering is offered: "Home is where we have to gather grace".

Meaning at Two Levels

The literal meaning of each stanza is followed by its symbolic interpretation.

1. A number of people including the poet-persona himself go on a journey in a spirit of dedication, as people go on a pilgrimage. They are extremely enthusiastic. To them, it is no burden but a pleasure. In their excessive enthusiasm, they have not even tested how far they are equal to the occasion. The more happy they are, the more difficult the journey is;

It started as a pilgrimage,
 Exalting minds and making all
 The burdens light. The second stage

Explored but did not list the call

The sun beat down to match our rage.

Man is in an exalted state of delight when he begins his career on the earth. The greater the delight he feels at the prospect of life, the greater the difficulty he experiences when he goes through life. The scorching "sun" stands for the agony and the obstacle man passes through. He never gets bogged down. It matches his enthusiasm, as symbolized by "rage".

2. The journeymen brave all dangers and difficulties that confront them on the way. They observe and record varieties of experiences they come across: "things the peasants sold and bought", and "the way of serpents and of goats". They go through three cities where these activities thrive. In these three cities, a sage is said to have taught spiritual aspects of life but they do not care to know what these spiritual matters are:

We stood it very well, I thought,

Observe and put down copious notes

On things the peasants sold and bought,

The way of serpents and of goats,

Three cities where a sage had taught.

Man in the course of his career is exposed to the material aspects of life symbolized by the "the peasants buying and selling", the evil ways of living is indicated by "the ways of serpents" and the sexual pursuits of man referred to by "the ways of goats". Man during his sojourn on earth is attracted towards worldly things than towards spiritual things. Man's indifference to spiritual matters is symbolized by the journeymen simply going through "three cities where a sage had taught." Zest for money, and lust for evil and sex consume man. He has no zeal for the higher things of life—spiritual matters.

3. Now, the travellers have to cross a desert. An expert in solving such difficult situations meets with death — a natural calamity. The travellers are shaken because they are deprived of the experience and expertise of a friend.

On how to cross desert patch,

We lost a friend whose stylish prose

Was quite the best of all our batch,

A shadow falls on us — and grows.

Life is not a primrose path. Difficulties are to be encountered on the way. "A desert patch" stands for a difficult situation. Pessimism sets in, as symbolized by "a shadow" falling on them. Man feels shaken because he is

deprived of the counseling and guidance of a friend who is no more. Knocks and shocks in life depress man's spirit.

4. During the next stage, difficulties multiply. It is the period of criticism and counter criticism. Engrossed in bickering, they lost their goal. Defection sets in many more desert the group, claiming liberty. At this stage, the poet-persona begins to despair. He tries to pray but he cannot. The leader eggs on the remaining men with false hopes.

Another phase was reached when we
Were twice attacked, and lost our way,
A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group, I tried to pray,
Our leader said he smelt the sea.

Man, when he is unable to overcome the difficulties and disappointments in life, seeks relief by freeing himself from any commitment in life ("A section claimed its liberty") or by prayer for divine guidance ("I tried to pray") or by feeding on false hope given by others ("Our leader said he smelt the sea").

5. Banking on the assurance given by the leader, the enterprisers proceed on their way. They notice nothing on the way. They are no longer a disciplined group but a straggling crowd of little hope. They have lost interest in their travel. The peals of thunder they hear but they are ignorant of the meaning and message of the thunder. They don't care even to have a wash. They have lost their will. Some are broken-hearted while some are keen on reaching the goal.

We noticed nothing as we went,
A straggling crowd of little hope,
Ignoring what the thunder meant
Deprived of common needs like soap,
Some were broken some merely bent.

Man, because of frustrating experiences, loses all hope, will, passion and desire. His "will-lessness" is reflected in his deprivation of "common needs like soap". Man does not care to listen to the message spoken by god in thunder showing to man "the threefold path of deliverance from the coil of this world" — "Data" [give], "Dayadhvam" [sympathize] and "Damyata" [control].

6. Finally, they reach the destination but there is no pride of achievement. "Our deeds were neither great nor rare". Disappointment is writ large on their forehead. "The trip had darkened every face." The

journey has ended in mental exhaustion without rewarding sense of achievement.

The last stanza sums up the futility enterprise. "The darkened face sums up the overall result of the life on earth. Is the sojourn on the earth worth all the fight, the struggle and the suffering that have been gone through for the wrong goal?

Message of the Poem

The concluding stanza lays bare the wasteful efforts of man to seek satisfaction in the things that lie outside him. As long as man cares for the body, he feels gravitated towards wealth, evil and sex as symbolized by "the peasants buying and selling", "the ways of serpents and those of goats" respectively. The only deliverance from these earthly entanglements is to care for the soul ("Home). Man can gather divine "grace" not in the world that lies outside himself but only in his own self, in the things of the spirit, giving himself to a noble life [Data] and by controlling his desire for wealth, evil and sex [Damyata] and by identifying himself with less fortunate brethren [Dayathvam].

The poem, begun in a note of delight, ends in a note of wisdom. It closes with a philosophical solution: "Home is where we have to gather grace". It is the "Home" where we have to gather grace and not elsewhere. The poem has echoes from T.S.Eliot. The thunder is symbolic (as in T.S.Eliot's *Waste Land*) of spiritual regeneration and fertility, but they do not care for it.

Comment on the Human Life

Ezekiel dives deep into the mysterious of life; and the poem serves as a comment on the human life on earth with its enthusiastic start, propelled by many expectations and disenchanted by its losses and lapses in its course and resulting in the final longing for grace that lies in abundance only in the Heavenly "Home". The last line beautifully clinches the message of the whole poem, bearing the entire thought-burden that occurs as a result of the burden of journey. No doubt, the journey has ended in a fiasco. But the concluding lines strike an optimistic note by offering a three-fold path of deliverance from the coil of the physical body which gravitates towards wealth, sex and evil. The remedy and the redemption for man lie in the wisdom of the Upanishad — to give, sympathise and control.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

'Enterprise' is an allegory of human condition on this planet and of the frequent efforts, failure and frustrations to which man is subject by the very nature of earthly life. The poet describes a spiritual pilgrimage where each pilgrim faces difficulties and disillusionment along the way. Thus, in the 'Enterprise' a group of people undertake a journey moved by noble aspirations, but it all ends in failures and frustrations as is usually the case

with human attempts at some noble achievement. The pilgrimage becomes a weary trek, by the time the goal is reached. The goal is alluring but the process of reaching it empties the victory of its glamour and glory. A number of people, including the poet decide to go on a pilgrimage. They are city dwellers and the journey they undertake is to some romantic, primitive hinterland. They start with hope, courage and determination, with their minds full of noble ideas and ideals. They are out to make some heroic effort, which will lead to some noble achievements. Their minds are exalted and they are not afraid of any dangers and difficulties. This stage of the journey symbolizes the stage of innocence that man enjoys in his boyhood and early youth, when he is entirely unconscious of the frustrations and failures which life brings at every stage.

But this innocence is lost and in the next stage of the journey the pilgrims face dangers and difficulties. They continue on their onward journey of exploration. The objects and forces of nature are out to frustrate human endeavour like the oppressive heat of the sun. The group of travelers is able to put up very well with the dangers and difficulties for sometime and continue to journey in hope. They note down the goods being bought and sold by the peasants and observe the ways of serpents and goats. They pass through three cities where a sage had taught, but do not care to find out what he had taught. But soon there are distractions and diversions. The difficulties and dangers posed by man's physical environment are not as damaging as those that result from his own insufficiency.

Soon there are differences of opinion among the travelers and they began to quarrel over petty matters. They had to cross a piece of wasteland a 'desert patch', and they could not agree as to the best way of doing so. One of their friends-rather proud of his stylish prose-was so angry that he left their company. The shadow of discord fell on their enterprise, and it has continued to grow. Bickering over petty matters, needless quarrels over trifles, hatred of, and hostility to, those who hold different opinions, is ingrained in human nature, and thus man carries the seeds of his failure and frustration within his own self. So do these pilgrims who, despite their quarrel, continue their onward journey.

But none the less, they are divided into groups, each group attacking the other. Engrossed in their quarrel, they lose their ways and forget noble aspirations which had motivated their enterprise. Their goal and their purpose were forgotten and their idealism is all gone. Some of them decide to leave the group. Frustration and difficulties overwhelm the human spirit and many do not have the courage to face the realities of life. They seek relief in escape and withdrawal. Many of us are such introverts. Some try to pray and seek Divine assistance and blessings, forgetting that God help

those who help themselves. Their leader feels that he smelt the sea and he feels that they have reached a dead end, and must go back. Their pilgrimage must end.

Still they persist, though their journey has lost all its' significance. They are dirty and shabby for they have been deprived of such common needs as soap, are broken in spirit and bent down physically. Such is the ultimate end of all human enterprises; this is the essential truth of human life. Absorbed in their pretty quarrels and tired and exhausted, frustrated and at bay, the travelers do not even hear the thunder and even if they do so, they ignore their significance. The thunder is symbolic of spiritual regeneration and fertility but they do not care for it. The extreme hopelessness of man at the end of life's journey is thus stressed.

The pilgrims even come to doubt the very worth and significance of the journey. It seems to them to have been meaningless and futile. All their noble aspirations are forgotten, there is sorrow and suffering on every face, and they are conscious of the fact that their actions have neither been great nor even. Efforts to escape from the realities of human existence are futile. We must accept the limitations of our lot and do our best within those limitations. Heroism means the acceptance of our lot in life and the doing of our best in the service of God and humanity. Therefore the poem concludes on a note of exultation and optimism when the pilgrims realize that it is not by undertaking long hazardous journeys but by doing the right deeds that everyone can receive God's grace.

An Explication of the Poem "Enterprise"

The poem is a systematic and well organized narration of a journey which started as a sacred pilgrimage to a sanctified place. During the beginning of the pilgrimage there was exaltation of the pilgrim that made all the burdens of life light for them. When the mind is exalted by the idea of a holy pilgrimage the burdens of life become light. The second stage of the pilgrimage explored the significance of the pilgrimage but it did not test the meaning of the call for pilgrimage. Behind every pilgrimage there is a divine call. A pilgrimage is not undertaken mechanically or for amusement. The meaning of a religious pilgrimage is a matter for spiritual exploration. The sun beats down upon the pilgrims severely to match their rage.

The pilgrims stood the rigours of the pilgrimage well with fortitude. The narrator of this event thought about the experiences of the pilgrimage, observed men and matters and wrote down copious notes about the things the peasants sold and bought. The narrator wrote about the behaviour of serpents and of goats and about three cities where a holy sage had taught.

But when the difference of opinion arose about how the pilgrims could cross a desert patch, the pilgrims lost a friend whose stylish prose was the

best of all their batch. Obviously the friend who had the command of the most stylish prose was not ready for the enterprise of crossing the dry and dreadful desert and therefore he dropped out of the pilgrimage. A shadow of gloom fell on the pilgrims and it grew steadily in volume. The ordeals that the pilgrims had to face during the enterprise of the pilgrimage cast a gloom on their minds and the gloom increased as they continued their journey. The physical difficulties led to increasing mental gloom.

During the pilgrimage the pilgrims reached another phase of experience when they were attacked two times and they lost their way. There was real danger to life and property and they lost their way. There was loss of hope about reaching their destination safely. A section of the pilgrims claimed its liberty to leave the group and go its way. The difficulties and dangers of the enterprise caused dissention and trials tribulations of the enterprise and therefore they dropped out of the enterprise. Many are called but few are chosen for the enterprise of the soul. Many may embark on the enterprising pilgrimage of the soul but only a few endure till they achieve their goal or reach their destination.

In this predicament of disintegration the narrator (who may be the poet) tried to pray. When there is no safety for a community of people who are united by a holy and common purpose and when the members of the community feel that they have lost their way or are experiencing the dark night of the soul, there is nothing that is so availing as prayer. When human power cannot save a situation one has to turn religiously to the kindly light for direction and lead. The leader of the group said that he smelt the sea; perhaps the vision of the sea (of eternity) would bring the enterprise to its end.

The travelling pilgrims noticed as they went. They were a straggling crowd of little hope. They continued their journey but they had little hope of reaching the destination of their journey. Physical discomforts, disunity in the group and dangers on the way have gone deeper into the people to make them lose their hope. It was nearly a forlorn hope! The crowd of people who continued their journey ignored the meaning of the thunder. They were deprived of even the common needs like soap. When they were so impoverished and soiled in mind and body how could they understand the meaning of the thunder? The travellers were miserable and wretched as some of them were mentally and spiritually broken and some were merely bent.

When at last the travellers reached the place they hardly knew why they were there. The enterprise was over but they could not understand the goal of the enterprise. They were a spent force. They could hardly understand the meaning at the conclusion of their pilgrimage or enterprise. Many people do not understand the meaning of the pilgrimage or enterprise

of human life. What is the purpose or ultimate goal of human life? To understand this many people go on external journeys or pilgrimages. The trip had darkened very face of the travellers. The travellers were both physically and mentally gloomy. Their deeds were neither great nor rare. The narrator gets the wisdom that home is the place where we have to gather grace. One has to work out one's own salvation at home. Instead of going with a number of diverse people on an external pilgrimage one should do an internal pilgrimage in one's own home and get divine grace.

A Critical Appreciation of the Poem "Enterprise"

An enterprise is a bold or dangerous undertaking. Ezekiel's poem "Enterprise" deals with the bold and dangerous undertaking of a group of people who go on a pilgrimage to a holy place. At the beginning of the pilgrimage the pilgrims have an exalted state of mind and they feel that the burdens of life have become light. They try to explore the meaning of the pilgrimage. The sun scorches them with its heat.

The poem is written in a colloquial style. This colloquial style of poetry reminds us of the poems of Robert Frost and T.S.Eliot. Robert Frost's "Stopping by woods on a snowy Evening" and T.S.Eliot's "the Journey of the Magi" are instances in point. All these three poems are about journey. The journey has literal and metaphorical meanings. The metaphorical meaning is that the journey is a pilgrimage of the human soul to reach its divine destination. Every human life is a spiritual pilgrimage. John Bunyan's, "The Pilgrim's Progress" deals in an elaborately wrought allegory with the pilgrimage of the human soul towards the celestial city of God. Great poetry is metaphorical. The beauty and power of the poem "Enterprise" are in its metaphorical meaning.

The narrator of the "Enterprise" is an observer of life and he records his observations. He is a spokesman who seeks for himself and about his group. There is irony when the narrator says that when differences of opinion arose about how to cross a desert patch, they lost a friend whose stylish prose was quite the best of all their batch. Literary skill is no advantage in facing the problems of life. What is needed is the proper attitude and fortitude. The man with the best stylish prose withdraws from the enterprise. It is a metaphor when the narrator says: "A shadow falls on us — and grows". The shadow, mentioned here is not external, physical shadow but internal, mental gloom.

When the group is attacked twice and when it loses its way a section claims its liberty to leave the group. Not all can endure dangers and difficulties of an enterprise. It is not right to claim liberty as a right in order to lose the goal and to save the skin. The narrator says that he tried to pray in that trying situation. We are convinced that this poem has echoes

from The Bible. There is the archetypal image of the Jewish prophets leading the Israelites through deserts to their promised land.

The members of the enterprise have little hope of reaching their destination and they ignore the meaning of the thunder. When man is deprived of his common needs like soap, he will not be in a mood to understand the supernatural meaning of the thunder. There is again metaphor when the narrator says: "Some were broken, some merely bent." The travellers are broken in spirit. There is no joy of achievement in reaching the destination. They hardly know why they are there. The long and dangerous enterprise has darkened every face. There is no cheerfulness in any face because the gloomy face is an index of the gloomy mind. The deeds of the travellers are neither great nor rare. The narrator gets the wisdom from this arduous but ordinary enterprise that home is the place where we have to gather grace. A man can gather divine grace through right living in his own home.

The words "Pilgrimage", "exalting minds", "explored", "test the call", "sage", "pray", and "grace" are appropriate to the presentation of the spiritual nature of the enterprise. People whose deed are not great and rare should rest contented with gathering grace in their own homes.

Poetry Analysis

Ezekiel describes the account of a journey in the poem 'Enterprise'. A section of people endeavour on a journey to achieve a specific goal. Their sheer initiative, and the thought of their objective leave them keyed up. They proceed on their expedition and the sun shines its scorching rays on them.

Nevertheless, they render themselves immune to the stinging rays and put up an enduring front. The leader of the group believes that they have withstood the heat well. They take notes of whatever they see in the course of the journey. They observe the things they find around, and the commodities that the peasants sell and buy and witness the behavior of serpents and goats. Besides, they behold the sight of three cities where a sage has delivered his learned discourses. The travelers fall into an argument over how to cross a desert. Owing to the differences, a person who wrote stylish prose and is supposed to be the best of the group forsakes the rest and goes his own way. The others are left with a sense of deprivation.

The travelers go through another ordeal as the travelers are attacked twice and they lose their way. At this juncture, many of the travelers leave the group and go on their own way. The poet asserts that on occasions like these he strived to seek solace in God, while the leader mentioned that they were near to the sea. Nevertheless, the travelers find themselves unmoved by anything they witness. They perceive nothing stimulating them

anymore, and ignore the significance of the thunder. The thunder reminds us of Eliot's "Wasteland", where it signifies fertility and productivity. Further, they divorce themselves from even basic amenities such as soap. Some of the groups are totally overcome with fatigue and they become too stressed to bear with the pressure of the journey any more.

Eventually, the travelers do reach their destination point. Nevertheless, when they do finally reach their target, they comprehend that their achievements have neither been far-fetched nor singular: 'Home' is the ultimate place that they, have to discover grace.

The journey at once becomes a metaphor for life. In the rat race of competition, principles and ethics are quite often side-stepped. We live life to achieve some prescribed goal. However, as we carry on, we tend to become so obsessed with the target that the means does not matter at all: the End is only the ends. Besides, the poet echoes that in the race to be successful, people have lost the inner meaning of life, and live life only on the topographical or superficial level. The theme that is echoed in Farhan Akthar's "Rock On". People have forsaken the simple joys of life; they tend to ignore life's basic experiences/teachings. The spiritual enigma of life is not a matter of concern for them. 'Home' or self-discovery resides within each individual. It is primarily subjective, and not objective. Furthermore, for the better lot, the objective is intention. The journey itself is Destination for them.

Conclusion

Ezekiel, who usually deals with conflicts such as the old versus the new, the rural against the urban, turns to the home-against-pilgrimage conflict in this poem. The value of pilgrimage lies not in moving away from 'home' but in reaching 'home'. The last verse throws light on the irony inherent in life. One leaves home seeking grace; all such pilgrimages would be meaningless if Home is the abode of grace. The ending of the poem implying the ennobling effect of 'home' on the human beings, is contemplative in mood and cryptic in tone.

The poem combines the realistic and symbolic modes to express a philosophical or spiritual meaning. One impulse from "Home" could impart grace to man rather than diverse phases of a pilgrimage.

Check your progress

1. Describe main features of Nissim Ezekiel as a poet.

2. Write down the structure of the poem.

3. What message can be derived from 'Enterprise'?

4. What is the meaning of the line The way of serpents and of goats'?

PHILOSOPHY

Poem

There is a place, to which I often go,
 Not by planning to, but by a flow
 Away from all existence, to a cold
 Lucidity, whose will is uncontrolled.
 Here, the mills of God are never slow.
 The landscape in its geological prime
 Dissolves to show its quintessential slime.
 A million stars are blotted out. I think
 Of each historic passion as a blink
 That happened to the sad eye of Time.
 But residues of meaning still remain,
 As darkest myths meander through the pain
 Towards a final formula of light.
 I, too, reject this clarity of sight.
 What cannot be explained, do not explain.
 The mundane language of the senses sings
 Its own interpretations. Common things
 Become, by virtue of their commonness,
 An argument against their nakedness
 That dies of cold to find the truth it brings.

The failure of Ezekiel's poetry to project a coherent philosophy is largely a reflection of Ezekiel's failure to possess one. Despite his incomplete academic training in philosophy — or because of it — his outlook displays few of the traits of that of a professional philosopher.

Poetry, as Ezekiel sees it, is the art of language, philosophy is the art of thought. One does not make poetry with ideas but with words. If Ezekiel has a philosophy, it is very much that of a poet, a philosophy which is very unphilosophical one. One of the papers he read at the Bombay Philosophical Society in 1973 is titled "Philosophy of the Literary Man": Ezekiel explains, "The philosophy of the literary man then appears to be dependent on his imagery, along with a host of other utterly irrelevant devices so far as philosophy is concerned and which cannot make one iota of difference to its objective truth. The truth of the literary man is a private vision of reality". The literary man is philosophically eclectic and whatever philosophy he evolves for himself is inevitably bound to be riven by contradictions.

Check your progress

5. Explain the meaning of last stanza of 'Philosophy'.

NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Night of the Scorpion" is an attempt of the poet to understand the Indian ethos. The poem is in a colloquial style and in the first person narrative. The narrator recollects an incident and gives a picturesque account of it.

Poem

I remember the night my mother
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours
of steady rain had driven him
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.
Parting with his poison - flash
of diabolic tail in the dark room —
he risked the rain again.
The peasants came like swarms of flies
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times
to paralyse the Evil One.
With candles and with lanterns
throwing giant scorpion shadows
on the mud-baked walls
they searched for him: he was not found.
They clicked their tongues.

With every movement that the scorpion made
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.

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May he sit still, they said
May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said.
May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
May the sum of all evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain.
May the poison purify your flesh
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
they said, and they sat around
on the floor with my mother in the centre,
the peace of understanding on each face.
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
more insects, and the endless rain.
My mother twisted through and through,
groaning on a mat.
My father, sceptic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
I watched the holy man perform his rites
to tame the poison with an incantation.
After twenty hours
it lost its sting.
My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.

Summary of the Poem

Introduction. An often — anthological poem "Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel, an urban poet, portrays a rural picture. It is typically Indian in theme, setting and imagery. It is taken from the collection *The Exact Name* (1965). The poet weaves a beautiful poem out of the ordinariness of an event. He is aptly called a poet of the ordinariness.

Summary. The poet's mother was stung by a scorpion one rainy night. The peasants came, buzzing the name of God a hundred times: With candles and lanterns, the peasants sat around the mother and consoled her with "philosophical words". The rationalist father tried "powder, mixture, herb and hybrid" and poured a little paraffin on the bitten toe. The priest too tried to tame the poison with an incantation. With all these the pain

Indian English Literature ceased only after twenty hours. The mother thanked God that the scorpion picked on her and spared her children.

A poem of Situation. The poem "Night of the Scorpion" can be classified as poetry of situation — an art in which Browning and Robert by a scorpion. It involves a typical Indian situation in which an entire village community identifies itself with a sad domestic happening. It pictures the traditional Indian society steeped in ignorance and superstition.

The Indian Rural Setting

The poem is set against the backdrop of Indian rural setting. The rural habit of storing rice in gunny bags is referred to in the phrase, "a sack of rice". The rural practice of building huts with mud walls is captured in the phrase "mud baked walls". The absence of rural electrification in Indian villages before independence is hinted at in a string of images, "dark room" and "candles and lanterns". "Darkness" has the extended meaning of Indian villages being steeped in ignorance.

Indian Rural Practices

The situation of a scorpion—stung mother is encountered in different ways of prayer, incantation and science.

No one stays at home when the peasants hear of a mother bitten by a scorpion. They rush buzzing the name of God times without number. With candles and lanterns, they search for him. He is not found. They sit on the floor with the mother in the centre and try to comfort her with words of philosophy. Their prayer brings out their genuine concern for the suffering mother. The father, though a sceptic and a rationalist, does not differ in the least from the ignorant peasants. He tries both medicine and "mantra" — drugs and chants as seen in the phrase "trying every curse and blessing". A holy man is brought to tame the poison with an incantation.

Indian Rural Beliefs

Nissim Ezekiel

It is the belief of the village community that buzzing "the name of God a hundred times" will bring about relief to the mother stung by the scorpion. The action of the rural folk brings out their firm faith in God and in the efficacy of prayer. It is the belief of the rural community that the faster the scorpion moves, the faster the poison in the mother's blood will move:

With every movement that the scorpion made
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.
May he sit still, they said

In equating the movement of the scorpion and that of the poison in the blood stream, the peasants betray their superstition.

The peasants sit around the mother groaning in pain and they try to console her offering remedial advice of a strong ritualistic and faith — healing kind:

May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said.
May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
May the sum of all evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain.

The incantatory utterances made by the peasants smack of their beliefs in the Hindu law of "Karma" ["previous birth"], in the Hindu doctrine of rebirth ["next birth"] and in the Hindu concept of the world as one of illusion ["unreal world"]. Again, it is their belief that physical suffering will bring about spiritual rejuvenation:

May the poison purify your flesh
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
they said.

Indian Mother's Selfless Love

The poem is remembered particularly for its 'memorable close' — the last three lines:

My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.

The use of the restricted adverb "only" distinguishes the mother from the peasants, the father and the holy man. The Mother does not blame God but she thanks god because the scorpion stung her and spared her children. Her agony would have been greater if any of her children were bitten. The lines are revelatory of the mother's self-negating nature. The sting of the lines is in the irony.

Style and Structure

Irony in the Poem

Irony is Nissim Ezekiel's forte. The irony in the poem "Night of the Scorpion" cannot be missed.

The scorpion-stung-mother with her woe-begone face goes on groaning in pain but the irony is, there is peace on the face of the peasants.

The peasants have come to console the mother stung by the scorpion but the irony is, they add to her suffering by calling her a sinner who deserves to suffer for all the sins committed by her in her previous birth.

The father claims himself to be a sceptic and a rationalist. But the irony is he does not feel hesitant to try both chants and drugs. He is no better than the ignorant peasant.

The mother does not think of herself. She is more concerned with the welfare of her children. But the irony is the care and concern of all others — the peasants, the father and the holy man are for the suffering mother.

Science is said to have the power to bring immediate relief to the scorpion — bite. Superstition is also believed to have power to bring relief to the mother stung by the scorpion. But the irony is both science and superstition have failed to bring relief to the mother.

Contrast in the Poem

The poem is a study in contrast. The world of superstition is represented by the peasants in contrast with the world of science represented by the father.

There is a contrast between the mother's concern for the welfare of her children and the concern of the peasants and the priest for the welfare of the mother.

The view of the traditional Indian rural society is contrasted with the modern urbanized society.

There is a contrast between the fewer words spoken by the mother and the large number of words spoken by the peasants.

The bite of the scorpion with his poison in the tail warrants a comparison with the uncharitable remarks by the peasants who call the mother a sinner punished with the biting of the scorpion for all her sins in

the previous birth, with the unfeeling attitude of the father who burns her bitten toe without any thought of her pain and with the insensitive holy man who, oblivious of the mother's agony, goes on chanting mantras.

Phono-aesthetics in the Poem

The poet in the opening lines of the poem builds up the atmosphere. It is the dark night. It is the rainy night. During such a night, the mother is stung by a scorpion.

The poet creates a vivid picture of the villagers swarming like bees:

The peasants came like swarms of flies
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times
to paralyse the Evil One.

Here is the use of onomatopoeia—sound echoing sense in the word "buzzed". The sound emerging from the word "buzzed" is in keeping with the flies and the people.

The sudden appearance as well as the swift disappearance of the scorpion is well brought out in the poet's use of the plosive consonants / p/in "parting" and / t/in "tail" and / k/in "risked".

Parting with his poison - flash
of diabolic tail in the dark room —
he risked the rain again.

The hurried pace of rhythm is captured in the words cited above.

The poet equates the hurried movement of the scorpion and the speedy movement of the poison in the mother's blood by the use of the hurried rhythm in the use of long words / u: / in "movement" and "moved".

With every movement that the scorpion made
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.

The use of the bilabial consonants shows the coming together of the mother's toe and the scorpion's sitting thereby indicating the injection of poison in the mother's blood.

The lines 18-29 with every sentence starting with "May" and ending with "they said" an incantation. The initial repetition of "May" at the beginning of every successive clause called anaphora reinforces the tone and tenor of an incantation. The initial "May" is reminiscent of the chanting of mantra with "Ohm", while the final "they said" is like the chanting of mantra with the final "Namaha". The repetition of "they" creates the impression of people speaking together. The rhythm in the lines enacts a ritual recited in chorus. Look at the following lines:

More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
more insects, and the endless rain.

The enactment of the rhythm in the fragments with the repetition of "more" refers to the continuous flow of people in a steady stream, and then come the lines:

My father, sceptic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.

These fragments as like the previous ones, build up the hurried rhythm involved in the father's act of experimenting item after item — powder, mixture, herb and hybrid. The fragments are catchy and emphatic.

The use of restricted adverbial "only" in the concluding lines is richly ambiguous. "Only" is a squinting modifier — a movable adverbial. It goes forward and backward. By means of IC Analysis, the highly enriching ambiguity can be brought about. The tonal group "My mother only / said..." Means no one else but she only said these words, not the peasants, not the father, not even the holy man. The tonal group "My mother / only said" Means she does not blame god. Rather she praises god, for the scorpion has bitten her and spared her children.

Other features in the Poem

The language is conversational. The tone is ironic. The one and only simile "like swarms of flies" stresses the unrefined nature of the rustics. "The endless rain" is a symbol. It indicates the endless flow of life in the outside world that goes on as indifferent to human suffering. It goes on raining to the mother who goes on groaning in pain. The peasants, utterly oblivious of the mother's pain, go on speaking words of philosophy. The father goes on experimenting one item after another unmindful of the mother's agony. The priest goes on chanting mantra utterly unmindful of the suffering mother. The one metaphor in the poem is the scorpion shadow. The shadow stresses the unreality of the world.

Conclusion

The poem begins with, a casual background of a rural setting. Ultimately, it assumes universal dimensions. The poem throws light on the selfless love of the Indian mother. But it has an extended meaning. It refers to mothers in general. It is maternal love rooted in the biological instinct. The mother also reminds us of the mother character of Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*. The Poem is a unique illustration of Indianness. It registers the character of the Indian Peasants, their native simplicity, superstitions, simple faith and human concern.

The poet's emotional detachment makes the poem more appealing. As K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar says, "Ezekiel invests the poem with deep significance in trying to understand the Indian ethos and its view of evil but he makes no claim to sharing it." Ezekiel himself: "I am incurably and skeptical. That is what I am in relation to India". Paul Verghese is of the opinion "Ezekiel deliberately withholds his emotional colouring so that reading the poem, we may be aware of a traditional world of superstition as against of scepticism and rationalism".

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

'Night of the Scorpion', in which Ezekiel recalls the behaviour of 'the peasants', his father, his mother and a holy man when his mother was poisoned by a scorpion's sting. Here the aim is to find poetry in ordinary reality as observed, known, felt, experienced rather than as an intellect thinks it should be. While the peasants pray and speak of incarnations, his father, 'sceptic, rationalist', tries 'every curse and blessing, powder, mixture, herb and hybrid' and a holy man performs a rite. After a day the poison is no longer felt and, in a final irony, his mother, in contrast to the previous feverish activity centred upon her, makes a typical motherly comment:

My mother only said

Thank God the scorpion picked on me

and spared my children

The 'Thank God' is doubly ironic as it is a commonplace expression of speech in contrast to all the previous religious and superstitious activity. Ezekiel's purpose is not, however, an expression of scepticism but rather the exact notation of what he saw as a child. The aim is not to explain but to make real 'by naming, by saying 'common things'. The poem is a new direction, a vision of ordinary reality, especially of Indian life, unmediated by cold intellect. The new purpose is seen in the poem's style, unrhymed, with line lengths shaped by natural syntactical units and rhythm created by the cadences of the speaking voice into a long verse paragraph, rather than the stanzaic structure used in earlier poems.

In his poetry there is the truth of acknowledging what is felt and experienced in its complexity, contradictions, pleasures, fears and disillusionments without preconceived ideas of what poetry should say about the poet and life.

Nissim Ezekiel's 'Night of The Scorpion' is much appreciated by the critics and it has found place in many anthologies for excellence, Critics, commenting on its aesthetic beauty expressed different views,. In their critical sweep, they, brought everything from superstitious ritualism to

modern rationalism. One can find that in the poem superstitious ritualism or sceptic rationalism or even the balance of the both with expression of

Indian ethos through maternal love in the Indian way, is nothing but scratching the surface. The poem has something more gigantic than its face value, which as I find is the symbolic juxtaposition of the forces of darkness and light that is intrinsically centripetal in the poem.

It is 'Night' of 'The Scorpion' with the first word absorbing accent. It seems to have been implicitly contrived here that 'Night' should stand as a symbol of darkness with the 'Scorpion' as the symbol of evil. Such ingenuity in craftsmanship takes the poem to the higher level of understanding. Prof. Birje Patil is right in putting that in "Night of The Scorpion", where evil is symbolized by the scorpion, the reader is made to participate in the ritual as well as suffering through 'a vivid evocation of the poison moving in the mother's blood'. And evil has always been associated with darkness, the seamy side of our life, in human psyche. It has always been the integral part of theology, in whatever form it has manifested that suffering helps in removing that darker patch in human mind, the patch that has been a besetting sin of man's existence.

May the sum of evil

Balanced in this unreal world

against the sum of good

become diminished by your pain, they said

These lines amply testify that the poem aims at achieving something higher than its narrative simplicity. The choric refrain 'they said' in the chain of reactions made by the village peasants is undoubtedly ironic, but the poet hasn't as much to stress the concept of sin, redemption or rebirth as he has to insinuate the indomitable force of darkness gripping the minds of the unenlightened. Going through the poem attentively more than once, it can't fail catching our notice that modern rationalism is also equally shallow and perverse. It is also a road leading to confusion where through emerges scepticism, the other darker patch on our modernized existence. The image of the father in this poem speaks volumes for this capsizing modernism which sandwiches in its arm- space the primitive and the perverted. The "sceptic rationalist" father trying 'powder, mixture, herb and hybrid' bears upon human primitivism and when he experiments with 'a little paraffin upon a bitten toe and put a match to it he becomes a symbol Of perversion in the modern man's psyche.

Christopher Wiseman puts it, "...a fascinating tension between personal crisis and mocking social observation"; neither there is any personal crisis. On the other hand there is spiritual compassion and an intense urge for getting rid of this psychological syndrome that the whole

modern world has been caught, the slow-moving poison of this syndromic scorpion into the very veins of creation, the image of the mother in agony nullifying the clear vision of human thought and enveloping the whole of humanity. In the darker shades of confusion more chaotic, troubles the poet a much sharply as the sting of the poisonous worm. There is crisis, but it is the crisis of human existence that needs to be overcome. The poet, though a distant observer, doesn't take a stance of detachment. On the exact opposite, he watches with curiosity 'the flame feeding on my mother', but being uncertain whether the paraffin flame would cleanse her of the agony of the absorbing poison, he loses himself in a thoughtful trance.

The whole poem abounds with these two symbols of darkness and light. In the very beginning the poet has ushered in this symbolic juxtaposition and then as the poem advanced, built upon it the whole structure of his fascinating architecture in the lines. Ten hours of steady rain had driven him to crawl beneath a sack of rice parting with his poison - flash of diabolic tail in the dark room he risked the rain again.

The incessant rain stands for the hope and regeneration and it juxtaposed, the destructive hurdles to fruitify that hope. But the constructive, life giving rain continuous and the evil, having fulfilled its parts, departs. Then afterwards other hurdles more preying than the first, come in. More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours, more insects, and the endless rain. My mother twisted through and through groaning on a mat.

The symbols of light and darkness, candles lanterns, neighbours and insects and rain again are noteworthy. But the force of light gains a width handover the evil force and life is restored once again in its joyous stride and this life long struggle between forces of darkness and light reaches a crescendo when - after twenty hours it lost its sting. Here, in the above lines, lies the beauty of the poem, when the ascending steps of darkness, being chased by the force of following light are ripped down; when at last on the peak the chaser wins and the chased slips down.

The man who has not understood what motherhood is might be taken in by such expression of motherly love. But I convincingly feel that any woman would have exclaimed the same thing as the mother in this poem did. In my view, it would have been truly Indian had the mother in her tortures remembered her children and though helplessly, had she desired to protect them lest the scorpion might catch them unawares. Anyway, the beauty of the poem remains- unmarred by such revision. The poem is a thing of beauty par excellence.

The poem "Night of the Scorpion" can be classified as poetry of situation—an art in which Browning and Robert Frost excelled. It presents

a critical situation in which a mother is bitten by a scorpion. It involves a typical Indian Situation in which an entire village community identifies itself with a sad domestic happening. It pictures the traditional Indian society steeped in ignorance and superstition.

The poem is set against the backdrop of Indian rural setting. The rural habit of Storing rice in gunny bags is referred to in the phrase, "a sack of rice".

The rural practice of building huts with mud walls is captured in the phrase "mud baked walls". The absence of rural electrification in Indian villages before independence is hinted at in a string of images, "dark room" and "Candles and lanterns". "Darkness" has the extended meaning of Indian villages being steeped in ignorance.

The situation of a scorpion-stung mother is encountered in different ways of prayer, incantation and science.

No one stays at home when the peasants hear of a mother bitten by a scorpion. They rush buzzing the name of God times without number. With candles and lanterns, they search for him. He is not found. They sit on the floor with the mother in the centre and try to comfort her with words of philosophy. Their prayer brings out their genuine concern for the suffering mother. The father, through a skeptic and a rationalist, does not differ in the least from the ignorant peasants. He tries both medicine and "mantra" drugs and chants as seen in the phrase "trying every where and blessing". A holy man is brought to tame the poison with an incantation.

It is the belief of the village community that buzzing "the name of God a hundred times" will bring about relief to the mother stung by the scorpion. The action of the rural folk brings out their firm faith in God and in the efficiency of prayer. It is the belief of the rural community that the faster the scorpion moves, the faster the poison in the mother's blood will move. In equating the movement of the scorpion and that of the poison in the blood stream, the peasants betray their superstition.

The peasants sit around the mother groaning in pain and they try to console her offering remedial advice of a strong ritualistic and faith-healing kind. Some peasants say that as she has suffered now, in the next birth she will experience less troubles. She will now be in a balanced state whereby her body is ridden of disease and her spirit of ambition. The incantatory utterances made by the peasants smack of their belief in the Hindu law of "Karma", in the Hindu doctrine of rebirth and in the Hindu concept of the world as one of illusion and the physical suffering bringing about spiritual rejuvenation.

The poem is remembered particularly for its 'memorable close' - in last three lines:

My Mother only said
 Thank God the scorpion picked on me
 And spared my children.

The use of the restricted adverb 'only' distinguishes the mother from the peasants, the father and the holy man. The, others do not blame God but she thanks God because the scorpion stung her and spared her children. Her agony would have been greater if any of her children were bitten. Ultimately, it assumes universal dimensions. The poet throws light on the selfless lore of the Indian mother.

Poetry Analysis

Nissim Ezekiel's 'Night of the Scorpion' is the poet's personal account of his memory of his mother being stung by a scorpion when he was a child. He begins by explaining that the scorpion had come in because of heavy rain and had hidden under a sack of rice. Ezekiel uses alliteration to describe the moment of the sting: 'Parting with his poison'. He alludes to evil in the phrase 'diabolic tail', comparing the scorpion to the devil.

The scorpion departed and, on hearing the news of the deadly sting, villagers came to the house. Ezekiel uses the simile 'like swarms of flies' to describe their number and behaviour. He states that they 'buzzed the name of God' repeatedly, the onomatopoeia enabling us to 'hear' the constant noise they made. The scorpion is again seen as the devil in line ten: 'the Evil One'. We can imagine the fear of the child observing the scene, as the peasants' lanterns created 'giant scorpion shadows' on the walls of his home. Onomatopoeia is used again as the poet says that these people 'clicked their tongues' whilst searching for the scorpion. They believed that whenever the scorpion moved, its poison 'moved in Mother's blood'.

Line eighteen is the first in a fourteen-line section which recounts the words of wisdom voiced by the peasants in the hope that the woman would survive. Five of the lines begin 'May ...' and are clear examples of the religious beliefs held by these villagers. They refer to past and future lives, absolution of sins, the lessening of evil and the hope that the poison will 'purify' the woman's flesh and spirit. Ezekiel describes how they surrounded his mother; he saw 'the peace of understanding' in their facial expressions.

Lines thirty-two and thirty-three form a repetitive pattern in which Ezekiel remembers the arrival of 'More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours, / more insects' as the rain continued to fall. In line thirty-four he makes the first direct reference to his mother's suffering, telling us that she 'twisted through and through' and was groaning in pain. He then turns to the reaction of his father, not a religious man but 'sceptic, rationalist'. On this occasion, however, the man resorted to 'every curse and blessing'

accompanied by various herbal concoctions, such was his desperation. Ezekiel describes in detail that his father actually set a light to the toe that had been bitten. It must have had a profound effect on the poet as a child; he describes how 'I watched the flame feeding on my mother', personifying the fire. Ezekiel then watched and listened to a 'holy man' carrying out certain rites to 'tame' the poison. The poison lost its sting the following night.

The first forty-five lines form one continuous stanza relating the event from start to finish. The poem concludes with a short three-line stanza in which Ezekiel recalls his mother's reaction to her frightening and painful experience. She spoke of it only briefly, thanking God and saying how glad she was that the scorpion had chosen to sting her rather than her children. This was the boundless, selfless love of a mother, and these were words which Ezekiel never forgot.

One of the interesting points about the poem is that Ezekiel narrates it from the point of view of a child who was purely an observer, not involved as the adults were in taking any action. This allows him to relate the actions and words of the peasants and his father whilst being detached from them. It is an insight into the behaviour of a small community in India where everyone becomes involved in one family or one mother's suffering, and all gather to witness the event and contribute a prayer. To the child it must have seemed as though there was a huge number of people, and the night must have been interminable. His comparison of the peasants to flies suggests that he would rather prefer they had left the family in peace.

The structure of the poem is very free, with lines of varying lengths and no rhyme scheme. The second stanza that ends the poem attracts attention for its brevity and emphasises the words of the mother and their effect on the son.

Check your progress

6. Write a short note on the poem, "Night of the Scorpion".

7. Write down the structure of the poem, "Night of the Scorpion".

8. Describe the irony depicted by the poem 'Night of the Scorpion'.

9. Describe the contrast in the scenario of 'Night of the Scorpion'.

THE VISITOR

Nissim Ezekiel's poem "The Visitor" is a leisurely meditation on the folk belief that a visitor will come following the cawing of a crow. The poem is as follows:

Poem

Three times the crow has cawed
 At the window, baleful eyes fixed
 On mine, wings slightly raised
 In sinister poise, body tense
 And neck craned like a nagging woman's
 Filling the room with voice and presence.
 Three times I got the message,
 Sleep — walking on the air of thought
 With muddy clothes, and floated down,
 Concerned for all created things,
 To cope with the visitor
 Whose terms would compromise my own.
 All day I waited, as befits
 The folk belief that following
 The crow a visitor would come,
 An angel in disguise, perhaps,
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 On else temptation in unlikely shape
 To test my promises, ruin my sleep.
 It was not like that at all.
 His hands were empty, his need:
 Only to kill a little time.
 Between his good intentions
 And my sympathy, the cigarette smoke

Was more substantial than our talk.

Indian English Literature

I see how wrong I was

Not to foresee precisely this:

Outside the miracles of mind,

The figure in the carpet blazing,

Ebb-flow of sex and the seasons,

The ordinariness of most events.

SUMMARY

The narrator in the poem "The Visitor" says that the crow had cawed three times at the window. The baleful eyes of the crow were fixed on those of the narrator. The wings of the crow were raised in sinister poise. The body was tense and the neck was craned like that of a nagging woman. The crow filled the room with its voice and presence.

Three times the narrator got the message from the casings of the crow. He was in a reverie. He seemed to be sleep-walking on the air of thought with muddy clothes and floated down. From his reverie he came back to reality with concern for all created things. He was ready to cope with the visitor who would come. He knew that the terms of the visitor compromise with his own. The narrator would have to make adjustments with the visitor.

All through the day he waited for a visitor in keeping with the folk belief that following the cawing of a crow a visitor would come. The visitor may be an angel in the disguise of a man or temptation in unexpected shape to test the narrator's promises and to ruin his sleep.

It did not happen like that at all. No supernatural being like an angel came in dialogue. No temptation in unexpected shape came as a visitor. His need was to kill a little time of the narrator by talking idly. Between the good intentions of the visitor and the sympathy of the narrator, the unsubstantial smoke was more substantial than their talk. Their talk was light and unsubstantial.

The narrator realized how wrong he was in not foreseeing precisely this consequence of the cawing of the crow. Miracles happen only in the human mind. We expect a miracle to happen following the ordinary cawing of an ordinary crow. Very often such miracles do not happen following ordinary actions or happenings. The blazing figure in the carpet shows the ebb and flow of sex and the seasons and the ordinariness of most events.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem "The Visitor"

Nissim Ezekiel has written the poem "The Visitor" in a heightened and figurative style. The poem has the quality of a reverie. The rhythm is slow and leisurely in consonance with the nature of the slow contemplation on the relation of a folk belief to personal experiences. Ezekiel tries to understand the truth of the widespread popular belief or superstition that the cawing of a crow would be followed by a visitor. The poet shows his knowledge of folk beliefs. Through realistic description of the eyes, the wings, the neck of the crow, the poet reveals his keen power of observation. There is humour when the poet says that the neck of the crow was craned like a nagging woman's neck. The crow cawed three times. The three times reception has its emphasis. It is ironical that no miracle happened and no angel in disguise came that day following the cawing of the crow. Only an ordinary man came to kill the poet's precious time and to indulge in unsubstantial talk. From his personal experience the poet makes a general conclusion that miracles happen only in the human mind. Outside the mind most events are ordinary.

Check your progress

10. Critically appreciate the poem, "The Visitor"

POET, LOVER, BIRD WATCHER

Poem

To force the pace and never to be still
 Is not the way of those who study birds
 Or women. The best poets wait for words.
 The hunt is not an exercise of will
 But patient love relaxing on a hill
 To note the movement of a timid wing;
 Until the one who knows that she is loved
 No longer waits but risks surrendering —
 In this the poet finds his moral proved
 Who never spoke before his spirit moved.
 The slow movement seems, somehow, to say much more.
 To watch the rarer birds, you have to go
 Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow
 In silence near the source, or by a shore

Remote and thorny like the heart's dark floor.
And there the women slowly turn around,
Not only flesh and bone but myths of light
With darkness at the core, and sense is found
But poets lost in crooked, restless flight,
The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

The best poem of the volume 'Poet, Lover, Bird-watcher' displays Ezekiel's views on poet's problems. He thinks the best poets wait for words, like ornithologists sitting in silence to see birds. Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher is one of the better known poems of Ezekiel and has received considerable critical attention. It epitomizes the poet's search for a poetics which would help him redeem himself in his eyes and in the eyes of the god. Parallelism is drawn between the poet, the lover and the birdwatcher. All the three have to wait patiently in their respective pursuits, indeed their 'waiting' is a sort of strategy, a plan of action which bears fruit if persisted in and followed with patience. It is patient waiting which crowns the efforts of all the three with success.

Ezekiel attempts to define the poet in terms of a lover and the birdwatcher. There is a close resemblance among them in their search for love, bird and word. All the three become one in spirit, and Ezekiel expresses this in imagery noted for its precision and decorum:

The hunt is not an exercise of will
But patient love relaxing on a hill
To note the movement of a timid wing

There is no action, no exercise of will in all the three cases, but 'Patient waiting' is itself strategy, a kind of planned action to reach the goal. The patience of the birdwatcher is rewarded when the timid bird is suddenly caught in the net; the patience of the lover is rewarded, when the woman loved, risks surrendering. Similarly, if the poets wait still the moment of inspiration, he achieves some noble utterance. "Bird-beloved-poem syndrome runs throughout the lyric". The Second-stanza stresses the fact that slow movement is good. One has to go to a remote place just as one has to discover love in a remote place like the heart's dark floor. It is there, that women look something more than their body, and that they appear like myths of light. And the poet, in zigzag movements, yet with a sense of musical delight, manages to combine sense and sound in such a way that 'deaf can hear, the blind recover sight'. Highest poetry is remedial in its action, it cures human apathy and deadness of spirit, activists' human sense, and makes man see and hear much more than he would have otherwise done.

At the end of this wait, the poetic word appears in the concrete and sensuous form of a woman, who knows that she is loved and who surrenders to her lover at once. In this process, poetry and love, word and woman become intertwined. But this "slow movement" of love and poetry, which shows no irritable haste to arrive at meaning, does not come by easily. In order to possess the vision of the rarer birds of his psyche, the poet has to go through the "deserted lanes" of his solitary, private life; he has to walk along the primal rivers of his consciousness in silence, or travel to a far off shore which is like the heart's dark floor. The poet, then, gloats on the slow curving movements of the women, both for the sake of their sensuousness and the insights they bring.

He creates his poetry out of these "myths of light" whose essential darkness or mystery remains at the entire of creation itself. But the poet finds the greatest sense or meaning in his own creativity which eventually liberates him from "crooked restless flight" of those moments when he struggles to find the poetic idiom. The poetry which releases the poet from suffering is the medium through which the deaf can hear and the blind see. This is a justly celebrated poem, containing a beautiful worked set of images moving as the title suggests, on three interpenetrating levels.

SUMMARY

- Ezekiel's first book, *The Bad Day*, appeared in 1952. He published another volume of poems, *The Deadly Man* in 1960. After working as an advertising copywriter and general manager of a picture frame company (1954-59), he co-founded the literary monthly *Jumpo*, in 1961. He became art critic of *The Times of India* (1964-66) and edited *Poetry India* (1966-67). From 1961 to 1972, he headed the English department of Mithibai College, Bombay. *The Exact Name*, his fifth book of poetry was published in 1965. During this period he held short-term tenure as visiting professor at University of Leeds (1964) and University of Pondicherry (1967). In 1967, while in America, he experimented with LSD. He finally stopped using it in 1972. In 1969, Writers Workshop, Kozhikode published his *The Damn Plays*. A year later, he presented an art series of ten programmes for Dubai television. In 1976, he co-edited a fiction and poetry anthology. His poem *The Night of the Scorpion* is used as study material in Indian and Columbian schools. He wrote a poem based on instruction boards in his favourite Irani café, today it is used in NCERT English textbooks to show students the lovingly mother nature.

1. Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel (14 December 1924 — 9 January 2004) was an Indian Jewish poet, playwright, editor and art-critic.

2. Superstition

Superstition is a credulous belief or notion, not based on reason or knowledge.

3. Tradition

A tradition is a ritual, belief or object passed down within a society, still maintained in the present, with origins in the past.

4. Belief

Belief is the psychological state in which an individual holds a proposition or premise to be true.

5. Ornithology

Ornithology is a branch of zoology that concerns the study of birds.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Ezekiel is a dedicated person to the rhyme, the extremes and pitfalls. No other Indian-English poet has today shown the ability to organise his experience into words as competently as Ezekiel. The remarkable aspect of his poetry is his sincerity and individuality. His poems generalise his own felt experience. It is neither repetitive nor shocking, but 'simple, introspective and analytical. He treats poetry as a first-hand record of the growth of his mind. He loves simplicity.

2. The poem "Enterprise" as a whole is to be interpreted as an allegory of the pilgrimage theme. "As Chetan Karnani says, "It treats journey as a metaphor for life. There are six stanzas each having five lines with alternated rhyme scheme. The thematic progress in the stanzas corresponds to the progress of the pilgrimage from morning till evening. The poem "Enterprise is an exploration of the psychic experiences of the poet-persona".

3. In the rat race of competition, principles and ethics are quite often sidestepped. We live life to achieve some prescribed goal. However, as we carry on, we tend to become so obsessed with the target that the means does not matter at all: the End is only the ends. Besides, the poet echoes that in the race to be successful, people have lost the inner meaning of life, and live life only on the topographical or superficial level.

4. The evils of living is indicated by "the ways of serpents" and the sexual pursuits of man referred to by "the ways of goats".

5. "The truth of the literary man is a private vision of reality". The literary man is philosophically eclectic and whatever philosophy he evolves for himself is inevitably bound to be riven by contradictions.

6. Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Night of the Scorpion" is an attempt of the poet to understand the Indian ethos. The poem is in a colloquial style and in the first person narrative. The narrator recollects an incident and gives a picturesque account of it.

7. The structure of the poem is very free, with lines of varying lengths and no rhyme scheme. The second stanza that ends the poem attracts attention for its brevity and emphasises the words of the mother and their effect on the son.

8. Irony is Nissim Ezekiel's forte. The irony in the poem "Night of the Scorpion" cannot be missed. The scorpion-stung-mother with her woe-begone face goes on groaning in pain but the irony is, there is peace on the face of the peasants. The peasants have come to console the mother stung by the scorpion but the irony is, they add to her suffering by calling her a sinner who deserves to suffer for all the sins committed by her in her previous birth. The father claims himself to be a sceptic and a rationalist. But the irony is he does not feel hesitant to try both chants and drugs. He is no better than the ignorant peasant.

The mother does not think of herself. She is more concerned with the welfare of her children. But the irony is the care and concern of all others—the peasants, the father and the holy man are for the suffering mother. Science is said to have the power to bring immediate relief to the scorpion—bite. Superstition is also believed to have power to bring relief to the mother stung by the scorpion. But the irony is both science and superstition have failed to bring relief to the mother.

9. The poem is a study in contrast. The world of superstition is represented by the peasants in contrast with the world of science represented by the father.

There is a contrast between the mother's concern for the welfare of her children and the concern of the peasants and the priest for the welfare of the mother. The view of the traditional Indian rural society is contrasted with the modern urbanized society.

10. Nissim Ezekiel has written the poem "The Visitor" in a heightened and figurative style. The poem has the quality of a reverie. The rhythm is slow and leisurely in consonance with the nature of the slow contemplation on the relation of a folk belief to personal experiences. Ezekiel tries to understand the truth of the widespread popular belief or superstition that

the cawing of a crow would be followed by a visitor. The poet shows his knowledge of folk beliefs. Through realistic description of the eyes, the wings, the neck of the crow, the poet reveals his keen power of observation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical appreciation of The Night of The Scorpion.
2. Discuss the view of the poet in the poem, "Philosophy".
3. Examine the style of writing in the poem, "Visitor".
4. State the theme about family relations in the poem, "Night of the Scorpion".
5. Write down the summary of "Poet, Lover, Bird Watcher".
6. What are the two factions mentioned among the Indo-anglican poets? Highlight their peculiarities.
7. Briefly discuss the life works of Nissim Ezekiel—dwelling on him as a poet, truly Indian.
8. "Ezekiel's poem 'Enterprise' has philosophical overtones though not a philosopher himself." Comment.
9. How is the poem allegorical in nature? What different stages in the pilgrim's progress does he chant?
10. Comment on the concluding philosophical solution "Home is where we have together grace". What does the poet drive home to his readers when he says that?
11. Give Ezekiel's emotical analysis of journey in his 'Enterprise' and say how does this journey become a metaphor of life?
12. Give the gist of the poem 'Philosophy' and discuss the appropriateness of the title of the poem.
13. With close reference to the poem 'Night of the Scorpions', discuss—
 - (a) the ordinariness of the theme and background against which the poem is set.
 - (b) the thing that runs through the poem.
 - (c) and the use of symbolism in the poem.
 - (d) what does the 'endless vain' stand for in the poem?
 - (e) the autobiographical element in the poem.

FURTHER READINGS

- Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel — A. Raghu
- Indian Poetry in English: Roots and Blossoms — Amar Nath Prasad
- Indian Writing in English — Rama Kundu.

UNIT-III

A. K. Ramanujan

A. K. RAMANUJAN

STRUCTURE

This chapter shall cover the following main points:

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- Looking for a Cousin on a Swing
- A River
- Of Mothers Among Other Things
- Love Poem for a Wife
- Small Scale Reflections on a Great House
- Obituary
- Summary
- Key Words
- Answers to Check Your Progress
- Review Questions
- Further Readings

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the theme of the poem, "Looking for a cousin on a swing"
- discuss how the poet appreciates the features of river in the poem, "A River"
- examine the style of writing in the poem, "Of others among other things"
- state the theme about family relations in the poem, "Love poem for a wife"
- write down the summary of "Small scale reflections on a great house" and "Obituary".

INTRODUCTION

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929-1993) was a scholar of Indian literature who wrote in both English and Kannada. Ramanujan wrote many

hats as Indian poet, scholar and author, those of a philologist, folklorist, translator, poet and playwright. His academic research ranged across five languages: Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit, and English. He published works on both classical and modern variants of these literatures and also argued strongly for giving local, non-standard dialects their due.

He was born into an Iyengar family in Mysore City in 1929. He was educated at D. Bhanumaiah's High School and Maharaja College of Mysore. He was a Fellow of Deccan College, Pune in 1958-59 and Fulbright Scholar at Indiana University in 1959-62. He was educated in English at the Mysore University and received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from Indiana University.

Having been a lecturer in English at Quilon and Belgaum, he taught at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda for about eight years. In 1962, he joined the University of Chicago teaching in several departments. In 1983, he was appointed the William E. Colvin Professor in the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, of Linguistics, and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and, the same year, he received a MacArthur Fellowship.

As an Indo-American writer Ramanujan had the experience of the native milieu as well as of the foreign milieu. His poems like the "Conventions of Despair" reflected his views on the cultures and conventions of the east and the west. A. K. Ramanujan died in 1993 as result of adverse reaction to anesthesia during preparation for surgery.

Ramanujan's poetry is essentially Indian in material and sensibility. He explains the paradox in a note to Twentieth Century Indian Poets: "English and my disciplines (linguistics, anthropology) give me my 'outer forms—linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupation with Kannada, Tamil, the classics and folklores give me my substance, my 'Inner' forms, images and symbols. They are continuous with each other, and I no longer can tell what comes from where."

A.K. Ramanujan occupies a prominent place as a poet in the cosmos of Indo-Anglian poetry. He has earned the name and fame all over the world after the publication of his two volumes of poetry — "The Striders" (1966) and "Relations" (1971). After the promulgation of "The Striders" he won a 'Poetry Book Society Recommendation' and established his position as "one of the most talented of the 'new' poets." William Walsh rightly evaluates him as "the most gifted poet." Ramanujan also achieved recognition in Kannada and Tamil with his anthologies — "Hokkulalli Hoovilla" and "Kurunthohai." He has also translated into English the poetry in Tamil and

Kannada in *The Interior Landscape* (1967) and *Speaking of Siva* (1972) respectively. Each and every piece of his literary output in Kannada and Tamil proclaimed a new epoch in vernacular literature. Ramanujan's poetry reflects a touch of humanity, Indian ethos and pertinence of life.

Ramanujan is an example of a polished, sophisticated and profound multiculturalism. His English poetry incorporates and assimilates linguistic, literary and cultural features of Kannada and Tamil into 1:1 to linguistic, literary and cultural form of English literature. Like the house in "Small Scale Reflections on a Great House" he absorbs the Western model to express a supposedly Indian way of being. He blended the India and European models into new forms. He has the ability to tolerate, accommodate and assimilate other cultures without losing consciousness of being an Indian.

Style and Techniques of A.K.Ramanujan

Ramanujan's poetry exemplifies how an Indian poet in English could derive strength by forging back to his roots. In poem after poem he goes back to his childhood memories and experiences of life in India. There is no attempt to disown the richness of the past. This insistent preoccupation with the past produces a poetry in which memory plays a significant creative role. It is not 'emotion recollected in tranquility but recollection emotionalized in untr tranquil moments that appear to be the driving force behind much of Ramanujan's poetry. Time and again 'a hood/of memory like a coil on a heath' unfolds in the mind.

Ramanujan's tones and temperaments fascinate the critical privilege of the people because of his poetic height and perception. Bruce King betrays this idea:

"Ramanujan is widely read in India, along with Western and Western influenced modern Indian poetry in Indian languages. This unpredictable fusion of varied roots in Ramanujan's poetry is true of the attitudes it expresses."

The poet seeks direct meaning to life. He opines that poetry has no value without the meaning of life. He evinces his deep sympathy "for a most disadvantaged section of Indian society, the women."

Ramanujan garnishes an intimate feeling and an individual turning point to the narrative technique. He indicates the common human situation through his individual experience.

He has a mastery of words and in his poems each word is used adroitly, attentively, accurately and economically. He has effectively demonstrated to his contemporaries the supreme significance of having roots and has also shown glimpses of the vitality the work of a poet acquires when he succeeds even partially in his attempt. He has derived his poetic technique from the

ancient Kannada and Tamil verse and the poets of today have synthesised oriental and occidental models into new forms. Ramanujan's technical accomplishment is incontestable and his thematic strategy is precisely the right one for a poet in his position. He has completely exploited the opportunities his material offers him. Ramanujan's poetic technique is critically examined by M.K. Naik: "In poetic technique, of all his contemporaries, Ramanujan appears to have the surest touch, for he never lapses into romantic cliché. His unfailing sense of rhythm gives a fitting answer to those who hold that complete inwardness with language is possible only to a poet writing in his mother tongue. Though he writes in open forms, his verse is extremely tightly constructed." Ramanujan is very often extolled for "his unique tone of voice, a feature that accounts for the characteristic style of his poetry."

The "outer" forms and "Inner" forms suggest the linguistic situation and cultural determinates respectively, which act upon him simultaneously. His poetry is the outcome of the interaction of these two forces. He has to convey the psyche of one culture in an alien language. Praising Ramanujan as the best of Indo-Anglican poets, R. Parthasarathy wrote, "Both the *Strider* (1966) and *Relations* (1974) are the heir of an interior tradition, a tradition very much of the subcontinent, the deposits of which are in Kannada and Tamil, and which have been assimilated into English. Ramanujan's deepest roots are in the Kannada and Tamil past and he has repossessed that past, in fact made it available, in English language. I consider this a significant achievement, one almost without a parallel in the history of Indian English verse. Ramanujan has, it seems to me, successfully conveyed in English what, at its subtlest and most incantational, and is locked up in another linguistic tradition."

Ramanujan has evolved as a very important Indian poet through his collections like *The Striders*, *Relations*, *Selected Poems*, *The Second Sight* and *The Black Hen and Other Poems* written over a period ranging more than three decades. In spite of his constant exposure to American beliefs and culture he has consistently written about India — not as an obsession, but as a source of inspiration. One observes in his writings a possibility that an artist as an individual is capable of doing of restructuring a personal (Indian) past and nourishing the same as insulated from the ideological oppositions that affect the time and space in which his text is written. While recreating the Indian settings — both rural and urban, he seems to be unaffected by the objects and images of his American surrounding because the life he captures looks so original and just not a memory game. "His exile in Chicago only strengthened his sense of the Indian past: his disturbingly vivid and agile poetic articulations both in English and Kannada are deeply rooted in the myth, folklore, history, culture and ethos

of his native soil, says K. Satchidanandan in his editorial comment in a commemorative volume on Ramanujan. While recreating the human situations and details of Indian life the image of family appears as a key image. It helps the reader understand and appropriate the meaning and beauty of such poems. R. Parthasarathy, another important Indian poet writing in English suggests, "The family, for Ramanujan, is in fact one of the central metaphors with which he thinks."

A. K. Ramanujan

LOOKING FOR A COUSIN ON A SWING

Looking for a Cousin on a swing are the memorable poems that express his relationship with past, present, and with various emotions like anxiety, fear and sexuality.

Poem

When she was four or five
she sat on a village swing
and her cousin, six or seven,
sat himself against her;
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with every lunge of the swing
she felt him
in the lunging pits
of her feeling;
and afterwards
we climbed a tree, she said,
not very tall, but full of leaves
like those of a fig tree,
and we were very innocent
about it,
Now she looks for the swing
in cities with fifteen suburbs
and tries to be innocent
about it.
not only on the crotch of a tree
that looked as if it would burst
under every leaf
into a brood of scarlet figs
if someone suddenly sneezed

Summary

The narrator in this poem speaks about the childhood experiences of her friend. When the friend was four or five years old she sat on a village swing and her cousin who was six or seven years old sat on the swing against her. With every lunge or push of the swing the young girl felt her cousin in the lunging pits of her feeling. Whenever the cousin pushed the swing backward the girl pressing against hers and felt a sensation. After playing on the village swing the girl and her cousin climbed a tree for play. The tree was not very tall but it was full of leaves like those of a fig tree. The girl and her cousin were very young and innocent in their plays.

Now the girl has grown up into an experienced woman. She looks for the swing in sprawling cities which have fifteen subrubs. She looks for a cousin on a swing and tries to be innocent about it. She looks for a swing in cities on the crotch or fork of a tree that appeared as if it would burst under every leaf into a brood of scarlet figs if someone suddenly sneezed".

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

This is a short narrative poem of recollected childhood experience of close relatives. A.K. Ramanujan who is domiciled in Chicago very often turns to his native village in South India and recollects his early experiences of persons and places. Here the narrator speaks about the recollected childhood experiences of her friend. When the friend was four or five years old she sat on a village swing and her cousin who was six or seven years old sat against her on the swing. Playing on a swing is a common amusement in the villages of South India. There is a beautiful metaphor of an exciting emotional experience in the lines.

"With every lunge of the swing
She felt him
In the lunging pits
Of her feeling;"

With every lunge of the swing the young girl felt her cousin against her. She had an exciting emotion which was a combination of the physical sensation of the swing and the emotional sensation of the girl's physical contact with her cousin. After playing on the swing the young girl and her cousin climbed a tree which was full of leaves like the fig tree. They were very innocent about these recreations. In Tamil there is custom of describing things in polished way. It is called "illai marai kaaai marai". The poet Ramanuj an writing in English adopts this method of Tamil culture.

Now the girl has grown up into woman and she looks for the swing and perhaps for her cousin on the swing in big cities which have fifteen subrubs. Now as an adult she is experienced in life. But she tries to be innocent

about the experiences of the swing. There is a great swing of time which has changed the innocent girl and her cousin into experienced adults. The poem makes a sharp contrast between the innocence of childhood and the experiences of adulthood, the simple pleasures of village life and the artificiality of sprawling cities. The grown up woman tried to be innocent on the crotch of a tree that looked as if it would burst into a brood of scarlet figs if someone suddenly sneezed. There is humour when the poet says that the tree would put forth a brood of scarlet figs if someone suddenly sneezed. It is a childhood experience that children are shocked when someone suddenly sneezes.

Check your progress

1. What does the narrator of the poem speak about?

A RIVER

"A River" is one of Ramanujan's finest poems appeared in "The Striders" in 1966. It is a poem on the Vaigai which flows through Madurai, a City that has been the seat of Tamil Culture. The poem is an evocation of a river. The poet refers to the river as a helping as well as a destructive force. In the Sangam Period the city had many great pundits who sang the glory of their town, Language and river, they wrote profusely when the river was in spate. At the same time there were times when the river remained dry. On the Sandy bed could be seen the hair and stow dogging the Watergates. The iron bars under the bridge are in need of repair. The wet stones all like the sleeping crocodiles. The dry stones look like the sharen buffaloes. It is a wonder for the poet because not too often such scenes are described by the poets.

The water in the river makes all the poets imaginative and sings verses about it. A poet visits the river and examines the scene quite closely.

But the scene witnessed by him is different. As it was raining the level of the water in the river kept rising. The whole city was flooded. Three village houses were swept away. The news came of a pregnant lady and a couple of cows being washed away. Even the new poets do not bother to write about all these things. They look at it still in the old way as seen by the old poets. A careful, imaginative consideration should bring in many things so far unsaid about the river. It is a pity that no one has the heart to feel about the heart with twin children in her womb getting drowned in the river.

In "A River" Ramanujan throws light on the reality of the present and the past. In the past, the poets were the appreciators of the cities, temples, rivers, streams and were indifferent to the miseries of human beings and animals. The river dries to a trickle in every summer the "poets sang only of the floods." Flood is the symbol of destruction to person

and property. The poets of today still quoted the old poets sans the relevancy of life:

"The new poets still quoted
the old poets, but no one spoke
in verse of the pregnant woman —
drowned, with perhaps twins in her,
kicking at the blank walls even before birth."

The image of "pregnant woman" implies a fine example of two generations, the present and the future. R. Parthasarathy verily remarks "The relative attitudes of the old and new Tamil poets, both of whom are exposed for their callousness to suffering, when it is so obvious as a result of the flood." This statement is, no doubt, corroborated by K. Surnana in a lucid manner:

"The poet narrates the poem through the mouth of a visitor to make it objective. The greatness of the poem lies in the fact that the traditional praise for river has been contrasted with what is actually experienced by the people during the floods. Apart from presenting the grim realities of a river in spate, Ramanujan hints at the sterility of new Tamil poets who still quoted the old poets."

"A River" and "Epitaph on a Street Dog" ironically present the same reality: "She spawned in a hurry a score of pups/all bald, blind, and growing old at her paps." The cosmic vision of India in "A River" and "Epitaph on a Street Dog" is contrasted to "Love Poem for a Wife." Ramanujan's attempt to squire the ancient circle/of you and me is fascinating in its varying moods. His lover claims that he cannot recollect the face and the words of his absent beloved, though his memory is not explained. "Love Poem for a Wife" is an imposing comment on how an unshared childhood eliminates a dedicated couple and "Still Life" is an appraisal of love as an abiding presence. These love poems are conspicuous for their insight, splendour and deep emotion.

Poem

In Madurai,
city of temples and poets
who sang of cities and temples:
every summer

a river dries to a trickle
in the sand,
baring the sand-ribs,
straw and women's hair
clogging the Watergates
at the rusty bars
under the bridges with patches
of repair all over them,
the wet stones glistening like sleepy
crocodiles, the dry ones
shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun
The poets sang only of the floods
He was there for a day
when they had the floods
People everywhere talked
of the inches rising,
of the precise number of cobbled steps
run over by the water, rising
on the bathing places,
and the way it carried off there village houses,
one pregnant woman
and a couple of cows
named Gopi and Brinda, as usual.
The new poets still quoted
the old poets, but no one spoke
in verse
of the pregnant woman
drowned, with perhaps twins in her, --
kicking at blank walls
even before birth.

NOTES

He said:
the river has water enough
to be poetic
about only once a year
and then
it carries away
66 Self-Instructional Material
in the first half-hour

three village houses.
couple of cows named Gopi and Brinda
and one pregnant woman
expecting identical twins
with no moles on their bodies
with different coloured diapers
to tell them apart.

Summary

Madurai is a city of temples and poets. The poets of Madurai sang about cities and temples. In the city of Madurai every summer a river dries to a trickle in the sand. The sand ribs are revealed on the river bed. Straw and women's long hair clog the Watergates at the rusty bars under the bridges with patches of repair all over them. The wet stones of the river glistened like sleepy crocodiles. The dry stones of the river were like shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun. The old poets and the new poets sang only about the floods in the river. They did not sing about the dry river.

The protagonist of this poem was there in the city of Madurai for a day when they had the floods. People everywhere in the city talked of the flood waters rising by inches. They talked about the precise number of cobbled steps run over by the flood waters. People talked about the flood waters rising on the bathing places. People talked about the way in which flood waters carried off three village houses; one pregnant woman and a couple of cows named Gopi and Brinda. Such a destruction of life and property was usual during the floods in the river.

The new poets still imitated the old poets and sang only about the floods. No one spoke in verse about the pregnant woman who was drowned in the floods. Perhaps that pregnant woman had twins in her which kicked against the walls even before birth.

The protagonist said that the river has enough water to be poetic about only once a year. During that period of floods the river carries in the first half hour three village houses, a couple of cows named Gopi and Brinda and one pregnant woman expecting identical twins with no moles on their bodies but with different coloured diapers to tell them apart.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

A.K. Ramanujan's poem "A River" is about the famous river Vaigai which flows through the beautiful and historic temple city of Madurai. Madurai has an honourable place in the history and literature of the Tamil people because it is a city of many temples and many famous Tamil poets. The city of Madurai is connected with the Tamil Sangam literature, the legend of the poet Nakkirar and Thiruvilayadal Puranam. According to

legends, the gold lotus in the tank of the temple of Lord Chokkar was used to evaluate the worth of literary works. If a literary work was placed on the gold lotus, it would float by virtue of its worth. If a work did not have worth, it would sink on being placed on the gold lotus. Thus the ancient city of Madurai has a hallowed place in the religion and literature of the Tamils.

The holy river Vaigai dries every summer to a trickle in the sand. Old poets and new poets have sung about the annual floods in the Vaigai river. In summer the famous river presents an unromantic and unpoetic picture. A.K.Ramanujan uses vivid details and images to paint a realistic picture of the river bed showing its sand-ribs, straw and the long hair of woman clogging the Watergates and the stones of the river glisten like sleepy, unmoving crocodiles. The dry stones are like shaven water — buffaloes lounging in the sun. The poet has seen the river in floods and in a trickle. He gives a realistic description of the destruction of life and property caused by the river during floods and also the dryness, drabness, scantiness, barrenness of the river and the clogged watergates and the patches of repair of the bridges. As a humanist the poet sympathises with the people and cattle destroyed by the floods.

Ramanujan gives us the sensation of the rising flood waters of the river. People talked of the flood waters of the river rising by inches on the cobbled steps of the bathing places. The poet refers to the habit of the Tamils who give names like Gopi and Brinda to their cows. The loss of cows in the floods is like the loss of near and loss of people.

The poet feels sad that the new poets quote the old poets and glorify the floods. No one speaks in verse about the terrible and pitiable loss of life and property caused by the floods of the river.

Ramanujan's expatriate sensibility includes an objective and accurate portrayal of both countries - particularly the native country. In his poem "A River" he gives minute details about the nature of the river and the condition of the bridge across it and so on. While many poets of the past and present sang only about the floods and presented a romantic and idealistic picture and called it a creative force initiating life on earth, Ramanujan offers information about the other side of the picture by explaining the destructive nature. While admitting that the river in Madurai "has water enough/to be poetic/about only once a year", he is alive to the fact that

it carries away
in the first half - hour
three village houses
a couple of cows
named Gopi and Brinda

and one pregnant woman
expecting identical twins
with no mole on their bodies
with different - coloured diapers
to tell them apart.

By showing the river as a preserver and destroyer, the poet gives a complete picture. The havoc caused by floods and drought suggested by the "sand-ribs", runs contrary to the poetic myth-making tendency of Tamil poets who ignored reality and the poem itself, as Bruce remarks, is an attempt to debunk the romanticization of traditional Tamil culture.

In the poetic sensibility of A.K. Ramanujan, we find a coalesces of the East and the West - the inner world of his Indian heritage and experience and the objectivity and accuracy of the Western poetic tradition. Though his memory is sharp and his vision of Indian society is comprehensive he cannot be called a nostalgic traditionalist. Though he was alive to western modes of expression, changes and attitudes, we cannot conclude that he accepted them fully and advocated modernisation and westernization. As in the case of several expatriates, Ramanujan's works include nostalgia, inwardness, documentary realism; but there is no idealization and the vision does not become dark inspite of the ironic and satiric tone.

Check your progress

2. Write a short note on the poem, "A River".

3. What are your views about the poet's unconventional attitude towards the river? Is realism as important as imagination?

OF MOTHERS AMONG OTHER THINGS

The poem "Of Mothers, Among Other Things" talks about mothers. The expatriate and the local dichotomy disappear as the poet discovers the same unchanging motherhood among other things, among opposing cultural contexts and in the non human animal world. The poem evokes the ideas of birth, survival and death. The personal tone in the first person depiction of the mother image merges into the impersonal world of reality. The youth and the age in the life of a woman are for the most part consumed in rearing the children. The mother is like a bird trying to protect the nestlings in the face of heavy rains. As an eagle cripples a claw in a garden

trap while picking a mouse for its nestling a woman is trapped by other things of the world. She has to barter her youth for the ones she brings to the world.

Ramanujan's poetry abounds in family themes. Family images not only recreate the Indian cultural contexts but evoke in the readers universal human urges responsible for meaningful relationship. He shows us our own photographs, taken in India and processed in the United States.

Check your progress

4. Write about the importance of family themes in A.K. Ramanujan's poems.

LOVE POEM FOR A WIFE

The stratification of Indian family and the presence of old rites and habits are reflected adequately by Ramanujan. The greatness of the great house is ultimately questioned. The reflections however are not done in small scale in the poem.

The disintegration of such house and the joint family system is depicted in his 'Love Poem for a Wife'. The poem reveals how the abandonment of tradition has resulted in the decadence of the institution of marriage. The non-resident Indian couples in Chicago reconstruct their unshared Indian past and magnify the invisible space and the sense of apartness between them. The reminiscence appears to be a conscious attempt at projecting illusory past images of each to the other so as to hide the incestuous and other sexual affairs of their pre-marital period. India remains in the blurred memory of expatriates in Chicago as a reference to the jackfruit tree in one's father's house in Alleppey.

Really what keeps us apart
At the end of years is unshared
Childhood...
Or we should do as well-meaning
Hindus did.

This is one of Ramanujan's poems in focusing the marriage problem and it should not be viewed as ordinary nostalgia for the closeness of Hindu family relations. The concluding part of the poem suggests humorous exaggeration.

A. K. Ramanujan

The panoramic visior

..... Probably
Only the Egyptians had it right:
Their kings had sisters for queens
To continue the incests
Of childhood into marriage.

The "namelessness of childhoods" suggests a time before the formation of individual identity and ego since it refers to a time of unity without the strife that arises from separate wills. It can hardly be considered an answer to the problems of marriage. It is quoted here tongue-in-cheek as an unrealizable ideal.

Ramanujan is chiefly concerned with memory and the way it finalises or falsifies human contacts in a changing world. Ramanujan cannot be termed as a conventionalist or an advocate of modernization and westernization. He is the product of both and his poetic outputs mirrors a personality aware of change, celebrating its verve, vigour and variety. "Love Poem for a Wife" is a critique of how an unshared childhood separates a devoted couple and "Still life" is an abiding presence. These romantic poems are notable for their grandeur and deep emotion, and clear perception.

The old mother in "Of Mothers among other things" depicts the posture of a beholder with her sarees hanging loose on her lanky body like skeleton. The poet explicates his philosophical ideas this way:

"You cannot entirely live in the past; neither can you entirely in the present, because we are not like that. We are both these things. The past never passes — either the individual past or historical past or cultural past. It is with us, it is what gives us the richness of — what you call it — the richness of understanding. And the richness of expression".

Ramanuj an expresses the marriage problem and its consists of nostalgic memories of South Indian Hindu family relations. Denied a shared childhood, marital life is a disharmony. In the concluding part of the poem we find the implication of hyperbolic humour.

Check your progress

5. Write the theme of the poem, "Love poem for a wife".

SMALL SCALE REFLECTIONS ON A GREAT HOUSE

A.K. Ramanujan's second collection of poems, *The Relations* is a mature achievement. "Small-scale Reflections on a Great House", a remarkable poem from this collection, is a luminous evocation of

Ramanujan's ancestral house. The poet recalls his relationship with various members of his family. T. Parthasarathy, another new poet, remarks: "The family, for Ramanujan, is in fact one of the central metaphors with which he thinks". The poet presents the history of the great house in a musing meditative tone.

Ramanujan wrote the poem "Small-scale Reflections on a Great House" while he was in the United States of America as an expatriate. It is a memory poem; and with nostalgia he thinks of his happy childhood days in his great ancestral house. He remembers the fortune occupants of the great house who had lived a happy life in it and in fact the world was not too much with them.

The juxtaposition of the words "small" and "great" in the title of the poem is highly suggestive. At the great house, the occupants are small with all humans failties. The house with all its glorious tradition is great. The poet, at the outset, refers to its hospitality, its accommodative quality and its absorbing power. These qualities are vividly described through a series of pictures.

Perhaps the expatriate Ramanujan thought of his roots and the warmth he received at the great house. In the very first line of the poem he says, "Nothing that ever comes into this house goes out" implying no one from the great house could forget the great ancestral house. It is the living past that makes him happy and in other words it is the memory of the great house that saves him from the thought of rootlessness.

..... Things come in every day
to lose themselves among other things
lost long ago among
other things lost long ago;

The opening stanza clearly proves that the poem is by a linguist whose facile use of words creates the intended effect. The skilful repetition of the words "lost long ago", "lost long ago," indicate the revival of memory and how the poet relives the past. It is indicated by the use of the present tense.

lame wandering cows from nowhere
have been known to be tethered,
given a name, encouraged
to get pregnant in the broad daylight
of the street under the elders'
supervision, the girls hiding
Behind windows with holes in them.

This great house provides food and shelter not only for human being but also for animals like "lame wandering cows from nowhere". They are brought to this house, given names and encouraged to lead a moral life. In this process the stud-bulls are bought to the great house and even the lame cows are helped to get pregnant in the broad daylight under the elders' supervision. The poet (humorously) recalls how the young girls are barred from witnessing the act of mating; but the girls are curious and they peep though the window holes.

Not only the human beings and animals but also even the small insects like silverfish are not disturbed in the great house. Rather they are encouraged to breed dynasties in the big volumes of law books borrowed by the head of the family from the local but ironically they remain permanently in the great house like other things. The law books printed during the Victoria era and bound with goat skin become juicy food for these small insects and without any impediments they increase and multiply.

Then, the poet remembers the festivals celebrated at the great house.

Neighbours' dishes brought up
with the greasy sweets they made
all night the day before yesterday
for the wedding anniversary of a god,
never leave the house they enter,
like the servants, the phonographs,
the epilepsies in the blood,
sons-in-law who quite forget
their mothers, but stay to check
accounts or teach arithmetic to nieces,

He humorously remembers how the neighbours' vessels that are brought to this house with "greasy sweets" remain permanently like "the servants, the phonographs and the epilepsies in the blood." Epilepsy, may be is a genetically inherited disease among the members of his family. Here the poet mixes the comic with the tragic. The servants lived in the house till their death because all their needs were taken care of and every one was looked after properly. Most of the sons-in-law of this house stayed in the house for ever "quite forgetting their mothers". Apart from staying in the house they used to "check accounts". In other words these lazy men led a life of luxury by getting money at the house.

Then he remembers with nostalgia the generosity of the elders of the great house. That the head of the family was not after money or dowry is indicated in the following lines.

or the women who come as wives
from houses open on one side
to rising suns, on another
to the setting, accustomed
to wait and to yield to monsoons
in the mountains' calendar
beating through the hanging banana leaves.

The daughters-in-law had been selected from poor families; and these women liberally gave birth to a lot of children and it resulted in a number of auspicious functions. It is suggested by the symbol of hanging banana leaves. These women are compared to banana trees. The banana trees stand for continuity while the leaves indicate happy occasions and auspicious celebrations.

Anything that goes out of this great house will ultimately come back to it. It is likened to the cotton grown in this country (i.e in India) that goes to the invisible Manchester in England and comes back to the great house in the form of different varieties of cloth with "long bills attached" to them. Even the letters sent by this house go to wrong addresses in Tiruvalla and Sialkot and finally find their way back to it with many redirections. The ideas expressed by a member of this great house in the course of some gossip with some visitor took the shape of rumours and later brought back to the great house by other visitors who did not know that these "idea-turned-rumours" had that their origin in the great house.

And ideas behave like rumours,
once casually mentioned somewhere
they come back to the door as prodigies
born to prodigal fathers, with eyes
that vaguely look like our own,

Interestingly rumour mongers are compared to prodigal fathers; and rumour is a prodigal son bred by a prodigal father.

The poet then talks about the sadder aspects.

Nothing stays out: daughters
get married to short-lived idiots;
sons who run away come back
in grandchildren who recite Sanskrit

to approving old men, or bring
betelnuts for visiting uncles
who keep them gaping with
anecdotes of unseen fathers,
or to bring Ganges water
in a copper pot
for the last of the dying
ancestors' rattle in the throat.

He remembers how the daughters of this great house, "married to short lived idiots" had to come back to it as young widows. The poet repeatedly tells the reader how the comic, the tragic and the ironic are interwoven in family life. Also he refers to the run-away sons who come back in grand 'children' and these children recite Sanskrit slogans to the approving old men. Here the poet presents a picture of the innocent grandchildren listening to the vising uncles who tell these unfortunate children the stories of "their unseen fathers." The stories relating to their unseen fathers kindle the curiosity of these children.

In the last section of the poem the poet states that he painfully remembers at least two occasions when dead bodies were brought to this great house.

Recently only twice:
once in nineteen-forty-three
from as far away as -the Sahara,
half-gnawed by desert foxes,
and lately from somewhere
in the north, a nephew with stripes
on his shoulder was called
an incident on the border
and was brought back in plane
and train and military truck
even before the telegrams reached,
on a perfectly good
chatty afternoon.

One of the members of this great family was killed on the battlefield in the Sahara desert during the Second World War in 1943 and his body that was "half eaten by the foxes" had been brought to this house. And in the recent past a nephew of the poet who seved the army got killed in an

encounter on the country's border and his body was brought to this house "in aeroplane, train and military truck even before the telegrams reached" the house. It disturbed the other members of the family who were enjoying a siesta on that afternoon.

It will be quite relevant here to remind the reader of Chiranta Kulshrestha's perceptive comment on the poem: "Each of the things "lost long ago" revives in the speaker's memory an event which is recounted in terms of its pathos and near absurd complexity. Thus is strange and bizarre catalogue of things that come into the house from outside to stay for ever and the things that go out but inevitably return: stray cows, library books, neighbours' dishes, servants, phonographs, inherited epilepsies, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, letters, ideas, beggar songs, widowed daughters, and nephews killed in the war.

Check your progress

6. Describe the memories and sentiments attached with the great house in the heart of poet.

OBITUARY

Poem

Father, when he passed on,
left dust
on a table full of papers,
left debts and daughters,
a bedwetting grandson
named by the toss
of a coin after him, a house that leaned slowly through our growing
years on a bent coconut
tree in the yard.
Being the burning type,
he burned properly
at the cremation
as before, easily
and at both ends,
left his eye coins
in the ashes that didn't

A. K. Ramanujan

look one bit different
several spinal discs, rough,
some burned to coal, for sons
to pick gingerly
and throw as the priest
said, facing east
where three rivers met
near the railway station;
no longstanding headstone
with his full name and two dates
to hold in their parentheses
everything he didn't quite
manage to do himself,
like his caesarian birth
in a Brahmin ghetto
and his death by heart
failure in the fruit market.
But someone told me
he got two lines
in an inside column
of a Madras newspaper
sold by the kilo
exactly four weeks later
to streethawkers
who sell groceries
where I buy salt,
coriander
and jaggery
in newspaper cones
that I usually read
for fun, and lately
in the hope of finding
these obituary lines.
And he left us

a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual

A. K. Ramanujan

Summary

An obituary is an account of a deceased person. The narrator in the poem gives an account of the life of his father who has passed away. When the father passed away he left dust on a table full of papers. He left debts and daughters, a bedwetting grandson who was named after his grandfather by the toss of a coin. The father left a house that leaned on a bent coconut tree in the yard. Being inflammable during his life time, the dead father burned properly at the cremation. He burned easily at both ends and left his eye coins in the ashes. The father left behind him several spinal discs that were rough and some of them burned to coal. The father left behind him several spinal discs that were rough and some of them up gingerly and throw them facing the east where three rivers met near the railway station. There was no longstanding headstone with his full name and his two dates of birth and death. Between these two dates his whole life is compressed. He did not manage to do many things himself like his caesarean birth in a Brahmin ghetto and his death by heart failui in the fruit market.

Someone told the narrator that there were two lines of obituary note about his father in a Madras newspaper. The newspaper was sold by the kilo four weeks later to street hawkers. The street hawkers sell the papers in turn to the small groceries where the narrator used to buy salt, coriander and jaggery in newspaper cones. The narrator usually read for fun such newspapers used for packing. He read them in the hope of finding those ordinary lines. The deceases father left a mother who was changed inwardly and outwardly and more than one annual ritual.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

In the poem "Obituary" the poet Ramanujan gives a detached, ironical and humorous account of the life and death of his father. The potagonist is the poet himself. When the father died, he left behind him dusty papers, debts, daughter and bedwetting grandson. There is humour when the poet speaks about the bedwetting grandson who was named after his grandfather by the toss of a coin. It is a Hindu custom to name grand children after their grand parents. That is why in Tamil the grand children are called "perapillaigal". There is humour and pun when the poet says that his father being a burning type (burning, emotional) he burned properly at the cremation. It is a custom of Hindus to burn dead bodies. It is a custom among Brahmins and others to collect the burnt bones of the dead and

facing the east immerse the bone in the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati (mythical subterranean river) at the place called Gaya. It is the dates of birth and death of the deceased person. The poet's father had a caesarean birth and a death due to heart failure in the market place. Both these things the father could not manage himself. It is ironical that the newspaper in which the obituary note appeared was sold in kilos and the paper was used in groceries for packaging provisions. The father by his death left a mother who was changed in mind and in physical appearance. In the Hindu society widows give up cosmetics and embellishments. Annual ceremonies and other ceremonies are conducted with faith for the satisfaction of the departed souls. In his poem of recollection the poet Ramanujan deals with the Hindu beliefs, customs, and rituals connected with the death of a person.

There is vivid evocation of the poet's father in the poem "Obituary." The speaker has nothing glorious to say about his father; and avoids emotion—charged scenes. There is neither a great lamentation over the loss nor a very affectionate reference to his father. There is no place for sentimentality in the father's death. Such a reading is strengthened by the omission of the possessive adjective 'my' before 'father' in the first line of the first stanza of the poem.

The opening lines of the poem begin in a flippant tone. There is a vivid description of the family after the demise of his father. Dusty papers on a table, debts to be repaid, daughters to be married, a bed-wetting grandson and an old decaying house, are the legacy left behind by the dead father :

Father, when he passed on,
left dust
on a table full of papers
left debts and daughters,
a bed-wetting grand-son
named by the toss
of a coin after him,
a house that leaned
slowly through our growing
years on a bent coconut
tree in the yard.
Being the burning type
He burned properly
At the cremation as before,

The repetition of the plosive consonant /t/ in "dust", "debts" and "daughters" and the twice-repeated "left" suggested by the hardness of the sound, stand for the hardness of experience confronting the son.

The curse of the middle class family gets reflected in the poverty of the father and his inability to get the daughters married because of the dowry to be given and in the incurrence of the debts at the time of the marriage. There is an evocation of the Hindu convention of eternalizing the memory of the elders in naming the child after the grandfather.

What other things did the father leave behind? He left his ashes and two coins with which his eyes were closed, and several spinal discs. The things left behind bring out the Hindu belief in the emptiness of human life. However great and glorious a person may be, he reduced to a handful of ashes. There is a reference to the superstition prevalent among the Hindus that men with unfulfilled longings do not burn well. But in the case of his father he burned properly at the cremation; perhaps he died without any longings.

The last rites to be performed flash before the poet's mind :

..... for sons
to pick up gingerly
and throw as the priest
said, facing east
where three rivers met
near the railway station

There is visual picture of the Hindu custom of the sons collecting bits of the bones of the dead and getting them immersed in sacred rivers on the second day after cremation. The clause "where three rivers met" is a pointer of the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and subterranean Saraswathi.

The poet cautions against the supposed erection of the headstone. In a mocking tone he says that if a headstone were there, it would, in addition the dates of his birth and death, include in "parentheses". Remembering his father again the poet says he did many things in life but he did not actually do them, rather they happened to him. He was born through a caesarian operation in a congested Brahmin locality and died of heart failure in the local fruit market.

everything he didn't quite
manage to do himself
like his caesarian birth
in a Brahmin ghetto

and his death by heart

failure in the fruit market.

The grief at the father's death gets evaporated when the city newspaper reporting the news is later sold to street hawkers who in turn sell it to the small groceries.

The concluding lines register a sudden shift in tone and save the poem from falling into flippancy:

And he left us
a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual

The crisp expression "a changed mother" brings before our mind's eye the picture of a widow in a Hindu society. She has to lose her normal appearance with the tonsure of her head and with the denial of all the comforts of life. The life of a Hindu widow undergoes a sea-change as she is no longer an honoured member of the family but regarded as a bad omen. But the father's death has really produced a profound agony on his mother. But the situation of the son is very different. He is only aware of the "more than one annual ritual" he will have to perform gingerly as the priest will instruct him. Away in America, does he wonder?: Will the ritual bring the dead back to life? The seriousness of the death of the father gets evaporated with the observance of the death-anniversary by the son. The anguish-charged expression: "changed mother" brings out the poet's attachment and affection towards his mother.

These memories recalled in the discussion of the poem "Obituary" are, according to M.K. Naik, "mostly of life seen through the eyes of sensitive and observant boy growing up in a traditional middle class South Indian Hindu Brahmin Family. "They" evolve and emerge from within the poet's psychic obsession with his cultural roots deeply embedded in his unforgettable Indian past".

The poet looks at his dead father with detachment; and in fact, this detached perspective is the hallmark of the poem. Though the poem is on a common experience, it is rich with suggestions. The word "dust" found in the opening lines is significant as it points to the evanescence of human life. Death converts the human body into a handful of dust. Ultimately everyone should become one with the dust from which everyone comes. ("Dust thou art to dust thou returneth"). Equally significant are the words "changed mother" makes the son (the poet) more sad than the death of his father. The picture of the father that emerges from the description is that of a not wordly wise man but perhaps a scholar and writer ("left a table full of

papers") with a deep understanding of the evanescence of life on earth. Indeed "Obituary" is a remarkable poem of memory and reflection.

A. K. Ramanujan

Check your progress

7. Write about the narrator's father in the poem, "Obituary".

8. State your views about 'Obituary'. Is it a humorous or tragic poem? Discuss.

SUMMARY

- Ramanujan's poetry is to believe in immense human possibilities. His poetry and polyglottic genius cannot be tethered down to any age or any flux of time, but in him Indian sensibility gets its most genuine and potent expression. He observes the inalienable link between life and art and tries to touch the life into art. To him, as Chirantan Kulshrestha assumes, "life and art must connect at some point."
- Having been a lecturer in English at QuiIon and Belgaum, he taught at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda for about eight years. In 1962, he joined the University of Chicago teaching in several departments. In 1983, he was appointed the William E. Colvin Professor in the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, of Linguistics, and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and, the same year, he received a MacArthur Fellowship.
- As an Indo-American writer Ramanujan had the experience of the native milieu as well as of the foreign milieu. His poems like the "Conventions of Despair" reflected his views on the cultures and conventions of the east and the west. A. K. Ramanujan died in 1993 as result of adverse reaction to anesthesia during preparation for surgery.

KEY WORDS

1. Philologist

Philology is the study of language in written historical sources; as such it is a combination of literary studies, history and linguistics.

2. Ethos

Ethos is a Greek word meaning "character" that is used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community, nation, or ideology.

3. Folklorist

Folklore consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular belief, fairy tales and customs that are the traditions of that culture, subculture, or group. It is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared.

4. Playwright

A playwright, also known as a dramatist, is a person who writes dramatic literature or drama.

5. Obituary

An obituary is a news story that reports the recent death of a person, typically along with an account of the person's life and information about the upcoming funeral.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The narrator in this poem speaks about the childhood experiences of her friend. When the friend was four or five years old she sat on a village swing and her cousin who was six or seven years old sat on the swing against her. With every lunge or push of the swing the young girl felt her cousin in the lunging pits of her feeling. Whenever the cousin pushed the swing backward the girl pressing against hers and felt a sensation. After playing on the village swing the girl and her cousin climbed a tree for play.

2. "A River" is one of Ramanujan's finest poems appeared in "The Striders" in 1966. It is a poem on the Vaigai which flows through Madurai, a city that has been the seat of Tamil Culture. The poem is an evocation of a river. The poet refers to the river as a helping as well as a destructive force. In the Sangam Period the city had many great pundits who sang the glory of their town, language and river, they wrote profusely when the river was in spate.

3. The protagonist of the poem is the poet Ramanujan himself. The river has enough water to be poetic only once in a year. In spite of the poetic beauty, the river causes destruction of village houses, cattle and people. The poet heightens the pathos of the floods by referring to the drowning of a pregnant woman who might have spotless identical twins. The twins have no moles on their bodies. Here the poet translates the Tamil expression "maccham maru atre or "maasu maru atra". The twins could be distinguished from one another by their different coloured baby napkins. This poem reveals the sense of realism, originality and sympathy of the poet Ramanujan. The poem does not elaborate on the symbolic significance of the Vaigai river, or its religious significance or literary significance or historic significance. The poet shows the unromantic and destructive side of the river. Love of nature is superceded by pity for loss of life.

4. Ramanujan's poetry abounds in family themes. Family images not only recreate the Indian cultural contexts but evoke in the readers universal human urges responsible for meaningful relationship. He shows us our own photographs, taken in India and processed in the United States.

5. Ramanujan expresses the marriage problem and it consists of nostalgic memories of South Indian Hindu family relations. Denied a shared childhood, marital life is a disharmony. In the concluding part of the poem we find the implication of hyperbolic humour.

6. The memory of these things and the circumstances of their arrival and return provide a certain intensity to the self, drawing it compulsively backward within the precincts of the house like all other things collected over the years. The torture of recall confirms the clutching and unceasing hold of decaying house on the speaker's consciousness, proving the abiding wisdom of Kannada poet Basavanna, who poignantly reiterates the urgency experienced by the maneya maga (legitimate heir of the house) to forge relations in a world of disrelations."

7. The narrator in the poem gives an account of the life of his father who has passed away. When the father passed away he left dust on a table full of papers. He left debts and daughters, a bedwetting grandson who was named after his grandfather by the toss of a coin. The father left a house that leaned on a bent coconut tree in the yard. Being inflammable during his life time, the dead father burned properly at the cremation. He burned easily at both ends and left his eye coins in the ashes. The father left behind him several spinal discs that were rough and some of them burned to coal.

8. The poet continues to write in a tone that borders on mock irony. The poet waits to find the news of his father's death in the paper cone from the grocer's shop. The blending of levity and seriousness is hinted at here.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the comments of Ramanujan on life?
2. Describe the theme of the poem, "Looking for a cousin on a swing".
3. Discuss how the poet appreciates the features of river in the poem, "A River".
4. Examine the style of writing in the poem, "Of mothers among other things".
5. State the theme about family relations in the poem, "Love poem for a wife".

6. Write down the summary of "Small scale reflections on a great house" and "Obituary".
7. Write a short note on:
 - (a) The style and techniques of Ramanujan as an Indian poet writing in English.
 - (b) Briefly comment on the theme of his poem—"Looking for a cousin on a swing." Bring out the significance of the metaphor of swing in the poem.
 - (c) How does the poem intend a sharp contrast between the innocence of childhood and experiences of adulthood?
8. With reference to the poem 'The River' describe the activity of the river round the year, giving a realistic description of its various moods and its religious, historic and literary significance.
9. Explain briefly the importance of the imagery of 'Mother' in Ramanujan's poems.
10. "In 'Love Poem for a Wife' the poet uses this medium to depict the disintegration of a house and a joint family". Comment elaborating upon the theme.
11. In the poem 'Small Scale Reflections on a Great House' the poet deals with the importance of relationships calling it a memory poem. Discuss.
12. The concluding part of the poem is replete with pathos reviewing memories of things and people 'lost long ago'. Comment.
13. The poem 'Obituary' gives a detached chemical and humorous account of life and death of his father and the legacy he left behind discuss.
14. Despite the poem being cynical in love, it is underlined with fun and humour comment.
15. How far do you agree that the poem 'Small Scale Reflections on a Great House' is autobiographical and evocative in nature?

FURTHER READINGS

- Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan—Manmohan Krishna Bhatnagar
- Collected Poems—A.K. Ramanujan
- Indian English Literature—Basavaraj S. Naikar.

UNIT-IV

Kamala Das

KAMALA DAS

STRUCTURE

This chapter shall cover the following main points:

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- The Freaks
- My Grand Mother's House
- A Hot Noon in Malabar
- The Sunshine Cat
- The Invitation
- The Looking Glass
- Summary
- Key words
- Answers to Check Your Progress
- Review Questions
- Further Readings

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the theme of the poem, "The Freaks"
- understand the mind of the author of "My Grand Mother's House"
- examine the setting portrayed in the poem, "A Hot Noon in Malabar"
- enumerate the thoughts and ideas of poet in "The Sunshine Cat"
- write down the summary of "The Invitation" and "The Looking Glass".

INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das (March 1934—31 May 2009) was an Indian writer who wrote in English and Malayalam, her native language. Her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography. She openly and honestly discussed and wrote about the sexual desires of Indian women, which made her an iconoclast of her generation. On 31 May 2009, aged 75, she died at a hospital in Pune.

Kamala Das was born in Punnayurkulam, Thrissur District in Kerala, on March 31, 1934, to V. M. Nair, a former managing editor of the widely-circulated Malayalam daily *Mathrübhumī*, and Nalappatt Balamani Amma, a renowned Malayali poetess.

She spent her childhood between Calcutta, where her father was employed as a senior officer in the Walford Transport Company that sold Bentley and Rolls Royce automobiles, and the Nalappatt ancestral home in Punnayurkulam.

Like her mother, Kamala Das also excelled in writing. Her love of poetry began at an early age through the influence of her great uncle, Nalappatt Narayana Menon, a prominent writer. However, she did not start writing professionally until she got married and became a mother.

Kamala wished to begin writing, her husband supported her decision to augment the family's income. She would often wait until nightfall after her family had gone to sleep and would write until morning: "There was only the kitchen table where I would cut vegetables, and after all the plates and things were cleared, I would sit there and start typing". This rigorous schedule took its toll upon her health.

She was noted for her many Malayalam short stories as well as many poems written in English. Das was also a syndicated columnist. She once claimed that "poetry does not sell in this country [India]", but her forthright columns, which sounded off on everything from women's issues and child care to politics, were popular.

Das' first book, *Summer In Calcutta* was a promising start. She wrote chiefly of love, its betrayal, and the consequent anguish. Ms. Das abandoned the certainties offered by an archaic, and somewhat sterile, aestheticism for an independence of mind and body at a time when Indian women poets were still expected to write about fantasies of eternal, bloodless, unrequited love.

At the age of 42, she published her autobiography, *My Story*, which was later translated into many foreign languages. Kamala Das wrote on a diverse range of topics, often disparate- from the story of a poor old servant, about the sexual disposition of upper middle class women living near a metropolitan city or in the middle of the ghetto. Some of her better-known stories include *Pakshiyude Manam*, *Neypayasam*, *Thanuppu*, and *Chandana Marangal*. She wrote a few novels, out of which *Neermathalam Pootha Kalam*, which was received favourably by the reading public as well as the critics, stands out.

She travelled extensively to read poetry to Germany's University of Duisburg-Essen, University of Bonn, Adelaide Writer's Festival, Frankfurt Book Fair, University of Kingston, Jamaica, Singapore, and South Bank

Festival (London), Concordia University (Montreal, Canada), etc. Her works are available in French, Spanish, Russian, German and Japanese. She has also held positions as Vice chairperson in Kerala Sahitya Academy, chairperson in Kerala forestry Board, President of the Kerala Children's Film Society, editor of Poet magazine and Poetry editor of Illustrated Weekly of India.

Kamala Das had three sons - M D Nalapat, Chinnen Das and Jayasurya Das. Madhav Das Nalapat, the eldest, is married to Princess Lakshmi Bayi (daughter of M.R.Ry. Sri Chembrol Raja Raja Varma Avargal) from the Travancore Royal House. He holds the UNESCO Peace Chair and Professor of geopolitics at the Manipal Academy of Higher Education. He was formerly a resident editor of the Times of India. On 31 May 2009, aged 75, she died at a hospital in Pune. Her body was flown to her home state of Kerala. She was buried at the Palayam Juma Masjid at Thiruvananthapuram with full state honour.

"My Grandmother's House" is a moving poem. It records the poet's nostalgic yearning for her family-home (Nalapat House) in malabar, where she received abundant love from her grandmother. To think o' the househouse was to think of her grandmother. Both "The Sunshine Cat" and "The Looking-glass" are love poems highlighting man-woman relationship in all its aspects. "The Sunshine Cat" presents a woman who does not discover fulfilment in the company of her husband. He, being "selfish" and "coward" fails to respond to her true love. She expects him to go beyond carnality but his love stops with physical gratification. "The Looking Glass" is a symbolic poem. The mirror image is a reference. In a male-dominated world, the woman is expected to satisfy the male ego. All the three poems portray the predicament of typical Indian wife.

Characteristics of Kamala Das's Poetry

Kamala Das expresses her need for genuine love for the soul with a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context. What is overpowering about her poems is their sense of urgency. Poems like the "The Old Playhouse", "The Looking Glass", and "The Freaks" over flow with powerful emotion. In poems like "Substitute", she expresses her sense of despair as she could not find true love. "An Introduction is an autobiographical poem". In poems like "A Hot Noon in Malabar" and in "My Grandmother's House", we find Kamala Das's nostalgic reminiscence for her childhood at Nalapat House, which was her family home. Even when she was in cities, she remembered with home sickness the noons in Malabar. Kamala Das impresses us by being very much herself in her poems. The prone of her poems, is strikingly feminine.

Kamala Das is an uninhibited, bold, self revealing, and liberated Indian woman poet in English. Love that transcends carnal love is the soul of her poetry. She is a champion of women's liberation. She is a confessional poet, who lays bare her intimate private experience. Devindra Kohli says that, Kamala Das is gifted with a "striking vitality of metaphor and an originality of verse". "Truthful, sensitive, bold and tormented personality, the female protagonist in her poems is often a reflection of Kamala Das's own Personality.

THE FREAKS

This remarkable lyric is extracted from *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), and is to be marked for its abnormally psychological situation in lovemaking and its unredeemed helplessness and deep despair. The title itself suggests these things. The 'freak' is one who is capricious and whimsical in behaviour, one who does not behave in accordance with the accepted norm. The title suggests that the lovers — the woman and her man — do not behave properly with each other, and hence are abnormal and whimsical in their approach to love.

'He' in the poem is the man persona and 'Me' is the woman persona. They are together in a room. The lover talks and turns his reddened face towards her. But he is not like the lover in a fairy tale; he is rather repulsive to her. His cheeks are 'sustained' and brownish in colour; his mouth is ugly and looks like a 'dark cavern'; his teeth are 'uneven' and calciferous. Evidently, these details are given here to show the woman's disgust with the man. She seems to be tied to him socially, though personally she does not like him. Thomas Gray in his famous elegy written in *E country churchyard* was deeply moved by the loss of so many precious lives in villages whose talents were not properly utilized. Kamala Das in her poem expresses her ideas against arranged marriages which are usually inspired by the parents' conveniences more than those of the couples. The poetess, therefore, paints an abhorrent picture of her man, with whom she has to enter into sexual intercourse willy-nilly for his satisfaction. In such a situation, no partner feels happy and jovial. Except for physical contact, it offers no emotional contact between the man and the woman. Hence, her deep sense of personal agony and despair. Her situation becomes all the more pathetic because there is no escape from it. She is utterly helpless and hopeless.

The man puts his hand on her knee in an apparent gesture of love making. And though they are inclined to make love to each other, they simply can't do so, because their minds, or at least the woman's, wander away. The phrase 'puddles of desire' denotes that the lovers are smitten by the arrows of love, but that their love is full of dirt and filth, and not pure

and emotional. Where there is no meeting-point for the two hearts, the minds will definitely go astray. This is precisely Kamala's own situation, - a situation that Devinder Kohli characterizes as "a rather helpless situation".

The woman-persona is filled with utter disgust at the failing of her lover, who can touch her with nimble finger-tips to fondle and soothe her, but who can offer her nothing more than 'skin's lazy hungers'. Possibly her sexual hunger also remains unfulfilled nothing to speak of the yearnings of the heart for truer love and closer understanding. The fullness of life through "the sexual titillation and fulfillment" has completely evaded her. So, in great despair, she asks the question:

Who can

Help us who have lived so long And have failed in love?

The heart remains 'an empty cistern', and like a dry well devoid of the eaters of life it harbours only 'coiling snakes of silence'.

Summary

"The Freaks" deals with frustration or unfulfilment in love. It smacks of unabashed confession. A crisis in the woman persona's personal life — a crisis which arises out of unconsummated love — forms the theme of The Freaks. At the outset, the significance of the title should be noted. A freak is a person subject to capriciousness. A freak (slang) is also a person who has broken away from conventional society. The title in the plural number has added dimension because the woman persona talks not only for herself but also for similar women who seek an intense fulfillment through love.

The poem opens with a man of "sun-stained/Cheek". He is a womanizer, as suggested by his "sun-stained/Cheek" symbolic of his frequenting different women at different times. He talks to the woman persona. His talk is only a seductive device to delight her and draw her towards him. He is a symbol of the Id because he craves for the physical fulfillment of sex. His mouth resembling a "dark cavern" is suggestive of his excessive passion for "skin-communicated" ecstasies. He places his right hand on her knee to stimulate sexual desires in her and to entice her into lustful entanglement.

Placing his right hand on her knee is not a devoted progression towards the attainment of the higher reaches of the spirit. The male partner stagnates at the level of lust.

He is capable of unleashing only the "Skin's lazy hungers." The woman refuses to identify "sin-communicated" pleasures with love. She is poised for an intense fulfillment through love. But her male partner cannot surge her on wings of love, for he is rooted to bodily responses. She is extremely doubtful whether he can be her match in her hunger for the higher reaches of fulfillment.

It is heart where love is enthroned but her is an "empty cistern", an empty container. Love's fulfillment is in containment, not in emptiness. She is not for lust. She is for an ultimate creative fulfillment through love. Therefore she is sexually incompatible and fails to respond to his advances.

She comes to the conclusion that her male partner falls below her vibrant expectation for an intense fulfillment of eternal love through love. For the social make-believe she pretends to be responsive to him which she really does not.

Check your progress

1. What does the term "Freak" refers to?

MY GRAND MOTHER'S HOUSE

Poem

There is a house now far away where once
Received love... That woman died,
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon,
How often I think of going
There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
Just listen to the frozen air,
Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
Darkness to bring it here to lie
Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
Dog... you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved... I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?

Summary

There is a house which is now 'far away in distance. In that house Kamala Das once received happy love. The woman who gave her warm love died. After that loving woman's death the house withdraw in to silence. When the loving woman was alive, the house was alive and agog with joy

and bustling activity. After the death of that woman love, which was the soul and spirit of the house, sad silence fell upon the house.

The protagonist of this poem who is the poet Kamala Das herself says that she was too young at that time to read books. The woman who gave her love to Kamala Das was none other than her grandmother. On the death of the beloved woman and at the fearful sight of snakes moving among books, the protagonist's blood turned cold like moon. The beloved woman was the warmth of the home. Her death and movement of dangerous snakes on the neglected books turned the sad protagonist's blood cold like the cold moon. The protagonist became sad, frightened and cheerless. The protagonist very often thought of going to that house to peer through the blind eyes of the windows. When the beloved woman and the protagonist lived in that house, they gave life to that house. They saw life through the windows of the house. The windows could see because it is bereft of its living inmates. Therefore the eyes of the windows are blind! The protagonist thought of listening to the frozen air through the windows of the house. The protagonist had a sense of belonging to the house when the beloved woman was alive.

Now she does not have that sense of belonging. She responds to the dead and deserted house as a detached outsider. The air in the house seems to be frozen because the warm hearted woman who was the indwelling soul of that house was no more there. The protagonist wanted to hear the moaning sound of the frozen air of the house through the windows. In her despair the protagonist wanted to do the impossible and fantastic deed of picking an armful of darkness from that dark and gloomy ancestral house was filled with brooding darkness and gloom. The darkness was so thick that the protagonist in her despair could fancy herself picking an armful of it and depositing it behind the door of her bedroom. The darkness was tangible and visible like a brooding dog. The protagonist addresses her husband and says that he cannot believe that she lived in such a house that was once very happy. She was proud of her beloved grandmother and of herself, she was proud to live in such a happy house. She was loved by her grandmother. Now the protagonist feels sad that she has lost her way in life. She has lost the path of love. Now she is begging for love at the doors of strangers. She who was once loved by her grandmother is now brought down to the pitiable predicament of begging strangers for their love. Her grandmother had given her love in abundance but now the protagonist has to beg outsiders and strangers for a small amount of love.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

Kamala Das's poem "My Grandmother's House" is an autobiographical poem in which she recollects with nostalgic the pleasant memories her childhood days in her grandmother's house. In romantic poetry there is

recollection of a past experience. Very often the past experience is better than the present experience. Wordsworth expresses his sense of sadness and loss at the feeling of the visionary gleam and the glory and the dream of early childhood in his immortal poem "Ode to an Intimations of Immortality of Early Childhood". It is the loss of a spiritual experience of early childhood that Wordsworth recollects and laments over. For Kamala Das also her childhood was a golden period of her life. Human love was the soul of her life. She longed for true human love. She enjoyed the love and care of her grandmother in her childhood.

In her later years Kamala Das made a desperate quest for true love. She found only egoism, selfishness, exploitation and lust. She could not find the soul satisfying love. Living in a city like Bombay, Kamala Das recollects her childhood spent in her grandmother's Nalapat House in Malabar. There is a clear contrast in time, place and experience. In her childhood she received abundant, spontaneous and unselfish love from her grandmother. When the grandmother died the house fell into dread and dreadful silence. The house lost its lively cheer. The house was so neglected that dangerous snakes moved among books. Kamala Das was then too young to read. The cheerlessness and lack of warm love of Kamala Das are brought out by the simple and apt image "my blood turned cold like the moon".

Very often Kamala Das thought of going to her beloved grandmother's house to peer through the windows, or to listen to the frozen air or in wild despair pick an armful of darkness from there and place it behind the door of her bedroom, so that would lie there like a brooding dog. The image "to peer through blind eyes of windows" is pathetic fallacy. It conveys the personal feeling of the poet. In the cheerful inmates the house had lost its Kamala Das life. The eyes of the windows from become blind. The image 'frozen air' also conveys to the reader the absence of warm joy in the house. The despair and sad brooding of the poet are brought out by the images in the following lines:

Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
Darkness to bring it here to lie
Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
Dog

Like Charles Lamb, Kamala Das loved old places for their human associations. It would be unbelievable to her husband and others who could not give her genuine love of the soul. She had once lived in a house of love, had felt the pride of love and had loved. Now in her later life she feels that she has lost her way. Like a beggar she is begging at stranger's doors for a small amount of love. There is pathos in the image.

"I who have lost

My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change."

Kamala Das

The joy and pride which Kamala Das experienced in her childhood in her grandmother's house are contrasted with the gloom and despair, experiences by her in later years. It is in the love of personal relationships that we can find joy, pride and security. It is love that gives meaning to life.

Check your progress

2. Write a short note on the poem, "My Grandmother's House".

A HOT NOON IN MALABAR

Summary

Kamala Das is a well known female writer in India. She writes in English as well as in Malayalam which is her mother-tongue. 'A Hot Noon In Malabar' is one of her poems that she wrote when she was reminiscing her memories back in Kerala. She compares Kolkata (where she is presently residing) to her hometown. In this poem, she describes minute observations about her hometown. Things like heat, dust and noise, that would annoy many a people, have impressed her.

The poetess talks about a hot noon in Malabar. She is in a nostalgic mood. She remembers the streets of Malabar which were full of interesting people and pleasing sounds. She remembers the beggars, who would, in whining tones beg for alms. She talks about the fortune tellers who pass by her home carrying parrots in a cage and fortune cards which were stained with dust. The dark skinned Kurava girls are a nomadic tribe with tired eyes. They read palms in sing song voices to impress their customers. The poetess talks about the bangle sellers who spread there bright and colourful bangles on the cool black floor. She says that the bangles are all covered with the dust of the roads. This expression signifies that these people travel a long distances to make a fortune.

These strange people have devouring rough feet, that have cracks because the walk for miles barefooted on the dusty rugged roads. So when they clamber onto the porch of the poetess' house a grating noise is heard. These strangers peep through the windows to take a look inside. But as they have traveled so long under this sun they are unable to get a clear vision. Displeased by this they turn yearningly at the brick-ledge well so as to quench their thirst.

The poetess says that this is the noon for strangers with lack of trust in their eyes. They are dark, silent ones who rarely speak. If at all they speak

theirs voices are wild, jungle like. The poetess then uses alliteration by saying:

"A noon for wild men, wild thoughts, wild love."

She feels that this noon is meant for men, more primitive in their thoughts and actions than anything else.

The poetess, suddenly has a wild desire for love. She says that to be away from her hometown is torturous. She feels homesick. She feels passionately about her hometown and years to return to those childhood days when she was living this primitive life, on a hot afternoon in Malabar.

Critical Appreciation

Kamala Das has expressed intense feeling of separation from her hometown, her primitive life in the simple town of Malabar. She describes minute details about the passers by who can be witnessed on such a hot afternoon. She has paid close attention to the stain on the cards of the fortune tellers. She has also observed the Kurava girls to have light singsong voices. She has noticed that these little traders have hard heels with crack because of walking on the savage roads.

The poetess has noticed the pain in the eyes of these traders when they look into the windows of her house. She mentions the smallest of the details such as that of the colours of the bangles. This may also depict her age, which has been assumed to be her childhood.

The poetess feels that these primitive men have wild jungle like voices. She gets lost in admiring the simplicity of their lives. This poem mainly revolves around the theme of unfulfilled desires. She accepts the wilderness of her hometown and admires it. The poem is ended with a deep repentance of being away from her hometown.

Check your progress

3. What is the theme of the poem, "A Hot Noon in Malabar"?

THE SUNSHINE CAT

Poem

They did this to her, the men who knew her, the man
She loved, who loved her not enough, being selfish
And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor
Used her, but was a ruthless watcher, and the band
Of cynics she turned to, clinging to their chests where

New hair sprouted like great-winged moths, burrowing her
 Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget,
 To forget, oh to forget... and, they said, each of
 Them, I do not love, I cannot love, it is not
 In my nature to love, but I can be kind to you...
 They let her slide from pegs of sanity into
 A bed made soft with tears and she lay there weeping
 For sleep had lost its use; I shall build walls with tears,
 She said, walls to shut me in... Her husband shut her
 In every morning; locked her in a room of books
 With a streak of sunshine lying near the door, like
 A yellow cat, to keep her company, but soon
 Winter came and one day while locking her in he
 Noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a
 Line, a hair-thin line, and in the evening when
 He returned to take her out, she was a cold and
 Half-dead woman, now of no use at all to men.

Summary

The protagonist of the poem "The Sunshine Cat" says that the men who knew her gave physical satisfaction to her. The man, whom she loved, did not love her enough because he was selfish and he was a coward. The husband neither loved her truly nor used her properly. The husband was a ruthless watcher who watched the conduct of his wife. The woman who went in quest of true love made desperate physical love with other men. She clung passionately to the tickling chests of the man. The chests to which she clung had new hair which had sprouted like great winged moths. She burrowed her face into their smells and their young lusts to forget her, it was exciting and exhilarating to forget herself in the rapture of love. Her husband said that he could not love her. He said that it was not in his nature to love but he could be kind to her. Such men who were sensual and kind but incapable of true love let the woman slide from pegs of sanity into a bed which was moistened and softened by her tears of sorrow when she lay there weeping.

As the woman got only sex from men and could not get genuine love from any man, she wept bitterly in sadness and despair and softened the bed with her tears. It was pitiable that the woman who longed for true love that transcends physical love should become so disappointed and unhappy. Sleep had lost its use. The woman could not sleep because she was

disappointed in love. In her disappointment and despair in love the woman said that she would build walls with her tears of sadness and shut herself within those walls. The husband shut her up in the house every morning. The jealous and suspicious husband locked his wife in a room of books so that she would have the company of only books.

The woman was kept all alone without any human companion. A streak of sunshine lay near the door like a yellow cat to keep her company. The woman's life was made dark and gloomy and confined by her selfish and suspicious husband who was incapable of soul-kindling true love. The woman's life was thus wasted away. The prime of her life was thus wasted tragically. The winter of her life came and one day while the husband locked his wife in the room he noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a hair-thin line. The woman's life was dark and confined and the husband realized very late in his life that his wife had only a streak of joy in her life. He had denied her true love and wasted her life in mental and spiritual gloom.

In the evening of his life when the husband returned with the intention of taking his wife out of her room where she had been shut away from the outside world, the wife was a cold and half-dead woman. The warmth of cheerful life had left the woman. She was a half dead woman in her spirit. Now in this predicament as a woman she was no use at all to men. She had become too old to be of any use to any man in sexual life. It is a great pity that a woman whose husband is jealous and impotent should turn in vain to other men for love. It is equally pitiable and terrible that his wife who longs for true love should be shut up in a room of books by her husband.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem

"The Sunshine Cat" is a sad poem of Kamala Das about the frustrated love of a married woman. The man to whom she was married did not love her enough. He was a selfish and cowardly man who neither loved his wife with his heart nor used her for sex. He was a ruthless and jealous watcher who always kept an eye on his wife's conduct and locked her up in a room of books.

It was a domestic tragedy. There was neither conjugal love nor conjugal bliss. They were fallen Adam and Eve. The wife went to other men seeking true love but the men were only kind to her. They were incapable of true love. The woman sank into despair and wasted away her life in self pity shedding tears of sorrow in utter loneliness. The poem effectively presents the different stages in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual degradation of a woman frustrated in love.

The frustrated woman made desperate love to other men to forget herself and her disappointment. When the men told her that they could not

love her, she shed tears of sorrow profusely. Next she lost her sleep due to her tormented mind. She slid from the pegs of sanity and fell into self pity and weeping. She says "I shall build walls with tears". It is a hyperbole and this image only heightens the sorrow and despair of the woman. The loss of sleep is yet another stage in the experience of the woman who desperately longs for love. Every morning the woman is physically imprisoned in a room of books by her husband. This is unjust. Is this enforced physical chastity? Is the woman chaste-mentally and otherwise? The protagonist is a victim of selfish and soulless male domination. She is an archetype of women who are more sinned against than sinning. The image "cat of sunshine" is a metaphor. There is no sunshine of real joy in the life of such a woman who longs for true love and is imprisoned in her own house by her own husband. If there is any joy in her it only sneaks into her life furtively like a cat sneaking into a house. The words "morning" and "evening" are metaphors and they stand for the prime of life to take his wife out of the room where she was locked up, he found her a cold and half dead woman. She was devoid of energy and spirit. As a woman decrepit in body and al.2,_) in mind she was of no use at all to men. The physical love of men is contrasted with the love of the soul of the woman. The final stage in the decline and degradation of the woman who is frustrated in her love is shown by her being cold and half dead. It is a tragedy that a woman, who longs for true love, meets with despair and despondency and waste away her precious life.

Check your progress

4. Write about the mind of the protagonist of the poem.

2.6 THE INVITATION

Two dominant but contrasting traits characterize Kamala Das's poetry: one, her desire to love and be loved and, two, her wish for death when life becomes quite frustration. Kamala Das writes on the theme of love in all its divergent forms and shapes in her poetry. Sometimes love takes the form of her nostalgia for her grandmother who symbolizes a happy, loving home, and at other times, it becomes a woman's quest for love from a lover or a husband. Her ardent yearning for love can be gauged from the fact that she feels she has in her veins the blood of her ancestress who preferred to marry more than one husband. Her vigorous quest for life and love confronts numerous difficulties and hardships which end up in frustration. The unhappy marital life of her parents, the indifferent attitude of her husband, the amorous advances of her so-called lovers and the severance of

her roots from Malabar — all ultimately resulted in so much helplessness and frustration in Kamala Das that they bred in her autobiography *My Story* (1976) and in a series of her articles and short stories.

Kamala Das's poem "The Invitation" is a narrative of the mental struggle of a frustrated, love-sickened woman whose lover has gone away without giving her any firm assurance of his return. In her intensity of love, she has physical relationship with him and, naturally, has been waiting for him to come back, having reposed her full faith in him. The poem can also be taken as a dramatic account of the struggle going on in her mind while she remains undecided about her future course of action — to live in hope or to die in frustration. This is what Bruce King implies when he says that her poems are not concerned so much with sexual act or love but are "involved with the self and its varied, often conflicting emotions, ranging from the desire to security and intimacy to the assertion of the ego, self-dramatization and feelings of shame and depression".

The woman persona of the poem is no other than the poetess herself since her statements echo those of Kamala Das herself as detailed in her autobiographical work — *My Story*. The poem "The Invitation" reveals the desperate mental state of a woman stung by love who looks both ways — her prospect of a happy life with her lover, and the eventuality of death in his absence. At one time, she had tasted an ecstatic pleasure in his company, but now in his absence she can only remember those moments nostalgically but with a fast fading hope — a hope which cannot sustain her beyond a point and, consequently, what takes the place of this emotion in her is the feeling of annihilation and the suicidal tendency. To love or to die — is the question which haunts her mind, and is the subject matter of the poem.

Kamala Das's "The Invitation" is in the form of a dialogue between the sea and the beloved — the former inviting the latter to end herself in it implying the cessation of her life whereas the latter insisting hopefully that her lover is bound to return and hence she has to love waiting for his return. The poem too can be taken as a dramatic portrayal of the two sides of her mind — the positive one which wants to wait for the lover even if she has to undergo through terrible anxious moments, and the negative — which comes in the form of the sea — inviting her to commit suicide. The sea attempts to prevail upon her by putting forward apparent logical statements. Undoubtedly, both the voices are Kamala Das's own in which her inner struggle is reflected. Her two selves are engaged in arguments — one driving her to commit suicide and the other striving to resist it equally forcefully. As the hope of lover's return fades and as the sea's invitation gathers a corresponding force and validity, her resistance to the sea's invitation appears gradually crumbling, though she earnestly endeavours

to cope with a trying situation and a tantalizing call. In other words, the poem is the externalization of Kamala Das's inner conflict as she, by looking at the positive side, attempts to get over the overwhelming negative forces in order to save herself from the physical extinction even if she has already become a wasteland.

The opening stanza of the poem refers to the pulsating pain in the head of the beloved as if somebody were clenching his fist in it. Her dilemma comes from being at a crossroad where she has to decide whether to continue treading on the path of love which has proved quite a frustrating experience or to adopt the path of death which promises the end of her miseries but which might as well cease the possibilities of her ever living a happy life with her lover. The thought of negative forces brings to her mind the idea of committing suicide in order to free herself from a life of physical emptiness. She also realizes that since her prospects of living a further happy life are almost non-existent, there is nothing to lose by the cessation of her life.

Her idea of committing suicide is a wavering one and is brushed aside by her other self a number of times in various tones and words because the prospect of her leading a good life is not completely bleak, and the sea seems to her as Devinder Kohli puts it, "a constant distraction, a nagging threat, and beckons her towards negation". She still wishes to bank upon the memory of blissful moments when her lover had made her life so happy as if they were in a paradise. It is, therefore, natural that she coldly brushes aside the first proposal of the sea:

Oh Sea, let me shrink or grow, slosh up,

Slide down, go your way

I will go mine.

Engrossed completely in the memory of her ecstatic union with her lover, she turns down the sea's suicidal idea even if the pain caused by the absence of her lover happens to be quite agonizing. Her lover came periodically from a brief union with her "as a fish coming up for air". However, those moments of union with her lover were so sweet, so blissful, and so warm and lent her such happiness that they cannot be obliterated from her mind even though a lot of time has passed since their last meeting. It is this memorable moment of ecstasy which sustains her in difficult times and forms an embankment which keeps out the invasion of negative and pessimistic notions in her mind.

All through that summer's afternoons we lay.

On beds, our limbs inert, cells expanding

Into throbbing suns. The head had

Blotted our thoughts...

Devinder Kohli, too, feels that the "poet resists all temptation by recounting the self-contained intensity of the moment of sexual love".

The suicidal tendency in a person is usually like labour pains which come and go with a certain frequency while the mind and will power of the poetess waver between her desire to live and her acceptance of death. She does not seem to quite succeed in her attempt to lead her present and future life merely on the past ecstatic moments, as there is also a fit of suicidal wish within her which takes the concrete form of the sea as one of her lovers. It is obvious then that she cannot always live on mere nostalgia of the foregone meeting, overlooking the fact that the lover who had not come for such a long time is not likely to come back again. The point, the sea stresses, remains that her human lover has gone for good — never to return, since the poetess's act of waiting for him would be quite illogical, hence, the sea invited her again, saying, "Come in, Come in," to emphasize that the only option left for her is to accept the sea, must end her miserable life in the sea rather than prolong her ceaseless mental agony with an illusory hope.

As the suicidal tendency is recurrent to live and to prolong her self, equally insistent is her ambition to live and to prolong her physical existence even if it is by her remembrance of paradisaical experience. The poetess is a divided-self when she contemplates on accepting or declining the sea's offer, because for her the past "is a symbol as security, love and freedom" whereas the present "stands for insecurity, pretensions and bondage of society. Her consciousness lies stretched between these two poles; it is drawn towards the positive past but held back by the negative present".

Hence, she declines the gallant proposal of the sea-as-lover to embrace death. The memory of her ecstatic experience in the arms of her lover has been so fascinating that she resolves to continue living merely on its remembrance. The memory becomes a beacon of hope that sustains her in the midst of her frustrations. Nazreen Ayaz feels that the beloved "yearns for a kind of love which is a spiritual experience though sexual relationship". The poetess recalls the moment in detail:

As long

As I remember, I want no other

On the bed with him, the boundaries of

Paradise had shrunk to a mere

Six by two and afterwards, when we walked

Our together, they

Widened to hold the unknowing city

Kamala Das

The reference here is obviously to her sexual experience with him. It was the height of pleasurable experience which one rarely achieves in life, and consequently, her heart broadened in happiness so much that an unfamiliar city gets coloured according to their ecstatic

Then the poetess swings again towards the negative side which is being paraded as an advantage by the sea-as-lover. Since death is inevitable to every mortal creature irrespective of his happiness or miseries, the sea-as-lover contrasts the cessation of physical existence of a person on the land with that in the sea. Obviously referring to the Hindu rites of cremation of dead bodies in fire as one of the last rites, the sea points out that the death on a funeral pyre with a burning head on the earth is much more painful than the death by drowning in sea. In place of having a burning head in fire, the death in water would be as comfortable as taking a cold bath. Rather than having the human body tied to the bier and crumpled into a funeral pyre which is what happens in the cremation of a dead body in death by drowning, the body gets freedom to stretch its limbs and lie down on the cool sands found on the bottom of the sea. Even if one were to die inevitably, the sea promises a more comfortable death than the poetess could ever have had on the land.

In order to make her more susceptible to suicidal notions, the sea advises her not to fall back on illusory happy memories but flatters her ego by pointing out that by embracing the sea-as-lover, she would be an exceptional creature not to be commonly found, and for whom it had been waiting for a long time. It is not a common occurrence to have a renowned poetess committing suicide in the sea and hence she would be considered a great dignitary. Surprisingly enough, the sea-as-lover does not view the poetess's suicide as death but another kind of life which is different from the life on land/an attractive life-in-death to which the sea as lover invites her:

For long I've waited for the right one

To come, the bright one, the right one to live, In the blue.

In spite of all the forceful arguments of the sea-as-lover, the poetess resists succumbing to it and counters it by a new idea that she is "still young" and does not consider it an appropriate time to kill herself. She wishes to wait for the return of her lover without whom she is incomplete. She wants him in order to destroy her egoistic self, and to construct a new self out of it through that love which transforms two selves of man and woman to merge into one inseparable being. At the same time, she makes the last ditch, pathetic entreaty to her lover, cautioning him that her desire for survival cannot last long as the suicidal tendency can be dodged only for

a short time on one excuse or the other but eventually it might become too powerful to be resisted. The image of the sea beating its waves against the walls in anger symbolizes the insistence with which the suicidal tendency erupts. The implied message to the lover is that unless he comes back, the chances are that under pressure and persuasion, she might succumb to the invitation. It is possible that her quest for a permanent spiritual lover takes her to the "sea — the archetypal symbol of eternity — representing the urge and temptation to negate, to be dismantled, and to free herself from sole bondage sanctioned by the past so that a redefinition of herself could be possible".

Kamala Das has taken an appropriate metaphor for the depiction of the inner conflict in her frustrated life. She has been very close to the sea throughout her life as she writes: "The Sea was our only witness. How many times I turned to it and whispered, oh, sea, I am at last in love, I have found my Krishna." But she failed to get permanent love and responses, and therefore her death-wish grew stronger inspite of all her efforts to maintain mental balance: "I have been for a year obsessed with the idea of death. I have come to believe that life is a mere dream and this death is the only reality. It is endless, stretching before and beyond our human existence". The idea of taking sea as her lover has been quite dominant in her life because throughout her life she has been toying with the idea of killing herself in the sea: "Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself to be rid of my loneliness which is not unique in anyway but is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements". Anisur Rahman, too identifies in Kamala Das's wish to merge with the sea "to her search of the right man who could nourish the demands of the soul as well. The sea stands here both as image and metaphor of her quest". The suicidal tendency and the instinct for survival take alternative dominance in her which can be compared to the undulating sea-waves which strike against the shore, return to the sea and then strike the shore again — the process being repeated endlessly. The poetess, too at one moment is combative against her suicidal tendency. The garrulity of the sea can be compared to the recurring of this inner conflict in the mind of the poetess. The repetition of words, "Come I, Come in," echoes the striking waves whereas that of the words "the sea shall take no more, the sea shall take no more" points to the recurrence of her inner conflict with a certain insistent frequency. "The Invitation" is a dramatization of Kamala Das's anguished-yet-futile quest for a spiritual lover as also of her suicidal tendency reflected in the sea-as-lover's invitation for a happier life-in-death.

Check your progress

5. How does the mental struggle carried out in the poem serve as theme of the poem by Kamala Das?

THE LOOKING GLASS

Poem

Getting a man to love you is easy
 Only be honest about your wants as
 Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
 So that he sees himself the stronger one
 And believes it so and you so much more
 Softer, younger, lovelier... Admit your
 Admiration. Notice, the perfection
 Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
 The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
 Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
 Urinates. All the fond details that make
 Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
 Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
 Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
 The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
 Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting
 A man to love is easy, but living
 Without him afterwards may have to be
 Faced. A living without life when you move
 Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that
 Gave up their search, with ears that hear only
 His last voice calling out your name and your
 Body which once under his touch had gleamed
 Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute.

Explication of the Poem

Kamala Das's poem "The Looking Glass" is about love. The female protagonist of this poem gives instructions to another woman about winning the love of a man. Getting a man to love a woman is easy. But a woman should be honest about her wants as a woman. She should stand nude before the looking glass with him so that the man sees himself to be

stronger one and believes it to be so. He should see the woman to be so much softer, younger and lovelier. The woman should admit her admiration of the man. She should express her admiration of the superiority of the man and make him feel important. The woman should notice the perfection of his limbs, his eyes reddening under the shower, his shy walk across the bathroom floor, the dropping of towels and the jerky way he urinates.

She should praise him for all those things that make him a male and her only man. She must make him believe that he is the manliest man and that he is the only man that she admires. She must make him believe that he has the best gifts of a man and she should offer him the scent of her long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts, the warm shock of menstrual blood and all her endless hungers as a woman. The female protagonist tells her friend that getting a man to love is easy but a woman will have to face living without him sometime. When she loses her charms, the man may leave her. Then the woman will have to lead a lifeless life. She will move around, meet strangers and keep shut her eyes that search for her man. Her ears would hear only his last voice calling out her name. She would have to live with a drab and destitute body which once under the touch of her man had gleamed like polished brass.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem "The Looking Glass"

Kamala Das's poem "The Looking-glass" is a poem about love. The female protagonist of this poem gives instructions to a female friend in the art of love making. The poem reveals Kamala Das's knowledge on the art of love making. The different stages and skills in love making are clearly enumerated. By these means a woman can captivate a man and make him love her. A woman must be honest about her wants as a woman — whether she wants a lover or a husband. Then she can adopt different tactics. The main thing in winning a man's love is to boost up his male superiority and Narcissus Complex. The looking-glass is a metaphor. The looking-glass flatters a person who sees his image reflected in it. It does not give true self knowledge.

Flattering the male ego and surrendering all the gifts of a woman to man make for success in love. The man must be given the illusion that he is the manliest man and that the woman loves him only. Life will be a problem and a pity for a woman when her man leaves her. She will be haunted by her man's form and voice. Her body which under his touch had shone like polished brass would become drab and destitute in her old age. A woman needs love. For winning a man's love a woman should know what she wants and then skillfully adopt certain arts. An egoistic woman cannot succeed in love. It is pathetic that physical charm fades in the passage of time and a woman without her man will have to lead miserable and lifeless

life. Kamala Das beautifully presents the pride and pathos of a woman of love. The poet wins our sympathy for such women.

Kamala Das

Annotations

1. ... "You cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved... I who have lost
My way and beg now at stranger's doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?"

The protagonist of Kamala Das's poem, "My Grandmother's House" recalls her happy childhood in her grandmother's house. The protagonist remembers happily how she was loved by her grandmother. But when the loving grandmother died, the house itself became dead. Silence fell over the cheerful house and snakes moved among the books. The sight of such a melancholy and dreadful transformation of the house the blood and the feelings of the protagonist turned cold like the moon. Because she loved the house for the sake of her beloved grandmother, the protagonist (the granddaughter) often thought of going to her grandmother's house to peer into the house through the blind eyes of the windows, or to listen to the frozen air to pick an armful of darkness from there and put it behind her bedroom door so that it would lie there like a brooding dog. The protagonist addresses her husband and says that he would not believe that she lived in such a house which was once happy and where she was proud of her and loved her grandmother who reciprocated her love. In later years, the protagonist felt that she had lost her way in the world like a beggar begged strangers for their love and got only a small change of love. There is pathos in these lines. When the grandmother lived, she kept her granddaughter proud and rich in love. After the grandmother's death the granddaughter had to beg strangers for a small change of love. In her life Kamala Das had great love for her grandmother and she longed for true human love. The poem is autobiographical.

2. ... "Her husband shut her
In every morning; locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door like
A Yellow cat, to keep her company".

In Kamala Das's poem "The Sunshine Cat" there is a narration of the pathetic life of a loving woman who was not loved enough by her selfish and cowardly husband. In her desperate attempt to get love she turned to a band of cynical men who told her that they could not love her but would be kind to her. The woman shed tears of sorrow and disappointment. Her husband locked her up in a room of books every morning. The woman had

no company except a thin line of sunshine that fell near the door and looked like a yellow cat. This is a poem about the frustrated love of a housewife. The narrator gives a powerful picture of the tragic waste of the youth and love of a frustrated wife.

3. "Oh yes, getting

A man to love is easy, but living

Without him afterwards may have to be

Faced".

The female protagonist in Kamala Das's love poem "Looking-glass" gives instructions to a companion in the art of winning the love of a man. Getting a man should stand nude before a looking-glass with her lover and admire his superiority over her. She should flatter his ego and offer him all her feminine gifts. Getting man to love a woman is easy but the woman will have to face the problem of living without him. He may desert her or die. In her old age she will hear his last voice calling out her name. Her body which had gleamed like polished brass under his touch would become drab and destitute.

Main Themes of Das's Poetry

Kamala Das moves in a narrow range in her poetry. Like Jane Austen in English fiction, her range of themes is limited. Very often there is witnessed repetition, and consequently monotony, in the body of her poetical works. However, she moves in her circle with grace and skill. She does not try to transgress her self-imposed limitations, and this accounts for her success in poetical endeavours. In fact, broad political, financial, and social issues were beyond her reach, but whatever she wrote was born of her own experiences which immediately makes her an integral poet, a poet of felt thought.

Kamala is primarily a poet of feminine longings. Her poetry and prose reflect her restlessness as a sensitive woman moving in the male-dominated society, and in them she appears as a champion of woman's cause. She raises her forceful voice against the male tyrannies in such poems as "A Relationship", "Summer in Calcutta," "An Introduction," and "Marine Drive", and in such essays as "Why Not More Than One Husband?" and "What Women Expect Out of Marriage and What They Get". In them she comes out as an ardent spokesman of women's 'lib' movement. Kamala expresses the secret hopes and fears of womankind as seen in the poem "Afterwards":

Son of my womb,

Ugly in loneliness

You walk the world's bleary eye

Like a grit. Your cleverness

Shall not be your doom

As ours was.

The above quoted lines highlight a mother's concerns for her son. And the following poetic passage reveals the monotony and tiresomeness of a hollow married life:

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon

You built around me with morning tea,

Love-words flung from doorways and of course

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Kamala Das

Your tired lust. I shall someday take

Wings fly around....

Evidently, Kamala speaks here as a 'liberated' woman, who resents the cocoon built around her and desires to flirt about without any restrictions. The fairer sex receives a better deal from this sensitive poetess, who airs out its grievances and sufferings in a striking fashion.

Mrs. Das is unquestionably a poet of love and sex. As such, she is not so much preoccupied with the metaphysical quest of a restless soul, nor with the formulation of any theory of poetry. She writes almost invariably about the power of love and the appeal of the body. She confesses that she CC . . . wrote the poems in the book *Summer in Calcutta* to make a man love me, to break down his resistance." As an honest poet of love, she looks very frank and naive, without the 'intellectual pride' and the domestic air of the well-known Australian poetess, Judith Wright. It should, however, be remembered that Kamala Das wrote her poetry against a conservative and tabooed society than that of Wright. She has, therefore, ore to say about the pathos of a woman emerging from a passive role to the point of discovering and asserting her individual liberty and identity. More often than not she concentrates on sexual love, and her woman-persona rises as though in a mood of revolt. The love poems of Kamala usually breathe an air of unconventionality and urgency.

Related to the theme of love is the theme of the body in Mrs. Das's verse. Sometimes she likes her body, while at others she dislikes it. Physically, she is 'dark' with ordinary features, and her loathing for the body is mainly, due to this factor as well as to her protracted illness. In liking the body, she resembles Nissim Ezekiel, who is also a 'poet of the body'. Both these poets, like American 'Confessional' poets, accept wholeheartedly the demands of the body. As for Kamala Das, the tensions of the body issue forth in her poetry from a pressure of her complex family background — she was not properly cared for neither during her childhood

nor well attended to in her married life. And as she says in her "I Have Lived Beautifully", her marriage was doomed to fail right from the beginning: "My husband was immersed in his office-work, and after work there was the dinner, followed by sex. Where was there any time left for him to want to see the sea or the dark buffaloes of the slopes?"

Kamala Das: A Love Poet

On one count alone, Kamala Das deserves to be read as an Indian poet in English, that is, as a love-poet examining the pangs and frustrations of love from her various profoundly subtle angles. Saha remarks: "She is basically a poet of love. Sensuous, terribly emotional, extremely moving, and profoundly shocking and disturbing are her love poems. She is an unsatisfied satyr, longing for more and more cares, mourning endlessly in a passionate wail the dearth of love in the modern world". Almost all her poems deal with either of the following modes the physical aspects of desire caused by amorous attachment and adulterous love or pangs and frustrations occasioned by unconsummated love or rather the failure of love, or the absence of love with the possessiveness of a woman who can realize her being only through love".

The poem "The Old Playhouse" deals with the theme of frustration in love. There seems to be an ambiguous and deliberate play upon the word "you" meaning either the husband or "another person" in keeping with the woman-persona's liberated spirit. The expression "of yet another man" is probably an endorsement of the extramarital relation the woman persona seeks:

It was not to gather knowledge
Of yet another man that I came to you but to learn
What I was, and by learning, to learn to grow, but every
Lesson you gave was about yourself.

What she is after is not the knowledge "Of yet another man" but the awareness of herself through other man. The man to whom she uncovers her bosom differs not in the least from her knowledge about other men. In no way is he free from the carnal hungers and domineering ego of the male.

She gets frustrated at her man's indulgence in sexual revel without psychological responses from her and also at his sole and whole concern with her "body's response, its weather, its usual shallow/Convulsions."

You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured
Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed
My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices. You called me wife.

I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your Questions I mumbled incoherent replies

An atmosphere of male-dominated sexual experience is created by the employment of physical images like "body's response," "shallow/Convulsions", "dribbled spittle into my mouth", "poured/Yourself into every nook and cranny", and "bitter-sweet juices". "The images underline the female protagonist's distance for the male lust and it appears that she has been rather unwillingly, subjected to the tedium of carnal hungers". The female psyche is only a dumb animal driven to be sacrificed on the altar of the lust-centred male supremacy.

The woman-persona has been a "swallow" with inborn "urge to fly". Once she walks into the trap of lust set by man, she is tamed to forget the "urge to fly" and is rid of her freedom:

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her

In the long summer of your love so that she would forget/Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind but Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless Pathways of the sky.

The woman-persona's own passionate self that is not satisfied is beautifully brought out by the symbol, swallow. Like the swallow experiencing the seasons of the year with its corresponding smooths and roughs, she also experiences the varying intensities of sexual awareness in contrast to what knowledge she has with this man:

The summer

Begins to pall. I remember the ruder breezes

Of the fall and the smoke from burning leaves.

The poet persona's unhappy love is an experience which she recalls with bitter taste.

The oft-repeated sexual indulgences with her man leave her disappointed playgoer in an old playhouse — a playhouse frequented to witness the play put up many a time with no newness or freshness; There is/No more singing no more dance, my mind is an old/playhouse with all its lights put out. "A total sublime, spiritual experience she seeks with such purity and a power as to have the "will to shatter the mirrors and the kind night to erase the water."

While commenting on the concluding lines of the poem, Arelene R.K.Zide observes: "The power and implicit sadness of the last verse are bound up in the essential truths it presents us. Her explorations of love are self-explorations; love is "Narcissus at the water's edge, haunted/By its own

lonely face..." She had come to him, husband/lover, to learn what she was, to find her own real self, but what she found was only the strong man, with his age-old techniques of serving love in lethal dose, serving himself upto swallow whole. In the end, the female persona "will the mirrors to shatter", must seek freedom in order not to die as an individual from those lethal doses of male ego, in order not to remain an old/playhouse with all its lights put out".

The Freaks' also deals with the similar theme of unfulfilled love. The man turns his sun-stained cheek to her. He talks with his uneven teeth gleaming and his mouth appearing ravaging. He places his right hand on her knee to titillate desires of sex in her. The tonic effect of cutaneous excitation is to make powerful reverberations in the sexual sphere. Despite this action of his, she remains insipid and passive. Their minds, though they are "willed to race towards love", "only wander tripping idly over puddles of desires". He is capable of unleashing only the "skin's lazy hungers". The poet's heart is an "empty cistern" filling itself with "Coiling snakes of silence".

Lust is far from her mind. Sexual gratification through the body hinders sublimation, she thinks. The higher reaches of the spirit, she feels, cannot be reached through sheer physical act of sex. She has her own dubiety about this man wafting her on wings of love to reach the world of her own. "If his contact with her is superficial, glancing off the skin without stirring any deeper, her heart correspondingly, is an 'empty cistern'. A cul-de-sac has been reached with the thought her body, as suggested by his mouth a "dark cavern" symbolic of his passion for lust.

She has own misgivings whether this can be a match to her in her hankering after reaches of fulfillment. Finding him inadequate and incompatible she only makes a social pretence of a "grand, flamboyant lust". She lays bare her detestation for sex and expresses her inner longing for an ultimate creative fulfillment through love.

Much of what Kamala Das writes may be looked upon as journalistic sensationalism. She seems to shock her readers with the gimmicks of an unabashed confession but her confessions are sincere, moving and courageous.

Kamala Das: An Emancipated Poet

Kamala Das, by her bold confessions, iconoclastic attitudes, and tongue-in-the-cheek attacks on social conventions and taboos, comes out as western oriented Indian woman — an emancipated woman — coming to grips with her modern existence but in the background of her Hindu ethos. Almost all her poems bear the stamp of her emancipated spirit. "Her poetry is a hard-hitting indictment on the misplaced male superiority". In her

vindication of the rights of women, she is an Indian Mary Wollstonecraft. "She burst upon the Indo-Anglian scene like a daring fascinating scepter of unconventionality blowing to smith-reens the traditional reticence's of Indian womanhood. Amrita Pritam of the Punjab is her Indian counterpart in her impassioned plea for the emancipation of women from the dominant male ego. In her revolt against convention she is an equivalent of George Sand, the French novelist, who, as an ardent feminist, flouted the conventions of society.

As a feminist, Kamala Das leads an attack on the convention-ridden society that shuns poetry in which "one can touch flesh and visualize the bare unromanticised core on the man-woman relationship". She is called poet of the 'body' for she is the first Indian woman to speak frankly about sex. Man-woman relationship is no forbidden fruit for her. She comes "to terms with man-woman relationship to blunt, bitter and concrete terms, where the man still pussyfoot around in metaphor metaphysics and roundaboutation". As an iconoclast she is against the conventional concept of love concerned with purely physical gratification.

In the Old Playhouse the poet comes down heavily upon that tries to seek fruition through the fulfillment of the skin's lazy hungers". She makes a scathing attack on the social exploitation of the female by the male for the appeasement of his carnal appetites.

The poet makes a virulent attack on the conjugal life-the snares of domesticity as suggested by the 'swallow' being tamed. The "swallow" stands for the freedom she yearns for. But teamed into domesticity, she is deprived of her freedom.

Once a free bird in the bright world of Nature with the "urge to fly" in the "endless / Pathways of the sky", and enjoying the "ruder breezes / Of the fall and the smoke from burning leaves", she is now confined to her room "lit by artificial lights", and her sense of freedom is stifled in this largely male-dominated married life.

The poet persona expresses her resentment at the customary subordination of the female sex to the male:

Cowering

Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic of loaf and

Became a dwarf, I lost my will and reason, to all your

Question I mumbled incoherent replies.

She is very conscious of the domineering male ego. The strong man he is, he fulfils his fill of love in excessive and strong doses which may please him but not her and hence lethal to her. It is man's selfish love that seeks fruition through woman without the expectations of reciprocal emotional

and psychological responses from his partner. Kamala Das has no good word for the male. Time and again her experience has always been a depressing judgement of men being absolutely self-oriented in their relation with her.

It is only in freedom from such of married life and strong hold of male domination the poet finds her true self. This freedom she yearns for cannot be realized as long as the poet's self is preoccupied with the physical. Hence her desire to seek an "end, a pure total freedom."

In *The Freaks*, the poet persona remonstrates against the fulfillment of sex-hunger and refuses to identify that "Skin's lazy hunger" with love. Hence her question "Can this man with/Nimble finger-tips unleash/Nothing more alive than the/Skin's lazy hungers?" She feels that her male partner, a socially uncouth finger-tips" suggestive of his wanderlust, concupiscence and libidinousness respectively, cannot be a mate to her in her hunger for the higher reaches of the spirit which cannot be attained by a sheer sensational gratification of titillation of sex.

Kamala Das identifies herself with the One and the Many as Walt Whitman does in his *Song of Myself*. The title of the poem *The Freaks* in the plural number is of singular significance. The poet's inner agonies in *Luminol* are not mere Kamala Das's but many a woman's, Kamala is the mouthpiece of the anguished but assertive voice of woman in the Old Playhouse. Almost all her poems outreach personal significance.

Use of Images and Symbols in the Poetry of Kamala Das

Image in poetry is the making of a picture in terms of words. It is a device for making the experience of life vivid and life like. Poets deficient in this art of image making fail in their vocation. It exploits different sensory perceptions and pin down his experiences with precision and thereby evokes a living and pulsating picture of life. A.N. Dwivedi says: "Imagery serves twin-purposes together-that of 'ornamentation' and that of arousing 'aesthetic pleasure' in the reader". The process of 'image-making' involves the skilful use of metaphors, similes, contrasts, and may be equated to 'picture-making' or 'concretization of emotions'. Symbol is the use of an object for signifying something that is beyond the literal denotation of the object. It is a potent tool arising out of the vibrant imaginative perception of reality. A work of art without proper symbolism is as worthless as a flower without fragrance. However rich and profound a thought may be it has a very little significance in the realm of art and literature unless it is woven into the fabric of images and symbols. History is replete with instances that most of the poets thrived and rose to eminence with the help of putting thoughts into the pattern of images and symbols.

T.E. Hulme (1883-1917) was the chief protagonist of the imagist movement in England. Reacting sharply against the loose and facile texture of the Georgian poetry, Hulme advocated the importance of "hard, dry image" in poetry. He emphasised that poetry should restrict itself to the world perceived by senses and to the presentation of its theme in detail and precise in significance. Other pioneers of this movement were Ezra Pound, James Joyce and C. Day Lewis. Ezra Pound says "An image is one which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pound 1915:349) C. Day Lewis remarks:

"An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image or an image may be presented to us in phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive, but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality."

Kamala Das was influenced by these writers and while she was composing her own poetry, she resorted to the imagist and symbolistic techniques in order to render it impressive, precise and compact. Kamala Das's diction is marked by simplicity and clarity. It is the language of her emotions and she speaks to her readers as one human being to another. In this lies her originality and her distinction. There are no abstractions, no complexities and no intricate, tortuous constructions. Her images are drawn from the familiar and the common place, are symbolic and thus they increase the expressive range of her language. The sun and heat, house and window, cremation and burning, objects of nature, human anatomy, sleep, sea, the mythic grandmother and Krishna constitute her whole range of imagery. One of the dominant images in Mrs. Das's poetry is that of 'the human body'. While male body is a source of corruption and exploitation the female body is a storehouse of beauty and chastity misused to the maximum. The poetess in her poem "The Freaks" presents a subtle analysis of the male physiology :

He talks, turning a sun-stained
cheek to me, his mouth, a dark
cavern where Stalactites of
Uneven teeth gleam, his right
hand on my knee.....
..... can't this man with
nimble figure-tips unleash
nothing more alive than the
skin's lazy hungers ? (Das 1965 :10)

The male anatomy furnishes her with images of horror and ugliness. It is represented as repulsive and destructive. A lover is generally attractive

and pleasant to the beloved, but here he is repulsive to the woman. His cheeks are sun-stained and so brownish in colour, and to her, his mouth seems to be ugly and horrible like a 'dark cavern'. His teeth are uneven and they seem to her to be like the white, calciferous growth which often forms on the roofs of caves. Images of ugliness here focus on her attitude of rejection and negation. It is symbolic of her revolt against male ego and the male-dominated world. It is obvious that her relationship with her husband is a forced one; there is no love lost between the two and the woman is there only because as a wife she must submit herself to the lust of her husband. Through images of repulsion and horror she brings out the emotional emptiness and sterility of her married life and the intensity of her misery as a wife who had to submit to her husband whom she found repulsive, and with whom she had no emotional contact at all. She is conscious of the beauty and glory of the human anatomy and is attracted by it, but its raging lustfulness disgusts her and hence the use of images like these cited above. She is also conscious of disease and decay to which the human flesh is heir to, and this awareness also colours her imagery. She says in the following lines of the poem "The Looking Glass":

Notice the perfection
of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
dropping towels, and the jerky way he
uninates, all the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
endless female hungers. (Das 1967:25)

The images concretize her fond awareness of the intimate human details. They express adequately her abiding love for the human body as also her aversion to it. Indeed, images are her themes as well as the modes of expression. They dramatise her passion and impart certain depth and resonance to her feelings. Another recurrent image is that of the sun and the heat it generates. It is used most frequently as a symbol of lust & corruption. 'In The Dance of the Eunuchs' and 'Summer in Calcutta' and in a host of other poems the sun with its scorching heat is an agent of pain, suffering & lustfulness. "The Dance of the Eunuchs" is powerful and bold and displays an admirable sense of proportion in the use of imagery and metaphor. It displays a very skilled use of imagery and symbolism. The poetess is eminently successful in creating the impression of summer. heat.

The poem contains a number of excellent images. The poetess sympathises with the eunuchs who neither constitute the male nor the female genre nor suffer a peculiar irony of fate:

It was hot, so hot, before the eunuchs came
 To dance, wide skirts going round and round, cymbals
 Richly clashing, & anklets jingling, jingling,
 Jingling, ... Beneath the fiery gulmohar, with
 Long braids flying, dark eyes flashing, they danced and
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Indian English Literature They danced, oh ! they danced till they bled. (Das 1965:10)

The funeral imagery in the poem is symbolic of the inner vacuity and sterility of the eunuchs as well as of their decrepit bodies. The poetess uses the funeral imagery with a view to portraying the decrepit figure of the eunuchs:

They were thin in limbs and dry ; like half burnt logs from
 Funeral pyres, a drought & a rottenness
 were in each of them. (Das 1973 : 01)

The image creates the visual impression of the eunuchs who survive and suffer endlessly like "half-burnt logs from funeral pyres". Unable to find fulfilment as a woman or to give satisfaction as one, the poetess sees in the eunuchs 'writhing in vacant ecstasy' a devastating image of her own sterility.

In the poem "In love" the drama of sterile love which brings no emotional fulfilment is enacted against the background of scorching heat of the summer scene, a symbol of the poet's own scorching frustration as a woman. The title is ironic because poetess is not at all in love, but disgusted with the man who had her body. A sense of revulsion takes possession of the poetess and this is expressed through the use of powerful imagery. She compares the mouth of her lover to the sun which brings, in turn, both the heat and loss of love:

Of what does the burning mouth
 of sun, burning in today's
 Sky, remind me oh, yes, his
 Mouth, andhis limbs like pale and
 Carnivorous plants reaching
 out for me, and the sad lie
 of my unending lust. (Das 1973 :1)

We find a network of evocative and concrete imagery in the poem "The Old play-house". The title of the poem is a metaphor. The poetess compares herself to an old play house with its all the lights put out. Light here is symbol of hope and poetic illumination of the poetess and lights put out symbolises her lost imagination and aspiration for flying high in the literary sky. She is no longer an imaginative person able to unveil a new world with the help of her poetic imagination. She was completely in the grip of her husband. This captivity has been inferred through the opening line of the poem:

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her (Das 1973:1)

The swallow symbolises freedom and a carefree life and taming of swallow suggests the loss of freedom or captivity. The poetess is now a captive in the hands of her husband. The obsession of suppression and despair has further been strengthened in the following lines of the poem

No more singing, no more dance, my mind is an old

Playhouse with all its lights put out. (I bid)

We find the plight of the poetess who bewails that her egocentric and male chauvinist husband has virtually reduced her full blooded and aspiring self to a mere entertaining toy. Her turning into dwarf is also symbolical. She cannot stand before the ego of her husband who always imposes his undue commands on her and she has to obey without any question. Memory of her sweet past has undergone a complete transformation which has well been symbolised through the falling leaves and burning of dry dead leaves. The nature imagery- the summer of your love, the ruder breeze, burning leaves reinforces her suffering and suffocation is aptly symbolised through the word 'Smoke'. The urban imagery-artificial lights, air-conditioner & cut flowers in the vase point out the unnatural state of her sapless life.

The sea-image recurs most frequently and acquires symbolic significance. The sea for her is a place of retreat both from the ravages of the boastful male and the scorching sun. The desire to merge with the great blue sea is also symbolic of her desire for union with the right man through whom she can achieve emotional fulfilment. In "The Invitation", the poetess ultimately decides to merge with the sea. The sea here symbolises a place of retreat from barren lustful relationship as well as the cosmic home, the eternity, the basic principle of life and regeneration. The poem begins with the powerful image of a male fist 'clenching and unclenching' in her head which conveys the intensity of the headaches she gets as a result of meaningless sexual encounters. The opening lines express poet's distaste for the kind of life she has been leading as well as her frustration consequent upon her failure to find that emotional fulfillment for which her

soul hungered. Another recurrent image in Kamala's poetry is that of the window. It recurs in a number of poems. It is a place to view & review the past as well as the present. Often it is used as a link between the past and the present. The poetess in her poem 'My Grandmother's House' says :

How often I think of going
 There, to peer through blind eyes of window or
 just listen to the frozen air, or in wild despair, pick an armful of
 Darkness to bring it here to lie
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
 Dog.....

'The window image', underlines here, with sufficient emphasis, the languishing desire of the poetess for a sentient peep into her past and resurrects her dreams and desires. With the dereliction of the old house the windows have become blind. Only the heat of reunion with the house will melt the ice & its windows will again be restored to old life.

Kamala Das makes frequent use of the Radha-Krishna and Mirabai legends to provide a mythic frame-work to extra-marital sex in her poetry. Krishna is the mythical lover, and Radha and Mirabai are the eternal seekers for their object of love, Krishna. These mythical personages are recurrently used as symbols to sanctify the quest of Kamala's woman persona for emotional fulfillment outside marriage. They also bear testimony to her Indianness" which is also borne out by her use of typically Indian flora and fauna, scenes & sights, for her purposes.

In conclusion, we may affirm that Kamala Das's wide ranging application of images & symbols in her poetry is impeccable. Her images are functional rather than decorative. They are quite striking and arresting and are used with dexterity and aptness. She is not always in the knack of image-making and creating symbols and she resorts to this device when it becomes necessary.

SUMMARY

- Kamala wished to begin writing, her husband supported her decision to augment the family's income. She would often wait until nightfall after her family had gone to sleep and would write until morning: "There was usually the kitchen table where I would cut vegetables, and after all the plates and things were cleared, I would sit there and start typing". This rigorous schedule took its toll upon her health. She was noted for her many Malayalam short stories as well as many poems written in English. Das was also a syndicated columnist. She once claimed that "poetry does not sell in this country [India]", but her forthright

columns, which sounded off on everything from women's issues and child care to politics, were popular.

- Das' first book of poetry, *Summer in Calcutta* was a breath of fresh air in Indian English poetry. She wrote chiefly of love, its betrayal, and the consequent anguish. Ms. Das abandoned the certainties offered by an archaic, and somewhat sterile, aestheticism for an independence of mind and body at a time when Indian poets were still governed by "19th-century diction, sentiment and romanticised love." Her second book of poetry, *The Descendants* was even more explicit, urging women to:

Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers ..." - *The Looking Glass*

- This directness of her voice led to comparisons with Marguerite Duras and Sylvia Plath
- At the age of 42, she published) a daring autobiography, *My Story*; it was originally written in Malayalam and later she translated it into English. Later she admitted that much of the autobiography had fictional elements. Kamala Das wrote on a diverse range of topics, often disparate- from the story of a poor old servant, about the sexual disposition of upper middle class women living near a metropolitan city or in the middle of the ghetto. Some of her better-known stories include *Pakshiyude Manam*, *Neypayasam*, *Thanuppu*, and *Chandana Marangal*. She wrote a few novels, out of which *Neermathalam Pootha Kalam*, which was received favourably by the reading public as well as the critics, stands out.
- She travelled extensively to read poetry to Germany's University of Duisburg-Essen, University of Bonn, Adelaide Writer's Festival, Frankfurt Book Fair, University of Kingston, Jamaica, Singapore, and South Bank Festival (London), Concordia University (Montreal, Canada), etc. Her works are available in French, Spanish, Russian, German and Japanese. She has also held positions as Vice chairperson in Kerala Sahitya Academy, chairperson in Kerala forestry Board, President of the Kerala Children's Film Society, editor of *Poet* magazine and Poetry editor of *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Although occasionally seen as an attention-grabber in her early years, she is now seen as one of the most formative influences on Indian English poetry. In 2009, *The Times* called her "the mother of modern English Indian poetry"

1. Kamala Das

(Kamala Das March 1934 — 31 May 2009) was an Indian writer who wrote in English and Malayalam, her native language.

2. Freaks

The word "freak" is commonly used to refer to a person with something unusual about their appearance or behaviour.

3. Frustration

Frustration is a common emotional response to opposition.

4. Emotional Conflict

Emotional conflict refers to clashing and contradictory emotions within a person.

5. Domesticity

Domesticity refers to the quality or condition of being domestic.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The 'freak' is one who is capricious and whimsical in behaviour, one who does not behave in accordance with the accepted norm. The title suggests that the lovers — the woman and her man — do not behave properly with each other, and hence are abnormal and whimsical in their approach to love.

2. There is a house which is now 'far away in distance. In that house Kamala Das once received happy love. The woman who gave her warm love died. After that loving woman's death the house withdraw in to silence. When the loving woman was alive, the house was alive and agog with joy and bustling activity. After the death of that woman, which was the soul and spirit of the house, sad silence fell upon the house.

3. 'A Hot Noon In Malabar' is one of her poems that she wrote when she was reminiscing her memories back in Kerala. She compares Kolkata (where she was residing) to her hometown. In this poem, she describes minute observations about her hometown. Things like heat, dust and noise, that would annoy many a people, have impressed her.

4. The protagonist of the poem was devoid of energy and spirit. As a woman decrepit in body and also in mind she was of no use at all to men. The physical love of men is contrasted with the love of the soul of the woman. The final stage in the decline and degradation of the woman who is frustrated in her love is shown by her being cold and half dead. It is a tragedy that a woman, who longs for true love, meets with despair and despondency and wastes away her precious life.

5. Kamala Das's poem "The Invitation" is a narrative of the mental struggle of a frustrated, love-sickened woman whose lover has gone away without giving her any firm assurance of his return. In her intensity of love, she has physical relationship with him and, naturally, has been waiting for him to come back, having reposed her full faith in him. The poem can also be taken as a dramatic account of the struggle going on in her mind while she remains undecided about her future course of action — to live in hope or to die in frustration.

1. Describe the theme of the poem, "The Freaks".
2. Discuss the mentality of the author of the poem, "My Grand Mother's House".
3. Examine the setting portrayed in the poem, "A Hot Noon in Malabar".
4. Enumerate the thoughts and ideas of poet in "The Sunshine Cat".
5. Write down the summary of "The Invitation" and "The Looking Glass".
6. Discuss critically the theme of the poem 'freaks', justifying the title of the poem or (say how far is the title suitable) and how does it bring out the frustrations of the lady in love.
7. Discuss with close reference to the poem 'My Grandmother's House' the poetess memories attached to the House and what kind of memories does it evolve?
8. How far would you call the poem 'My Grandmother's House' evocative by nature? What kind of memories does it arouse in the poetess? Does it come under the genre of being autobiographical?
9. Give the critically appreciation of the poem 'My Grandmother's House' by Kamala Das. Bring out the nostalgia that underlines the poem.
10. Critically analyse the poem 'A Hot Noon in Malabar' and attempt a comparative study of the two poems where she writes about her reminiscences of her early life.
11. With reference to the poem 'The Sunshine Cat' give a detailed character analysis of the protagonist, the husband, as delineated by the poetess and why does the poetess show up the poem as a 'tragedy'.
12. "Kamala Das's 'The Invitation' is a dialogue between the sea and the beloved." Comment critically. Highlight the symbolism that runs through the poem.
13. Discuss the mental conflict that is going on in the protagonists mind and say how does it serve as the theme.
14. Discuss Kamala Das as a love poet and the theme of frustration and disillusionment that she expresses through her works.
15. 'How far would it be correct that all her poems deal with unfulfilled love. Comment.
16. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Kamala Das as an emancipated poet.
 - (b) Sensual love vs platonic love.

FURTHER READINGS

- Kamala Das and her Poetry — A.N. Dwivedi
- Kamala Das — The Old Playhouse and other poems — Kamala Das
- Studies in Indian Poetry in English — U.S. Rukhaiyar.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणिः पश्यन्तु माकष्टिद् दुःख भागभवेत्॥

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