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**CORE COURSE XIII
INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH**

SYLLABUS

Objectives:

To make learners aware of the history and the growth of Indian Writing in English

To introduce learners to the rich literary tradition in Indian Writing in English

To enable learners to appreciate the changing trends in Indian literature in English

from pre to post-Independence era

Unit– I: Poetry

Henry Derozio : “The Harp of India”

Sarojini Naidu : “Love and Death”

Unit– II: Poetry

Nissim Ezekiel : “Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher”

A. K. Ramanujan : “Of Mothers, Among Other Things”

Unit – III: Prose

M. K. Gandhi : “Playing the English Gentleman” (Chapter 15 from The

Story of My Experiments with Truth)

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam : “The Power of Prayer”

Unit– IV: Drama

Girish Karnad : Nagamandala

Unit– V: Fiction

Mulk Raj Anand : Coolie

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

UNIT - 1

The Harp of India -Henry Derozio

POEM

The Harp Of India

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
 Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
 Thy music once was sweet — who hears it now?
 Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
 Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
 Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
 Like ruined monument on desert plain:
 O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
 And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
 Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
 Those hands are cold — but if thy notes divine
 May be by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

Author Introduction

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, (born April 18, 1809, [Calcutta](#), India—
 died Dec. 26, 1831, Calcutta), poet and assistant headmaster of Hindu
 College, Calcutta, a radical thinker and one of the first Indian
 educators to disseminate Western learning and science among the
 young men of [Bengal](#).

The son of an Indian father and an English mother, Derozio was
 influenced by the English Romantic poets. He began publishing
 patriotic verses when he was 17, which brought him to the attention of
 the intellectual elite of Calcutta. In 1826 he was appointed instructor

at Hindu College, where his reportedly brilliant teaching influenced his students and won him their loyalty. In 1828 his students organized the Academic Association, a debating society that drew both Britons and Indians to discussions of religion and philosophy.

In the spirit of English rationalism, Derozio criticized the social practices and religious beliefs of orthodox Hinduism. Accused of irreverence by his students' orthodox Hindu parents, he was forced to resign by the directors of Hindu College in 1831.

Long after Derozio's death (of cholera), his influence lived on among his former students, who came to be known as Young Bengal and many of whom became prominent in social reform, law, and journalism.

Introduction:

Henry Derozio is the first English Indian poet who also headed the Young Bengal Movement. Despite having little Indian blood in his veins, he loved India. He was a child of Indo-Portuguese father and a British mother.

The Poem The Harp of India is a nostalgic poem by Henry Derozio. It celebrates the magnificent Indian past and laments over the loss that is caused by the British Rule. The poem ends with a hope that one day India will regain its glory. The word Harp is used by the poet for the famous Indian poets who under the British Rule are now suffering.

The poem is an unconventional sonnet having a rhyming scheme ababbabcdcb. The poem is divided into two main parts. In the first part, the poet laments on the magnificent past while in the second part, he hopes for the glory to be regained.

Summary:

Part 1

The speaker begins with the question of “Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough?” The word “Thou” speaks of the “harp” and more specifically the people of India. The poet is wondering over the lonely hanging harp on the dry and dead bough and asks for the reason.

Hence, the poem begins with melancholy and a sad tone. The speaker, in the next line, suggests that it (the harp) will forever remain with a dead bough without strings. Just like the dead branch, the harp is also dead.

Furthermore, the speaker is nostalgic and refers to the past when the music of harp was quite meaningful and sweet. When it was not unstrung, it would have sweet melodies. Now the strings are removed, it cannot have any music and no one listens to it anymore. The harp is too old to be played now.

Moreover, the harp cannot wake up by the breeze or air that passes by it. Simply, in other words, the words are useless to play it. It is now dead by the silence or unmusicality. As a very old cenotaph in the desert, it is subdued, abandoned and ruined.

Part 2

The second part of the poem begins with a morning tone, yet end with hope. The speaker shifts his interest from the harp (musical instrument) to the one who used the harp to sung melodies (poets). The speaker points out the past poets before him whose poems were more worthy and melodious than his. He says that those poets produced outstanding poetry that would make the listeners enjoyable.

Though these poets are now dead, yet their works have kept them, alive and immortal. Because of their work, they are always honored and will be honored in the coming ages. Hence, even after their death, they are still alive just as the flowers still blossoms on their graves.

At the end of the poem, the poets refer to past poets and called the Cold Hands. However, the speaker desires to revive the past literary works of those poets and hopes that by reviving that work, the India glory will also be revived.

Themes

Colonization:

The only reoccurring theme of the poem is colonization. The poem is written in the nineteenth century. During that Era, the world, particularly India was going through the period of colonization. The British Raj or Rule has drastic impacts on the people and literary developments. The poet in the poem refers to the instruments as withered (dead). He says that they are untouched for years resulting in its rusting.

Before the arrival of the British Empire, the poetry produced in India has an idealistic tone, making the music beautiful. Yet after they are empowered by “others”, the beauty is lost and the poets have stopped practicing due to the restrictions imposed on them. The poet highlights the importance of a culture that was lost because of colonization. With the loss of culture, the beauty and worth of those poets also diminished.

The development and modernization by the colonizers made the colonized to adopt their way of living and assimilate in their foreign culture. The natives have lost their identities and are oppressed.

Analysis

Part 1

Harp in the port The Harp of India refers to that past, dead India poets who once sung the melodious and sweet poetry and then lost their magnificence in the tiring British Rule in India. Hence, they are unstrung poets and nobody wants to listen to their worthy and meaningful poems. This all is caused by the new developments and modernity by the British. According to pet, the past poets are so dead

and silent that the little breeze (referring to the struggle) is not enough to put life in them.

The poet uses the word “Silence” that refers to the metaphorical death of the poetry of these poets. The British restricted them from writing that made them like the old, neglected, silenced and ruined monument in the desert.

Part 2

The word “hands” in the second part of the poem refers to the poets before the poet. Those poets wrote amazing poetry. Though these poets are now dead, yet their works have kept them, alive and immortal. Because of their work, they are always honored and will be honored in the coming ages. Hence, even after their death, they are still alive just as the flowers still blossoms on their graves. The poet desires to revive the past literary works of those poets and hopes that by reviving that work, the India glory will also be revived.

Literary Devices in “The Harp of India”

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough? (Personification)

Unstrung forever, must thou there remain; (personification)

Thy music once was sweet – who hears it now?

Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain? (Personification)

Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain; (personification)

Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,

Like ruined monument on the desert plain: (Simile)

O! many a hand more worthy far than mine (synecdoche)

Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,

And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
 Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
 Those hands are cold – but if thy notes divine (synecdoche)
 Maybe by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

Love and Death
 - Sarojini Naidu

Poem

I dreamed my love had set thy spirit free,
 Enfranchised thee from Fate's o'ermastering power,
 And girt thy being with a scatheless dower
 Of rich and joyous immortality;
 Of Love, I dreamed my soul had ransomed thee,
 In thy lone, dread, incalculable hour
 From those pale hands at which all mortals cower,
 And conquered Death by Love, like Savitri.
 When I awoke, alas, my love was vain
 E'en to annul one throe of destined pain,
 Or by one heart-beat to prolong thy breath;
 O Love, alas, that love could not assuage
 The burden of thy human heritage,
 Or save thee from the swift decrees of Death.

Author Introduction

Sarojini Naidu, née Sarojini Chattopadhyay, (born February 13, 1879, [Hyderabad](#), India—died March 2, 1949, Lucknow), political activist, feminist, poet, and the first Indian woman to be president of

the [Indian National Congress](#) and to be appointed an Indian state governor. She was sometimes called “the Nightingale of India.” Sarojini was the eldest daughter of Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, a [Bengali](#) Brahman who was principal of the Nizam’s College, Hyderabad. She entered the [University of Madras](#) at the age of 12 and studied (1895–98) at [King’s College](#), London, and later at Girton College, Cambridge.

After some experience in the suffragist campaign in England, she was drawn to [India’s](#) Congress movement and to [Mahatma Gandhi’s Noncooperation Movement](#). In 1924 she traveled in [eastern Africa](#) and [South Africa](#) in the interest of Indians there and the following year became the first Indian woman president of the National Congress—having been preceded eight years earlier by the English feminist [Annie Besant](#). She toured [North America](#), lecturing on the Congress movement, in 1928–29. Back in India her anti-British activity brought her a number of prison sentences (1930, 1932, and 1942–43). She accompanied Gandhi to London for the inconclusive second session of the [Round Table Conference](#) for Indian–British cooperation (1931). Upon the outbreak of [World War II](#) she supported the Congress Party’s policies, first of aloofness, then of avowed hindrance to the Allied cause. In 1947 she became governor of the [United Provinces](#) (now [Uttar Pradesh](#)), a post she retained until her death.

Sarojini Naidu also led an active literary life and attracted notable Indian [intellectuals](#) to her famous salon in Bombay (now [Mumbai](#)). Her first volume of [poetry](#), *The Golden Threshold* (1905), was followed by *The Bird of Time* (1912), and in 1914 she was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her collected poems, all of which she wrote in English, have been published under the titles *The Sceptred Flute* (1928) and *The Feather of the Dawn* (1961).

Introduction

This poem is a sonnet from “The Bird of the time” collection. Its in the form of Petrarchan with rhymes scheme abbaabba ccdeed.

Summary

Here the premises of the poem is that there are two lovers one is alive and the other is dead. In the first line we see that the person alive dreamed of her lover to be alive as well. Somehow she thinks she has freed her lover from clutches of death and have bought him to life yet again fighting with his fate. She also dreams of bringing him back without harming or damaging him in anyway.

She is happy that now her lover is immortal because in her dream she dreams of releasing his soul by paying ransom at the right time before anyone could have pulled him back. She feels great for having conquered death by her love like how Savitri brought her husband sathyavan back from death.

But when she woke up nothing had changed. Her lover was dead and her love was not that powerful enough to bring him back. She was hurt that she could nor rescue her lover from the pain of death nor she could prolong his heart beat even by one breath. Now she thinks her love was not enough for him ,perhaps she didn't love him enough to save him from the clutches of death and now she regrets for not loved him from the bottom of her soul.

The sonnet Love and death contains a kind debate. Its between a certain idea of love which would conquer everything including death but that usually never happens even though a lover loves his/her beloved from heart and soul.

UNIT - II

'Poet, lover, birdwatcher'
-Nissim Ezekiel

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.

Author Introduction

Nissim Ezekiel (16 December 1924 – 9 January 2004) was an Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, editor and art-critic. He was a foundational figure in postcolonial India's literary history, specifically for Indian writing in English. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his Poetry collection, "Latter-Day Psalms", by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters. Ezekiel has been applauded for his subtle, restrained and well crafted diction, dealing with common and mundane themes in a manner that manifests both cognitive profundity, as well as an unsentimental, realistic sensibility, that has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry. Ezekiel enriched and established Indian English language poetry through his modernist innovations and techniques, which enlarged Indian English literature, moving it beyond purely spiritual and orientalist themes, to include a wider

range of concerns and interests, including mundane familial events, individual angst and skeptical societal introspection.

EARLY LIFE

Ezekiel was born on 16 December 1924 in Mumbai (Maharashtra). His father was a professor of botany at Wilson College, and his mother was principal of her own school. The Ezekiels belonged to Mumbai's Marathi speaking Jewish community, known as the Bene Israel. His maternal uncle was a singer / actor, Nandu Bhende.

In 1947, Ezekiel earned a BA in Literature from Wilson College, Mumbai, University of Mumbai. In 1947-48, he taught English literature and published literary articles. After dabbling in radical politics for a while, he sailed to England in November 1948. He studied philosophy at Birkbeck College, London. After three and a half years stay, Ezekiel worked his way home as a deck-scrubber aboard a ship carrying arms to Indochina.

CAREER

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 Names 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 used LSD. In 1969, *Writers Workshop*, Ezekiel published his *The Damn Plays*. A year later, he presented an art series of ten programmes for Indian television. In 1976, he translated Jawaharlal Nehru poetry from English to Marathi, in collaboration with Vrinda Nabar, and co-edited a fiction and poetry anthology. His poem *The Night Of The Scorpion* is used as study material in Indian and Columbian schools. Ezekiel also penned poems in 'Indian

English' like the one based on instruction boards in his favourite Irani café. His poems are used in NCERT and ICSE English textbooks.

He was honoured with the Padmashri award by the President of India in 1988 and the Sahitya akademi cultural award in 1983.

Introducton

The poem 'Poet, lover, birdwatcher' displays Ezekiel's views on poet's problems. Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher is one of the better known poems of Ezekiel and has received considerable critical attention. The message of them poem is clear, 'The best poets wait for words': the best poets began to write poetry only when they are truly inspired. It epitomizes the poet's search for a poetics which would help him redeem himself in his eyes and in the eyes of god.

Summary

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

The hunts 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 the three cases, but patient waiting is itself strategy, a kind of planned action to reach the goal. The hunt is search for birds or the desire to win a women's heart. Patient love relaxing on hill is to assume an attitude of patience and relaxation while watching birds or women. A timid wing is a

transferred epithet where the idea of a bird being timid is suggested. Until the one who knows that she is loved is for the man to wait for the woman to respond to his love out of her own accord, and should not force him upon her. In this poem poet finds his moral proved, who never spoke before his spirit moved.

Analysis

The first section opens with a reference to 'pace' which is taken up in the second section by slow movement. The lines weave in and out of the three fields and emerge as single morals learnt. The first stanza refers to physical love and suggests how to win women. Women are treated as birds of prey. Making love is like the experience of hunting. Right weapons are to be chosen like appropriate words used by the poet. The lover manipulates the situation in such a manner that the women cannot resist but surrender at the cost of being blamed.

The second stanza stresses the fact that slow movement is good. One has to go to 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 gladness, manages to combine sense and sound.

At the end of his 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 insight they bring.

All three are hunters, we are told: ironically none are going to devour what they succeed to hunt. The poem conducts a lesson through comparisons between the three poets, lover and birdwatcher. Poet is placed first in the title and in the poem he comes last. The differentiated placement is suggestive of who is learning and who becomes a lesson. Lover and birdwatcher are illustrative cases for the poet to learn the craft of poetry. The last two lines of both the sections indicate that the moral to be learnt is for the poet. The poem is well-structured poem in two regular stanzas having the rhyme pattern a b b a a c d c d d in each of them. It has a casual, conversational opening with a direct address to the poets, urging them to patiently wait for words as does a birdwatcher for birds and a lover for his ladylove.

The idea of labour and hard-work is implied here with regard to a bird watcher in search of rare birds and to a poet in search of the right words. ‘And there the women slowly turn around, not only flesh and bone but myths of light’: Only after undergoing an arduous journey may the lover get some response from the woman. The woman then becomes for him not just a being of flesh and blood, but appears as a radiant spirit which is not so much real, but mythical and imaginary. She is no longer a mere physical presence. The poet has thus glorified love as well as the woman who eventually responds to a man’s love.

‘Of Mothers, among other things’

-A.K. Ramanujan

Poem

I smell upon this twisted backbone tree
the silk and whitepetal of my mother’s youth.
From her earrings three diamonds

splash a handful of needles,
and I see my mother run back
from rain to the crying cradles.
The rains tack and sew

with broken threads the rags
of the tree tasseled light.
But her hands are a wet eagle's
two black-pink crinkled feet,

one talon crippled in a garden-
trap set for a mouse. Her saris
do not cling: they hang, loose
feather of a one time wing.

My cold parchment tongue licks bark
in the mouth when I see her four
still sensible fingers slowly flex
to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.

Author Introduction

A.K. RAMANUJAN (1929-1993), Indo-American*
(Ramanujan would remark to friends that he was the hyphen between
Indo-American)

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan was a poet, translator, linguist and folklorist. He was born in Mysore, Karnataka, to a Brahmin Iyengar family that loved and encouraged learning. He received his BA and MA degrees in English language and literature from the University of Mysore. Ramanujan taught at several universities in South India, after which he pursued a graduate diploma in theoretical linguistics from Deccan University in Poona, where he was a fellow. At the age of thirty, he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship at Indiana University, where he would also complete a Ph.D in Linguistics. In 1962, Ramanujan joined the University of Chicago, where he enjoyed an illustrious career as Professor of Linguistics and Professor of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. He taught across several departments, as well as set up the University of Chicago's South Asian Studies program. Ramanujan also taught at several prestigious U.S. colleges such as Harvard University, University of Wisconsin,

and University of California-Berkeley. Ramanujan was fluent in many languages, including English, Kannada and Tamil.

Ramanujan's critical work in Indian folklore and translations of Indian classical literature are highly regarded around the world and taught in colleges in India and the U.S. His essays, such as *Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?* take theoretical approaches from linguistics, in better understanding cultures, religious influences and ways of thinking, via a context-sensitive approach. Ramanujan is considered to be one of the cornerstones of Indo-American poetry, with his poems being an exploration and testament of immigrant life along with the reminiscence and preservation of his Indian culture.

In 1976, the government of India honored Ramanujan with the prestigious Padma Shri, one of its highest civilian awards, for his significant contributions to Indian literature and linguistics. In 1983, he was awarded the MacArthur Prize Fellowship.

Ramanujan passed away on July 13, 1993, in Chicago, Illinois, as a result of an adverse reaction to anesthesia during preparation for surgery.

Introduction

A. K. Ramanujan *Of Mothers, among other things* by A.K. Ramanujan

'Of Mothers, among other things' by A.K. Ramanujan is a five stanza poem that is separated into sets of four lines, or quatrains. These quatrains do not follow a specific rhyme scheme but there are moments of half, or slant, rhyme that help to unify the lines. These are seen through the repetition of assonance or consonance. This means that either a vowel or consonant sound is reused within one line, or multiple lines of verse.

Poetic Techniques

Poetic techniques used by Ramanujan include enjambment, alliteration, and zoomorphism. The later is the opposite of anthropomorphism. It applies to moments in writing in which a person is given animal characteristics. This is the case in ‘Of Mothers, among other things,’ especially in stanzas three and four as the mother is compared to an eagle.

Another important technique that is commonly used within poetry is enjambment. This occurs when a line is cut off before its natural stopping point. It forces a reader down to the next line, and the next, quickly. One has to move forward in order to comfortably resolve a phrase or sentence. The fourth line in the first stanza is a great example. A reader has to go to the second stanza to find out what is going on with her “ear-rings three diamonds”.

Alliteration occurs when words are used in succession, or at least appear close together, and begin with the same letter. For example, the phrase “crying cradles” in the second stanza, “tree-tasselled” in the third, and the words “still,” “sensible” and “slowly” in the fifth.

Summary

‘Of Mothers, among other things’ by A.K. Ramanujan is a vibrant portrait of the speaker’s mother, and the way she has moved through the world.

The poem begins with the speaker smelling the images of his mother’s youth. She was soft, flower-like and silken. That couldn’t last forever though. As she aged she met with adversity, seen through the rain imagery. It tried to tie her up, but she was an eagle and fought through it. But, that wasn’t the end to her troubles.

One very poignant moment in the poem shows the mother, as an eagle, getting one talon trapped in a mousetrap. She lost that finger/talon. The poem concludes with all the images of the previous stanzas come together to depict the mother, in her current, older state, reaching down to “pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.” The son sees her whole history in this movement,

Analysis

Stanza One

In the first lines of ‘Of Mothers, among other things’ the speaker begins by explaining something important he smelled. It was the “silk and white /petal of [his] mother’s youth”. The scent was found on a “blackbone tree.” It speaks to her beauty, youth, and the materials the speaker associates with her.

Many of the images in this poem are obscure, but they are closely associated with the senses. For instance, the reference to silk and white petal. Here, these words bring up feelings of softness, images of flowers, and the smells associated with them, and a general aura of beauty. This is how the speaker sees his mothers youth.

Somehow, he is able to smell it upon a tree he refers to as “blackbone”. The word “blackbone” seems more like an adjective than a noun, describing the look of the tree, rather than a type of tree. It contrasts with the youthful images of beauty and softness in the next lines. These lines suggest that the speaker is able to tap into his mothers youth, while also seeing her from a contemporary perspective. Perhaps, now that she is old, and more substantial in his mind, he sees her like his imagined “blackbone” tree. The fourth line of the stanza references her earrings and is enjambed.

Stanza Two

The second stanza picks up, somewhat, where the first left off. The syntax is confused, making the transition between stanzas and

images complicated. But, it is clear the speaker is still comparing his mother as he knows her now to how she was in her youth. Her diamond earrings are part of a handful of needles, another reference back up to the tree. He goes on to speak to his mother's energy and again, her youthfulness. He can imagine her running "from rain to the crying cradles". Rain is commonly used to refer to negative experiences, or general difficulties. This appears to be true in 'Of Mothers, among other things' as well.

Stanza Three

The third stanza describes how the rain attempted to use its broken threads to tie her down, or sew her up. The progression of her life led her into difficulties. The "light" that was originally associated with her becomes harder to maintain.

The next two lines describe how her hands "are a wet eagle's". This brings back some of the strength the speaker has previously associated with her. An eagle represents power, and in this instance, strength in the face of adversity. The eagle's feet might be wet, but they are still have talons. There are a number of other contrasts in the following lines as the eagle's feet are both "black" and "pink crinkled".

Stanza Four

The fourth stanza is another example of how with age, the mother's youthfulness and a softness was degraded. She experienced other setbacks, such as getting "one talon crippled in a garden trap set for a mouse". She was permanently changed and to this day, as will be stated in the fifth stanza, the speaker can see the impact of this injury.

The imagery of the bird is continued in 'Of Mothers, among other things' as the speaker references the mother's saris. They do not cling as they might've done in the past, but "hang loose" like "feathers of a

onetime wing”. She is no longer the eagle she used to be, but parts of her past still exist.

Stanza Five

The fifth stanza of ‘Of Mothers, among other things’ brings the description of the mother around to the speaker himself. He speaks of his own “cold parchment tongue”. There is a strangeness to this image that connects the eagle-like image of the mother to her son. He again taps into the reader’s senses to explain how he feels when he sees his mother’s four intact fingers.

All the images of the previous stanzas come together to depict the mother, in her current, older state, reaching down to “pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.” The speaker draws attention to the way her fingers “slowly flex”. They are “sensible” and simple in their actions. He sees her whole history in this movement, from her silken, soft youth to the rainy troubles of her aging years, to her current, sensible existence.

UNIT – III

Playing The English Gentleman -M. K. Gandhi

Author Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was the primary leader of India’s independence movement and also the architect of a form of non-violent civil disobedience that would influence the world. Until Gandhi was assassinated in 1948, his life and teachings inspired activists including Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Who Was Mahatma Gandhi?

Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of India’s non-violent independence movement against British rule and in South Africa who advocated for

the civil rights of Indians. Born in Porbandar, India, Gandhi studied law and organized boycotts against British institutions in peaceful forms of civil disobedience. He was killed by a fanatic in 1948.

Early Life and Education

Indian nationalist leader Gandhi (born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Kathiawar, India, which was then part of the British Empire. Gandhi's father, Karamchand Gandhi, served as a chief minister in Porbandar and other states in western India. His mother, Putlibai, was a deeply religious woman who fasted regularly. Young Gandhi was a shy, unremarkable student who was so timid that he slept with the lights on even as a teenager. In the ensuing years, the teenager rebelled by smoking, eating meat and stealing change from household servants. Although Gandhi was interested in becoming a doctor, his father hoped he would also become a government minister and steered him to enter the legal profession. In 1888, 18-year-old Gandhi sailed for London, England, to study law. The young Indian struggled with the transition to Western culture. Upon returning to India in 1891, Gandhi learned that his mother had died just weeks earlier. He struggled to gain his footing as a lawyer. In his first courtroom case, a nervous Gandhi blanked when the time came to cross-examine a witness. He immediately fled the courtroom after reimbursing his client for his legal fees.

Text

My faith in vegetarianism grew on me from day to day. Salt's book whetted my appetite for dietetic studies. I went in for all books available on vegetarianism and read them. One of these, Howard Williams' *The Ethics of Diet*, was a 'biographical history of the literature of humane dietetics from the earliest period to the present day'. It tried to make out, that all philosophers and prophets from Pythagoras and Jesus down to those of the present age were vegetarians. Dr. Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet* was also

an attractive book. Dr. Allinson's writings on health and hygiene were likewise very helpful. He advocated a curative system based on regulation of the dietary of patients. Himself a vegetarian, he prescribed for his patients also a strictly vegetarian diet. The result of reading all this literature was that dietetic experiments came to take an important place in my life. Health was the principal consideration of these experiments to begin with. But later on religion became the supreme motive.

Meanwhile my friend had not ceased to worry about me. His love for me led him to think that, if I persisted in my objections to meat-eating, I should not only develop a weak constitution, but should remain a duffer, because I should never feel at home in English society. When he came to know that I had begun to interest myself in books on vegetarianism, he was afraid lest these studies should muddle my head; that I should fritter my life away in experiments, forgetting my own work, and become a crank. He therefore made one last effort to reform me. He one day invited me to go to the theatre. Before the play we were to dine together at the Holborn Restaurant, to me a palatial place and the first big restaurant I had been to since leaving the Victoria Hotel. The stay at that hotel had scarcely been a helpful experience for I had not lived there with my wits about me. The friend had planned to take me to this restaurant evidently imagining that modesty would forbid any questions. And it was a very big company of diners in the midst of which my friend and I sat sharing a table between us. The first course was soup. I wondered what it might be made of, but dared not ask the friend about it. I therefore summoned the waiter. My friend saw the movement and sternly asked across the table what was the matter. With considerable hesitation I told him that I wanted to inquire if the soup was a vegetable soup. 'You are too clumsy for decent society,' he passionately exclaimed 'If you cannot behave yourself, you had better go. Feed in some other restaurant and await me outside.' This delighted me. Out I went. There was a vegetarian restaurant close by, but it was closed. So I went without food that night. I accompanied my friend to the theatre, but he never said a word about the scene I had created. On my part of course there was nothing to say.

That was the last friendly tussle we had. It did not affect our relations in the least. I could see and appreciate the love by which all my friend's efforts were actuated, and my respect for him was all the greater on account of our differences in thought and action.

But I decided that I should put him at ease, that I should assure him that I would be clumsy no more, but try to become polished and make up for my vegetarianism by cultivating other accomplishments which fitted one for polite society. And for this purpose I undertook the all too impossible task of becoming an English gentleman.

The clothes after the Bombay cut that I was wearing were, I thought, unsuitable for English society, and I got new ones at the Army and Navy stores. I also went in for a chimney-pot hat costing nineteen shillings – an excessive price in those days. Not content with this, I wasted ten pounds on an evening suit made in Bond Street, the centre of fashionable life in London; and got my good and noble-hearted brother to send me a double watch-chain of gold. It was not correct to wear a ready-made tie and I learnt the art of tying one for myself.

While in India, the mirror had been a luxury permitted on the days when the family barber gave me a shave. Here I wasted ten minutes every day before a huge mirror, watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the correct fashion. My hair was by no means soft, and every day it meant a regular struggle with the brush to keep it in position. Each time the hat was put on and off, the hand would automatically move towards the head to adjust the hair, not to mention the other civilized habit of the hand every now and then operating for the same purpose when sitting in polished society.

As if all this were not enough to make me look the thing, I directed my attention to other details that were supposed to go towards the making of an English gentleman. I was told it was necessary for me to take lessons in dancing, French and elocution. French was not only the language of neighbouring France, but it was the lingua franca of the Continent over which I had a desire to travel. I decided to take dancing lessons at a class and paid down £3 as fees for a term. I must have taken about six lessons in three weeks. But it was beyond me to achieve anything like rhythmic motion. I could not follow the piano and hence found it impossible to keep time. What then was I to do? The recluse in the fable kept a cat to keep off the rats, and then a cow

to feed the cat with milk, and a man to keep the cow and so on. My ambitions also grew like the family of the recluse. I thought I should learn to play the violin in order to cultivate an ear for Western music. So I invested £3 in a violin and something more in fees. I sought a third teacher to give me lessons in elocution and paid him a preliminary fee of a guinea. He recommended Bell's Standard Elocutionist as the text-book, which I purchased. And I began with a speech of Pitt's.

But Mr. Bell rang the bell of alarm in my ear and I awoke.

I had not to spend a lifetime in England, I said to myself. What then was the use of learning elocution? And how could dancing make a gentleman of me? The violin I could learn even in India. I was a student and ought to go on with my studies. I should qualify myself to join the Inns of Court. If my character made a gentleman of me, so much the better. Otherwise I should forego the ambition.

These and similar thoughts possessed me, and I expressed them in a letter which I addressed to the elocution teacher, requesting him to excuse me from further lessons. I had taken only two or three. I wrote a similar letter to the dancing teacher, and went personally to the violin teacher with a request to dispose of the violin for any price it might fetch. She was rather friendly to me, so I told her how I had discovered that I was pursuing a false ideal. She encouraged me in the determination to make a complete change.

This infatuation must have lasted about three months. The punctiliousness in dress persisted for years. But henceforward I became a student.

Be Eco-Friendly Save Trees

Summary

In Playing the English Gentleman by Mahatma Gandhi we have the theme of identity, acceptance, change, perception and tradition. Taken from his autobiography The Story of My Experiments with Truth the reader realises after reading the essay that Gandhi may be exploring the theme of identity. There is a sense that Gandhi while a student in England wishes to fit in with his peers even though he may live a lifestyle that would be deemed unfamiliar to an English gentleman

(being a vegetarian for example). Regardless of this Gandhi does go some way in order to give off the appearance of an English gentleman. Going as far as getting dancing lessons, changing his attire, learning the violin and getting elocution lessons. All of which Gandhi hopes will help him to fit in with his surroundings and be accepted by others. However there does come a point when Gandhi realises that he is living a lie and that he is not only fooling himself but also denying his tradition or the fact that he is an Indian and not an Englishman.

What is also interesting about the essay is the fact that the reader is left with a sense that Gandhi may be feeling insecure within himself. Unable to accept who he is and as such decides to change his very fabric in order to fit in with his peers. In reality it is up to others to accept Gandhi as he is and not the other way around. Gandhi's peers have an obligation to accept him as he is. Though this may not necessarily be how matters are perceived by others. Many might believe that in order to be accepted as a peer, which Gandhi wants to be, one must change their life to how the majority live theirs. The insecurity that Gandhi may feel as a student is not to be confused with a deeper insecurity often found and developed in a person since youth. Gandhi simply wants to fit in while living in England. It doesn't appear as though he is intent on living his life while back in India as an Englishman. Though some critics might think differently suggesting that Gandhi's insecurities are deeply rooted and he is embarrassed by his appearance when compared to the average Englishman. If this is the case then the fact that Gandhi decides against change suggests that he realises he is attempting to be something he is not. And as such Gandhi is comfortable with his identity.

However the fact that Gandhi can have concerns about his identity is important as it suggests that Gandhi may have internal doubts about who he is. Though it might be important to again remember that Gandhi overcomes these doubts and rediscovers who he really is. An Indian man who is studying and living in England. A person who does not necessarily have to change his appearance or how he speaks. The responsibility as mentioned is on others to accept Gandhi for who he is. Whether people do is entirely up to them. Should they not accept

Gandhi for who he is than they are at a loss. The fact that Gandhi learns quickly that dancing is not for him might also be important as symbolically this could suggest that Gandhi walks his own path. A path that may make an English gentleman uncomfortable as it is contrary to his beliefs. Similarly when it comes to speaking and the lessons in elocution. Symbolically Gandhi could be suggesting that speaking may not be important but rather the content of one's speech might be more important.

The end of the essay is also interesting as there is a sense that though Gandhi might feel as though he has been beaten in his attempts to be an Englishman. He has rediscovered who he really is. Something which in time would serve Gandhi well. Even if he at the time he could not imagine how it might. By rejecting the rules of being an English gentleman Gandhi has not only found his true identity but he has also learnt a valuable lesson. How important it is for a person to be true to themselves. Something that is obvious to readers by the fact that Gandhi gives up all pursuits when it comes to being an English gentleman. Gandhi is displaying an honesty that many might not because they wish to fit in with a system that may or may not be right or appropriate for them. Some people are naturally suited to be English gentlemen while others are foolish to try and pursue the rule if it means they forgo their true identity.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

-Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam

Introduction

In this prose “The Power of Prayer”, Abdul Kalam writes about his childhood spend in his village. He shares his memories with his parents, friends and the power of prayer.

Author Introduction

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in full Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, (born October 15, 1931, [Rameswaram](#), India—died July 27, 2015, Shillong), Indian scientist and politician who played a leading role in

the development of [India's](#) missile and [nuclear weapons](#) programs. He was [president](#) of India from 2002 to 2007.

TOP QUESTIONS

Kalam earned a degree in [aeronautical engineering](#) from the Madras Institute of Technology and in 1958 joined the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). He soon moved to the [Indian Space Research Organisation](#), where he was project director of the [SLV-III](#), India's first indigenously designed and produced satellite [launch vehicle](#). Rejoining DRDO in 1982, Kalam planned the program that produced a number of successful missiles, which helped earned him the nickname "Missile Man."

From 1992 to 1997 Kalam was scientific adviser to the defense minister, and he later served as principal scientific adviser (1999–2001) to the government with the rank of cabinet minister. His prominent role in the country's 1998 nuclear weapons tests established Kalam as a national hero, although the tests caused great concern in the international [community](#). In 1998 Kalam put forward a countrywide plan called Technology Vision 2020, which he described as a road map for transforming India from a less-developed to a developed society in 20 years. The plan called for, among other measures, increasing agricultural productivity, emphasizing [technology](#) as a vehicle for [economic growth](#), and widening access to health care and education.

In 2002 India's ruling [National Democratic Alliance](#) (NDA) put forward Kalam to succeed outgoing President [Kocheril Raman Narayanan](#). Kalam was nominated by the Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) NDA even though he was Muslim, and his stature and popular appeal were such that even the main opposition party, the [Indian National Congress](#), also proposed his candidacy. Kalam easily won the election and was sworn in as India's 11th president, a largely ceremonial post, in July 2002. He remained committed to using [science](#) and technology to transform India into a developed country. In 2007 Kalam left office and was succeeded by [Pratibha Patil](#), the country's first woman president.

Kalam wrote several books, including an autobiography, *Wings of Fire* (1999). Among his numerous awards were two of the country's highest honours, the Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the Bharat Ratna (1997).

TEXT

Kalam's Memories

Abdul Kalam was born in a middle class family in Rameshwaram. His father Jainulabdeen was a humble man and possessed wisdom. His mother was a homemaker and hospitable woman. Kalam was a short and dark boy. He lived in their ancestral home. His father did not like any luxuries but provided all necessities to them. Kalam lived a secure

childhood. Rameshwaram was a Hindu pilgrim centre. The Siva temple was very famous. Kalam's locality was full of Muslim people with few Hindu families. Muslims and Hindus lived happily. Kalam went to the old Mosque every evening with his father. He did not understand the Arabic prayers but believed that they reached God. After the prayer, People of different religions keep the bowls of water and Kalam's father tipped his fingers in the water and prayed. They believe the Holy water cured their diseases. They thanked his father's but he replied the praise should be dedicated to the almighty Allah. Kalam wondered at his father's curative powers and humility. Kalam's father was very friendly with the high priest of Rameshwaram temple. They discussed about the spiritual matters. Kalam asked the meaning of prayer to his father. His father said to him that prayer could foster spiritual communion among people and God. Prayer transcends wealth, religion, caste and creed. Everybody is a part of the universe. Nobody should fear for difficulties and suffering. They are opportunities for self-communication and progress. According to Kalam's father, he acts as a messenger between people and God. Prayer conquers demonic forces and brings relief and success. Thus, Kalam understood the value of prayer from his father. Kalam's father was a systematic man. Daily, he rose at 4:00 a.m and read the Namaz. Then, he walked to his coconut grove and returned with a dozen coconuts. Kalam took his father as his model. He also learned some fundamental truths about the universe. Later, he followed them in his world of science and technology. Kalam's father built a wooden boat with the help of his relative Ahmad Jallaluddin. He transported pilgrims between Rameshwaram and Dhanushkodi. He did good business with it. One day a cyclone destroyed the boat. They try to save the passengers. His father saved them whole-heartedly. Jallaluddeen and Kalam become close friends. They often walked together. They discussed spiritual matters when they went around the Siva temple with the Hindu Pilgrims. Druid

Be Eco-Friendly Save Trees They watched the rituals and they believed that the prayers of the pilgrims reached God. Thus, Kalam developed an open outlook. This made him a man who loved people of all religions.

Jallaluddeen could not get higher education but he had good English Knowledge. He helped many people and encouraged Kalam in his education. He introduced scientific discoveries, contemporary literature and medical achievements. Kalam read many books from lending them from a revolutionary man named S.T.R. Manickam.

Samsuddin was

Kalam's cousin. He was a newspaper agent. Kalam earned money by distributing papers. During the World War II, there was a demand for tamarind seeds and Kalam picked and sold them.

Conclusion

Thus, genuine men moulded Kalam. He inherited self-discipline from his father, and faith in goodness and kindness for his mother. His companionship with Jallaluddeen, Samsuddin and S.T.R. Manikam had greatest influence on his life. His success was largely because of his practical wisdom.

UNIT – IV

Nagamandala - Girish Karnad

Introduction

The play Nagamandala is based on the two oral stories from Karnataka that the playwright Girish Karnad heard from his mentor, Professor A.K Ramanujan. Karnad through the play exposes the exploitation and incarceration of women that occurs through the institution of marriage and how myths display the fears of men in society and are thus inherently patriarchal and are used in order to control and restrict the actions of women. The play also mocks the idea of chastity and aims at the emancipation and empowerment of women.

Author Introduction

Girish Karnad, (born May 19, 1938, [Matheran](#), Bombay Presidency [now in Maharashtra], India—died June 10, 2019, [Bengaluru](#), Karnataka), Indian playwright, author, actor, and [film](#) director whose movies and plays, written largely in [Kannada](#), explore the present by way of the past.

After graduating from Karnataka University in 1958, Karnad studied philosophy, politics, and economics as a [Rhodes scholar](#) at the [University of Oxford](#) (1960–63). He wrote his first [play](#), the critically acclaimed *Yayati* (1961), while still at Oxford. Centred on the story of a mythological king, the play established Karnad’s use of the themes of history and mythology that would inform his work over the following decades. Karnad’s next play, *Tughlaq* (1964), tells the story of the 14th-century sultan [Muhammad ibn Tughluq](#) and remains among the best known of his works.

Samskara (1970) marked Karnad’s entry into filmmaking. He wrote the [screenplay](#) and played the lead role in the film, an [adaptation](#) of an [anticaste](#) novel of the same name by U.R. Ananthamurthy. Karnad followed with *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), codirected by B.V. Karanth. During this period Karnad continued to produce work as a playwright, including *Hayavadana* (1971), widely recognized as among the most important plays of postindependence [India](#). For his contributions to [theatre](#), he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India’s top civilian honours, in 1974.

Karnad’s other well-known films in Kannada included *Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane* (1977; *Godhuli*) and *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978). He also worked in [Hindi](#), [directing](#) the critically acclaimed *Utsav* (1984), an adaptation of Shudraka’s 4th-century [Sanskrit](#) play *Mrichchakatika*. With the play *Nagamandala* (1988), Karnad framed an unhappy contemporary marriage in imagery drawn from Kannada folk tales.

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In 1992 the Indian government awarded Karnad another of its highest honours, the Padma Bhushan, in recognition of his contributions to the arts. He was the recipient of the [Jnanpith Award](#), India's highest literary prize, in 1999 for his contributions to [literature](#) and theatre. He continued to work in film, directing such movies as Kanooru Heggadithi (1999) and [acting](#) in Iqbal (2005), Life Goes On (2009), and 24 (2016), among others.

Summary of Nagamandala

The play is based on a rural setting and centred around the life of Rani, who is the everyday submissive rural Indian woman who is married off to a man by her parents, who arrange the marriage without taking into consideration her wishes. Her husband, a rich man named Appanna (which translates to any man). The name is a symbol employed by Karnad to highlight that this is the reality of most weddings that occur. It is to show how marriage is a patriarchal institution that has always been unfair to women.

Rani goes to Appanna's house with the hopes of living a quiet, domestic life that she has been conditioned to expect but the reality she faces is horrendous. On the first day of their marriage, Appanna locks her in the house and goes to visit his mistress. This goes on every day as Appanna's treatment of Rani is sub-human and he neglects her needs. She is kept isolated from society and due to the conditioning, she has undergone in her patriarchal set-up, she does not have the courage to question Appanna and better her condition. This stands to show that women in society lose the agency to question but when they violate the prescribed patriarchal norms, they are questioned immediately. The same is not the case for men who are free to do as they please.

We find that Karnad's play is full of symbolism that represents the unequal nature of our society and how the women feel. As Rani's emotional and sexual needs are not being met, she suppresses her urges and this suppression is meant to display how women are not able to claim their needs. She dreams of an eagle coming taking her far away from Appanna's world, which is another symbol of the

repression of her desires. Her repressed desire to be loved and to be free gets expression in her fantasy where an eagle wants to take her away. Being a victim of extreme isolation and subjugation, her dreams function to her emotional needs.

As the story progresses, Rani comes across Kurudava who offers her a mystical root which if she feeds Appanna, will lead to him forgetting about his mistress and being completely devoted to her. Upon cooking the root, the potion takes a horrible red color and she disposes of it in a nearby ant hill where a Naga(snake) drinks it. The snake falls in love with Rani due to the potion and takes the form of Appanna at night, praises her long hair and talks a lot about her parents and listens to her attentively. He also fulfills Rani's sexual needs and soon she falls in love with the Appanna.

She however gets confused with the discrepancy in behaviour between the Appanna she sees at noon, who disregards her and leaves for his mistress and the Appanna at night, who treats her with care and is a sensual lover. However, she can't question her husband. She must obey whatever she was told by her husband or any other male. Here nobody permits Rani to question anybody – Naga because of his deep passionate love for her and Appanna for his egoistic, male chauvinistic dominance. The women are seen as an object and not as a human being with an agency of her own.

Soon, Rani becomes pregnant which angers Appanna who calls her a harlot when she says that the child is his and she has done nothing wrong. She is taken to the village panchayat, where she must undergo a chastity test in order to prove her innocence. Nobody brings forth the question of Appanna being questioned for his misdeeds which again shows the two-faced notion of patriarchal justice that the panchayat was going to employ. Her test consists of her having to put her hand in a snake pit – if deemed pure, the snake would not bite her and if guilty of adultery, she would be poisoned by the very snake.

THE ANXIOUS, SCARED, WOMAN FINDS WITHIN HERSELF, COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE AND GAINS SOCIAL RESPECTABILITY AS SHE EMERGES VICTORIOUS FROM THE PUBLIC TRIAL, BY THE SAME PUBLIC TRIAL THAT WAS MEANT TO CONDEMN HER.

The Naga goes into the pit and makes an umbrella with his hood over her head and moves over her shoulder to make a garland. In an ironic situation, her infidelity comes to her aid in proving that she is a faithful wife. The panchayat declares that Rani is not only equal to a righteous man but is beyond human beings and is, in fact, a Goddess. Appanna too 'realises' this and begs for forgiveness and attempts to reconcile with Rani. Thus, the anxious, scared woman finds within herself, courage and confidence and gains social respectability as she emerges victorious from the public trial, by the same public trial that was meant to condemn her.

She now has more control of her life and, more importantly, respect. There are multiple ends given by Karnad that talk of the fate of the snake. The most accepted is the case where the snake strangles himself to death upon seeing Rani reconcile with Appanna.

Conclusion

Through the play, we can see that women can only be on par with men through attaining a god-like status, but this is only the case if the status quo of the society is maintained. In Rani's case, society is still patriarchal and exploitative in nature. However, she gains respect due to events that unfold during the trial. Her material reality has not changed. Hence, Girish Karnad implies that as long as the existing material reality of women is not changed, where they are forced to be reliant on the closest patriarch in their life, they can only attain freedom and respect by becoming god-like.

UNIT-V

Coolie **Mulk Raj Anand**

Introduction

Coolie, by Mulk Raj Anand, was first published in 1936 and helped to establish Anand as one of the foremost Anglophone Indian writers of his day. Like much of his other work, this novel is concerned with the consequences of British Rule in India and with the rigid caste system that structured Indian society. “Coolie” is a term for an unskilled laborer, though it can also be used as a pejorative.

Author Introduction

Nationality: Indian. Born: Peshawar, 1905. Education: Khalsa College, Amritsar; Punjab University, 1921-24, B.A. (honours) 1924; University College, University of London, 1926-29, Ph.D.; Cambridge University, 1929-30; League of Nations School of Intellectual Cooperation, Geneva, 1930-32. Career: Lecturer, School of Intellectual Cooperation, Summer 1930, and Workers Educational Association, London, intermittently 1932-45; has also taught at the universities of Punjab, Benares, and Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1948-66; Tagore Professor of Literature and Fine Art, University of Punjab, 1963-66; Visiting Professor, Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 1967-68. Fine Art Chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Art), New Delhi, 1965-70. Since 1946 editor, Marg magazine, Bombay: editor and contributor, Marg Encyclopedia of Art, 136 vols., 1948-81; since 1946 director, Kutub Publishers, Bombay. Since 1970 President of the Lokayata Trust, for creating a community and cultural centre in Hauz Khas village, New Delhi. Awards: Leverhulme fellowship, 1940-42; World Peace Council prize, 1952; Padma Bhushan, India, 1968; Akademi prize, for Morning Face, 1970; Sahitya Academy award, 1974; Birla award; distinguished writer award, State Government of Maharashtra, India. D. Litt: University of Delhi, University of Patiala, University of Andhra, University of Benaras, and University of Kanpur. Fellow, Indian Academy of Letters.

Summary of the Novel

Anand's novel tells the story of Munoo, a young boy from the Kangra Hills in Bilaspur. He is an orphan who lives with his aunt and uncle; however, early in the novel they reveal they can no longer support Munoo and insist that he get a job. This is the beginning of a journey that will take Munoo to Bombay and beyond, but it also marks the end of his childhood.

With his Uncle, Munoo travels to a nearby town where he finds a job as a servant to a bank clerk, Babu Nathoo Ram. Munoo is mistreated by his master's wife but he admires his master's younger brother, Prem Chand, who is a doctor. Babu Nathoo Ram himself is something of a caricature; a typical example of a Middle Class Anglophile who has internalized the values of the colonizer and firmly believes in the supremacy of white people. A great fuss is made when the aptly named Mr. English visits the bank where Babu Nathoo Ram works, but Anand uses this episode to undercut the apparent superiority of the English. When Prem Chand enquires about the best place in Britain to further his medical training, it is revealed that Mr. English is uneducated and doesn't know.

After accidentally injuring Sheila, Babu Nathoo Ram's daughter, Munoo is beaten and decides to run away. He makes it as far as Daultapur, where he is taken in by Prabha, who runs a pickle factory. Prabha and his wife are kind to Munoo, although the work is hard. Throughout the novel, Anand points to the way the lower classes are exploited by those above them, with Munoo being the ultimate example of this exploitation. Here, he shows how Prabha must appease his neighbor, the Public Prosecutor Sir Todar Mal, with free pickles and jam to prevent him having the factory shut down because the smoke irritates him. Ultimately, however, it is Prabha's own business partner, Ganpat, who cheats him and leaves him bankrupt, suggesting a lack of class consciousness or solidarity.

When Prabha loses the factory, Munoo is left to fend for himself once again. He meets an elephant driver who is travelling to Bombay with a circus and decides to join them. At first, Munoo is delighted with Bombay, but he soon realizes that, even here, “coolies” must sleep on the streets. He finds work at Sir George White’s cotton mill where he meets Ratan, a man he comes to idolize. Ratan is a wrestler and a member of the worker’s union, a man who has chosen to fight his masters and reject the exploitative conditions in which he labors. The optimistic possibility symbolized by Ratan is short lived for Munoo, however, as a riot breaks out during a workers’ strike and he becomes lost.

While wandering the streets, he is run over by Mrs. Mainwaring’s car. As compensation, she hires him as a servant and takes him to Simla. Mrs. Mainwaring offers insight into another dimension of Indian society. She has English, as well as Indian, ancestry, and longs to be accepted by English society. As a result she travelled to England and married a young English soldier. Her desire to be recognized as English can also be read as a desire to be recognized as white, with all of the privileges that accompany whiteness in colonial India, privileges that Munoo will never enjoy. Despite the kindness that Mrs. Mainwaring shows him, Munoo contracts tuberculosis and dies, aged just fifteen.

Coolie is a devastating account of the poverty and exploitation faced, not just by Munoo, but thousands like him. Anand shows how the racial and class hierarchies imposed by British colonialism have intersected, or overlaid, the existing caste system to make life impossible for “coolies”. Munoo has no real control over his life; over the work he does or where he lives or how he is treated. As he moves from one place to another in search of a job or a home, he moves from one tragedy to another. In his travels and through the various people he meets and is employed by, he is exposed to the multiplicity of life in India which is made vivid by Anand’s prose. If the novel’s portrait of Munoo’s life raises difficult questions about Indian society, Munoo’s death raises the question of whether there can be any future for a “coolie” if nothing changes.

THANK YOU