Elective English - III

DENG202

LOVELY
PROFESSIONAL
UNIVERSITY

ELECTIVE ENGLISH—III

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SYLLABUS

Elective English—III

Objectives:

- To introduce the student to the development and growth of various trends and movements in England and its society.
- To make students analyze poems critically.
- To improve students' knowledge of literary terminology.

Sr. No.	Content
1	The Linguist by Geetashree Chatterjee
2	A Dream within a Dream by Edgar Allan Poe
3	Chitra by Rabindranath Tagore
4	Ode to the West Wind by P.B.Shelly. The Vendor of Sweets by R.K. Narayan
5	How Much Land does a Man Need by Leo Tolstoy
6	The Agony of Win by Malavika Roy Singh
7	Love Lives Beyond the Tomb by John Clare. The Traveller's story of a Terribly Strange Bed by Wilkie Collins
8	Beggarly Heart by Rabindranath Tagore
9	Next Sunday by R.K. Narayan
10	A Lickpenny Lover by O' Henry

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Unit 1: The Linguist by Geetashree Chatterjee

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Geetashree Chatterjee
- Understand Geetashree Chatterjee's short story 'The Linguist'

Introduction

Geetashree Chatterjee is an upcoming writer and her stories have not gained popularity but this is the reason for including her work in this curriculum. Chatterjee is a short story writer who writes down her feelings without any qualms, which make them, heart rendering. Apart from writing short stories, Chatterjee writes reviews, blogs, commentaries and poems. Her blogs *Panaecea* and *Speak Your Heart Out* are storehouse of her works. She has also written stories like Maamone and Illusion.

This unit talks about a short story *The Linguist* and let the readers explore the world of two college friends and their bond of friendship.

1.1 About the Author

Geetashree Chatterjee was born in Kolkata, West Bengal, brought up in Delhi, is a graduate from Delhi University. She also holds a Diploma in Personnel Management & Industrial Relations. She has worked with the Petroleum & Natural Gas Sector for 22 years (including 13 years in HR). She loves listening to Hindustani Classical Music, now; she is an avid listener of music. She is also fond of other art forms such as painting, sculpting or dancing.

She is not exactly a passionate reader; however, particular topics and subjects might compel her to read. Like reading, writing was never on her mind. It was not even a hobby or least a passion. However, it suddenly happened to her. She just began to express her feelings and experiences on paper. Though she has always been intrigued by the beauty of language – be it English, Bengali (her mother tongue) or Hindi, writing was not on the cards. However, it began probably as a sort of replacement therapy for music.

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Gradually, Chatterjee's heart established an intimate connection with poetry. "Perhaps the need arises from vocalizing thoughts cooped up somewhere. A need to regurgitate and reach across!" She says. She loves to speak about common people, usually overlooked or ignored by many writers. She describes herself as nobody struggling to find an identity among the worthy. She believes that someday she would add and etch the everyday chaos that life subjects her to, because that is also an indivisible part of her.

Example: Casket of Love, The Imposter, The Bizarre Shadow Part 1 and 2, Mr. Barlow's Bungalow, I Wish I Could Be Your Beau, Mamonne and Amaresh are some of the short stories by Geetashree Chatterjee.

Task Read Chatterjee's blogs *Panaecea* and *Speak Your Heart Out* and write an analysis on them.

1.2 The Linguist – Summary

The story is about two friends, their friendship, jealousy, freedom and happiness. Nalini and the narrator are good friends and share common interest for literature. When the narrator is told that Nalini is getting married to a linguist professor living in abroad, she was jealous. Soon that day came when Nalini left the country to live with her intellectual husband abroad. Here the narrator got busy with her job and several years passed. One day both friends meet at a get together and the narrator becomes aware of Nalini's troubled married life. The narrator is quite amused to know that Nalini had to deal with the high expectations of being a linguist's wife. She realised may be Nalini's life was not all rosy abroad. However, the story ends when the friends meet accidently in CP, Delhi.

Notes The intrinsic theme of the story is driving pleasure out of the misfortune of others. This character trait is present in almost every individual and spares no one. However, any individual characterising this trait cannot help but feel guilty afterwards.

1.3 The Linguist – Story

Nalini looked radiant and she had every reason to be so. She was getting married. The exciting news was conveyed in jubilant whispers as soon as Mrs. Kocchar, our lecturer, turned her back towards us. She wrote something on the blackboard but we had little attention for her notes or lecture.

Nalini and I were classmates post graduating in English literature – final year. We were not bosom friends but shared a common love for the English language or for that matter, any language. Much of our leisure (in between classes) was spent wrangling over the subtle nuances of Dickens, Hardy, Bronte, Shelly, Tagore, Prem Chand, and others in the league – sometimes in the empty lecture halls, sometimes in the crowded canteen and at other times while walking down to the bus stop to catch our respective University Specials.

However, today, the classics were set aside. I eagerly waited for Mrs. Kochhar's session to end so that I could pounce on Nalini to extricate some more information about the imminent ceremony. We were out on the compound as soon as the class was over.

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It was peak winter in the capital. The pale warmth of the sun soothed our freezing bones. I found an excuse to draw Nalini apart from her group. "So what does he do?" "Oh! He is a professor," Nalini said airily. I coaxed for more. "A linguist!" She added after a while. Now pride was clearly intoned in her reply. He is a professor of Comparative Study of Languages working at one of the widely known international academic centres. He holds quite an authority on the subject! He would be visiting India very soon to tie the knot and whisk the bride away with him.

"How lucky!" I said. She looked cool in a blue salwar suit. There was an additional sparkle in her large, luminous eyes. I could almost hear her noisy heartbeat. Her face was suffused with colour. In addition, her breath came in short spurts. Nalini looked like an over inflated balloon ready to burst any moment with uncontained joy.

Nalini would be settling abroad which meant that I would not be able to see her more often. The thought made me a little sad. We had spent some lovely time together. Our thirst for knowledge was unquenchable and spirit of imbibing boundless.

I could not stop marvelling at what Nalini's life would be being married to a linguist. For me it was the ultimate enraptured existence! How her eclectic horizons would broaden discoursing with an intellectual giant who coupled as a soul mate too! Life could not have been more profitable for Nalini.

It was fantasizing on Nalini's post-marital bliss that I experienced the first pang of jealousy – a mild but pricking pain in my heart!

The marriage was fixed on a date after the final exams, three months hence. Nalini seemed to be on winged feet. Of course, she was in constant touch with her beau as was obvious from the conversations that we were having lately.

"Toska!" She threw the word in the air. I jumped up and caught it. "Russian", she explained, "The word has several layers to it. Love-sickness is one of them. Putting it simply!" We hurried towards the library.

A week later, we collided in the corridor. Nalini broke into a tinkle of merry laughter. "So how's the romance going?" I asked jokingly. "Oh! We often "meet" on Skype. But most of the time we are in a state of mamihlapinatapei!" "What's that?" I exclaimed uncomprehendingly. Nalini elaborated that it signified the meaningful look shared by two people who desired to initiate something but were hesitant to do so, each expecting the other to start.

Nalini shuttled these invaluable gems at me as though tossing a bowl of juicy meat towards a ravenous hound. I would hurriedly note them down in my diary. However, at times I also missed one or two, which left me with a sense of acute deprivation. During this time, the pain in my chest also intensified.

The marriage was a grand affair. Nalini dazzled while the groom looked shy and ill at ease. A little advance in age, perhaps, but definitely the most prized catch. I wanted to draw him into a "meaningful" chat but he appeared to be a man of very few words. One who would like to lose his identity in the crowd.

A month after Nalini left for her new home. We did meet years later but she was not the Nalini I remembered.

The mobile rang incessantly. I extended my hand under the quilt to answer the call.

"Hi Geeta! Sorry to wake you up early in the morning. However, I wanted to invite you home this evening. We are having a get-together, just a few of us, old college mates."

"Hi Shamlee! An invitation for a wakeup call! One couldn't ask for more."

"So sorry! However, it is just next to impossible to get you these days. That's why thought of calling you up at this wee hour."

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I could not argue on that. My work took up most of my time. I had almost ex-communicated my friends. My social circle was next to nil. I suffered from numerous ailments and in spite of all the hard work, that I put in and the timely promotion up the organizational ladder, I generally felt dejected with my life and myself. This was my last chance to woo normalcy. Therefore, I heartily agreed to join the bandwagon at Shamlee's sharp at eight in the evening.

"I have a surprise in store for you." Shamlee looked chic in her new dress. She pointed a well-manicured finger towards the opposite corner of the room. A lone, emaciated form nursing a drink occupied the sofa. The soft lighting over played the shadows in the room. I could barely make out a long drawn face, wrinkled brows, hollowed cheeks, worried eyes and drooping lips.

"N-a-l-i-n-i" I halted on each letter. She looked so different….withdrawn…unhappy.

She was equally startled to see me but merely gave a half-hearted "Hi" in reply. Averting gaze she concentrated on the drink. My attempts at conversation yielded minimal response.

It was Shamlee who filled me in later. Nalini's marriage seemed to be on the rocks. Apparently, married to a linguist had its own share of strain. Nalini's husband nurtured a selective society of fellow linguists who had this strange habit of communicating in multiple languages. Naturally, Nalini found it difficult to keep pace with them. At times, she felt like an outsider and at other times, she was made to feel like one. She tried to discuss the matter with her husband. However, he only had a quiet contempt for an answer. Gradually, diffidence set in. Nalini felt as though she were good for nothing and retreated into a shell, which made things worse. Somebody suggested a change of scene. That was why this sudden visit to the homeland all by herself. But Shamlee had grave doubts whether this self-imposed separation would ultimately prove fruitful.

I remembered the Nalini of yore – cheerful, giggly, loud, opinionated, noisily arguing on Tennyson's superiority over other poets. "Depressing!" I genuinely felt sorry for her. "It seems being a good husband is much more essential to keep a marriage going than being a brilliant scholar…..a linguist….or whatever."

Shamlee nodded in agreement.

It was a priceless revelation for me as well who had once felt envious of Nalini's conjugal gains.

Time flew by. I, once again, lost touch with my friends. It was work, work and work….grinding…. gruelling….grousing. I had almost forgotten Nalini when we suddenly bumped into each other in Connaught Place. This time, again, I failed to recognize her. She had put on oodles of weight. Prosperity, as she put it. The telltale marks of age were visible on her face. However, I was glad to note that the music in her laughter was back. Her spirits shone in her eyes. In addition, her demeanour spoke of general well-being.

Yes, she was doing well.

"Won't you like to know how?" She quipped.

Before I could ask, she continued, "We are seekers throughout our lives. It is far better to plunge in than to suffer fromtorschlusspanik. In addition, that, my dear, is German. The fear that time is running out."

Nalini carried on, "Of course, I could not save my marriage. However, we decided to keep in touch. No, it was not enough. The loneliness, the pain, the yearning and above all, the litostalmost killed me."

"Ahem! I interjected, "Litost?"

"Aah! An almost untranslatable Czech expression," she ejaculated, "The closest definition being an agonizing realization of one's own misery."

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"However, with time I pulled myself out of this saudade." She added quickly, "Portuguese – the longing for someone you love and lost."

We were quiet for some time.

"It was the only way out for my sanity." She resumed after a while, "I was enrolled as his student. Thereafter, life has been an endless journey of pious enrichment….now he is the teacher and I am the taught…Believe me, it's an elevation to a higher plateau." She sighed in pure ecstasy, "You know Geeta! I have been dying to share these feelings with someone who did not give in to moments of schadenfreude when I was left heartbroken…..Well! That's German again referring to the pleasure derived from other's misfortune."

Of course! I swallowed hard.

It was good to see the old Nalini back again.

Caution There are various non-English words used in the story.

Task Try to gather information about the author Geetashree Chatterjee.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. The narrator has been named in the story.
2. *I Wish I Could Be Your Beau* is Chatterjee's short story.
3. The narrator has been invited to Nalini's place for a get together.
4. Geetashree Chaterjee was born in Kolkata.
5. The two friends studied Literature from Delhi University.

1.4 Summary

- Apart from writing short stories, Geetashree Chatterjee writes reviews, blogs, commentaries and poems.
- Her blogs *Panaecea* and *Speak Your Heart Out* are storehouse of her works.
- Geetashree Chatterjee was born in Kolkata, West Bengal and brought up in Delhi, and graduated from Delhi University.
- According to Chatterjee, "Perhaps the need arises from vocalizing thoughts cooped up somewhere. A need to regurgitate and reach across!"
- *The Linguist* story is about two friends, their friendship, jealousy, freedom and happiness.

1.5 Keywords

Diffidence: Shyness.

Fromtorschlusspanik: A German expression meaning the fear that time is running out.

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Litostalmost: A Czech expression referring to an painful realisation of one's own misery.

Mamihlapinatapei: The meaningful look shared by two people who desired to initiate something but were hesitant to do so, each expecting the other to start.

Saudade: A Portuguese word meaning the longing for someone you love and lost.

Schadenfreude: A German word referring to the pleasure derived from misfortune of others.

Toska: Russian word for love-sickness.

1.6 Review Questions

1. Write in detail about Geetashree Chatterjee.
2. Write a note on upcoming writers in India.
3. Analyse the story *The Linguist*.
4. Do you think that Nalini did the right thing in coming back to India? Explain.
5. What are the reasons Nalini's fairy tale marriage with the linguist do not succeed? Elaborate.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False

1.7 Further Readings

Books

The Linguist by Geetashree Chatterjee, New Delhi

The Illusion by Geetashree Chatterjee, New Delhi

The Maamone by Geetashree Chatterjee, New Delhi

Online links

http://panaecea.wordpress.com/about/

http://www.induswomanwiriting.com/the-linguist.html

http://vanderloost.blogspot.in/2011_03_01_archive.html

Unit 2: A Dream within a Dream by Edgar Allan Poe

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Edgar Allan Poe
- Understand Poe's life, works and his writing style
- Understand the major themes in Poe's works
- Analyse the poem 'A Dream within a Dream'

Introduction

Almost all the writers use some sort of inspiration to write their work, but what is their source of inspiration? Most of the people usually think that ideas or inspirations come to writers naturally. However, the fact is that writers have to get inspired or get ideas from somewhere. One of the most common inspirations for writers is their personal experiences and thoughts. Edgar Allan Poe, his writings took inspiration from his tragic life, his dysfunctional brain and the time he lived in. Poe was affected immensely by his tragic life.

The poem *A Dream within a Dream* is one of the many masterpieces written by the acclaimed writer. In the poem, the poet is explaining the situation of bidding farewell to his love. It seems that his love is going away from him and he does not want her to go away.

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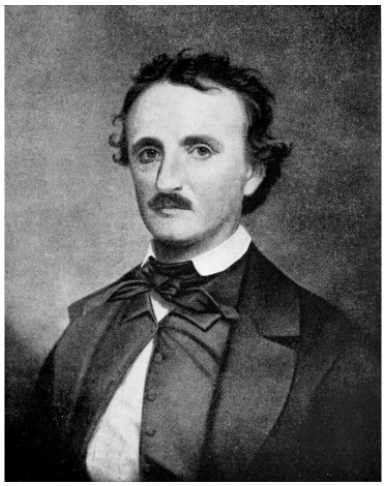
This unit is designed to make you aware about the times and life of Poe and his works. His one of the most famous poems, *A Dream within a Dream* is elaborately explained with critical analysis.

2.1 About the Poet

Edgar Allan Poe was a brilliant American poet, journalist, short story writer and literary critic. In his lifetime, he had the distinction of being one of the first American writers with more cultural cache in Europe than in the United States. The writing of Poe has inspired various thinkers and writers including H. P. Lovecraft, Jules Verne and Charles Baudelaire. He is also a contributed in the development of the literary genres of mystery and science fiction. The collection of his writing is diverse and includes classics such as *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, The Fall of the House of Usher*, and *The Purloined Letter* to name a few.

Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts on 19 January 1809. His father and mother were professional actors and members of a repertory company in Boston. Poe's father left around the same time when he was born and after a few years, his mother passed away. According to Leonard Unger, "Poe's mother's death shaped his life (Unger 1079)." Poe was taken in by John and Frances Allan. The couple gave him a respectable upbringing but never officially adopted him. This was why Poe felt like an outcast. Due to all this, he suffered from depression, which made his writings very beautiful.

Figure 2.1: Edgar Allen Poe in 1898



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a6/Edgar_Allan_Poe_1898.jpg

Poe spent most of his life struggling and dealing with hardships. He was good in academics but was mocked by his peers because of his actor parents. He was involved in gambling and was in a huge debt. When the Allans acquired some money, they sent Poe to University of Virginia at Charlottesville in 1825.

At the university, Poe excelled in academics but was compelled to quit after less than a year due to bad debts and insufficient financial backing from Allan. His relationship with Allan began to break down after his return to Richmond in 1827. Soon after Poe left for Boston, where he enlisted in the army and published his first poetry collection, *Tamerlane and Other Poems.* The volume did not catch public attention and went unnoticed by readers and reviewers. His second collection, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* came out in 1829 and received only slightly more attention. In the same year, Poe was honourably released from the army, having achieved the rank of regimental sergeant major. He then enrolled to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Poe intentionally went to West Point just to please John. During this time,

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Poe's foster mother passed away and left a deep impact on him. He again experienced another death of a loved one.

While Poe was at the academy, his foster father John did not give him sufficient funds to maintain himself as a cadet. He did not even give the consent necessary to resign from the Academy, disgruntled by Allan's behaviour, Poe deliberately began to ignore his duties and as a result dismissed from the academy. After becoming estranged from John, Poe began his life of adversities. He switched jobs often and had a lot of debt. Meanwhile John remarried and had a son of his own, finally disowning Poe. He was separated from him family and John no longer cared for him. This experience left a mark on Poe's life and he felt lonely, abandoned, and angry because of his foster parent's behaviour. After that he went to New York City and then to Baltimore, where he lived with his aunt, Mrs Maria Clemm and her daughter Virginia Clemm. Over the next couple of years, Poe's first short stories published in the Philadelphia Saturday Courier and his *MS. Found in a Bottle* won a cash prize for the best story in the Baltimore Saturday Visitor. Still, Poe was still not making enough money to live independently, nor did John left any fortune for him after his death in 1834. The subsequent year, however, his financial problems were solved when he accepted an editorship at The Southern Literary Messenger in Richmond. He went along with his aunt and his twelve-year-old cousin, Virginia. The Southern Literary Messenger was the first of several journals Poe would direct over the following ten years and due to which he acquired fame as a leading man of letters in America. Poe came to be known not only as an excellent author of poetry and fiction, but also as a literary critic whose level of imagination and insight had previously been unapproached in the American literature.

In 1836, Poe married Virginia Clemm, who was merely thirteen years old at the time and he was twenty-six. Six years later Virginia became fell severely ill and was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She succumbed to the deadly disease after fighting it for about five years in 1847. Unable to cope up with the loss, Poe began drinking heavily and became involved in a number of romantic affairs. The estrangement of his biological father, the death of his biological mother, behaviour of his foster parents, death of his foster mother and estrangement of his foster father all contributed to his deep depression and became a source of inspiration. The loss of his wife had a huge impact on and acted as a theme in his one of the most popular works, The Raven as the speaker addresses his despondency "for the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore." Another famous story *The Masque of the Red Death* is also thought to be a reference to the Black Death as well as the pandemic of tuberculosis.

Poe's writings gained attention in the late 1830s and early 1840s; however, the profits from his work were insufficient. He sustained himself by editing the Broadway Journal in New York City and Graham's Magazine and Burton's Gentleman's Magazine in Philadelphia.

While preparing for his second marriage Poe, for reasons unknown, came back to Baltimore in late September of 1849. He was found in a state of semi-consciousness on October 3, and breathed his last four days later without recuperating from the delirium to describe what had happened during the last days of his life.

The prose and poetry of Poe have influenced world literature and philosophy. His Gothic literature acts as a reaction to the intellectual trends seen in transcendentalism. He criticised this theory as being uselessly obscure and absurdly mystical. Poe criticised the transcendental movement for those he thought to be just sophists. He also considered allegory and didacticism as problematic. He encouraged literary work having a particular focus and brevity that let a work to be read in a sitting.

2.2 Writing Style

Poe's most noticeable contribution to the world literature stems from the analytical technique he followed both as an author and as a critic of the works of his contemporaries. His intent was

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to devise strictly artistic standards in an environment that he thought excessively concerned with the utilitarian value of literature, a tendency he called the "heresy of the didactic." While Poe's position includes the key fundamentals of pure aestheticism, his importance on literary formalism was directly associated with his philosophical ideals. Through the calculated use of language one may express, though always poorly, a vision of truth and the fundamental condition of human existence.

There is a psychological intensity, which is characteristic of Poe's writings, particularly the tales of horror that contains his well-known works. These stories include *The Black Cat*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. They are told by a first-person narrator and through this voice Poe explores the workings of a character's psyche. This method foreshadows the school of psychological realism and the psychological explorations of Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

In works such as *Von Kempelen and His Discovery* and *The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfaall,* Poe took inspiration from the latest science and technology that emerged in the early 19th century to produce fantastic and speculative stories that anticipate a kind of literature that did not become popular until 20th century. Likewise, Poe's three tales of ratiocination–*The Mystery of Marie Roget*, *The Purloined Letter* and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*–are recognised examples that establish the main characters and literary standards of detective fiction. The amateur detective who solves a crime that has perplexed the authorities and is always accompanied by an admiring associate.

Task Read *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Poe and analyse it.

Poe also composed poems that were meant to be read aloud. He experimented with different combinations of sound and rhythm and used technical devices like internal rhyme, assonance, repetition, alliteration and parallelism.

Example: In *The Bells*, the repetition of the word "bells" in various structures emphasises the distinctive tone of the various kinds of bells expressed in the poem.

2.3 Critics

Although Poe's works were not much applauded during his lifetime, he did earn due respect as a talented poet, man of letters and fiction writer. He earned a remarkable success after the publishing of the poem *The Raven,* which is his one of the most popular poems. After his demise, however, the account of his critical reception becomes one of dramatically unequal interpretations and judgments. This state of affairs was introduced by Poe's one-time friend and literary facilitator R.W. Griswold, who, in a libellous obituary notice in the New York Tribune bearing the by-line "Ludwig," accredited the psychological and depravity abnormalities of several of the characters in Poe's fiction to Poe himself. In retrospect, Griswold's disparagements appear ultimately to have caused as much sympathy as censure with respect to Poe and his work. This led following biographers of the late 19th century to defend Poe's name. It was not until the 1941 that the biography of Poe by A.H. Quinn showed a balanced view was of Poe's life, his work, and the relationship between his imagination and life. However, the identification of Poe with the murderers and madmen of his works lived and prospered in the 20th century, most conspicuously in the form of psychoanalytical studies like those of Joseph Wood Krutch and Marie Bonaparte.

An American journalist, critic and essayist, Paul Elmer More called Poe "the poet of unripe boys and unsound men." Therefore, in addition to the controversy over the sanity, or maturity of Poe, was the question of the significance of Poe's works as crucial literature. T.S. Eliot, Henry James

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and Aldous Huxley were a few of the renowned detractors of Poe, who scorned his works as artistically debased, juvenile and vulgar. On the contrary, literary figures like William Carlos Williams and Bernard Shaw have called Poe's works to be of the highest literary merit. Adding to Poe's erratic reputation among American and English critics is the more stable, and normally higher opinion of critics somewhere else in the world, especially in France. Following the widespread commentaries and translations of Charles Baudelaire in the 1850s, the French writers received Poe's works with a peculiar reverence and appreciation. It happened most profoundly with those related with the Symbolism movement, who appreciated Poe's transcendent ambitions as a poet, the Surrealism movement, which valued Poe's queer and seemingly unruled imagination and figures like Paul Valery, who found an ideal of supreme rationalism in Poe's theories. In other countries, Poe's works have received a similar appreciation, and several studies have been written tracking the influence of the American author on the international literary scene, particularly in Latin America, Japan, Russia and Scandinavia.

2.4 Discussion

Edgar Allan Poe has turned out to be known as the maestro of moody and horrifying works. His works has been critiqued, redone, mocked, and copied by various people, especially a work that has been turned into a spoof by the television show, *The Simpsons*. Poe had written over 100 poems, stories, criticisms, literary analysis and biographies. In his short lifespan, he had made an impact with his writings and gave rise to popular genres.

Several writers and critics have argued about Poe's writings. From John Neal of the *Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette* (1829) to T.S. Eliot (1948) to and Lacan have expressed their thoughts on Poe's work. These bits of insights from the critical dominions of the world provide extreme confusion and dislike to delight and appreciation. Although a normal sense of bewilderment seems to run along the stream of discourse on Poe, everybody seems to agree to disagree about him and his writings. Given below are a few pieces of criticism on Poe and his work by his fellow writers.

John Neal of *Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette* (1829) said, "If E.A.P. of Baltimore—whose lines about 'Heaven'…are, though nonsense, rather exquisite nonsense—would but do himself justice [he] might make a beautiful and perhaps magnificent poem" (qtd in Bits and Pieces II). That quote is about Poe's *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*, one of his earlier works, and though not an excessively generous critique, one that at least permits for a little encouragement of Poe's work. Several critics completely beat Poe in the critical circles. According to Lambert A. Wilmer in "Defamation of the Dead",

Poe during his life-time, was feared and hated by many newspaper editors and other literary animalcules, some of whom, or their friends, had been the subjects of his scorching critiques; and others disliked him, naturally enough, because he was a man of superior intellect. While he lived, these resentful gentlemen were discreetly silent, but they nursed their wrath to keep it warm, and the first intelligence of his death was the signal for a general onslaught. (qtd in Bits and Pieces II)

Although after Poe passed away many scornful critiques and insulting remarks were written about him professionally and personally, Poe's has become one of the most popular American authors in today. George Bernard Shaw states this in his 16 January 1909 remark,

[Poe] died…and was duly explained away as a drunkard and a failure, though it remains an open question whether he really drank as much in his whole lifetime as a modern successful American drinks, without comment, in six months . . . Poe constantly and inevitably produced magic where his greatest contemporaries produced only beauty . . . Poe's supremacy in this respect has cost him his reputation. . . . Above all, Poe is great because he is independent of cheap attractions, independent of sex, of patriotism, of fighting, of sentimentality, snobbery, gluttony, and all the rest of the vulgar stock-in-trade of his profession.

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2.5 Role

Edgar Allan Poe did not receive much of recognition during his lifetime, but in years later after his death, his works have become a canvas for other writers to inspire and create upon. Poe had a reputation for being a unwise drunk without any talent, which was why the literary circles of his time rejected him. However, today, his acceptance is more noticeable than ever. *Law and Order, N.Y.P.D. Blue*, and numerous other television shows that include a detective character, would have never been existed today, had it not been for Poe's character, C. Auguste Dupin in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. This story has also been related to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's memorable mysteries of Sherlock Holmes. However, his condition has a name today; Poe frequently used themes regarding the "double self," which was also referred to as split personality. Today it is known as schizophrenia or bi polar disorder.

Poe had a vivid and wild imagination, which he used it to his advantage and created beyond what anyone could imagine. While he frequently took the opportunity to deal with dark topics, he did it with such style that he has been credited for initiating the surrealist movement. It was sure that his writing style would inspire a new generation of writers but not until years after his death did his level of inspiration become visible.

Many writers vocally praised Poe's work and attributed him for their inspiration. The praise was strongest in France before it spread to Russia, China, Portugal, Austria, Croatia, Japan, Scandinavia, Spain, Germany, England, Estonia, Latin America and Poland. Many famous writers like Jorge Luis Borges, Jules Verne, Carlos Fuentes and Franz Kafka called Poe as their chief source of inspiration. It took many years for the American literary circles to ultimately begin to accept his talent. Joyce Carol Oates state quite bluntly, "Who has not been influenced by Poe?"

Today, Poe is recognised as one of the leading ancestors of modern literature, both in its popular forms, for example, detective and horror fiction, and in its more complicated and self-conscious forms that signify the indispensable artistic manner of the 12th century. In contrast, to previous critics who viewed the man and his works as one. Criticism of the past twenty-five years has led to the development of a view of Poe as a detached and indifferent artist who was more concerned with exhibiting his virtuosity than expressing his "soul," and who shared an ironic rather than an autobiographical relationship with his writings. While at one time critics such as Yvor Winters wanted to eliminate Poe from literary history, his works remain vital to any conception of modernism in world literature. Herbert Marshall McLuhan wrote in an essay entitled "Edgar Poe's Tradition": "While the New England dons formally turned the pages of Buddha and Plato beside a tea-cozy, and while Tennyson and Browning were creating a parochial fog for the English mind to relax in, Poe never lost contact with the awful pathos of his time. Coevally with Baudelaire, and long before Eliot and Conrad, he explored the heart of darkness."

2.6 Major Themes

Death

A large portion of Poe's fiction contains musings on the nature of death and on queries about the afterlife. In poems like *Eldorado*, the protagonist is only able to reach his life's goal in death, having spent his life in continuous seeking. In other works like *The City in the Sea*, *The Bells*, and *The Conqueror Worm*, death is a foregone conclusion as the end of a decaying process that started long before. Poe does not essentially come to the same conclusion about death in every poem, especially in the case of *The Raven* and *Lenore*, two poems that share a dead female's name but that take a quite distinctive approach to the subject of the afterlife. While Guy de Vere of *Lenore* is disobedient and hopeful in his mourning, as he believes that he will again see Lenore in Heaven, the anonymous narrator of *The Raven* becomes progressively agitated as he begins to believe that he will "nevermore" see Lenore.

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Love

A common theme within Poe's work is that of a woman who has died at the height of her youth and beauty, leaving a bereaved lover behind to grieve. In most of the cases, similarities can be drawn between the female in question and Poe's unwell and prematurely deceased wife, Virginia Clemm. Poe frequently portrays the female as naive or child-like, which remember Virginia's young age at the time of marriage. For Poe, the deepest and most lasting love commonly belonged to the young and innocent protagonists of *Tamerlane* and *Annabel Lee*. An approach in line with other contemporary writers of the Romantic era who deemed that childhood is the purest state of man. *To Helen* also highlights the nurturing role of a caring woman. After the death of the women in his works, the reaction of many of Poe's male protagonists is to continue to be emotionally dependent upon the deceased women to the point of obsession.

Example: The narrator of *Ulalume* roams absentmindedly through the woods but is irresistibly drawn to her tomb, and the narrator of *Annabel Lee* sleeps every night next to her grave by the sea, providing horrid undertones to what seems at first to be faithful love.

Impermanence and Uncertainty

A Dream within a Dream deals most precisely with the disturbing idea that reality is temporary and nothing more than a dream. As the narrator first parts from his lover and then struggles with his inability to clasp the nature of a short-lived truth. However, various other poems touch upon the certainty of the end, as in *The Conqueror Worm*, one of Poe's least optimistic poems that proclaim that all men are affected by unseen forces until their inevitable and unfortunately gruesome deaths. In a number of cases, the central characters of Poe's works worry as they see the transience of their state of being but are incapable of making predictions about the unknown. *The Raven* particularly emphasises the dilemma of the incomprehensible by juxtaposing the inquisitive narrator and the seemingly all-knowing, non-sentient raven's refusal of a possible future.

The Subconscious Self

In his short compositions, Poe frequently uses the idea of a double, where the narrator has a doppelganger that stand for his primal instincts or subconscious. In some cases, for example, in *Ulalume*, the double acts as the expression of instinctive wisdom and here the narrator's psyche attempts ineffectively to guide him away from the path to Ulalume's tomb because she knows that he will face grief and pursues to guard him. In other situations, as in *The Raven*, the narrator encounters a double that symbolises his deepest fears, which in turn finally subjugate his conscious, rational self. Even though the narrator of *The Raven* at first ignores the message of the intruding bird, he finishes the poem by understanding its word "nevermore" as the refusal of all his hopes; he has propelled his soul into the body of the bird. In both the cases, the poetic split of the two halves creates a dramatic dialogue that emphasises the narrator's personal struggle.

Nature

As a writer, Poe was part of the American Romantic movement of the early 19th century, when authors redirected their thoughts to nature to attain a purer and less evil state, away from the negative impacts of the society. Consequently, Poe often linked nature with good, like in *Tamerlane*, where Tamerlane and his childhood friend discover love and happiness in nature until he leaves to enjoy the companionship of other men and falls victim to ambition and pride. The poet of "Sonnet - To Science" also mourns the trespassing of man into nature as he "drive[s] the Hamadryad from the wood" and accordingly loses something of his soul. Many of Poe's

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central character wander in nature and learn something about their deepest thoughts. For example, just like the narrator of *Ulalume*, who roams in a wood and unintentionally reaches to his beloved's tomb. Poe also views cities in negative manner; *The City in the Sea* finally sinks into hell after wasting away under the impact of personified death.

The Human Imagination

Poe focus on the competences of the human mind most openly in *Sonnet - To Science*, where the narrator poet grieves that the deadening effect of modern science has constrained the power of imagination. Still, he has the aesthetic principles of human creativity and means to several mythological characters in his assertion that the capability to imagine is at the centre of humanity's identity. On the contrary, other poems deal with the imagination in a rather dissimilar manner, presenting the risks of the imagination when not strengthened by a sense of reality. The narrator of *The Raven* represents this behaviour, though he initially attempts to describe the possibly unearthly phenomenon of the raven via rational measures. He finally ignores his rational mind in his grief and misery and comes to treat the raven as an emotional being and hence, supernatural messenger.

Hope and Despair

By enlisting his characters in situations of loss and regret, Poe explores the variety of human emotions such as despair and hope with his writings. On the one hand, poems such as *The Conqueror Worm* and *The Raven* mainly endorse despair. In the latter work, the narrator's words become more and more agitated, and he screams uselessly at the raven. This state of being contrasts profoundly with the more hopeful ending of *Eldorado*. In this, the "pilgrim shadow" tells the elderly knight that he needs to venture boldly into the Valley of the Shadow to accomplish his objective and therefore, offer the knight a potential end to his life-long quest. However, even this suggestion of hope has dark feelings since it suggests that the knight will be condemned to search for the rest of his life. In addition, he ought to ride into death to fulfil his quest.

2.7 A Dream within a Dream – Poem

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow-
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand-
How few! Yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep- while I weep!

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O God! Can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! Can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

2.8 Explanation

Published in 1849 *A Dream within a Dream*, is a conversation poem. It is a farewell poem to a beloved and in concurrence with their assertion. The poet assents that reality we see or seem has been a dream. Those memories with his beloved were joyful for the poet is sad and grieving as he weeps and weeps for the passing of those memories or dreams to time. The "pitiless waves" is an analogy for the cruel passage of time (22). The question, "was our time together a reality or dream … hopes flies, night turns to day, visions become none, and sand creeps? The poet inquires God to interfere, "O God! Can I not save (21)/'One' from the pitiless waves?" (22) The passageway of dreams is portrayed as fierce, "a surf-tormented shore" (13), and it makes the poet "weep" (18). The lost dreams are compared to "grains of golden sand" (15) whereas the "dream within a dream" are memories as is seen or seems. The dream as it seems is internal for the poet, while the dream as he sees is external.

The poet inquiries the reality of what he sees in the night or the day, vision or none: are those sights a dream since what he saw has passed? He questions the reality of what seems to be when the surf crashes along the shore, the grains of sand slips through his fingers: are those a dream since what seems has passed? The last question posed—"Is all" that we see or seem (23)/But a dream within a dream?" (24) His concerns—are what he sees realities, and are what it seems realities, or both a fantasy within a fantasy. The poet wants to keep the memories as reality but with the passage of time, as specified by the waves and golden sand, what ones sees and seems is a fleeting dream.

2.9 Analysis

The structure of *A Dream within a Dream* contains of two stanzas having two unrelated but eventually connected scenes. The first stanza shows the first-person's opinion of the narrator separating from a lover, while at the second places the narrator on a beach while uselessly trying to clasp a handful of sand in his hand. The juxtaposed scenes contrast in a number of ways, as the poem moves from a tranquil, though sincere, farewell to a more passionate second half. While the first stanza features a considerate agreement, the seashore scene includes swearwords such as "O God!" and tormented exclamations along with hopeless rhetorical questions to reveal the suffering in the narrator's soul.

In spite of the apparent dissimilarities between the two stanzas, they are connected through the ironic resemblance of their evanescent natures. In the first image, the narrator is separating from his lover, representing a sense of definiteness (and mortality) to their love. Consequently, the falling grains of sand in the second stanza recollect the image of an hourglass that in turn signifies the passage of time. As the sand flows away until all time has passed, the lovers' time also vanishes, and the romance and the sand each turn into effects from a dream. With the help of the alliteration in "grains of the golden sand," Poe highlights the "golden" or desired nature of both the sand and of love, but he portrays evidently that neither is permanently achievable.

Like several of Poe's poems, *A Dream within a Dream* uses the sea as a setting for a discussion of death and decay. *The City in the Sea* illustrates the imagery of a pitiless sea most clearly, with the Gothic allusions to the end of time, and in *A Dream within a Dream*, the "surf-tormented shore"

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becomes a second metaphor for time, as the waters of the sea gradually but inevitably pound away at the physical existence of the shore. The narrator regards the wave as "pitiless," but he further links himself with the temporal nature of the water by weeping in tandem with the falling of the sand.

Although the two stanzas are not alike in length, their similar use of an iambic rhythm and of couplets and triplets in their end rhyme scheme makes a pattern that matches the parallel of their ideas. Especially, the refrain lines "All that we see or seem/Is but a dream within a dream" unite the passages in the poem's conclusion of ineffectiveness and remorse at the movement of time. Poe attracts attention to "all that we see or seem" with alliteration, and we can view this phrase as the combination of two aspects of reality, where "all that we see" is the external and "all that we seem" is the internal element. By asserting that both sides are the also alliterative phrase "a dream within a dream," Poe suggests that neither is more real than a dream.

As the title, the phrase "a dream within a dream" has a special implication to any understandings of the poem. Poe takes the idea of a daydream and twists it so that the narrator's opinion of reality happens at two degrees of detachment away from reality. Therefore, this reality contemplates upon itself through the medium of dreams, and the narrator can no longer distinguish causality in his perception. By showing the narrator's suffering at his observations, Poe increases the risks of uncertainty and of the potential changes to his identity. Time is a powerful but mysterious force that endorses cognitive discord between the protagonist's self and his abilities of understanding, and the daydream proves to have ensnared him. Otherwise, the poem itself may be viewed as the outermost dream, where the inner dream is just a function of the narrator's mind.

Did u know? A Dream within a Dream rhymes: in the first stanza it is—AAABBCCDDBB, and in the second stanza—EEFFGGGHHIIBB. It has feet and is metered.

This poem is Gothic. Gothic poems are characterised as extremely emotional, inherently sublime, and disturbing in atmosphere. They are psychologically anxious, mysterious and dark caused by frustration, despair, madness, and death. Those characterizations are presented in two lines: "O God! Can I not save (21)/'One' from the pitiless waves?" (22) Extreme emotion, frustration, despair and fear of death, is present when the poet cries, "O God!" (21). Admiration inherent in the transcendental is present when the poet realises he cannot "save (21)/'One'" (22). The atmosphere is troubling when the poet refers to the waves as "pitiless" (22). The poet identifies his psychological nervousness when he says the memories cannot be saved not even "One" (22). Darkness and mystery appears when the poet cries, "O God!" (21) Madness and death is present when the poet realises he cannot save even one reality, but time will take it away like the "pitiless wave" (22). The poet cries to a supernatural being is eager with psychological anxiety, for he cannot save one memory, the waves take on personification for being pitiless: they are without regard for his desires. Similar to the grains of golden sand life and life's golden memories slip through his fingers with the passage of time, much like waves wearing away the sand on a beach.

This poem has two stanzas, and two couplets. The first stanza is lines one through nine, and the second stanza is twelve through twenty-two. The couplets are lines ten and eleven, and twenty-three and twenty-four. The first stanza is a response to a proposition posed by a beloved and farewell to the beloved. He asserts an agreement: "You are not wrong, who deem" (4)/That my days have been a dream" (5): the rest of the poem is a response to that assertion. The author poses a question as hope flies during the night or day without present vision—is it gone?

The second stanza is lines twelve through twenty-two. It is written in the first person coupled with verbs "I stand" (12), "I hold" (14), "I weep" (18), and "can I" (21). The poet stands, holds,

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weeps and then begs the question—can he not save one memory from the passage of time? How does he address this question? He stands amid a violent shore. What does the poet try to hold? He tries to hold "golden sand" (15). What happens to the sand? The sand creeps "through [his] fingers" (17). What happens when he loses those memories? He weeps. What can the poet do about this loss? He cries out to God to save just one valuable memory from the passage of time.

Lines ten and eleven, and twenty-three and twenty are couplets. They consist of two lines that rhyme with "seem" and "dream," but they do not have the same feet or meter. This couplet is an epigram: it is brief, clever, and memorable. For example, "'All' that we see or seem (10)/Is but a dream within a dream" (11), and the next: "Is 'all' that we see or seem (23)/But a dream within a dream?"(24) are memorable lines that rhyme with alliteration and assonance. Alliteration is with the "s" sound in the words "see" and "seem"(10) and (23), and "d" sound in the words "dream" and "dream" (11) and (24). Assonance is presented with the "ee" sound in "see," "seems," "dream," and "dream" (10), (11), (23), and (24). The alliteration and assonance within each of those lines are referred to as an internal rhyme. The first couplet is a reply to a question, are memories gone? The response is an affirmative statement. The second couplet is a reply to a question; can he not save one memory from the passage of time? The response requests the question.

Caution Make sure you recognise couplets, epigram, assonance and alliteration in poems to help in critically analysing them.

This poem rhymes and in the first stanza, the rhyming scheme is AAABBCCDDBB whereas in the second stanza it is EEFFGGGHHIIBB. It has feet and is metered and the variations in feet and meter do not match the changes in the rhyming scheme. The couplets do not match in feet and meter, but do match in rhyme.

Notes In the poem, *A Dream within a Dream*, Lines one has three feet, and all feet are trochaic; line two has three feet, and all feet are trochaic; line three has three feet, and all feet are iambic; line four has three feet, and all feet are iambic; line five has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line six has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line seven has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line eight has four feet, and three trochaic with a final spondee; line nine has four feet, and three are iambic with a final spondee; line ten has three feet, and three are iambic; line eleven has four feet, and four are iambic; line twelve has four feet, and four are iambic; line thirteen has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line fourteen has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line fifteen has three feet, and one is trochaic with the final two as iambic; line sixteen has three feet, and three are iambic; line seventeen has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line eighteen has four feet with a caesurae in the middle as indicated by the hyphen, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line nineteen has three feet, and three are iambic; line twenty has three feet, and three are iambic; line twenty-one has three feet, and three are iambic; line twenty-two has three feet, and three are iambic; line twenty-three has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee; line twenty-four has four feet, and three are trochaic with a final spondee.

The poet uses six variations the feet vary between three and four, and the meter variation include—iambic, trochaic and spondees. For the reader, the iambic meter communicates a passive, a more natural gait than the trochaic. The trochaic meter tends to be more urgent and insistent.

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The spondees emphasise on imperative words, for example, “dream” (5), “away” (6), “day” (7), “none” (8), “gone” (9), “shore” (13), “hand” (14), “deep” (17), “weep” (18), “seems” (23), “dream” (24). When I dream away my day are all those memories gone? I stand upon the shore as dreams slip beyond my reach into the deep hollows of death. I weep for what it seems—those memories are but a dream. This poem is one of despair as specified by the stressed words of ‘gone’ (9), ‘All’ (10), ‘One’ (22), and ‘all’ (23). The reader is left with the question—through the passage of time, are our dreams that we see or seem gone one and all?

2.9.1 Use of Literary Devices

There is a variety of literary devices used in this poem to promote the message of the poem to the readers effectively. Like all of Poe’s poems, the impact of the poetry on the reader is more clear and distinct. Assonance has been used in places like, in line 10 (see, seem), line 14 (hold, hand). Personification has also been used in line 6 “hope has flown away”. Repetition is there in line 18 “while I weep” whereas onomatopoeia has been used in line 3 “avow”. The poem also uses metaphor is in line 24 “pitiless wave”.

Task Recite the poem *The Raven* in class with the help of voice modulation.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts on ……..
2. In *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe talked about the nature of writing and the ……..
3. An American journalist, critic and essayist, …… called Poe “the poet of unripe boys and unsound men.”
4. *A Dream within a Dream* was a conversation poem and published in ……..
5. The rhyming scheme of the first stanza is …… and the second stanza is ……..

2.10 Summary

- Edgar Allan Poe was a brilliant American poet, journalist, short story writer and literary critic.
- The poem *A Dream within a Dream* is one of the many masterpieces written by the acclaimed writer.
- Poe’s theory of literary creation is well known for two vital ideas (1) a work should create a unity of effect on the reader to be considered successful and (2) the production of this particular effect should not be left to the threats of accident or inspiration.
- There is a psychological intensity, which is characteristic of Poe’s writings, particularly the tales of horror that contains his well-known works. These stories include *The Black Cat*, *The Cask of Amontillado* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*.
- Poe influenced many following authors and is considered a precursor of key literary movements such as symbolism and surrealism.

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- *A Dream within a Dream* deals most precisely with the disturbing idea that reality is temporary and nothing more than a dream.
- Poe frequently uses the idea of a double, where the narrator has a doppelganger that stand for his primal instincts or subconscious.
- As a writer, Poe was part of the American Romantic movement of the early 19th century, when authors redirected their thoughts to nature so as to attain a purer and less evil state, away from the negative impacts of the society.
- A large portion of Poe's fiction contains musings on the nature of death and on queries about the afterlife.
- Poe explores the variety of human emotions such as despair and hope with his writings.
- A common theme within Poe's work is that of a woman who has died at the height of her youth and beauty, leaving a bereaved lover behind to grieve.
- Poe focus on the competences of the human mind most openly.
- Published in 1849 *A Dream within a Dream*, is a conversation poem. It is a farewell poem to a beloved and in concurrence with their assertion.

2.11 Keywords

Gothic: Belonging to or suggestive of the Dark Ages and significantly horrifying or gloomy.

Supernatural: Accredited to some force beyond the laws of nature or scientific understanding.

Surrealism: A movement of the 20th century in art and literature, which was launched to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind.

Symbolism: A 19th movement in art and literature, which focussed on the use of symbolic images and indirect suggestions to describe state of mind, emotions and mystical ideas.

2.12 Review Questions

1. Write in brief about the poet Edgar Allan Poe.
2. What are the various themes explored by the Poe?
3. Write a brief note on Poe and his contemporaries.
4. What effect does the rhyme have on the poem's content? Does it make it seem more or less serious?
5. Does the speaker really believe all of life is a dream within a dream, or does he seem doubtful? How can you tell?
6. Write about Poe and his personal life. Do you think that his personal life served as a source of inspiration for him?
7. What is the theme of the poem 'A Dream within a Dream'?
8. Give a detailed analyses of the lines, "Is all that we see or seem/But a dream within a dream?"
9. Critically analyse the poem *A Dream within a Dream*.
10. Why do you think the woman is in this poem? What effect does she have on its themes and message? Is she just a metaphor, or is she a real figure?

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11. Give a short note on the literary devices used in *A Dream within a Dream*.
12. Is the poem *A Dream within a Dream* about the nature of reality or the nature of loss? Can it be about both?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. 19 January 1809
2. Truth
3. Paul Elmer More
4. 1849
5. AAABBCCDDBB, EEFFGGGHHIIBB

2.13 Further Readings

Books

Barnes, Nigel. *A Dream within a Dream: The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*

Peeples, Scott. *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*

Online links

http://www.rtlibrary.org/poetalesofterror.pdf

http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/17841865/lit/poe.htm

http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1983/3/83.03.06.x.html

Unit 3: Chitra by Rabindranath Tagore

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life of Rabindranath Tagore
- Understand Tagore's works and writing style
- Analyse and understand Tagore's 'Chitra'

Introduction

Humanitarian, writer and poet, Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to be bestowed the Nobel Prize for Literature. He also played a major role in the revival of the modern India. Tagore is most commonly known for his poetry, but he has written articles, plays, novels and short stories. He took a keen interest in a widespread range of artistic, cultural and social endeavours. He has been described as one of the first 20th century's global man.

"So I repeat we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him. Civilisation must be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity."

—Sadhana: The Realisation of Life, (1916)

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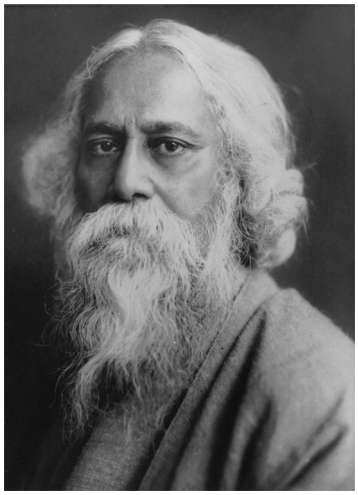
Tagore's involvement and literary work challenged the contradictions of an unfair and unequal world system and developed a new understanding of the society and the world in order to found a concrete and universal humanism. The writings and paths of Tagore is a reflection at the highest level of the interrelationship between the universal and the particular in understanding the complicated procedures of modernity.

In this unit, you will learn all about Tagore, his life and works in diverse fields. How his writings brought cultural as well as literary changes in the society and how he influenced literature and people. You will also learn in detail about his play *Chitra* and will be able to understand it.

3.1 About the Author

Rabindranath Tagore. the youngest of thirteen surviving children was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Calcutta, India to Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and Sarada Devi (1830–1875). The Tagore family came into prominence during the Bengal Renaissance that began during the age of Hussein Shah (1493–1519). The original name of the Tagore family was Banerjee, however, being Brahmins, their ancestors were called 'Thakurmashai' or 'Holy Sir'. During the British rule, this name stuck and they began to be known as Thakur and in due course the family name got anglicised to Tagore. Tagore family patriarchs were the Brahmo organisers of the Adi Dharm faith. The loyalist Prince Dwarkanath Tagore was his paternal grandfather. He employed European estate managers and visited with Victoria and other royalty. Debendranath had framed the Brahmoist philosophies adopted by his friend Ram Mohan Roy, and became pivotal in Brahmo society after Roy's demise.

Figure 3.1: Rabindranath Tagore



Source: http://southasiajournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Tagore-01.jpg

Did u know? Rabindranath Tagore is best known for being the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

3.1.1 Early Life 1861–1878

The young Tagore was brought up mostly by servants because his mother passed away when he was too young and his father travelled extensively. His home hosted the publication of literary

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magazines and theatre and recitals of both Bengali and Western classical music as the Jorasanko Tagores were part of an art-loving social group. Tagore's oldest brother Dwijendranath was an esteemed poet and philosopher whereas another brother, Satyendranath, was the first Indian selected to the elite and formerly all-European Indian Civil Service. Yet another brother, Jyotirindranath, was a musician, composer, and playwright. His sister Swarnakumari became a novelist. Jyotirindranath's wife Kadambari, slightly older than Tagore, was a dear friend and powerful influence. Her abrupt suicide in 1884, soon after he married, left him for years profoundly distraught.

After he experienced an *upanayan* commencement at age 11, he and his father left Kolkata in February 1873 for a months-long trip of the Raj. They visited his father's Santiniketan estate and rested in Amritsar on the way to the Himalayan Dhauladhars, their destination being the remote hill station at Dalhousie. Along the way, Tagore read biographies of Benjamin Franklin and many other famous people and his father taught him in Sanskrit, astronomy and history.

He came back to Jorosanko and completed a set of key works by 1877, one of them a long poem in the Maithili style of Vidyapati, which were published after his death. Regional experts acknowledged them as the lost writings of Bhânusimha, a newly discovered 17th century Vaishnava poet. He debuted the short-story genre in Bengali with "Bhikharini" ("The Beggar Woman"), and his *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) includes the well-known poem *Nirjharer Swapnabhanga* ("The Rousing of the Waterfall"). As the Jorasanko manor was in an area of north Kolkata rife with poverty and prostitution, he was prohibited to leave it for any purpose other than travelling to school. Therefore, he became preoccupied with the world outside and with nature.

3.1.2 Santiniketan 1901–1932

In 1901, Tagore moved to Santiniketan to establish an ashram with a marble-floored prayer hall—*The Mandir*—an experimental school, a library, gardens and groves of trees. After some time his wife and two of his children passed away. He also lost his father in 1905. He received monthly payments as part of his inheritance and income from the Maharaja of Tripura, sales of his family's jewellery, his seaside bungalow in Puri, and a derisory 2,000 rupees in book royalties. He won Bengali as well as foreign readers and published *Naivedya* (1901) and *Kheya* (1906) and translated poems into free verse.

In November 1913, Tagore won that year's Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish Academy praised the idealistic—and for Westerners—availability of a small body of his translated work focussed on the 1912 *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. In 1915, the British government granted Tagore a knighthood, which he gave up after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919.

Did u know? In 1921, Tagore with the agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst founded the "Institute for Rural Reconstruction" which was later renamed Shriniketan or "Abode of Welfare", in Surul, a village near the *ashram*.

With it, Tagore sought to curb Gandhi's *Swaraj* protests, which he sometimes blamed for British India's apparent mental—and thus finally colonial—decline. He wanted 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 "abnormal caste consciousness" and untouchability. He lectured against these social issues and penned Dalit heroes in his poems and dramas, he also campaigned—to open Guruvayoor Temple to Dalits.

3.1.3 Twilight Years 1932–1941

Tagore's life as a "peripatetic litterateur" stated his opinion that human divisions were insubstantial. A visit to a Bedouin encampment in the Iraqi desert in May 1932, the tribal chief

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told him, "Our prophet has said that a true Muslim is he by whose words and deeds not the least of his brother-men may ever come to any harm ..." Tagore disclosed in his diary: "I was startled into recognizing in his words the voice of essential humanity." Towards the end Tagore scrutinised orthodoxy and in 1934, he struck. That year, an earthquake hit Bihar and took the lives thousands. Gandhi welcomed it as seismic *karma*, as divine vengeance avenging the oppression of Dalits. Tagore reprimanded him for his seemingly dishonourable inferences. He grieved the recurrent poverty of Calcutta and the socioeconomic weakening of Bengal. He detailed these latest plebeian aesthetics in an unrhymed hundred-line poem whose technique of searing double-vision foreshadowed Satyajit Ray's film *Apur Sansar*. Fifteen fresh volumes appeared, among them prose-poem works *Punashcha* (1932), *Shes Saptak* (1935), and *Patraput* (1936). Experimentation continued in his prose-songs and dance-dramas such as *Chitra* (1914), *Dui Bon* (1933), *Malancha* (1934), *Char Adhyay* (1934), *Chandalika* (1938) and *Shyama* (1939). Tagore was a close friend of Gandhi, to whom he gave the sobriquet "Mahatma," meaning "great soul," while Gandhi dubbed Tagore, "The Great Sentinel," out of his abiding respect for Tagore's unswerving commitment to open-mindedness, inclusiveness and diversity in the envisioning of India that was soon to be born.

Tagore's interest in science developed in his last years and is hinted in a collection of essays, *Visva-Parichay* in 1937. His respect for scientific laws and his exploration of astronomy, physics and biology, informed his poetry, which showed extensive naturalism and verisimilitude. He wove the *process* of science, the narratives of scientists, into stories in *Se* (1937), *Tin Sangi* (1940), and *Galpasalpa* (1941). His last five years were marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. These began when Tagore lost consciousness in late 1937 and remained comatose for a while before recurring this medical condition in late 1940. He never recovered but his poetry from these valetudinary years is among his finest. Tagore's prolonged agony ended when he passed away at the Jorasanko mansion on 7 August 1941, at the age of 80.

In old age, Tagore still rose long before dawn to witness the birth of each new day, and he still wrote fluently in his own hand. He liked to make extensive corrections, therefore, he liked his manuscripts to be stylish, hence he began turning his waste cuttings into decorations, forming complicated patterns and pictures of snakes and birds of his own imagination. From this odd beginning came his last artistic adventure, as a painter. His sketches and paintings cannot be compared to those of any other artist or school. They possess some of the stark crudity of folk art with the imagery and symbolism which he saw in his visions.

Tagore died in the middle of the world war which seemed like the denial of all he had loved (he appealed to President Roosevelt to interfere when the Germans marched into Paris, to prevent its destruction). He looked forward to India's independence because he believed that only in freedom could Indians be true to their inheritance. His poems were selected to be the national anthems of India and Bangladesh because of their literary value and as a tribute to him.

Notes At age sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France[8]—were held throughout Europe. Tagore—who likely exhibited protanopia ("color blindness"), or partial lack of (red-green, in Tagore's case) colour discernment—painted in a style characterised by peculiarities in aesthetic and colouring style.

Did u know? In 1929, Tagore began painting and several of his paintings can be seen in museums today, particularly in India.

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3.2 Works

Apart from poetry, Tagore wrote songs, short stories, novels, dramas, travelogues, autobiographies and essays. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are probably most highly praised and is credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are commonly noted for their lyrical, rhythmic and optimistic nature and deal with the lives of common people. Tagore's non-fiction dealt with linguistics, spirituality and history. His essays, lectures, and travelogues were assembled into several volumes, including *Europe Jatrir Patro* (*Letters from Europe*) and *Manusher Dhormo* (*The Religion of Man*). On the occasion of Tagore's 150th birthday an compilation (titled *Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanabali*) of the total body of his works is presently being published in Bengali in chronological order. This includes all versions of each work and fills about eighty volumes. In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English. It was edited by Radha Chakravarthy and Fakrul Alam and marks the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth.

Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres and among his fifty and odd volumes of poetry are *Manasi* (1890) [*The Ideal One*], *Sonar Tari* (1894) [*The Golden Boat*], *Gitanjali* (1910) [*Song Offerings*], *Gitimalya* (1914) [*Wreath of Songs*], and *Balaka* (1916) [*The Flight of Cranes*]. The English renderings of his poetry, which include *The Gardener* (1913), *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), and *The Fugitive* (1921), do not generally correspond to particular volumes in the original Bengali; and in spite of its title, *Gitanjali: the Song Offerings* (1912), the much-admired of them, contains poems from other works besides its namesake. Tagore's major plays are *Raja* (1910) [*The King of the Dark Chamber*], *Dakghar* (1912) [*The Post Office], Achalayatan* (1912) [*The Immovable*], *Muktadhara* (1922) [*The Waterfall*], and *Raktakaravi* (1926) [*Red Oleanders*]. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them *Gora* (1910), *Ghare-Baire* (1916) [*The Home and the World*], and *Yogayog* (1929) [*Crosscurrents*]. Tagore also left several drawings and paintings, and composed music for his various songs.

Did u know? On 25 March 2004, Tagore's Nobel Prize was stolen from the safety vault of the Visva-Bharati University, along with many other of his personal belongings. On 7 December 2004, the Swedish Academy presented two replicas of Tagore's Nobel Prize, one made of gold and the other made of bronze, to the Visva Bharati University.

3.2.1 Dramas

Tagore's began to write drama when he was merely 16 years-old after leading his brother Jyotirindranath's adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. With the help of his brother Jyotirindranath, Tagore wrote his first original drama, *Valmiki Pratibha* (*The Genius of Valmiki*) at the age of 20, which was shown at the Tagores' mansion. Tagore stated that his works sought to articulate "the play of feeling and not of action". In 1890 he wrote *Visarjan* it has been regarded as his finest drama. In the original Bengali language, such works included complicated subplots and extended monologues. Later, Tagore's dramas used more philosophical and allegorical themes. In it the pandit Valmiki overcomes his sins, is blessed by Saraswati, and compiles the *Râmâyana*. Through it Tagore explores a varied range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of refurbished *kirtans* and adaptation of traditional Irish and English folk melodies as drinking songs. Another play, *Dak Ghar* (*The Post Office*), depicts the child Amal challenging his stuffy and childish confines by ultimately "fall[ing] asleep", hinting his physical death. A story with borderless appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—*Dak Ghar* dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds".

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Notes In the Nazi-besieged Warsaw Ghetto, Polish doctor-educator Janusz Korczak had orphans in his care stage *The Post Office* in July 1942. In *The King of Children*, biographer Betty Jean Lifton suspected that Korczak, agonising over whether one should determine when and how to die, was easing the children into accepting death. In mid-October, the Nazis sent them to Treblinka.

Tagore's other works fuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea, a break from prior Bengali drama. Tagore sought "the play of feeling and not of action". In 1890, he released what is regarded as his finest drama: *Visarjan* (*Sacrifice*). It is an version of *Rajarshi*, an earlier novella of his. "A forthright denunciation of a meaningless [and] cruel superstitious rite[s]", the Bengali originals feature intricate subplots and prolonged monologues that give play to historical events in 17th-century Udaipur. The devout Maharaja of Tripura is pitted against the evil head priest Raghupati. The dramas he wrote later has philosophical and allegorical in nature; these included *Dak Ghar*. Another is Tagore's *Chandalika* (*Untouchable Girl*), which was modelled on an ancient Buddhist legend describing how Ananda, the Gautama Buddha's disciple, asks a tribal girl for water.

In *Raktakarabi* ("Red" or "Blood Oleanders"), a kleptocrat rules over the residents of *Yaksha puri*. He and his retainers exploit his subjects—who are benumbed by alcohol and numbered like inventory—by forcing them to mine gold for him. The naive heroine Nandini rallies her subject-compatriots to beat the greed of the realm's *sardar*class—with the morally roused king's delayed help. Skirting the "good-vs-evil" trope, the work pits a crucial and joyous lèse majesté against the boring fealty of the king's varletry, giving rise to an allegorical struggle similar to that found in *Animal Farm* or *Gulliver's Travels*. The original, though prized in Bengal, long failed to spawn a "free and comprehensible" translation, and its outdated and resonant didacticism failed to attract interest from abroad. *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika*, and *Shyama* are other key plays that have dance-drama adaptations, which together are known as *Rabindra Nritya Natya*.

Example: Tagore's major plays are– Raja (1910) [The King of the Dark Chamber], Dakghar (1912) [The Post Office], Achalayatan (1912) [The Immovable], Muktadhara (1922) [The Waterfall], and Raktakaravi (1926) [Red Oleanders]. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them Gora (1910), Ghare-Baire (1916) [The Home and the World] and Yogayog (1929).

3.3 Chitra

Chitra is a one-act play written by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in English in 1914. The play adapts part of the story from the *Mahabharata* and centres on the character of Chitrangada, a female warrior who attempts to attract the attention of Arjuna. *Chitra* has been performed around the world and has been adapted into numerous different formats, such as dance.

Critical reception for *Chitra* throughout the years has been received positive reviews, and the work has been described as "the crown of this first half of the poet's career." Several versions of the play have been performed since its inception and it has been also been adapted into several formats including dance. A 1914 article in the New York Times said using Hindu legends, Tagore touched modern feminism with the character of Chitra.

3.3.1 Summary of the Play

The play is the story of Chitrângadâ and Arjuna from the *Mahabharata* and begins with Chitra initiating a conversation with Madana, the god of love, and Vasanta, the god of eternal youth

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and springtime. They ask Chitra who she is and what is worrying her, to which she replies that she is the daughter of the king of Maripur and has been brought up like a boy as her father had no male heir. She is a great warrior and a hero in spite of being born as a woman, but has never had any chance to truly live like a woman or learn how to use "feminine wiles". Chitra explains that she had met the warrior hero Arjuna after seeing him in the forest while she was hunting for game. Despite knowing that he had pledged several vows including one for twelve years of celibacy, Chitra fell instantly in love with him. The following day she tried to speak to him and plead her case, but Arjuna turned her away due to his vows. Chitra begs with the two gods to give her a day of perfect beauty so she can win over Arjuna and have just one night of love with him. Moved by her pleas, the two gods give her not just one day but an entire year to spend with Arjuna.

The next scene opens with Arjuna admiring over the perfect beauty he has seen. Chitra, the beauty of which he states, enters and Arjuna instantly strikes up a conversation with her. He requests to know what she is looking for, to which Chitra bashfully replies that she is in search of the man of her desires. The two go back and forth until Chitra admits that she is looking for him, which prompts Arjuna to say that he will no longer hold to his vows of chastity. Chitra realises that rather than feeling happy, hearing this makes her awfully miserable as he is not falling for her true self. She then tells him not to fall for an illusion.

Later the next day, Chitra confesses to Vasanta and Madana that she had spurned Arjuna due to him falling for what she saw as a false image of herself. The two gods scold her as they had only given her what she had asked of them. Chitra says that despite their gift, she sees the perfect beauty as a being separate from herself and that even if she had slept with Arjuna, it would not be the true her that he loved only her beauty. Vasanta advises Chitra to go to Arjuna and spend the year with him and that at the end of the year Arjuna will be able to embrace the true Chitra once the spell of perfect beauty is gone. Chitra does so, but during their year together she thinks that Arjuna will not love her once the year is over. After much time has passed, Arjuna begins to grow restless and longs to hunt once again. He also begins to ask Chitra questions about her past, speculating if she has anyone at home that is missing her. Chitra comments that she has no past and that she's as transient as a drop of dew, which disappointments Arjuna. With the year approaching its end, Chitra asks that the two gods make her last night her most beautiful, which they do.

However, around the same time Arjuna hears tales of the warrior Princess Chitra and begins to wonder what she might be like. As she has never having told him her name, Chitra assures Arjuna that he would never have noticed Chitra if he had passed by her and tries to persuade him into bed. Arjuna declines, saying that some villagers have informed him that Maripur is under attack. Chitra tries to assure him that the city is fully protected, but to no avail, Arjuna's mind is engaged in thoughts of the princess Chitra. bitterly asks if he would love her more if she were like the Princess Chitra he admires. Arjuna replies that since she has always kept her true self a secret, he has never sincerely grown to love her as much as he could and that his love is "incomplete". Noticing that this upsets her, Arjuna endeavours to console his companion.

The play ends with Chitra finally admitting to Arjuna that she is the princess of which he spoke of and that she pleaded for beauty in order to win him over. She confesses that she is not a perfect beauty, but that if he would accept her then she would stay with him forever. Chitra also discloses that she is pregnant with his son. Arjuna meets this news with joy and states that his life is truly full.

3.3.2 Characters of the Play

The characters of 'Chitra' are as follows:

- Vasanta: The god of springtime and eternal youth.
- Madana: The god of love.

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- Chitra/Chitrângadâ: Daughter of the King of Manipur, Chitrângadâ was raised as a boy due to the lack of a male heir.
- Assorted villagers
- Arjuna: A prince of the house of Kurus, Arjuna is a former warrior that is living as a hermit as of the start of the play.

3.4 Critical Analysis of 'Chitra'

"I am Chitra, the daughter of the Kingly house of Manipur" utters the princess in this play as she reveals herself, to the Gods. Undoubtedly this indicate the key to her whole character which is at once frank and dignified, free as well as self-poised. Born as a woman, she has none of the untaught arts of look and language of her sex. The simplicity of her speech draws us to her as much as the purity of her soul. We admire her when she spurns the boon of a God that has made her person lovely as she craves the perfection of the spirit even more than that of the body. She appears all the more radiant in her knowledge of true love; for hers "has no touch of earth". Her hero and Lord, Arjuna, stands almost a contrast before her even as "the low sun that makes the colour".

Rabindranath Tagore has wonderfully divined this short drama containing a thoughtful suggestion capable of capturing readers for long. For he alone knows to weave with consummate skill, "an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song", The whole purport of this drama strikes us as original both in form and substance. The anguish of Love when it fails in its expectation of a higher purpose awakens in us the sense of the futility of much that passes for that noble quality in this world. All that is given us, we begin to realise, is only the shadow. The psychological factor playing a significant part in this play cannot fail to whet the edge of our enjoyment, when the poet robes it in the ineffable sweetness of his language with the powerful aids of fancy and feeling.

There is not much wealth of detail or warmth of expression to engage us here. It is almost all the narration by either Arjuna to himself or Chitra to the God of Love, of their respective thoughts and hopes of the other. We are not often treated to situations wherein Arjuna and Chitra are wrapped up in ecstasy. Yet our heart's desires receive ample fulfilment from the unlimited scope for conjuring up the felicity of love from their own speeches which impress us with the indescribable charm of delicacy. Critics may find this drama too short to deserve the name. But the true lover of art will scarcely pass without realising that the rare suggestion in Rabindranath answers for the perfect enjoyment which we may derive from a complete play of many acts.

To minds, which often receive real sustenance from the infinite variety and unstinted flow of expressions vivifying and portraying to us the depths of love, jealousy, disappointment, and revenge, which the immortal characters of Shakespeare illustrate, the comparatively little soliloquy or the brief passages wherein Arjuna and Chitra are made to reveal themselves in this play, may not have any great appeal. But this is perhaps where Tagore's genius distinguishes itself by its singular chasteness and individuality. It is truly the product of the Oriental imagination. The tendency of art and activity in the West is expansive while in the East it has shown an immense concentration and singleness of purpose. Her love at first sight when described by Chitra to the God Madan, has no more ado about it than the typically simple language, devoid of the colour and detail, naturally imported by poets in order to evoke our emotions. "Ah, foolish heart! whither fled thy presumption. I know not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost," says the princess indeed conveying to us more than adequately the sudden gush of fresh impulses in her heart which deprived her of the power of speech. Really nothing more is required to keep the reader alive to the springs of love bubbling in her virgin soul. Nay, the imagination can fill in the rest left unsaid by her. The mind enjoys the refreshing device of the poet that has opened up for it a vista of love's longings by one gentle stroke of the pen.

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Again, nothing can stand comparison with the picture of the first union of Arjuna with Chitra, wrought with such a fine brush. The very scene where they meet for conjugal bliss speaks of the perfect harmony in nature which prepares us, as it does the lovers, to forget everything else in the security of love. The gradual development towards the heightening of emotions, is brought home to us no less vividly by the dramatic meeting of Arjuna and Chitra and their eagerness to linger long in each other's company, than by the description of the moon and the night which are in symphony with their increasing passion. The poet paints the scene thus, "The moon had moved to the West, peering through the leaves to espy the wonder of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air was heavy with perfume. The silence of the night was vocal with the chirping of crickets. The reflection of the trees hung motionless in the lake." Then occurs the gentle, unconscious movement in nature itself for the mingling of body and soul, when the moon has set behind the trees and "one curtain of darkness covered all". What greater testimony do we need to the wonderful power of the poet to fill us with supreme satisfaction unaided by any lengthy argument or account, than what is contained in that single sentence, "Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstasy . . ."

This very short play of one Act containing none of the attractions of variation in scene, action, and characters captivates us by its beauty even as the tiny bead of dew transformed into a laughing orb by the all-pervading sun. There is no more complexity in the plot than there is in the colour scheme of the clear sky. However, the blending of fine shades of thought in a single theme is rendered with such rare intuition and skill that as we begin dissecting it, we experience the same agreeable surprise at the emergence of fresh components, as at the rainbow colours from a ray of pure legit.

There is in us no feeling of vagueness bordering on dissatisfaction as we finish the book. But a strange discontent lurks within the heart as that of Arjuna when he fails to "feel Chitra on all sides". What sort of a woman is Chitra? She is neither so plain as her manly training might indicate to us, nor too elusive as Arjuna considers her when his first madness of love begins to die away. Anyhow she is not a Goddess hidden in a golden image. The noble ambition in her fed with youthful fantasies, to meet the greatest hero of the five Pandava brothers and to "break a lance with him, to challenge him in disguise to a single combat and prove her skill in arms against him" is the true outcome of her early education. But the woman in her, irresistible at the meeting of "the fervent gaze that almost grasps you like the clutching hands of the hungry spirit within," responds to the cuckoo call of love and the one strong desire that possesses her afterwards is to murmur to him, "take me, take all I am". There is a real conflict at first in her, whether to accept Arjuna when she learns of his broken vow of celibacy. The warning note is sounded to her by her conscience which say's "This is not love, this is not man's highest homage to woman". However, alas! Like many others, she slowly yields to the compromising attitude of allowing herself to be courted. That feeling, ebbing away within her with the first excitement of pleasure, the inner vision gradually strengthens her will until when finally she loathes her very body, which has become the seducer of her hero's heart. She then emerges a new being reconciled to her lot and ready to make her last sacrifice at Arjuna's feet. The final revelation of her true self, so sudden and impressive, cannot but leave a lingering taste of the high and the noble in our memory even long after the book is closed. Chitra certainly is greater than man and woman put together, though by the strange irony of fate she happens to be both.

The herb of the play next claims our attention. Is he no better than a thoughtless dissolute man seeking only physical perfection even at the risk of losing the fame of his heroic manhood? Poor Arjuna! He desires much to know more of Chitra In order to "clasp something that can last longer than pleasure that can endure even through suffering". However, herein lies the sadness of his failure to discover the secret of that enduring passion born of insatiate desire and unsullied thought. He knows little that the eyes of woman, naturally quick in discerning man get quicker still when they are love-opened. For Chitra painfully notes that the hours of thoughtless pleasure

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are over and the time has come for her being discarded. The sense of satiety brings with it the desire for change. Arjuna yearns to see Chitra in her manly self-riding on the horse and "dispensing glad hope all round her". The same Arjuna, who has spurned her youth when it was devoid of the softness of the woman, kneels before her when by the boon of a God she becomes beautiful. We are thus amused at the contrariness in man and woman when Arjuna is found fickle and Chitra steady, in her feelings. The intensity of pathos overwhelms us when each of them passes through the inner struggle in trying to understand the other. The figurative language and evasive answers of the princess set the mind of Arjuna a-thinking. However, all the while her heart is on edge doubting much the strength of Arjuna to retain a steady glow. The battle of wits, so naturally following on a flat refusal from Arjuna for further dalliance, is finely depicted. The keenness of disappointment has none of the soul-killing depression of spirit on Chitra. She earns fresh glory for having suppressed her ego and offering to her Lord the abiding proof of her great devotion to him, a child in the womb, whom, if born a man, she wishes to rear into a second Arjuna.

Overall, the character of Chitra satisfies the tests of an ideal woman. To fully appreciate the purpose of Tagore's introduction in this play of an incident not found in, the Mahabharata, namely Chitra's metamorphosis into a lovelier being by the grace of a God. The readers should have the imagination to accredit it to the happy device of the poet to illustrate how the artificial is attractive, while the real and the permanent do not immediately appeal to us. The idea in making Chitra superior to Arjuna in her aims and activities is the reflection of the opinion of the poet that the true woman of India has always a nobler function to perform than submissively following her Lord. She is a saviour to many a frail forlorn being, whose soul would have weltered in abject complacency of material prosperity, but for the helping hand of a devoted wife to lead him on to sublime altitudes. Such a woman is a priceless possession to her husband and acts as his best friend, perfecting his nature by her constant attendance, born of gentility of service and sweetness of disposition.

The last speech of the princess ends with the words "I offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king". The same dignity as at the beginning, but now made doubly worthy of her by the magnanimity of her heart, that persists in self-abnegation compels us to honour her for all that she stands for – faith, purity, love and sacrifice.

3.5 Feminism in 'Chitra', 'Natirpuja' and 'Chandalika'

Modern age is considered the age of feminism. The women in the modern period have crossed the barriers of society. They have proved their equality to their male counterparts. The modern women are not Feminism is a kind of revolt of women against social conventions. Feminine consciousness is, of course, consciousness of females for equality with males.

An attempt has been made to focus on the feminism reflected in Tagore's 'Chitra', 'NatirPuja' and 'Chandalika' in this paper. In good olden days, a woman was considered as sub ordinate and parasite. She was not independent to lead her life. The rights of woman were completely neglected. Rabindranath Tagore has brought out his women out of the kitchen and placed them in the active stream of life.

Feminism in Rabindranath Tagore challenges the traditional view of woman as the weaker sex. Tagore's Chitra is as strong as man is. She is expert in riding, hunting, duel and war. She is a type of terror for the evildoers in the state. She had ambition to challenge Arjuna in single combat.

When Arjuna in the forest rejects her, she does not go home weeping. She tries to show her strength and power by gaining perfect beauty from Madana. She seeks revenge against her insult of rejection by making him to surrender before her borrowed beauty. Chitra lived in a good olden days but she had a sense of feminism as a modern woman.

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She proved her equality. She equalled herself with her ancestors who made penance for child. Srimati in "NatirPuja" makes supreme sacrifice which is dazzling one. She has equalled herself with the males who sacrificed for the noble cause of religion.

Thomas A Becket in 'Murder in the Cathedral' makes deliberate efforts to become martyr. If we compare his sacrifice with Srimati our conclusion is 'Srimati is superior.' He is a priest of high rank and she is court dancer of low rank. Srimati becomes a model martyr. Her religious sense is superior to those who just pretend to be religious. Prakriti in 'Chandalika' stands for the revolt against conventions. She proves that a woman has equal right to choose her life member. She does not care for caste, creed and religion for the fulfilment of her ambition. Rabindranath Tagore's women characters are as conscious as modern women are. They try to gain self-improvement. Tagore has given priority to his female characters. Chitra had never thought she is inferior to men and learnt the duties of men.

The modern women have entered several sectors and are performing responsibilities equal to their male counterparts. Chitra's desire of challenging Arjuna in single combat shows her modernity. She loves her people like her children. As modern women are serving the country joining defence services, she too was defending her people.

Srimati was a court dancer in the court of Magadha. She was considered the means of entertainment. When the royal Authority banned the worship, she performs worship at the cost of her own life she does not care for the royal order. She crosses the barriers in the way of her worship. Fear of death did not astray her from her holy performance.

Rabindranath Tagore has described the journey of his women characters from ignorance to knowledge. Self-consciousness in all the characters play vital role in their development. As far as Chitra had no consciousness as woman, she was just the princess of the land. When she sees Arjuna, she realizes for the first time her womanhood.

Physical attraction enhances passion in her heart for Arjuna. She makes an experiment of penance and borrowing beauty due to her self-consciousness. Arjuna violates his vow of celibacy under the impression of Chitra's heavenly beauty. Chitra gets courage and inspiration out of her self-consciousness and acts further.

When Srimati had no self-consciousness, she had no courage at all. After listening to the message of equality from Upali and Utpalparna, she becomes conscious of her own self. Her mind set is completely changed after realization of herself.

She criticizes superficial sense of religion. She considers herself as a Budhist devotee. She faces the threat of life by performing holy worship. It is the consciousness of Srimati, which lifts her from a mere dancing girl to the height of martyr. When Prakriti realizes her identity, she becomes strong willed. She thinks when other girls are free to choose their life partners. Then why not she is allowed to do the same? Her consciousness inculcates in her mind the strength to venture further to gain Ananda. She brings him under the control of black magic. She withdraws the magical effect from Ananda out of sympathy. Therefore, Prakriti becomes stronger to Ananda.

Rabindranath Tagore's *'Chitra'*, *'Srimati'* and *'Prakriti'* have significant status. They are shown self-sufficient and self-cantered. They remain victorious. Chitra proves her ability by defeating Arjuna in the battle of romance. Srimati proves her superiority by making supreme sacrifice for the noble cause of religion. Prakriti shows her strength by making Ananda to come to her door-steps begging for love. Therefore, Rabindranath Tagore's women characters are superior to other ordinary women in the society. They are role models for the women. Suffering women can improve their circumstances by imitating the women characters of Rabindranath Tagore. They may realize their strength and may improve their condition.

Task Read Tagore's play *The Post Office*.

Notes

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.
2. The original name of the Tagore family was Banerjee.
3. *Chitra* is a one-act play written by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in English in 1913.
4. Gandhi called Tagore, The Great Sentinel for his unswerving commitment to open-mindedness, inclusiveness and diversity in the envisioning of India.
5. Jyotirindranath and Satyajit Ray edited *The Essential Tagore.*

3.6 Summary

- Poet, writer and humanitarian, Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and played a key role in the renaissance of modern India.
- Tagore's activism and literary work challenged the contradictions of an unequal and unfair world system and developed a new understanding of the society and the world in order to establish a concrete and universal humanism.
- The youngest of thirteen surviving children, Rabindranath Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata, India to parents Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and Sarada Devi (1830–1875).
- After returning to Jorosanko and completed a set of major works by 1877, one of them a long poem in the Maithili style of Vidyapati; they were published pseudonymously.
- He introduced the short-story genre in Bengali with "Bhikharini" ("The Beggar Woman"), and his *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) includes the famous poem "Nirjharer Swapnabhanga" ("The Rousing of the Waterfall").
- In 1883, he married Mrinalini Devi, born Bhabatarini, 1873–1902; they had five children, two of whom died in childhood.
- In 1901 Tagore moved to Santiniketan to found an ashram with a marble-floored prayer hall—*The Mandir*—an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, a library.
- 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*.
- Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas and thousands of songs.
- Tagore's experiences with drama began when he was sixteen, with his brother Jyotirindranath Tagore Tagore wrote his first original dramatic piece when he was twenty—*Valmiki Pratibha*.
- In old age, Tagore still rose long before dawn to witness the birth of each new day, and he still wrote fluently in his own hand.

3.7 Keywords

Dalit: A member of the lowest cast such as a schedule caste or schedule tribe, according to the Indian caste system.

Derisory: Very small, insufficient or inadequate.

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Fascist: A person who follows fascism, which is an totalitarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organisation.

Forbidden: To be not allowed or something that is banned.

Gymnastic: A special kind of physical activities that show agility and coordination.

Naturalism: A style and theory of representation based on the accurate depiction of detail.

Sobriquet: A nickname.

Verisimilitude: Something that looks or appears real or true.

3.8 Review Questions

1. How is love depicted as in the play *Chitra*? Support your answer.
2. Critically analyse the play *Chitra*.
3. Discuss feminism in Tagore's writings taking into account *Chitra*.
4. Discuss early life and works of Tagore.
5. Write a note on multitalented Rabindranath Tagore.
6. 'Between 1878 and 1932, Tagore set foot in more than thirty countries on five continents. Enumerate'.
7. Tagore's dramas used more philosophical and allegorical themes. Explain.
8. Write a note on the characters in the play *Chitra*.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False

3.9 Further Readings

Books

Edited by Tandon, Neeru. (2006). *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian-English Drama*, Atlantic Publishers.

Iyer, Natesan Sharda (2007). *Musings on Indian Writing in English: Drama*. Sarup & Sons.

Online links

http://home.arcor.de/tablagroup-hamburg/IMC-Projekte-R-Tagore-Biographie-032005-1.PDF

http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books/magazine/89649/rabindranath-tagore

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/rabindranath-tagore

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Unit 4: Ode to the West Wind by P B Shelley

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life and times of P B Shelley
- Analyse the themes, motifs and symbols in Shelley's writing
- Understand and critically analyse the poem 'Ode to the West Wind'

Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was an ostensible romantic poet, who taught the English literature with his original and impeccable works. His immaculate writings are example of his greatness and mastery in writing poetry. Therefore, his works reflected an great rejection for oppression and injustice in the society with the help of his revolutionary forms. Thus, he is "grown up with violently revolutionary ideas, which contrasted with those of his fathers."

Shelley's realisation of life was very mature since his early years of schooling. From a young age, he was in a favour of justice and human rights. Therefore, he "saw the petty tyranny of school masters and schoolmate as representative of man's general inhumanity to man, and dedicated his life to a war against all injustice and oppression."

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Shelley was deeply concerned with the imaginative aptitude purporting to the desired facet ever sought insistently by active minds. He believed that "the moral customs of a particular era are the result of imaginative vision of great men, and he discovers the ideal aspect of other people, which are no already embodied in existing moral codes."

Ode to the West Wind is one of Shelley's best known works in which the poet explains distinctly the activities of the west wind on the earth, on the sea and in the sky. Then the poet conveys his jealousy for the unlimited freedom of the west wind, his aspiration to be free like the wind and to spread his words among humanity. In the unit, you will learn about the life and works of P B Shelley, his major themes, motifs, symbols and analysis.

4.1 About the Author

Shelley declined to accept life as it is lived and attempted to persuade others of the lack of any requirement for doing so. He believed that life would be wonderful and an experience directed by love, "if tyranny, cruelty and the corruption of man by man through jealousy and the exercise of power are removed." Shelley implored the people to release their potential power that could change their standing in life, so he calls upon them to: their tragically short lives

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth, like dew

Shelley was born on 4 August 1792 near Horsham, Sussex, into a wealthy family that ultimately achieved minor noble rank—the poet's grandfather, a wealthy businessman, received a baronetcy in 1806. Shelley's father, Timothy Shelley was a country gentleman and a Member of Parliament. When Shelley was 12, his parents enrolled him into Eton, a prominent school for boys. At school, he discovered the writings of a philosopher William Godwin. Shelley devoted plenty of time in reading his works and became an ardent believer. The young man enthusiastically embraced the principles of equality and liberty promoted by the French Revolution. He also dedicated his great passion and convincing power in persuading others of the appropriateness of his beliefs. He enrolled at Oxford in 1810 but was expelled the following spring for taking part in authoring a pamphlet titled *The Necessity of Atheism* as atheism was considered an outrageous idea in religiously traditional 19th century England.

Figure 4.1: Percy Bysshe Shelley

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/57/Percy_Bysshe_Shelley_by_Alfred_Clint.jpg

Notes

At the age of 19, Shelley ran away with Harriet Westbrook, the 16-year-old daughter of a tavern keeper and married her regardless of his loathing for the tavern. This incident created a scandal and Shelley's father never forgave him for his elopement with a young girl. Now looking for a vacation Shelley moved to Ireland to campaign for political reforms and his poem *Queen Mab* published in 1813. He also wrote a political pamphlet *A Declaration of Rights*, on the French Revolution, which was thought to be extremely radical for circulation in Britain. Shelley came back to England where he became engaged in radical politics. The following year he met his ideal, William Godwin and fell in love with his daughter Mary, an idealist and a radical like himself. She also had a writer's streak and went on to write *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*, two of the most popular and influential novels in English literature. In July 1816, Mary and Percy along with Mary's half-sister Jain Clairmont went to Switzerland.

Did u know? P B Shelley did not make enough money from his writings during his lifetime. His primary income came from the money his grandfather left for him.

The Shelleys went there to meet Lord Byron, one of the most famous and controversial poets of the period. Shelley and Byron became friends and formed a circle of English expatriates in Pisa, travelling throughout Italy. It was the time when Shelley composed most of his best lyric poetry, including the *Ode to the West Wind* (1819), *Ode to a Skylark* (1820) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). On July 8, 1822, Shelley was drowned at sea during a fierce storm while sailing from Leghorn to La Spezia, Italy; he was not even 30 years old.

Percy Bysshe Shelley belongs to the younger generation of English Romantic poets, the generation that came to eminence while Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth were settling into middle age. The older generation of Romantics had a reverence and simple ideals for nature whereas the Romantics of the younger generation including Lord Byron and John Keats also came to be known for their sensuous aestheticism, their explorations of deep-passions and their political radicalism.

The younger generation of Romantics also died quite young, Shelley died when he was 29, Keats at the age of 26 and Byron when he was 36. To an extent, the greatness of feeling stressed by Romanticism indicated that Romanticism was always linked with youth, and because Keats, Shelley and Byron died young. However, they had attained iconic status as the representative tragic Romantic artists but they never had the chance to sink into conservatism and complacency like Wordsworth did. Shelley's life and his poetry surely support such an understanding, but it is significant not to get involved in stereotypes to the extent that they confuse a poet's individual character. Shelley's delight, his nobility, his optimism and belief in humanity are special and distinctive among the Romantics. His expression of these feelings makes him one of the early 19th century's most noteworthy writers in English.

Did u know? Shelley and John Keats were close friends so when Keats died of tuberculosis at the age of 26 Shelley dedicated the poem *Adonais* to him.

4.2 Themes, Motifs and Symbols

4.2.1 Themes

The Heroic, Visionary Role of the Poet

In Shelley's poetry, the character of the poet (as well as the character of Shelley himself) is not only a brilliant entertainer or even an observant moralist but also a grand, unfortunate, visionary

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hero. The poet has a profound spiritual appreciation for nature, as in the poem *To Wordsworth* (1816), and this strong connection with nature gives him access to extremely great cosmic truths, like in *Alastor*; or, *The Spirit of Solitude* (1816). He possesses the power—and the duty—to interpret these truths with the help of his imagination into poetry, but only a sort of poetry that the readers can understand. Therefore, his poetry becomes a type of prophecy with the help of which a poet capable enough to change the world for the better by bringing spiritual, social and political change.

Shelley's poet is a near-divine redeemer, similar to Christ as well as to Prometheus, a Greek demigod who stole fire from heaven and gave it to humans. Like Christ and Prometheus, figures of the poets in Shelley's writings are usually destined to suffer. This is because their visionary power separates them from other men, misunderstood by critics, persecuted by an oppressive government, or suffocated by conservative middle-class and religion morals. Ultimately, however, the poet wins because his art is immortal, enduring the tyranny of the society, religion and government and living on to inspire new generations.

The Power of Nature

Similar to several of the romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth, Shelley exhibits an immense admiration for the beauty of nature, and feels strongly connected to nature's power. In his early poetry, Shelley shares the romantic interest in pantheism. It is the belief that God, or a divine, unifying spirit, is present in everything in the universe. He talks about this unifying natural force in many poems, defining it as the "spirit of beauty" in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and distinguishing it with the Arve River and Mont Blanc in *Mont Blanc*. This force is the reason of all human goodness, happiness, pleasure, and faith and is the source of divine truth and poetic inspiration. Shelley asserts many times that this force can affect people to change the world for the better. However, Shelley at the same time acknowledges that nature's power is not entirely positive. Nature destroys as often as it creates or inspires but it destroys things without any discrimination and with cruelty. Therefore, Shelley's joy in nature is diminished by an awareness of its dark side.

The Power of the Human Mind

Shelley uses nature as his main source of poetic inspiration. In poems such as *Ode to the West Wind* and *The Mask of Anarchy Written on the Massacre at Manchester* (1819), Shelley implies that nature holds a sublime power over his imagination. This power seems to emerge from a peculiar, more spiritual place than merely his appreciation for nature's magnificence or beauty. Although Shelley believes that nature has creative power over him as it is a source of inspiration but he feels that his imagination has creative powers over nature.

Notes It is the imagination or our ability to form sensory perceptions, which permits us to explain nature in various, original ways that help to shape how nature appears and, hence, how it exists. Therefore, the power of the human mind becomes equal to the power of nature, and the experience of beauty of nature becomes a type of partnership between the observer and the observed.

As Shelley cannot be certain that, the inspiring powers he discerns in nature are merely the result of his exceptional imagination. He finds it hard to ascribe nature's power to God and the human activities in shaping nature hurt Shelley's belief that nature's beauty comes exclusively from a divine source.

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Atheism

The theme of a universe without a god is an integral part of Shelley's works and his constant references to the inspiration he received from nature. As with his fellow Romantic poets of his generation as well as of the previous generations, Shelley followed a philosophy that looked to the unfolding of the universe as a natural progress of time. Shelley's early principles and his removal because of his unavoidable atheistic views, he learned the unpopularity of atheism in his society. As he grew up, he became better at hiding his religious doubt and masking it in references to mythologies, biblical absurdity, and the ease of self-admitted unfamiliarity of the world's greatest mysteries.

Some of the related poems with this theme are: *Mutability, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, Mont Blanc, The Mask of Anarchy, England in 1819, Ode to the West Wind, The Indian Serenade, To a Skylark, Adonais* and *A Dirge.*

Oppression/Injustice/Tyranny/Power

Oppression, power, tyranny and injustice form an integral part of Shelley's works. Though he expresses this theme in many diverse ways, the idea of a majority being unjustly ruled by an oppressive few is maybe the most frequent theme in Shelley's writings. If there is a component of social theory to take from Shelley's poetry, it should be his purpose to inspire the tyrannised classes to involve in revolution against the oppression of atrocious institutions such as legal courts, religious institutions, the royal court, and other government systems. The disorder in France during his lifetime and effects of the French Revolution fresh in the minds of several people served as a powerful impact on him.

Example: Shelley had worked on pamphlets on a political theme asserting a "Declaration of Rights".

One of the most frequently used examples of this theme is atheism. So far, beyond his protest against the domineering elements of religion, Shelley thought of himself as a radical voice for the people in the fight against unfair laws and governments.

However, social tyranny included personal injustices pointed at Shelley. He was never able to accept society's denial of his nonconformity, particularly in his romantic life. Even though he was standing up against the impiety of authority in the name of freedom, the very people he wanted to encourage disowned him. For those people disapproved of his unusual lifestyle in marriage and love as well as his personal godlessness.

Some of the related poems with this theme are: *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, Ozymandias, The Mask of Anarchy, Song to the Men of England, England in 1819, Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark* and *Adonais.*

Revolution/Mutation/Change/Cycle

Knowing Shelley's overall discontent, it is not astonishing to see him frequently deliberating the theme of "change." In Shelley and Byron's own convictions, this is what isolated them from their first-generation Romantic poets. Coleridge, Wordsworth and Blake, only worked to describe and state the injustices of numerous powers in the years leading up to and then during the French Revolution. On the other hand, Shelley and Byron adopted more of a call-to-arms method. Shelley was never satisfied with only discussing the problems of state tyranny. He followed his own principles, even if it resulted in being disowned by his family, dismissal from Oxford and exile from London society. Shelley used his poetry to challenge his readers to act upon the ideas he was promoting. Philosophically, recognising that nothing in this world, whether manmade

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or natural, is constant, Shelley believed in a cyclical nature of the universe and of humanity and argued that man had the right and duty to live actively.

Some of the related poems with this theme are: *Mutability, Mont Blanc, Ozymandias, The Mask of Anarchy, Song to the Men of England, England in 1819* and *Ode to the West Wind.*

Narcissism/Vanity/Self

Richard Holmes' biography on P B Shelley, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, greatly suggests that as driven as Shelley was to motivate political and social change and overcome oppression; the changes he encouraged barely went beyond changes that would benefit him.

Disagreements can be made for either side of the coin. Shelley can be seen as an absentee father, an adulterous and selfish lover, and a treacherous countryman. On the other hand, he is a bard devoted to unselfish goals and particularly freedom – calling upon a revolutionary voice much eminent than his own – and a radical willing to give up his own status for the benefit of humanity. On Shelley's death, Byron, in response to John Murray's elegy on Shelley, wrote, "You are brutally mistaken about Shelley, who was without exception, the best and least selfish man I ever knew. I never knew one who was not a beast in comparison."

The vagueness is difficult to escape in Shelley's poetry. Does Shelley see himself as a superior being, primarily arrogant and patronising with his vigilante tone? Alternatively, is he, as speaker, a metaphor for the voice of everyman?

Some of the related poems with this theme are: *A Dirge, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Ode to the West Wind, The Indian Serenade.*

Immortality vs Mortality

Shelley did not challenge the seemingly scientific proof of mortality; however, he talked about the notion of death in spirit. In his works, death was quite frequently represented through water and references to Greek mythology were common. He is usually questioned both the future of the Romantic voice and the immortality of other voices, for example, Greek and Roman myths, Milton, Dante, Plato, and so on.

Some of the related poems with this theme are *Mutability, Mont Blanc, Ozymandias, Ode to the West Wind, Adonais* and *A Dirge.*

4.2.2 Motifs

Autumn

Many of Shelley's poems are set in autumn, including *Ode to the West Wind* and *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Fall or autumn is a time of both beauty and death, and is a great example of nature's both the creative and devastating powers. As a time of change, autumn is an appropriate setting for Shelley's vision of social and political revolution. In *Ode to the West Wind*, autumn's vivid colours and violent winds emphasise the intense and passionate nature of the poet, while the degeneration and death intrinsic in the season suggest the suffering and sacrifice of the Christ-like poet.

Ghosts and Spirits

Shelley's interest in the supernatural frequently appears in his writings. The spirits and ghosts in his poems indicate the likelihood of seeing a world outside the one in which we live. In *Hymn*

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to Intellectual Beauty, the speaker look for ghosts and describes that ghosts are one of the means men have experimented with to understand the world beyond. The speaker of *Mont Blanc* bumps into ghosts and shadows of actual natural objects in the cave of "Poesy." Ghosts are scarcely described in both poems such as the speaker do not find any ghosts in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and the ghosts of Poesy in *Mont Blanc* are not real, a discovery that emphasises the mystery and elusiveness of supernatural forces.

Christ

From his days at Oxford, Shelley felt severely doubtful about organised religion, especially Christianity. Nonetheless, in his poetry, he often denotes the poet as a Christ-like figure and so sets the poet up as a profane substitute for Christ. Martyred by traditional values and society, the Christ figure is resuscitated by the power of nature along with his own imagination to spread his prophetic visions all over the earth. Shelley further splits his Christ figures from conventional Christian values in *Adonais*, in which he equates the same character to Christ as well as Cain, whom the Bible depicts as the first murderer in the world. For Shelley, Christ and Cain are both rebels and outcasts, like him and other romantic poets.

4.2.3 Symbols

Mont Blanc

For Shelley, Mont Blanc, which is the highest mountain peak in the Alps, signifies the everlasting power of nature. Mont Blanc has been in existence forever, and will last eternally, an idea that the poet explores in *Mont Blanc*. The mountain fills the poet with motivation, but its coldness and unreachability are frightening. Eventually, Shelley ponders if the mountain's power might be futile, an invention of the more dominant human imagination.

The West Wind

Shelley uses the West Wind to represent the power of nature and of the source of imagination. Unlike Mont Blanc, the West Wind is depicted as dynamic and active in poems like *Ode to the West Wind*. While Mont Blanc is immovable, the West Wind is an agent for change. Even as it destroys, the wind supports new life on earth and social development among humanity.

The Statue of Ozymandias

In Shelley's work, the statue of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, or Ozymandias, represents political oppression. In *Ozymandias*, (1817) the statue is broken into pieces and abandoned in an empty desert, which suggests that tyranny is temporary and that no political leader, especially an unfair one, can expect to have lasting power. The broken monument also signifies the deterioration of civilization and culture. The statue is, after all, a piece of art made by a creator, which along with its creator have been destroyed, similar to all living things.

4.3 Analysis

The central thematic concerns of Shelley's poetry are largely the same themes that defined Romanticism, especially among the younger English poets of Shelley's era: the sanctity of the imagination, passions, political liberty, nature, creativity, and beauty. Shelley's philosophical relationship to his subject matter makes his treatment of these themes unique. These themes were better developed and expressed than any other Romantic poet with the exception of Wordsworth. Wordsworth's temperament was extremely sensitive and receptive even for a

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Romantic poet, and possessed an extraordinary capacity for hope, love and joy. Shelley ardently believed in the possibility of realising an ideal of human gladness as based on beauty. Also, his moments of despair and gloominess (specifically in book-length poems, for example, *Queen Mab*) usually originate from his discontent at seeing that ideal sacrificed to human weakness.

Shelley's strong feelings about beauty and expression are depicted in poems like *Ode to the West Wind* and *Ode to a Skylark*. In the poems, he cites metaphors from nature to characterise his relationship to his art. The centre of his artistic philosophy can be found in his significant essay, *A Defence of Poetry,* in which he argues that poetry brings about moral good. Shelley argues that poetry, expands and exercises the imagination, and imagination is the source of love, compassion and sympathy. It rests on the ability to project oneself into the position of another person. He writes,

"A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others. The pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb."

No other English poet of the early 19th century emphasised the association between beauty and goodness, or believed so passionately in the power of art's sensual pleasures for the betterment of society. Keats believed in beauty and aesthetics for their sake, on the contrary, Byron's pose was one of immoral sensuousness, or of scandalous rebelliousness. However, Shelley was of the belief that poetry makes people and society better and his poetry is suffused with this type of motivated moral optimism, which he hoped would influence his readers spiritually, morally and sensuously all at the same time.

Caution Remember that Wordsworth, Blake and Coleridge belong to the older generation of Romantics whereas Shelley along with Keats and Byron belong to younger generation of Romantics.

4.4 Ode to the West Wind – Poem

I

O wild West Wind; thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes:
O thou, Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

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II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them!

Thou For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!

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The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind!

4.5 Summary of the Poem

The speaker prays to the "Wild West Wind" of autumn, which scatters the dead leaves and spreads seeds so that they can be nurtured by the spring. He also calls out to the wind as "destroyer and preserver," and asks it to hear him. The speaker calls the wind the "dirge/Of the dying year," and explains how it stirs up violent storms, and again begs it to hear him. The speaker states that the wind moves the Mediterranean from "his summer dreams," and cleaves the Atlantic into uneven craters, making the "sapless foliage" of the ocean shudder, and asks for a third times that it hear him.

The speaker says that if he were a dead leaf that the wind could bear, a cloud it could carry, or a wave it could push, or even if he were, as a boy, "the comrade" of the wind is "wandering over heaven," then he would never have needed to pray to the wind and invoke its powers. He pleads with the wind to lift him "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!"—for though he is like the wind at heart, untameable and proud—he is now chained and bowed with the weight of his hours upon the earth.

The speaker asks the wind to "make me thy lyre," to be his own Spirit, and to drive his thoughts across the universe, "like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth." He asks the wind, by the incantation of this verse, to scatter his words among mankind, to be the "trumpet of a prophecy." Speaking both about the season and about the effect upon mankind that he hopes his words to have, the speaker asks, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

4.6 Explanation

Lines 1–14

In this first of the five sections of the poem, the speaker defines the areas and the powers of the West Wind. Stanza I describes the wind's effects on the land, stanza II discusses the wind's effect on the sky and stanza III addresses its impacts on the sea. The autumn breeze disperses dead leaves and seeds on the forest floor, where they finally sprout into new plants. The wind is called both "destroyer and preserver" (line 14), the wind ensures the recurring regularity of the seasons. The interconnectedness of life and death and themes of regeneration runs throughout *Ode to the West Wind*. The wind is, certainly, more than simply a current of air. Shelley was familiar with Greek and Latin and in both of these languages—the words for "wind," "inspiration," "soul," and "spirit" are all related. Hence, Shelley's "West Wind" appears to symbolise an inspiring spiritual power that moves everywhere and affects everything.

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Lines 2–3

These lines apparently suggest that just as if a magician scares away spirits, the wind spreads leaves. However, "dead leaves" can be interpreted as forgotten books, and "ghosts" as writers of the past. In this way, the winds of inspiration can signify new talent and ideas driving away the memories of the past.

Lines 4–5

The colours named in these lines indicate the various shades of the leaves, but it is also possible to interpret the leaves as symbols of humanity's dying masses. In this analysis, the colours signify different cultures Native American Caucasian, African and Asian. This idea is supported by the phrase "Each like a corpse within its grave" in line 8 that could mean that every person takes part in the natural cycle of life and death.

Lines 6–7

In these lines, the wind is depicted as a chariot that carries leaves and seeds to the earth. This comparison gives the impression that the wind has association with those who usually use chariots such as gods and powerful rulers.

Line 8

In this line, the leaves are personified as people within their graves, an image that takes the reader back to lines 4 and 5, where the leaves are considered as ailing "multitudes" of people.

Lines 9–12

In Roman and Greek mythology, the spring's west wind was masculine, as was the autumnal wind. In these lines, the speaker states the spring wind as feminine to emphasise its role of a life-giver and nurturer. The wind is described as an awakening Nature with her energetic "clarion," which is a type of medieval trumpet.

Lines 13–14

At the conclusion of the first stanza, the speaker distinguishes the wind as the dominant spirit of nature that has the power to both annihilate and instil a life. In fact, these two processes are said to be related to each other as without destruction and death, new life cannot come into existence. At the end of line 14 is the phrase "Oh hear!" that will be repeated at the end of stanzas 2 and 3. This refrain emphasises sound that looks apt given that wind, an invisible force, is the poem's central subject.

Lines 15–28

In these lines, the wind assists the clouds bring rain, as it had helped the trees shed leaves in stanza I. Just as the dead foliage sustains new life in the forest soil, the rain plays an important role in nature's regenerative cycle.

Lines 16–18

These lines have been profoundly criticised by critics like F.R. Leavis for their lack of concreteness and seemingly disengaged imagery. Others have mentioned Shelley's knowledge of science and the likelihood that these poetic phrasings might be based on real facts. The loose clouds, for instance, are maybe cirrus clouds, harbingers (or "angels" as in line 18) of rain. Like the leaves of stanza I have been shed from boughs, these clouds have been shaken from the heavier cloud masses, or "boughs of Heaven and Ocean" (line 17). In Latin, "cirrus" means "curl" or "lock of hair"; it is therefore, suitable that these clouds look like a Maenad's "bright hair" (line 20) and are referred to as the "locks of the approaching storm" (line 23).

Notes

Lines 20–23

These lines talks about Shelley and his experience in Florence. When Shelley was in Florence, he saw a relief sculpture of four maenads. Women were worshipping the Roman god of wine and vegetation, Bacchus (in Greek mythology, Dionysus) by performing dances and their hair were flowing from side to side. In these lines, the speaker compares the streaks of the cirrus clouds across the horizon with the maenads' blown tresses. This image seems particularly apt as Bacchus/ Dionysus is related to the natural world and the wind and clouds are main elements of nature.

Lines 23–28

In these lines, the wail of the wind is compared to a song of grief, as if it were grieving the "dying" year. As the year ends, nature prepares for the funeral as the coming night is defined as a "sepulcher," a burial tomb that will be marked by lightning and hail from a storm.

Lines 29–42

In these lines, the speaker says that the West Wind exercises its power over the sea. However, unlike the first two stanzas, this one is presented by an image of peace, sensuality and calm. The Mediterranean Sea is described as tranquil as if sleeping alongside the old Italian town of Baiae. Baize was once a playground of Roman emperors, which sank due to volcanic activities. It is now covered with underwater plants. However, the wind has the ability to "waken" (line 29) the sea and disrupt the summer tranquillity of the waters by ushering in an autumn storm.

Lines 32–33

These lines talks about the time when Shelley sailed past the Bay of Baiae In 1818. He sent a letter to Thomas Love Peacock in which he ardently explains the "ruins of its antique grandeur standing like rocks in the transparent sea under our boat."

Lines 36–38

In these lines, the speaker disturbs the peace of the seascape and retells the West Wind of its power to shake wild, white capped surf.

Lines 39–42

In these lines, the poet says that even the lush sea foliage underwater is aware of the wind's destructive powers. He is recalling the mayhem of cold weather storms on the vegetation as it drains of colour like a person turns pale with fear, or leaves fade in the fall. In a note to these lines, Shelley wrote, "The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it." The natural cycles of death and regeneration therefore, continue everywhere on earth, even underwater, with the help of the West Wind.

Lines 43–56

In these lines, the speaker asks to be encouraged by this spirit. For the first time in *Ode to the West Wind*, the wind confronts humanity in the form of the speaker. No longer an idealistic young man, the speaker experienced pain, limitations and sorrow. He stumbles while he asks the wind to uplift him spiritually. Simultaneously, he can remember his younger years when he was "tameless, and swift, and proud" like the wind. These memories help him to appeal to the wind for inspiration and new life. In this manner, the poem suggests that humans are part of the never-ending natural cycle of death and rebirth.

Lines 47–52

In line 47, the speaker describes his childhood encounters with the wind. He says that as an idealistic youth, he used to "race" with the wind and win, in his own mind. However, now as an old and wise man, he could never imagine challenging the wind's power.

Notes

Lines 53–54

Shelley's critics have usually ridiculed these famous lines. Here, the patterns of earth, sea and sky are remembered as the speaker asks to be lifted from his sorrows by the inspiring West Wind. He appears almost Christ-like in his suffering, the "thorns of life" recollecting the crown of thorns worn by Christ during the crucifixion.

Lines 55–56

The Christ-like image of the speaker continues in these lines. His life experiences have been like heavy crosses for him to bear and have weighed him down. Despite that, there is spark of life and hope inside him. He can still remember the time when he had several of the wind's qualities and powers.

Lines 57–70

If Stanza IV is the description of why the West Wind is being summoned then Stanza V is the prayer itself. The appeals of the speaker seem to amass speed much as the wind does whereas he begins by asking to be moved by the wind and wishes to unite with this power. Just as if a breeze can ignite a glowing coal, the speaker asks the wind to breathe a new life into him and his poetic art. Now the speaker reminds his audience that change is right at the corner, be it natural, artistic, political or personal. Several Romantic writers, including S T Coleridge in his poem *The Eolian Harp*, used the instrument as a symbol for the human imagination that is played upon by a greater power. However, in this poem, the speaker asks to be the West Wind's lyre, its means of communication and music.

Notes The lyre referred to in line 57 might be the Eolian lyre or harp, its name derived from Eolus, god of the winds. This lyre is a box with strings stretched across an opening. When the wind moves through it, the eolian harp produces musical sounds.

Lines 58–62

Here, the speaker appears to accept his distresses and miseries; he realises that the wind's power may let him to include harmony to autumn's music. He is still unhappy, but he recognises sweetness in his pain and that he is part of a natural cycle where he will have a chance to start over as both man and poet. The speaker's increasing strength is suggested at by the powerful exclamations in lines 61 and 62.

Lines 63–64

The wind blew leaves over the forest floor, fertilising the soil. Now, the speaker asks the wind to disperse his timeworn ideas and writings across the earth in hopes of rousing new thoughts and works. Notice the word play on "leaves," which can be found either on trees or in books.

Lines 65–67

In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley said, "the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness." In asking the wind to fan and arouse the dying embers of his words, the speaker seems to be echoing this idea.

Lines 68–69

These lines recollect the angel's "clarion" of line 10, waking the earth from the deep wintry slumber. Here, the speaker asks to become the poet-prophet of the latest season of regeneration.

Lines 69–70

Notes

Shelley initially framed the last two lines as a statement, expressed as a question and the poem ends on a note of suspense rather than affirmation. The speaker has made his case and plea to help the wind in the announcement of a new age. However, he has not received an answer yet. Together with his audience, the speaker eagerly awaits a "yes", delivered on the wings of the wind.

4.7 Form

All of the seven parts of *Ode to the West Wind* have five stanzas comprising of four three-line stanzas and a two-line couplet, all metered in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme in each part follows a pattern known as *terza rima,* the three-line rhyme scheme used by Dante in his *Divine Comedy.* In the three-line *terza rima* stanza, the first and third lines rhyme, and the middle line does not; then the end sound of that middle line is used as the rhyme for the first and third lines in the next stanza. The final couplet rhymes with the middle line of the last three-line stanza. Hence, all of the seven parts of *Ode to the West Wind* follows the scheme ABA BCB CDC DED EE.

Task Find out *terza rima* and examples where this rhyme scheme is popularly used.

4.8 Commentary

The slight, smooth *terza rima* of *Ode to the West Wind* finds Shelley taking a long thematic leap beyond the scope of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and combining his own art into the natural world and to his meditation on beauty. Shelley summons the wind miraculously, explaining its power and its role as both "destroyer and preserver," he asks the wind to sweep him out of his lethargy "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!"

In the fifth section, the poet then takes an extraordinary turn, transforming the wind into a metaphor for his own art, the communicative capacity that drives "dead thoughts" like "withered leaves" over the universe, to "quicken a new birth" or the coming of the spring. Here the spring season is a metaphor for human morality, liberty, imagination or consciousness, which Shelley hoped his art could bring in the human mind.

Shelley asks the wind to be his spirit, and in the same movement he makes it his metaphorical spirit and his poetic faculty. Now, it will play him like a musical instrument like the way it strums the leaves of the trees. The younger generation largely viewed nature as a source of beauty and aesthetic experience whereas the older generation of Romantic poets viewed nature as a source of truth and authentic experience. In this poem, Shelley clearly links nature with art by finding strong natural metaphors to express his ideas about power, quality, and other effects of aesthetic expression.

4.9 Critical Analysis

Ode to the West Wind is Shelley's outstanding work in which he wishes to summon the spirit in the wind and not the just the wind only. Therefore, he regards the wind as a human being, who has a strange power to frighten the dead leaves, as the poet sees them, and to protect the winged

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seeds from death. Thus, he used the season autumn as an characteristic of man's old age, particularly when he explains the dead leaves and the breath of the autumn's being:

O wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead,
Are driven like ghosts, from an enchanter fleeing,

Shelly has used the colours to be an expression to death that has plagued the leaves and rendered them useless:

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence stricken multitudes.

Despite Shelley's fascination with the miserable feature of death, he immediately combines the glistening aspect of life. However, what kind of life does he present? Moreover, Shelley believes in radical change that will cleanse the world and opens forth the new horizon of hope and life. Therefore, he addresses the seeds that are intensely buried in the human minds. These seeds are seeking to be activated and gifted with a new life to bring about an ideal world.

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow.

In these lines, the poet uses the "azure", mostly because Shelley believes azure or blue colour to be the colour of redemption, peace of the spirit and happiness.

The poet sets his imagination on high alert to yield a comprehensive understanding for the activities performed by the wind. Thus, he notices that sometimes the wind is wild and destroys things, but on the other hand, he realises that the wind is also a preserver of life because it carries the seeds to safe places as he writes:

Wild spirit, which are moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver, hear, oh, hear!

Furthermore, Shelley makes use of three things dead leaf, wave and cloud to signify him in his poetic work. Therefore, he hopes to be one of these things to live in harmony with the wind and unite with his body and soul.

If I were a dead leaf, thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power and share.

Shelley wanted to gain that unusual strength of the wind to bring back his youth. He also wants to fly side by side with the wind and is willing to sacrifice his real existence. Being a dead leaf indicates an abstraction of life but in this death, Shelley acquires an exciting eternity and eternal influence on men. Therefore, the poet is not concerned with death via melancholic realisation, but via considering death as a way for survival over the dead realities of life.

Shelley appeals to the west wind to save and cure him from all the pain in life he is going through in his miserable life. He is hurt by this life and wants the wind to heal his wounds Therefore, he says:

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

Amalgamation with the wind is summoned in the last part of the poem as the poet seeks to be a harmonious object with the wind like the lyre:

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Make me thy lyre, as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own!

The tumult of thy mighty harmonies.

Once more autumn is appeal to by the poet as a mark of the imminent death, therefore, the poet wants the wind to revive him to be part of nature. Thus, leaves that falls as if the poet could see his looming death. Furthermore, Shelley has searched for the state of unification with the wind to be incarnated in his soul, imploring the wind to impart him its regeneration and fertility as he says:

Will take from both a deep,
autumnal tone Sweet though in sadness.

Be thou, spirit fierce, My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

The origin of life is assigned to the wind as it hastens the life of the seeds. Hence, Shelley has appointed the wind a missionary post through sharing his thoughts that are buried in his mind. As a result, the wind can use its supernatural power to communicate the poet's ideas to people who are busy in their lives. Additionally, he uses the image of death as a way of life as death is the end and starting of a new beginning or regeneration. Therefore, the mentioning of the first is correlated with the second, as he writes:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

Shelley's dreams of regeneration and replenishment will not be realised without the vitality of the wind:

Scatter, as from an extinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth.

Finally, Shelley finishes his naturalistic epic of life and death in a panoramic way imparted with splendid hope and desire for spring, the season of love and fertility. Therefore, he is clearly an optimistic person whose ambition is to go beyond conventional life to the metaphysical achievements.

Therefore, in this poem Shelley paved the way for transformation and modification in the English society and his people by kindling the sparks of their minds to take active measures to change their desolate life. Hence, it is an invitation for freedom and change with the help of individual liberation by sacrificing their materialistic life to achieve utopia.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Mary Shelley was the daughter of ……..
2. P B shelly wrote …… an elegy for his friend Keats.
3. William Wordsworth, William Blake and …… are called older generation Romantic poets.
4. The rhyming scheme …… is used in *Ode to the West Wind*.
5. …… is the author of the *Divine Comedy*.

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4.10 Summary

- *Ode to the West Wind* is one of Shelley's best known works in which the poet explains distinctly the activities of the west wind on the earth, on the sea and in the sky.
- Shelley was born on 4 August 1792 near Horsham, Sussex, into a wealthy family.
- The younger generation of Romantics also died quite young, Shelley died when he was 29, Keats at the age of 26 and Byron when he was 36.
- In Shelley's poetry, the character of the poet (as well as the character of Shelley himself) is not only a brilliant entertainer or even an observant moralist but also a grand, unfortunate, visionary hero.
- Similar to several of the romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth, Shelley exhibits an immense admiration for the beauty of nature.
- Shelley uses nature as his main source of poetic inspiration and he implies that nature holds a sublime power over his imagination.
- Shelley's strong feelings about beauty and expression are depicted in poems like *Ode to the West Wind* and *Ode to a Skylark*.
- In *Ode to the West Wind,* Shelley asks the wind to be his spirit, and in the same movement he makes it his metaphorical spirit and his poetic faculty.

4.11 Keywords

Dante: An Italian poet; full name Dante Alighieri, well-known for his epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (1309–20), a poem describing his spiritual journey through Hell, Purgatory and then to Paradise.

Elegy: A sad poem lamenting a dead person.

Milton: John Milton was an English poet, well-known for his epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (1667).

Romanticism: A movement in art and literature that began in the 18th century and focussed on inspiration, subjectivity and importance of the individual.

4.12 Review Questions

1. Give a detailed analysis of Shelley's themes and motifs.
2. Write on symbolism in Shelley's poetry. Give an example.
3. Is the speaker in *Ode to the West Wind* a representative of all mankind, or is he unique or special in some way?
4. What will happen to the dormant seeds once the west wind's sister blows her clarion?
5. In poem *Ode to the West Wind*, throughout stanza II, the poet describes the approaching storm and the elements that the west wind will bring. Describe the storm in your own words.
6. In lines 53-54, the poet has '(fallen) upon the thorns of life...' He wishes he could be free of life's burdens. Quote how he phrases his desire to escape the 'thorns of life' in these lines.
7. In line 55-56, the poet says he used to have strength like the west wind has, but now how does he describe himself?

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8. The last line of the poem is often quoted. What do you understand the line to mean—other than that one season follows another?

9. What characteristics does *Ode to the West Wind* reveal?

10. An ode is an elaborately structured lyric poem praising and glorifying an individual, commemorating an event, or describing nature intellectually rather than emotionally. Odes originally were songs performed to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. Describe the main feature & Odes with an example.

11. Personification is giving human characteristics to an inanimate object or animal. Poets commonly use this technique to create images in their writing and to give their writing a greater sensory appeal. In this poem, the poet has personified the west wind. Whom do you think he has personified as the west wind?

12. Symbolism is yet another poetic device that is used to represent or recall something else possessing similar qualities especially an object representing an abstract thought or quality. In *Ode to the West Wind* the west wind is symbolic of both death and rebirth. Find instances from the poem to bring out this symbolism.

13. Dead leaves are mentioned, not once, not twice, but five times in this poem. Why is this speaker so obsessed with dead leaves?

14. Why is wildness so important here? The West Wind is wild, the clouds it blows around are like the hair of crazy Mænads, and the speaker wishes he were also "uncontrollable." What can be created through wildness that is not possible with control? Why does a poem that emphasises wildness have such a controlled form and meter?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. William Godwin
2. *Adonias*
3. S T Coleridge
4. *Terza rima*
5. Dante

4.13 Further Readings

Books

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Online links

http://blogs.dickinson.edu/romnat/2011/06/07/percy-bysshe-shelley/

http://nzr.mvnu.edu/faculty/trearick/english/rearick/readings/authors/specific/shelley_percy.htm

http://www.internal.org/Percy_Bysshe_Shelley

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Unit 5: The Vendor of Sweets by R K Narayan

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life and works of R K Narayan
- Understand the story 'A Vendor of Sweets'
- Critically analyse the major themes in the story 'A Vendor of Sweets'

Introduction

R K Narayan's art is a triumph of ironic transcendence. His irony is a rich compound of extensive humour and sympathy, gentle contempt and amiable mockery. The method is 'to mock at the thing dearest to one's heart,' and, of course, irony is always compatible with the most intense feelings. In irony, there is no scope either for the arid realms of dreary non-sentimental thinking or for a lavish and hysterical sentimentality. Delicate irony is a measure of detached observation and it light up the character of a person while exposing his weaknesses. It stimulates love in us for the person whom the author intends to be loved and here R K Narayan succeeds marvellously.

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An outstanding gift of R K Narayan as a writer is his capacity to affect, as it were, a comedic catharsis. The cathartic happiness so urgently needed in these days of arid cackle of dry-bones of humour bitter, disillusioned or cynical. In R K Narayan, we have laughter intensely happy, not in the least tainted by cynicism and never by bitterness. There is pure sentiment and good humour corrected from cheap sentimentality by detached and loving irony. The result is pure aesthetic delight, happiness and peace.

5.1 About the Author

R K Narayan was born in Madras (now Chennai), Madras Presidency, British India. His father was a school headmaster, and Narayan did some of his studies at his father's school. As his father's job entailed frequent transfers, Narayan spent part of his childhood under the care of his maternal grandmother, Parvati. During this time, his best friends and playmates were a peacock and a mischievous monkey.

Figure 5.1: R K Narayan

Source: http://bp1.blogger.com/_Xr_OH6sQvAw/R9QkFKbT3hI/AAAAAAAAALs/WbhyCO63U0U/s1600-h/Narayan.jpg

Did u know? Kunjappa is the name given to R K Narayan by his grandmother Parvathi.

His grandmother taught him arithmetic, mythology, classical Indian music and Sanskrit. According to his youngest brother R K Laxman, the family mostly conversed in English, and grammatical errors on the part of Narayan and his siblings were frowned upon. While living with his grandmother, Narayan studied at a succession of schools in Madras, including the Lutheran Mission School in Purasawalkam, C.R.C. High School, and the Christian College High School. Narayan was an avid reader, and his early literary diet included Dickens, Wodehouse, Arthur Conan Doyle and Thomas Hardy. When he was twelve years old, Narayan participated in a pro-independence march, for which his uncle reprimanded him; the family was apolitical and considered all governments wicked.

Narayan moved to Mysore to live with his family when his father was transferred to the Maharajah's Collegiate High School. The well-stocked library at the school, as well as his father's own, fed his reading habit, and he started writing as well. After completing high school, Narayan failed the university entrance examination and spent a year at home reading and writing; he subsequently passed the examination in 1926 and joined Maharaja College of Mysore. It took Narayan four years to obtain his Bachelor's degree, a year longer than usual. After being

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persuaded by a friend that taking a Master's degree (M.A.) would kill his interest in literature, he briefly held a job as a schoolteacher; however, he quit in protest when the headmaster of the school asked him to substitute for the physical training master. The experience made Narayan realise that the only career for him was in writing, and he decided to stay at home and write novels. His first published work was a book review of Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England. In 1930, Narayan wrote his first novel, Swami and Friend] an effort ridiculed by his uncle and rejected by a string of publishers. With this book, Narayan created Malgudi, a town that creatively reproduced the social sphere of the country; while it ignored the limits imposed by colonial rule, it also grew with the various socio-political changes of British and post-independence India.

5.1.1 Turning Point

While vacationing at his sister's house in Coimbatore, in 1933, Narayan met and fell in love with Rajam, a 15-year-old girl who lived nearby. Despite many astrological and financial obstacles, Narayan managed to gain permission from the girl's father and married her. Following his marriage, Narayan became a reporter for a Madras based paper called The Justice, dedicated to the rights of non-Brahmins. The publishers were thrilled to have a Brahmin Iyer in Narayan espousing their cause. The job brought him in contact with a wide variety of people and issues. Earlier, Narayan had sent the manuscript of Swami and Friends to a friend at Oxford, and about this time, the friend showed the manuscript to Graham Greene. Greene recommended the book to his publisher, and it was finally published in 1935. Greene also counselled Narayan on shortening his name to become more familiar to the English-speaking audience. The book was semi-autobiographical and built upon many incidents from his childhood. Reviews were favourable but sales were few. Narayan's next novel The Bachelor of Arts (1937), was inspired in part by his experiences at college, and dealt with the theme of a rebellious adolescent transitioning to a rather well-adjusted adult. A different publisher published it again, at the recommendation of Greene. His third novel, The Dark Room (1938) was about domestic disharmony, displaying the man as the oppressor and the woman as the victim within a marriage, and was published by yet another publisher; this book also received good reviews. In 1937, Narayan's father died, and Narayan was forced to accept a commission from the government of Mysore, as he was not making any money.

In 1939, his wife died of typhoid and Narayan went through a mental breakdown. However, his pain served as a source of inspiration and he came with the novel the English Teacher.

His first collection of short stories, Malgudi Days, was published in November 1942, followed by The English Teacher in 1945. After the publication of his fourth novel, The English Teacher, in 1945, Narayan's writing entered a period of greater maturity and condence.

5.1.2 The Later Years

Narayan was commissioned by the government of Karnataka to write a book to promote tourism in the state. The work was published as part of a larger government publication in the late 1970s. He thought it deserved better, and republished it as The Emerald Route (Indian Thought Publications, 1980). The book contains his personal perspective on the local history and heritage, but being bereft of his characters and creations, it misses his enjoyable narrative. The same year, he was elected as an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and won the AC Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature. Around the same time, Narayan's works were translated to Chinese for the first time.

In 1983, Narayan published his next novel, A Tiger for Malgudi, about a tiger and its relationship with humans. His next novel, Talkative Man, published in 1986, was the tale of an aspiring

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journalist from Malgudi. During this time, he also published two collections of short stories: Malgudi Days (1982), a revised edition including the original book and some other stories, and Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories, a new collection. In 1987, he completed A Writer's Nightmare, another collection of essays about topics as diverse as the caste system, Nobel Prize winners, love, and monkeys. The collection included essays he had written for newspapers and magazines since 1958.

Living alone in Mysore, Narayan developed an interest in agriculture. He bought an acre of agricultural land and tried his hand at farming. He was also prone to walking to the market every afternoon merely to interact with the people. In a typical afternoon stroll, he would stop every few steps to greet and converse with shopkeepers and others, most likely gathering material for his next book.

In 1980, Narayan was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, for his contributions to literature. During his entire six-year term, he was focused on one issue—the plight of school children, especially the heavy load of school books and the negative effect of the system on a child's creativity, which was something that he first highlighted in his debut novel, Swami and Friends. His inaugural speech was focused on this particular problem, and resulted in the formation of a committee chaired by Prof. Yash Pal, to recommend changes to the school educational system.

In 1990, he published his next novel, The World of Nagaraj, also set in Malgudi. Narayan's age shows in this work, as he appears to skip narrative details that he would have included if this were written earlier in his career. Soon after he finished the novel, Narayan fell ill and moved to Madras to be close to his daughter's family. A few years after his move, in 1994, his daughter died of cancer and his granddaughter Bhuvaneswari (Minnie) started taking care of him in addition to managing Indian Thought Publications. Narayan then published his final book, Grandmother's Tale. The book is an autobiographical novella, about his great-grandmother who travelled everywhere to find her husband, who ran away shortly after their marriage. His grandmother narrated the story to him, when he was a child.

He travelled widely and bestowed with several honours. He did not leave his accustomed milieu, though, which was Mysore, where he built himself a house, went for talkative walks, and savoured the quotidian pursuits of life, including agriculture, which he studied with interest. In 1989, he was appointed to membership of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Indian Parliament. His inaugural speech there was on the subject of Indian children. Children, he said, were being deprived of time to play or to look at birds and trees. In 2001 he died. His mind was clear to the end, and on his deathbed, he spoke of his desire to write another novel. He had confessed to friends, "I have become lazy since I entered my nineties."

Narayan's novels are sometimes described as simple. The prose is indeed limpid, the descriptions clear, and the emphasis is on direct and intelligible storytelling, invoking a cast of vivid characters. To the modern reader, accustomed to artice and allusion, this may give the books a slightly dated feel, and yet it is this quality of simplicity and directness, which makes them such ne works of art. Narayan is a storyteller rst and foremost, a characteristic which puts him in the company of the great 19th century novelists as well as those twentieth century writers, such as Somerset Maugham, who believed that the novelist's business is to narrate. His storytelling, though, sometimes has a somewhat rambling avour, with plots that can wander and sometimes betray an absence of resolution. However, this is not necessarily aw: real lives are often aimless and unresolved, and when we read of such lives in literature, we are quick to recognize their authenticity. There is nothing false in the world, which Narayan creates – quite the opposite, in fact: these novels convey the taste and texture of India with a vividness, which strikes the reader as utterly true. Even those who have no rst-hand experience of India will feel that what they experience in reading these books is a taste of the real place.

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Notes In between, being cut off from England due to the war, Narayan started his own publishing company, naming it (again) Indian Thought Publications; the publishing company was a success and is still active, now managed by his granddaughter.

5.2 Summary of the Story

R.K Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) like his other books is composed in simple, lucid English that can be read and understood without turning and returning the pages after a single read. The compositional language is no doubt, plain – to such an extent that even a young school child's vocabulary will be able to comprehend the sense of the tale. Nevertheless, the message that is being sent to the readers is delivered in the best possible manner.

Jagan, a college-educated man in the late fifties has made a success of his sweet shop. However, he grew quite rich as a sweet-vendor, his main interest and concern was his only son, Mali. Mali's mother died of brain tumour several years back. The barrier between the father and the son came into being the day the mother died. It might be that Mali, a little bewildered and dismayed, felt obscurely that in some way his father was responsible for his mother's death. Jagan was an advocate of nature cure. Jagan's love both for his wife and his son was deep and unwavering. The tragedy is that when he lost his wife, he lost also any affection that his son might have had for him. Jagan's love for the son was so much that he hastened home from his shop in the evenings thinking that the boy would be lonely.

However, Mali did not rise to his expectations and he preferred to be alone and detached. It led to a total estrangement between the two. Even after having lived twenty years with his son, Jagan knew very little about him. Jagan was very proud of his son but he had no control over him. Mali gave up his studies and went to America. Mali's letters from America only added Jagan's worries. Jagan could not think of his son eating beef. He was a true Gandhian and a vegetarian. During India's freedom struggle, he had been arrested for hoisting Indian flag. He lived a very simple life. He ate food cooked by his own hands. He never used sugar or salt since he believed that they were detrimental to health. As recommended by Gandhi he spun on his charka and used clothes made of khaddar. Jagan could not use toothbrush, as he feared that its bristles were made of pig's tails. *The Bhagawad Gita* was always in his hand and he read it whenever he was free. Thus, Jagan was a model of traditional Indian values whereas his son was the other extreme, a representative of modern Western values. Spirituality in him gave way to materialism. After three years of education in America, Mali returned home accompanied by a Korean-American girl name Grace.

When Mali announced to Jagan that the girl was his wife, Jagan was shocked. Still he loved them, gave due respect and allowed them to stay in his house. He accepted Grace as his daughter-in-law. She also behaved admirable towards him. Soon cracks developed not only between Jagan and Mali but also between Mali and Grace. Jagan was unwilling to finance a huge amount of money for Mali's establishment of story-writing machine. It was too much for Jagan when Grace announced to him that Mali and Grace had been living together without being married. Moreover, Mali was not even willing to marry her. The ever-growing tension in father-son relationship reached its climax when Mali was caught red-handed for breaking the prohibition laws. Then there came in Jagan's life the moment of self-realisation and of decision. He managed to break away from Mali and his scheming and vicious world, which he could not approve. He escaped from the chains of paternal love. Jagan abandoned the world and retired into a life of spiritual devotion. He was altogether unaffected to hear that Mali was in jail as the police had caught him with liquor in his car. He thought that a period of jail might be good for the young man.

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Jagan then asks his cousin to make sure that Mali stays in prison for some time, so that he can learn his mistakes. Jagan also gives some amount of money to the cousin so that he can buy a plane ticket to Grace so she can go back to her hometown.

Did u know? *The Vendor of Sweets* was made as a TV serial in Hindi and subsequently dubbed into English.

5.2.1 Settings

The love and marriage, their devotion to God and their celebration of the festivals make the Malgudians come alive. The simplicity of the vendor and the naivety of his customers are touching when they spend half an hour discussing politics, before asking for sweet meats and their price.

5.2.2 Point of View

In The Vendor of Sweets, Narayan adopts a Selective Omniscient point of view; it is the father – son relationship or the conflict of two generations, which plays the dominant role in developing the action and shaping the narrative. The experiences and events in the life of both the father and the son, therefore, occupy equal importance in the novel, Narayan, however, focalises the story from the point of view of the father. All the events and happenings in the novel are described as seen through the eyes and mind of Jagan. To provide the full view of Jagan's life and character, Narayan uses "flash on" and flash back techniques.

5.2.3 Socio-cultural Matrix – The Western Influence

As western modernity enters Malgudi, its own indigenous values are corroded. Presence of an Insurance company in The Dark Room,, the studio on the bank of river Sarayu in Mr.Sampath, and story writing machine brought by Mali in The Vendor of Sweets indicate that Malgudi is already growing as a civilized commercial centre. Change is not only spatial and temporal but also cultural and social. Mali lives with Grace, an American-Korean even when they are not married The orthodox Hindu society that Malgudi is, ostracises Jagan for being a Gandhian, mingling with all kinds of people and courting arrest, then for allowing a girl to stay in his house, even before her marriage to his son.

Task Read and compare *Malgudi Days* with *The Vendor of Sweets.*

5.3 Analysis of 'The Vendor of Sweets'

R K Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* was first published in London in 1967 by The Bodley Head Ltd. Its seventeenth reprint appeared in 2006.

R K Narayan's latest novel, *The Vendor of Sweets* again to be hailed with great delight and pleasure. It has the unmistakable stamp of the individuality and genius of R K Narayan as a writer. There are the same delightfully vivid and picturesque evocations of a South Indian middle-class life and there is the same inimitable, incomparable and irrepressible humour tempered with humanity and flavoured with irony. There are again his wonderfully keen powers of observation, masterly strokes of satire which softy bite, humour which tickles, pinches

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irresistibly, and yet leaves the mark. Instances may be taken from almost any page of the novel. To take a sample: 'A street dog lay Snoring on a heap of stones on the road side, kept there since the first municipal body was elected for Free India in 1947 and meant for paving the road.' In the same way, the description of the vagrant waiting to eat the remains on the dining leaves to be cast out of houses after dinner and Jagan throbbing for a moment with several national and international problems and their ramifications is both humorous and deeply touching.

The character of Jagan, the 55-year-old vendor of sweets, is broad and firm in outline, convincing and natural in full personality and essentially true to nature. Jagan's character is a curious mixture of innocence and shrewdness, humble simplicity and delightful eccentricity and he has a heart full of tenderness for his late wife and his 'poor boy.' He is a strict follower of Gandhi in all matters, in Truth, Satyagraha, Charkha-spinning, in dress, not the least, in non-violent footwear. His never-to-be-published *magnum opus* is on Nature Cure and Natural Diet with his immense faith in the properties of margosa, for brushing the teeth or for relief from headache, incorporating his ideas on 'the whole secret or human energy' and dietetic prevention or cure for premature white hair.

And yet we ask, as the 'cousin' (to the whole town) in the story asks and never bothers to know, why this man who has apparently perfected the art of living on nothing should go on working and earning, taking all the trouble? The author himself with an uncanny stroke of irony strips him bare by saying that as long as he bears the frying and sizzling noise in the kitchen his gaze is fixed on the lines of the Bhagavad Gita and once it stops he cries out 'What is happening?' Another stroke of the author is that Jagan keeps two categories of cash – one that can be inspected by anyone, the other to be viewed as 'free cash' perhaps self-generated and entitled to survive without reference to any tax. In addition, why, again we ask, is all this for this devout Gandhian follower, a simple man with harmless eccentricities? Well, perhaps, there is always a fascinating touch of mystery and inexplicability in the humble heroes of R K Narayan.

If Narayan's *The Guide* was a novel of intricate story, zigzag narration, complicated technical flourishes, a picture of hectic activity and straining tempo, with a young, romantic, irresponsible type of man as a hero, *The Vendor of Sweets* is a somewhat straight-forward, conventional but not unexciting novel with a humble, responsible, tender-hearted middle-class parent as a hero. From one point view it is a perfect picture of the ever-growing tension in – son relationships nowadays; a picture of a humble, tender-father, Jagan, facing an irresponsible, ultra-modern, rebellious son, Mali, and at its level of universality, it presents a sharp and disturbing clash of generations. As an old widower fondly in love with his son Jagan suffers the utmost when his son shocks him as a foreign-returned, ostentatiously business-minded would-be celebrity with nothing but mocks and insults and sneers for him, his ideas, his humble profession of the vending of sweets. It is after all with his money and love that Mali is enabled to fly foreign and return 'foriegn', as it were, with a charmer from Outer Mongolia to be a wife. It is as though the branch tries to cut itself off the roots from which it derived sustenance and breath. As for the story of Jagan, only an R K Narayan could depict the pathos and poetry of such a parent and save the tale from degenerating into the lachrymose sentimentality of a fumbling, fatuous, old fool of bygone days.

Jagan at a symbolic level suffers the gall and sorrow, confusion and bewilderment of the traditional, uncontaminated old Indian generation when sneered at and jettisoned by the artificial civilisation with its machine-produced literature and strange values. *The Vendor of Sweets* is thus from one point of view a vivid picture of traditional India set against modern India that is being rapidly westernised and uprooted to be planted in unhealthy alien soil. Perhaps a synthesis is to be awaited but at present there is only the widening, deepening gulf of generations, the old rapidly receding into the background, the new not yet attaining even material prosperity. A stage has to come, of course, of achieved material prosperity and retained spirituality in India.

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From another point of view *The Vendor of Sweets* recreates most vividly and convincingly the life of the common person in India, with average intelligence, average practicality and average goodness and average spirituality. When one is, born one should do one's duty as a man in the world, as a youth, man, father, and when one becomes old, finally, affect a complete renunciation – it would be the most accredited procedure according to the scriptures. Thus though there are many surprises and twists in the story Jagan's final act of renunciation from all business, shaking off the painful fetters of attachments and affections, is entirely in keeping with the general trend of the novel, and in fact, it has all the sure inevitability of a well-built, and calculated climax.

Jagan's business-mindedness and his adherence to the Gita are apparently incompatible traits of this simple good man but these contradictory traits are only superficial because as long as one is in the world, with necessary chains of love and affection one must "do" something for them, to answer the claims of the world. He becomes apparently a man of the world with a conscience that seems to be at once nodding and nagging, with an understanding that is neither too analytical nor outstandingly spiritual and he remains as one essentially true to nature.

A man, of necessity, should turn spiritual, some day or other, young or old, the cause may be frustrated love, or a termagant wife, or a rude shock from too-loved children, or from pure philosophical searchings. When that point comes, from whom the inspiration comes and from which conviction is achieved, we do not know. In addition, in the story of *The Vendor of Sweets* it comes through the strange and mysterious sculptor-disciple, now turned hair-blackener. He communicates to Jagan his master's blissful vision of the supreme five-faced goddess, Gayatri. The Gayatri-mantra being the most universal in its meaning and significance and the most accredited and indisputable in the whole world. As the supreme mantra for the highest meditation, in order to know and realise the Supreme, the Ultimate, whose meditation is incorporated (indeed, it occupies the central part) in the Hindu Sandhyavandanam, the daily three-time prayer-meditation of every true Hindu.

Thus, repeatedly, we see that beneath an apparent puckish light-heartedness, frivolity and flippancy, a mere no meaning light entertainment there is in R K Narayan a true sincerity, an intense preoccupation with the great traditions and values of India. He has a loving admiration for the common man and shows that the average fumbling, blundering, frail humanity is capable of sterner decisions and solid values and act with swiftness and alacrity and decision of purpose, and, with the necessary 'will-power,' aim at a transcendence, triumph over the petty weaknesses of the flesh and the world.

Regarding the technical aspect of the novel, it must be said that it is most satisfying in simplicity of plan and wonderful symmetry and arrangement of parts each with exciting twists and sustaining narration. The central crisis or turning point is well placed and well worked out and is, in the end, merged with the last climax. The last yet greater climax, the act of renunciation, arises, as it were, out of the earlier climax which is the sudden baffling decision to give up the preoccupation with the profits and which gives rise to the symbolic act of reducing the price of the sweet-packets.

The action, the mental states and the moods are described with wonderful charm. A pure, innocent reflectiveness, given to constant brooding, melancholy or happy, sad or sapient, musings and half-musings over the past, the present or the future – these make up the best technique adopted by Narayan to recreate in flesh and blood the full personality of lagan, to lay bare his innermost thoughts and feelings before us. In addition, in the vague, hazy, foggy reflecting and brooding mind of Jagan there is something sweet and irresistibly attractive. And in the last long brooding over the past just before his renunciation we have a most charming, delicious, nostalgic, reminiscent picture of Jagan's past life of youth and marriage. There is a special appeal to the heart as the author describes the sweet sentiments, the delicate feelings and noble traditions in Hindu marriages and morals. The description, the recreated picture, of the married life of Jagan covering a pretty span of life, from the exact point of his shedding his bachelorhood to the point

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of Mali's estrangement, is very vivid, subtle, delicate yet insinuating and intoxicating. His present life as the vendor of sweets concerned with Mali's education etc., is already given in the beginning. Finally, there are the last exciting glimpses of Jagan's future life as a completely retired person, retiring from the galling chains of samsara. Thus, here, we have at one point, somewhat midway as we proceed with the novel, a triumph of art and symmetry, the meeting of the three points of climax, a confluence of exciting and charming narratives and we get at this point a thrilling vision of the past, the present and the future of the entire novel. Moreover, as a work of art, *The Vendor of Sweets* has sweetness and sadness, charm and chagrin, 'old' morality and the 'new' bumper business and Bhagavad Gita, the strings of samsara and struggle for salvation.

5.4 Main Themes

It is possible to read The Vendor of Sweets as a merely amusing story, which depends for its comedy on the improbable and fantastic. However, there is much more in it than is apparent on the surface. While it seems to tell the amusing story of an eccentric and obscurantist father and his upstart son, and the game of hide and seek they play with each other, in fact it is built on a few inter-related themes of which the most readily obvious is the father-son motif. The others are youth versus age, the generation gap, tradition versus modernity, East versus West, and search or quest. The quest motif is the most meaningful in the novel and encompasses all the others. Jagan the protagonist of the novel, by virtue of the circumstances of his life, engaged himself in different kinds of search. However, he is not a deliberate and self-conscious quester, nor is he capable of sophisticated intellectual inquiry. What is more, he is hardly aware of some of the searches he is involved in.

Identity and Self-renewal

In The Vendor of Sweets, once again the theme is man's quest for identity and self-renewal. The protagonist Jagan is a sweet-vendor by profession, follower of the Gita in thinking and talker of Gandian principles but he indulges in double-dealing in matters of money, and also cheats sales-tax authorities. He comes to realize that money is evil when his son, Mali, comes back to India with a Korean girl, Grace and asks for money for his business. Jagan finds new life or a new birth in his retirement, when he surrenders his business to his cousin. His fragile Gandhian self-regard collapses before his much-loved son's strange actions; and after Mali ends up disastrously in prison as a result of driving drunk around Malgudi, Jagan has no option but a Hindu-style renunciation of the world, bewilderment and retreat to a simpler life. Nevertheless, even here his ideal of Sanyasa is spurious as he still holds the purse string.

East-West

East-West conflict is the major theme of the novel. It is the conflict between a genuine Indian or Eastern father and his Western-bred son. The relationship between Jagan and his son Mali might be read as the clash between Eastern and Western cultures. As characters, Jagan and Mali are contrasted in many ways: while Jagan keeps a strict, religiously founded diet, Mali has begun eating beef and drinking alcohol after his stay in America. While Jagan prefers to walk everywhere, Mali insists on getting a car. While Jagan's labour is manual, he is a vendor of sweets, Mali want to go into industrial business.

Generation Gap

The conflict between the old and young generation, their ideals and the generation gap makes 'Vendor of Sweets' a memorable story.

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As one opposing British rule in his youth, and sticking to those ideals as a grown man, Jagan fails to see that his son does not share those same ideals. It is not apparent whose fault it is that Mali does not want to follow his father, his own or Jagan's.

5.5 Gandhi "The Gita" and Gayatri in "The Vendor of Sweets"

Ever since his wife Ambika died of a brain tumour and an invincible barrier began to grow between himself and his orphaned son Mali, Jagan anxiously tries to establish, though in vain, an affectionate and durable relationship and communication with him. His other searches stem from this, because all the major problems of Jagan's life since his wife's death are created by Mali. Troubled by Mali's unpredictable ways, especially after his return from America, and deeply hurt by his contemptuous reference to him as "a vendor of sweets" (P. 96). Jagan engages himself, though unconsciously, in finding out his "identity" (P. 128). He seeks to know who he is: father of Mali, a mere maker and vendor of sweets, gatherer of money, or something else. In other words, he is made by his circumstances to seek an answer to one of the oldest questions of mankind, "Who am I?", although to be sure he does not phrase it in this fashion. He learns from experience, as the novel shows, that he is not just "bone or meat" (P. 120), but a living soul. Finally, there is Jagan's quest for freedom – freedom from tiresome routine activities, from a life of repetition and drift, from self-deception and delusion of attachments – so that he may live the remaining years of his life in meaningful activity directed away from his egotistical self. In effect, Jagan's search is for enduring values of life and complete spiritual enlightenment. In his own words, he seeks to enter "a new janma" (P. 120). It is Narayan's distinction as a novelist that he explores the time-honoured motif of quest through the comic mode. It is characteristic of his comic vision and method that he should choose such a prosaic figure as a vendor of sweets, who is ordinary and average as the protagonist of this quest novel. In Jagan's quest his profession of faith in Gandhian ideals and the teachings of the Bhagavadgita, and his interest in the sculpting of the idol of Gayatri the Goddess of radiance and enlightenment, all play a part in varying degrees.

It is better stated at the outset that *The Vendor of Sweets* is not a "Gandhi Novel" and that Narayan has not written one such. Nor does it aim at expressing any particular attitude towards Gandhi and his way of life. However, the novelist uses the Gandhian motif, to study a certain kind of man who claims to be a follower of Gandhi (P. 15). He gives us a meticulously detailed account of Jagan's apparently Gandhian habits. He wears only simple and plain Khaddar clothes made of yarn he himself has spun on the *Charkha.* He has been spinning on it since Gandhi visited Malgudi "over twenty years ago" (P. 15). He produces enough yarn to meet his sartorial requirements, which consist of just two sets of clothes. He has made it a point to wear only "non-violent footwear," "sandals made of the leather of an animal which had died of old age." Jagan's experiments in dietetics, his quackish enthusiasm for nature cure, his austerity and determination to be self-reliant regarding his personal needs, his needless conquest of taste, and his proud claim regarding his "simple living and high thinking, as Gandhi taught us" (P. 45), all these make him an eccentric and rather comic Gandhi man. However, he also accumulates wealth, largely by evading tax, even though he claims that one who "came under the spell of Gandhi" "could do no wrong" (P. 45). With his tongue in the cheek, the author says that if Gandhi had said anywhere that one should pay his sales tax uncomplainingly, Jagan would have certainly done so (P. 117).

He has a tendency to attribute to Gandhi, his "master", some of his own fads. For example, he asserts that the Mahatma "was opposed to buffalo products" (P. 97). His experiments with salt-free and sugar-free diet have nothing to do with Gandhi.

While the contradictions in his Gandhism are very true and do not have to be laboured at all, to be fair to him, we have to note that he keeps up well past his middle age certain Gandhian practices acquired as a young man. He consistently wears khadi, spins regularly on the charkha,

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and lives a life of ascetic simplicity, even though these do not make his day-to-day living smooth or comfortable for him. Moreover, his loyalty to Gandhi has made him an outcast from his close relations, although he is quite happy to be one since he can escape a number of tiresome family festivals and funerals (P. 148). He has not expected in return any personal gain for being "Gandbian", albeit in his own comic way. It is something to be a Gandhian, however imperfect, in an environment, which is anything but Gandhian. The Vendor is placed in the 'Sixties of post-Independence India, in which Gandhian values are given the go by. Jagan has to adhere to them for his own satisfaction.

Jagan's devotion to the Bhagavadgita, it may be assumed, is a consequence of his reverence for Gandhi, although it is not explicitly said so in the novel. Frequently both Gandhi and the Gita are associated in his mind. A "red bound" copy of the Gita is a companion to him and he spends most of his spare time in the sweet shop reading it. He sports before others his knowledge of its teachings to which he refers frequently. There is nothing surprising or unnatural in this since the Gita and its teachings are a part of the ethos of Malgudi, and have been so for centuries. However, Jagan makes of the Gita that renders him eccentric and comic the use. In fact, his "Gitaism" is much more comic than his Gandhism. This is brought out quietly in the first ever reference to it in the novel. We are told that every morning Jagan sat "with a sense of fulfilment on a throne-like chair in his shop placed at a strategic point" so that "he could hear, see and smell whatever was happening in the kitchen" and notice what was going on at the front stall. As long as the frying and sizzling noise in the kitchen continued and the trays passed, Jagan noticed nothing, "his gaze unflinchingly fixed on the Sanskrit lines in a red bound copy of the Bhagavadgita. However, if there were the slightest pause in the sizzling, he cried out to the cooks without lifting his eyes from the sacred text, "What is happening...?" By a similar shout, he would alert the counter-attendant as well as the guard at the door, and return to the Lord's sayings with a quietened mind".

Until the time for counting the day's collection arrived, Jagan would continue to read the Gita with fixed attention. His attachment to money, "free cash" (P. 20) as well as accounted money, conflicts with the Gita ideals of non-attachment as well as non-possession (both very dear to Gandhi). However, he likes to believe that he does not accumulate it at all – "it just grows naturally". It is one's "duty to work" and he is doing just this. He cites a verse from the Gita, as he can always do, in support of it (P. 46). Jagan's attachment to money is not simply that of a miser, although he does accumulate money meticulously. He is not just another version of Margayya, the "financial expert", with whom money becomes such an obsession as to make him at one stage even grow indifferent to his wife and son. Jagan, on the other hand, intends all his wealth for his son and wishes for his happiness. He even feels a "sneaking admiration" (P. 54) for his son when he comes to know to his shocks that Mali has pilfered from the loft enough money to buy his passage to America. He likes to regard it as his self-reliance, and as could be expected, alludes without any relevance to a saying of the Gita.

Jagan's frequent references to Gandhi and the Gita are little more than a harmless vanity he indulges in. They become ludicrous and comic because not only they are often irrelevant but also because on these occasions Jagan believes that he understands both Gandhi and the Gita. One suspects that he invokes them when his thinking is rather muddled. His understanding of Gandhian principles and of the teachings of the Gita comes to be put to a most severe test when Mali creates unexpectedly a series of problems for him. To start with, he not only revolts against Jagan's parental authority, refuses to go to school, and later goes to America ostensibly to learn to be a creative writer, but actually returns home along with Grace, a half-Korean and half-American girl to whom he is supposed to be married, and an absurd project to manufacture story-writing machines. Jagan is shaken rudely out of his complacency and sense of self-fulfilment. Until then he thought that he had solved every problem of his life, and even believed that he had conquered his self too. With Mali's return, the challenges of his life begin.

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Contrary to what some critics have thought, accepting Grace as his daughter-in-law and into his household is not very difficult for Jagan. To be sure, he does have some qualms about it at the beginning, and avoids people lest they should ask him embarrassing questions about his "daughter-in-law," and his son. When the "cousin" succeeds in cornering him once and asks him about their dietary arrangements, Jagan covers up his confusion and finds his escape in a reference to the Gita: "I can only provide what I am used to. If they do not like it, they can go and eat where they please… One can only do one's duty up to a point. Even in the Gita, you find it mentioned. The limit of one's duty is well-defined" (P. 66). Before long Jagan gets used to the presence of Grace at home, and even appreciates the feminine orderliness that she brings his household, which he had missed since the death of his wife years ago (P. 69).

Jagan's troubles start when both Mali and Grace together put pressure, the former rather crudely and the latter subtly and virtually try to coerce him to be the major shareholder in their project of manufacturing story-writing machines. Jagan who had not minded Mali's talking without his knowledge huge sums of money to go abroad now feels deeply hurt that he should try to involve him in his foolish venture. It hurts him even more when he is forced to suspect that "Grace's interest, friendliness and attentiveness" might be "a calculated effort to win his dollars" (P. 89). He tries to resist their moves by "ignoring the whole business." This is his version of "non-violent non-co-operation" (P. 92). But this comic version of the Gandhian technique of passive resistance for a personal end does not work for long. Mali and Grace corner him and demand an immediate and categorical answer from him. Instead of providing the share capital for Mall's project, which he wholly distrusts, Jagan offers to make over to him his sweetshop. However, this gesture elicits from Mali the contemptuous reply: "I have better plans than to be a vendor of sweetmeats" (P. 96) Naturally Jagan is deeply hurt when his own son sneers at "his business of a lifetime ... that had provided the money for Mali to fly to America and do all sorts of things there" (P. 98). In this state of mind, money appears to be "an evil" to him.

The conflict with his son over the question of providing funds for the venture is only the beginning of the crisis in Jagan's life. From now on, both Gandhi and the Gita not only occupy his mind increasingly, but in each case, he tries to apply to his particular situation what he understands from their teachings. Formerly, when all seemed smooth sailing for Jagan, his profession and practice of the Gandhian ideals and his public display of devotion to the Gita were touched with vanity and pride, though harmless, and stressed his difference from the less fortunate mortals. The crisis he faces now is unprecedented in his life, and he has to struggle hard to find a solution for it. When he actually finds one, it will be found though he may not be aware of it, that it is truly in keeping with the spirit of the teachings of Gandhi and the Gita as far as it is possible for a man of his powers of ordinary understanding.

The novel shows how under the pressure of experience, Jagan's earlier interest in Gandhi and the Gita and his newly acquired interest in the sculpting of the Goddess Gayatri coalesce.

5.6 Conflict between Spirituality and Materialism

As part of East-West conflict, one can notice the conflict between spirituality and materialism in all the novels of R K Narayan. Due to the colonial rule and western education, modern materialism got into Indian minds. Spirituality, the hallmark of the Indians started to ebb from people's way of life. Thus, there appeared open conflict between the elder, uneducated Indians and the younger, educated ones. Conflict is also visible within the minds of the younger generations—between their inherited spiritual self and the acquired material self. The characters of Narayan's novels can be divided into two categories: spiritualists and materialists.

Notes

Instances of the conflict between spirituality and materialism are many in *The Vendor of Sweets*. Given below are some of the occasions and conversations in the novel, which speak in ample about such conflicts:

"Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self," said Jagan to his listener, who asked, "Why conquer the self?"

Jagan said, "I do not know, but all sages advise us so" (Narayan 7). This opening paragraph of the novel proclaims what follows in the novel. It is clear from Jagan's words that he represents the Indian spirituality. Though he is a follower of it, he is unaware of the philosophy behind the spirituality. He follows what the sages have advised him to do. The reasoning and philosophical aspect of spirituality is exercised or is supposed to be exercised by the sages. The sages are meant for it. The layman need not bother about it. He just obeys what the sages advise. This is the case of Indian spirituality unlike the western.

Compared to several million spiritualists in India, we find only thousands in the West. The majority of the people in the West are materialists. They are not willing to surrender their brain to unquestioning and blind faith. This line of thinking is reflected in the listener's question. The westerner's do not understand the need for conquering the self. What he loves most is his self and for its sustenance and comfort, he devotes his life. This philosophy is revealed from the listener's question, though he is an Indian. An Indian putting forward such a question implies that the modern Indians have started to imitate the materialistic thinking and way of life of the westerners. Jagan is a Gandhian and a spiritualist.

The novel depicts the opposition between two value systems—spiritualistic and materialistic—operating in the post-Indian society. However, the conflict is of a knotty and intricate character. "Both Jagan and Mali experience the opposition between traditional Indian values and the modern Western values. Mali, with all his national, progressive modern attitudes ends up in prison and Jagan for all his faith in the traditional Indian culture becomes a modern sanyasi" (Nanda 91).

5.7 Characters

Jagan: The protagonist. A follower of Gandhi in his youth, he is now a vendor of sweets.

Mali: Jagan's son. Blames his father for his mother's death. After living in America, he dislikes his hometown and wants to "modernize" it.

Grace: A half American half-Korean girl Mali brings home, claiming she is his wife. She works like a catalyst between the two cultures, and tries to integrate into the Indian culture she has entered.

The cousin: A man regularly visiting Jagan in his shop to taste his sweets, and with whom Jagan discuss his matters.

5.7.1 Jagan

Jagan is the most vibrant character of the novel from the first page to the last. Mali, his son who returned from America with a half-American half-Korean girl whom he reported as his wife and later said he never married, had been something of a sensation disturbing the placid waters of Malgudi. However, Mali is insignificant when compared to his father.

Twelve of the thirteen chapters of the book deal with Jagan, a widower nearing sixty. He is not likely to celebrate his *shashtabyapurti,* as no one seems to care. The last but one of the thirteen chapters deals with flashbacks of Jagan's boyhood, youth, marriage, his begetting Mali after years of waiting and prayer. This with other references in the course of the book to Jagan's

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relationship with his elder brother and the tragic way he lost his wife completes the picture telling us all we need to know of him.

His way of life—dress, footwear, food etc. are narrated in detail in the first chapter. He wore a loose jibba over his dhoti, both made of material spun with his own hand; every day he spun for an hour. He never possessed more than two sets of clothes at a time. He delivered all the excess yarns in bundles to the local handloom committee in exchange for cash. Although the cash he thus earned was less than five rupees a month, he felt a sentimental thrill in receiving it, as he had begun the habit when Gandhi visited the town over twenty years ago, and he had been commended for it. . . . He draped his shoulders in khaddar shawl with gaudy yellow patterns on it and shod his feet with thick sandals made out of the leather of an animal which had died of old age. Being a follower of Gandhi, he explained, "I do not like to think that a living creature should have its throat cut for the comfort of my feet," and this occasionally involved him in excursions to remote villages where a cow or calf was reported to be dying (Narayan 9). The Gandhian principles of self-reliance, ahimsa, as well as the dignity of labour are established in Jagan's way of life.

However, an avowed Gandhian, Jagan's actions and words sometimes question his Gandhism.

Example: To cite an example from the novel, Jagan orders one of his employees, "Captian, that beggar should not be seen here except on Fridays. This is not a charity home" (Narayan 12). Though hypocritical, this attitude of Jagan is excusable when one takes him as only a layman and not an ascetic.

Jagan is ambivalent when it comes to his philosophy and attitude. He is a materialist and at the same time spiritualist. Profit making is his sole motto as a vendor. However, he is not prepared to make profit at any cost. He does not want to adulterate his sweets. He wants to provide quality products at reasonable rates. The *Gita* is always in hand and he reads from it in the leisure time. One may doubt whether the *Gita* is a cover to cheat people and amass money. He never concentrates on what he reads; his ears and mind are in the kitchen, whether the employees are sitting, idle or not. He has no prick of conscience to sell rotten *jilebi*re-cooked to new shape and item. To quote from the novel:

Jagan asked, "What do we do with the leftovers?"

The head cook said soothingly as usual, "We will try a new sweet tomorrow, if you let me to do it. . . . We can always pulp everything back and fry them afresh in a new shape.

Jagan said philosophically, "After all, everything consists of flour, sugar and flavours . . ." (Narayan 13)

Jagan's hypocrisy is revealed in this response. There is a conflict of materialism and spirituality in his mind. Merchants as a category are concerned with sale of their goods and thus make maximum profit. Jagan, though a Gandhian, cannot be an exception to it.

Jagan felt proud of his son Mali since he had told him that he was going to write a novel. Jagan also had a plan to write a book on diet. Jagan shared this news of the son to his cousin and added, "I hope he will also emulate my philosophy of living simple living and high thinking, as Gandhi has taught us."

"True, true. But what I don't understand is why you should run a trade, make money, and accumulate it."

"I do not accumulate, it just grows naturally," said Jagan. (Narayan 39)

Jagan's hypocrisy and bent to materialism is expressed in his words.

Notes

Though Jagan was a Gandhian in his observances, his mind lacked that spirituality as one finds in the beginning of the story. He was materialistic and profit motivated. Nevertheless, since Mali and Grace started to exploit him for their whims, a sudden transformation took place in Jagan. He wanted to reduce the price of the sweetmeats. He told his cousin:

"From tomorrow the price of everything will be reduced. I have made up my mind about it."

"Why?" asked the cousin in consternation.

Jagan spurned an explanation. He just said, "We buy provisions for, let us say, a hundred rupees a day, and the salaries of our staff and the rent amount to, let us say, a hundred . . . and the stuff produced need not earn more than, let us say, two hundred in all. Now, the truth is . . . more people will benefit by a reduction." (Narayan 91)

Jagan's transformation from a materialist to spiritualist is evident in these words. He has become a true Gandhian now. When the cousin told Jagan that he (Jagan) was opposed to eating sugar, Jagan replied, "I see no connection. It others want to eat sweets; they must have the purest ones, that is all. I am thinking particularly of children and poor people" (Narayan 91). The spiritual and Gandhi an element of Jagan is evident in these words. He did not want to cheat people and amass money as majority of vendors did.

On another occasion Jagan told the cousin, "Money is an evil . . . We should all be happier without it. It is enough if an activity goes on self-supported; no need to earn money, no need to earn money" (Narayan 92). These words proclaim that Jagan has grown into a real ascetic.

When the bearded man Chinna Dorai insisted Jagan to come down to the water in the pond, Jagan doubted that he was going to be drowned by him. Jagan was not shaky but thought that it was better to die than live. He told himself, "If I do not perish in this water, I shall perish of pneumonia. In my next life, I'd like to be born . . ." his mind ran through various choices. Pet dog? Predatory cat? Street-corner donkey? Maharajah on an elephant? Anything but a money-making sweets maker with a spoilt son" (Narayan 116). It is evident from his thoughts that he has matured into a spiritual man, purged of his material, moneymaking urges.

Chinna Dorai told Jagan that he was sixty-nine, and would die the next year. He wanted to finish the idol of the goddess before his death on the stone, which his master had put in the pond for seasoning. Thoughts about the future of the garden and image of the goddess after his death troubled him. Hence, he asked Jagan to buy that garden and install the goddess. To quote his words: "I only though it would do you good to have a retreat like this."

"Yes, yes, God knows I need a retreat. You know, my friend, at some stage in one's life one must uproot oneself from the accustomed surroundings and disappear so that others may continue in peace" (Narayan 120). Jagan's transformation from *grihasta* to *vanaprasta* is revealed through these words.

Jagan could not retreat to the forest and lead a lonely life there forever. His retreat had to be bought with the money from the sweet shop. As the novel ends, Mali who has been imprisoned and thus tempered of his aggressiveness waits to be bailed out by his father.

Narayan might have been ironical in the treatment of Jagan's character, but his irony has been tempered with sympathy. He is never critical of the Indian tradition. In the words of Nanda:

"In Jagan's retreat, Narayan has given us the sense of the timelessness of his struggle and of the larger social, cultural and religious fabric in which he plays his part. Jagan has turned sixty. At this ripe age, the worldly entanglements appear futile to him, his daily routine monotonous and empty. At this age, one has to turn the work of the world to others. Like a true Indian, Jagan decides to retreat to some place of purity".

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Though Jagan retreats, he does not forget his duties to Grace. He tells his cousin, "If you meet her, tell her that if she ever wants to go back to her country, I will buy her a ticket. It is a duty we owe her. She was a good girl" (Narayan 185).

With regard to Jagan's Gandhism, one may doubt whether it is hypocritical, "pecksniffian", or a "smoke-screen" for his dishonesty. Though the contradictions are very true and apparent, to be fair to him, one has to note that he keeps up well past his middle age certain Gandhian practices acquired as a young man. To quote Jayantha:

In his own way, he is an upright businessman and would not brook, under any circumstances, adulteration of the quality of sweets he makes and sells. In addition, he takes considerable trouble to guarantee their quality even when he slashes down their period. To make money, as he successfully does, in the world of Malgudi he does not require any "smoke-screen" at all, at least of all Gandhism. Therefore, "pecksniffian" cannot be the word to describe Jagan's "Gandhism" (64-65).

Jagan finally decided to retreat to Chinna Dorai's grove and spend his future life in meditation and prayers before the image of Gayatri. He took with him his Gandhian charka and the "bank book." One may suspect Jagan's genuine intention of renunciation and *vanaprasthasrama*. However, a closer look at what happens at the close of the novel would present Jagan's action in the right perspective. He asks the cousin to run his shop and look after the cooks well until Mali takes it over from him eventually. Even the money in the bank is intended for his son once he comes out transformed from the prison. His readiness to buy Grace a ticket to enable her to return to her country is an indication of his attitude to people and money. To quote Jayantha again:

It is made sufficiently clear in the novel that though Jagan, at the time of his departure to the grove, has neither conquered his attachment nor achieved the necessary equanimity of mind for a recluse, he has made a beginning in that direction . . . There is no indication either of Jagan's return to his former way of life. It is a part of Narayan's artistic strategy that he does not surround his protagonist's withdrawal with an aura of solemnity and other worldliness. It is his distinction as a novelist that through the comic mode he is able to affirm the continued relevance of certain traditional Indian values of life.

One of the modern influences that provided continuity between the past and the present culture of India was the personality of Gandhi. Himself an enigmatic man, Gandhi was a great force that provided the whole generation of Indians in the period before Independence a new sense of dignity, purpose and character. His strong sense of patriotism, ethical values, and asceticism deeply influenced the masses. "Narayan acknowledges the influence of Gandhi's personality on the ordinary people in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Vendor of Sweets*, for his heroes are not outstanding in any way bet reflect the mood of that period" (Gupta 23).

When Jagan is freed from the attachment and pursuit of money, the aesthetic, religious and moral tendencies surge forward for a new recognition and new inter relationship. When Chinna Dorai takes him to the garden and the lotus pond, Jagan receives a new set of impression, through which he perceives the close relationship between the various Indian arts, literature and Hindu mythology (Gupta 27). At this stage in Jagan's life the Gandhian ideals of truthfulness and detachment merge with the ancient Hindu ideals of *Purushartha* and *Ashramadharma*, enabling Jagan to form a more coherent and meaningful relationship with them. "He gives up the illusion of being "a soul disembodied, floating above the grime of the earth" and becomes "free," "determines," perceiving with "extra-ordinary clarity, what his goals in life are." His experiment with truth brings him a new critical perception and he faces himself with courage. His retirement is purposive and creative for it is related to his quest for truth (Gupta 29).

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Jagan does not lose hope of his son. He is optimistic that Mali will come back to lead a noble and responsible life. He believes that jail will purify him of all the blemishes. To quote Bruce F. Macdonald:

Even Mali, who constantly rejects his Indian past and tries to imitate a spurious Americanism, who lives unmarried with the casteless Grace, and advocates the killing of cows, and who is in jail when the novel closes, seems capable of being reclaimed into the historic process he has spurned. Jail may do him good, as his father anticipates, and the indication seems to be that like his father, he will be imperfect yet acceptable.

Narayan accepts the Hindu worldview and believes in Maya. Through Jagan he proclaims that there is "that non-aligned human centre which refuses to be committed to anything in the world of illusion, because absolute commitment or orthodoxy in human society makes sincerity in the spiritual realms false, as being too strongly identified with *maya*" (Macdonald 156). *Karma* is not escaped in Jagan's renunciation. ". . . in modern India Narayan feels the ideal of the *sanyasi,* like many other historic ideals, is impossible to attain fully, although the motivation may be the same as in earlier ages" (Macdonald 157).

The Vendor of Sweets is not merely a Hindu fable intended to illustrate man's passage from one *ashrama* to another but a novel set in modern India where individuals strive to make sense of a complex and fast changing life and how they are caught in clash of ideas and values. "Narayan's main discovery is the fact that traditional concepts like the *ashramas* and *purusharthas* in various disguises, distortions and subterfuges survive and continue to influence the lives of the people".

Task What would you have done and reacted if you were Jagan in the modern day world? Discuss.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. *The Vendor of Sweets* was first published in London in 1967 by The Bodley Head Ltd.
2. *Malgudi Days* was published in 1950.
3. Narayan founded the publication house, Indian Thought Publications in 1942.
4. Nationalism was the major theme of the story.
5. Mali and Grace were the vendors of sweets in the story *The Vendor of Sweets.*

5.8 Summary

- Narayan was commissioned by the government of Karnataka to write a book to promote tourism in the state. The work was published as part of a larger government publication in the late 1970s.
- The Bodley Head Ltd. first published R K Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets in London in 1967. Its seventeenth reprint appeared in 2006.
- R.K Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets like his other books is composed in simple, lucid English that can be read and understood without turning and returning the pages after a single read.

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- In The Vendor of Sweets, Narayan adopts a Selective Omniscient point of view; it is the father–son relationship or the conflict of two generations, which plays the dominant role in developing the action and shaping the narrative.
- Jagan is the most vibrant character of the novel from the first page to the last. Mali, his son who returned from America with a half-American half-Korean girl whom he reported as his wife and later said he never married, had been something of a sensation disturbing the placid waters of Malgudi. However, Mali is insignificant when compared to his father.
- To provide the full view of Jagan's life and character, Narayan uses "flash on" and flash back techniques.
- The novel depicts the opposition between two value systems—spiritualistic and materialistic—operating in the post-colonial Indian society.
- The Gandhian principles of self-reliance, ahimsa, as well as the dignity of labour are established in Jagan's way of life.

5.9 Keywords

Bhagavadgita: A long poem composed between the 2nd century BC and the 2nd century AD and is a part of the epic Mahabharata. Also called Gita, the poem is in the form of dialogues Prince Arjuna and his divine charioteer Krishna.

Contemptuous: A feeling that shows something or someone is worthless and beneath consideration.

Irony: The expression of one is meaning by using language that generally indicates the opposite, typically for emphatic or humorous effect.

Ostensibly: As stated or seems to be true, but not necessarily so.

Paternal Love: Love, kindness and care associated with a father.

Renunciation: The rejection of something.

Satyagraha: A policy of inactive political struggle, specifically the one supported by Mahatma Gandhi against the British rule in India.

5.10 Review Questions

1. Evaluate *The Vendor of Sweets* as a unique Indian English novel.
2. Draw a character sketch of Mali.
3. Write a detailed analysis on the character of Jagan.
4. Analyse the themes in *The Vendor of Sweets*.
5. How is Gandhian philosophy an integral part of the story? What does it signify?
6. Describe the conflict between spirituality and materialism in all the novels of R K Narayan, especially *The Vendor of Sweets*.
7. Explain the theme of order and disorder in the story.
8. Discuss the title of *The Vendor of Sweets*.
9. Critically analyse the character of Mali.
10. Tradition and modernity is finely blended in *The Vendor of Sweets*. Elaborate.

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Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. False

5.11 Further Readings

Books

Argyle, Barry. "Narayan's The Sweet-Vendor," in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. VII (June, 1972).

Rao, V. Panduranga. "The Art of R K Narayan," in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. No. 5 (July, 1968).

Online links

http://www.profkvdominic.com/?page_id=398

http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/classics/intro/swamiandfriends_narayan.pdf

http://yabaluri.org/TRIVENI/CDWEB/rknarayansartandthevendorofsweetsjan69.htm

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Unit 6: How Much Land Does a Man Need by Leo Tolstoy

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the life and works of Leo Tolstoy
- Describe the writing style and analysis of Tolstoy's work
- Analyse the story 'How Much Land Does a Man Need'

Introduction

Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was a Russian author best known for his novels War and Peace (1869) and Anna Karenina (1877) which is considered the greatest novels of realist fiction. Many also regard Tolstoy as world's best novelist. In addition to writing novels, Tolstoy also authored short stories, essays and plays. In addition, a moral thinker and a social reformer, Tolstoy held severe moralistic views. In later life, he became a fervent Christian anarchist and anarcho-pacifist. His non-violent resistance approach towards life has been expressed in his works such as The Kingdom of God is within You, which is known to have a profound effect on important 20th century figures, particularly, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi.

Tolstoy first achieved literary acclaim in his 20s for his Sevastopol Sketches (1855), based on his experiences in the Crimean War, and followed by the publication of a semi-autobiographical trilogy of novels, Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth (1855-1858). His fiction output also includes two additional novels, dozens of short stories, and several famous novellas, including The Death of Ivan Ilych, Family Happiness, and Hadji Murad. Later in life, he also wrote plays

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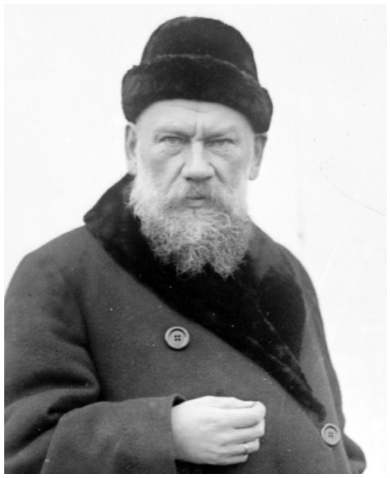
and essays. Tolstoy is equally known for his complicated and paradoxical persona and for his extreme moralistic and ascetic views, which he adopted after a moral crisis and spiritual awakening in the 1870s, after which he also became noted as a moral thinker and social reformer.

His literal interpretation of the ethical teachings of Jesus, centering on the Sermon on the Mount, caused him in later life to become a fervent Christian anarchist and anarcho-pacifist. His ideas on nonviolent resistance, expressed in such works as The Kingdom of God Is Within You, were to have a profound impact on such pivotal twentieth-century figures as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

6.1 About the Author

Leo Nikolaivich Tolstoy was born on August 28, 1828 to Princess Marie Volkonsky and Count Nicolas Tolstoy. Tolstoy was born at Yasnaya Polyana, the Volkonsky manor house on the road to Kieff in Russia. It was here that he was to spend the majority of his adult life. Leo was the fourth and last son of the family; they also had one daughter. Tolstoy's mother died when he was 18 months old, an event that would forever affect his feelings about women and motherhood. His father died when Tolstoy was nine years old, and the children grew up with a variety of aunts. According to Tolstoy, one of those aunts, Tatiana Yergolsky, "had the greatest influence on [his] life" because she taught him "the moral joy of love."

Figure 6.1: Leo Tolstoy



Source: http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/meio_ambiente/Count_Tolstoy%20_with_hat.jpg

Leo Nicolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) was the next to youngest of five children, descending from one of the oldest and best families in Russia. His youthful surroundings were of the upper class gentry of the last period of serfdom. Though his life spanned the westernization of Russia, his early intellectual and cultural education was the traditional eighteenth century training. Lyovochka (as he was called) was a tender, affection-seeking child who liked to do things "out of the ordinary."

In 1844, Leo attended the University of Kazan, then one of the great seats of learning east of Berlin. He early showed a contempt for academic learning but became interested enough at the faculty of Jurisprudence (the easiest course of study) to attend classes with some regularity. Kazan, next to St. Petersburg and Moscow, was a great social centre for the upper class. An eligible, titled young bachelor, Tolstoy devoted his energies to engage in the brilliant social life of his set. However, his homely peasant face was a constant source of embarrassment and

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Tolstoy took refuge in queer and original behaviour. His contemporaries called him "Lyovochka the bear," for he was always stiff and awkward.

He set off for Moscow in 1848 and for two years lived the irregular and dissipated life led by young men of his class. The diaries of this period reveal the critical self-scrutiny with which he regarded all his actions, and he itemized each deviation from his code of perfect behaviour. Carnal lust and gambling were those passions most difficult for him to exorcise. As he closely observed the life around him in Moscow, Tolstoy experienced an irresistible urge to write. This time was the birth of the creative artist and the following year saw the publication of his first story, Childhood.

Tolstoy began his army career in 1852, joining his brother Nicolai in the Caucasus. Garrisoned among a string of Cossack outposts on the borders of Georgia, Tolstoy participated in occasional expeditions against the fierce Chechenians, the Tartar natives rebelling against Russian rule. He spent the rest of his time gambling, hunting, and fornicating.

Torn amidst his inner struggle between his bad and good impulses, Tolstoy arrived at a sincere belief in God, though not in the formalized sense of the Eastern Church. The wild primitive environment of the Caucasus satisfied Tolstoy's intense physical and spiritual needs. Admiring the free, passionate, natural life of the mountain natives, he wished to turn his back forever on sophisticated society with its falseness and superficiality.

Soon after receiving his commission, Tolstoy fought among the defenders at Sevastopol against the Turks. In his Sevastopol sketches, he describes with objectivity and compassion the matter-of-fact bravery of the Russian officers and soldiers during the siege.

When the Crimean War broke out in 1853, Tolstoy was transferred to the front. During his experience with the War in Sebastopol, he had the first of many religious awakenings, believing that he needed to "create a new religion corresponding to the development of mankind." After Sebastopol capitulated in August 1855, he went to St. Petersburg to report on the battle, and then he left the army for good. In St. Petersburg, Tolstoy was well received by the literary community, but he also often fought with many of them, including disagreements with the great author Turgenev (Fathers & Sons). He was elected a member of the Moscow Literary Society in February 1859.

Notes The Tolstoy family left Russia in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, and Leo Tolstoy's descendants today live in Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Among them are Swedish singer Viktoria Tolstoy and Swedish landowner Christopher Paus, Herresta. In 1884, Tolstoy wrote a book called "What I Believe", in which he openly confessed his Christian beliefs. He affirmed his beliefs in Jesus Christ's teachings and was particularly influenced by the *Sermon on the Mount*, and the injunction to turn the other cheek. He understood this as a "commandment of non-resistance to evil by force" and a doctrine of pacifism and nonviolence.

Throughout the composition of Anna Karenina and later writings including Resurrection (1899) and the masterful short novel The Death of Ivan Ilyitch (1886), Tolstoy was heavily involved in public works. His work in the 1880s, for example, mostly involved a stream of pamphlets and didactic articles concerning religion, educational instruction, economics, and lifestyle. He wrote articles praising vegetarianism, temperance, chastity, and wealth redistribution through collective ownership of land. He underlined the importance of these lessons through personal example. When a series of famines struck Russia in the early 1890s, for example, he and his family moved deep into the countryside in order to set up soup kitchens - 246 of them by July 1892.

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By the turn of the century, Tolstoy was universally loved and respected by all classes of people except for the very wealthy and powerful. In part to mediate some of his influence, the Russian Church (Greek Orthodox) excommunicated him in March 1901. He was also denounced by the state as an anarchist in 1891, and he increasingly had to publish his works abroad because of censorship. These measures failed to lessen Tolstoy's popularity with the working class - on the day after the Church's excommunication announcement, students and workers paraded in public squares and accosted Tolstoy with such support and sympathy that he was forced to run back into his house.

Though his health began to fail in 1901, Tolstoy continued his writing and his public work until the end of his life. In his final years, he became more fixed on spiritual ideas and moral perfection. Desiring complete freedom from social responsibilities, he left his wife on November 10, 1910 in order to live in a hut in the woods and concentrate on spiritual matters. It was during this final journey that he died, on November 21, 1910, in a village near the Shamardin Convent. Appropriately, peasants brought his body to Yasnaya Polyana.

All three stages of Tolstoy's life and writings (pre-conversion, conversion, effects of conversion) reflect the single quest of his career: to find the ultimate truth of human existence. After finding this truth, his life was a series of struggles to practice his preaching. He became a public figure as both a sage and an artist during his lifetime and Yasnaya Polyana became a mecca for a never-ceasing stream of pilgrims. The intensity and heroic scale of his life have been preserved for us from the memoirs of friends and family and wisdom seeking visitors. Though Tolstoy expressed his philosophy and theory of history with the same thoroughness and lucidity he devoted to his novels, he is known today chiefly for his important contributions to literature. Although his artistic influence is wide and still pervasive, few writers have achieved the personal stature with which to emulate his epic style.

Did u know? Director Michael Hoffman with Christopher Plummer as Tolstoy and Helen Mirren as Sofya Tolstoya made a 2009 film about Tolstoy's final year, The Last Station, based on the novel by Jay Parini. Both performers were nominated for Oscars for their roles.

6.2 Writing Style

Tolstoy used ordinary events and characters to examine war, religion, feminism, and other topics. He was convinced that philosophical principles could only be understood in their concrete expression in history. All of his work is characterized by uncomplicated style, careful construction, and deep insight into human nature. His chapters are short, and he paid much attention to the details of everyday life. Tolstoy also refused to recognize the conventional climaxes of narrative - War and Peace begins in the middle of a conversation and ends in the first epilogue in the middle of a sentence.

Gary R. Jahn believes that in Tolstoy's work, the simple sentence is the norm for the narrative. Besides being comparatively short, sentences are often elliptical (=syntactically deponent in some respect, usually missing one of the normal lead elements, a subject or a verb). In longer sentences, there is a strong tendency toward a simple linking of independent clauses rather than a resort to subordinate constructions. There is a strong tendency toward the inversion of the standard order of elements within clauses – mutatis mutandis, the standard order of sentence elements in Contemporary Standard Russian (CSR) is subjectverbobject, while these stories show a frequent displacement of the subject. The stories frequently display lexical material and syntactic patterns, which are characteristic of popular speech "regional". Related to item five, there is the use of directly allusive language material (quotations from the Bible, interpolation

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of proverbs, use of collocations typical of folktales or religious legends). The narrative voice has a popular colouration (On the Style of a Story for the People).

6.3 Criticism on Tolstoy

Most critics comment on Tolstoy's work to be very effective in making his fiction appears to be very realistic and lifelike. They also feel that his examinations on psychology and society, which he developed later throughout his career, were very efficient. On the other hand, some critics find flaws in the harshness of Tolstoy's ways. Gerald Lucas believes that Tolstoy, himself an educated landowner, found many of Russia's elite class wasting their lives in search of the wrong things: "We're all looking for freedom from our obligations to our fellow man, but that is precisely what us human beings, that sense of our obligations, and if it weren't for that, we would live like animals". Tolstoy admired the communal sense that he perceived in the simple people. The Death of Ivan Ilyitch, written in 1886, represents Tolstoy's reactions to his social milieu and provides a severe moral lesson for his readers. He provides an answer by illustrating Russia's two common social classes: the affluent and educated class of Ivan Ilyitch and the oral, peasant class of Gerasim.

6.4 Historical Background

During the time of Tolstoy, many significant historical events were occurring. This included the publication of the Communist Manifesto, and the changing of Russian tsars from Nicholas' abdication to the start of a new government, which would lead to the Russian Revolution. Likewise, the historical background affected what Leo Tolstoy would write about during that specific time.

Example: When writing *War and Peace*, from the outset of 'war and peace', Tolstoy was concerned with Napoleon's struggle against Russia and its relation to historical problems. He was also concerned with the peaceful elements of family life. However, early drafts and notes fail to specify that at this stage he had worked out a comprehensive plan that would involve the vast epic sweep and elaborate philosophy of history of 'war and peace'.

Nor did the publication in a magazine in 1865 of the first thirty-eight chapters under the simple title 1805, corresponding roughly to the first twenty-five chapters of the definitive text, suggest that he had hit upon his larger and final design. By the next year, when a second instalment appeared which took the story only through 1805, Tolstoy's design did not seem to carry the action beyond Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. Notes at this point hint that the ending was to be a happy one - Prince Andrew, who recovers from his wound, nobly gives up his love for Natasha in order that she may marry Pierre. Pierre's changed outlook on life is uninfluenced by Platon Karataev's simple philosophy. Sonya inspired by Prince Andrew's renunciation gives way to Princess Mary's love for Nicholas. Pierre and Nicholas marry on the same day, and Nicholas and Prince Andrew leave to re-join their army units. In fact, in 1866 Tolstoy was confident he would finish the novel the next year and publish it as a whole under the title Alls Well That Ends Well! (Introduction to Tolstoy's Writings)

6.5 The Stories for the People

Written to exemplify certain ethical truths, the stories for the people resemble the other late works of Tolstoy, which are also, for the most part, overtly didactic. To the extent that he consciously, from an early date, sought to portray the "truth," as he understood it, in his fiction, even his early works reflect his didactic proclivities. Thus, it is not the themes or the motives of Tolstoy, which ultimately set the stories for the people apart from the rest of his work, but their

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style, which was developed specifically and consciously as an apt and accessible medium for conveying moral concepts to the popular audience.

Critics still argue over exactly which works should be classified as stories for the people, but certainly, a number of stories written in the 1880s belong to the genre. Four of the more complete editions of Tolstoy's collected works contain a volume or clearly marked section of a volume designated Stories for the People (Narodnye rasskazy). Some two dozen stories appeared in one or more of these editions, but only sixteen of them were included in every one. Of these the most celebrated are "What Men Live By", "Two Old Men", "Where Love Is, There Is God Also", "How Much Land Does a Man Need", "The Tale of Ivan the Fool" and "The Three Hermits". In 1887, Tolstoy consented to the publication by The Intermediary of a volume to be titled Stories for the People. Forbidden by the censorship, the book never appeared, but its proposed contents included fifteen of the sixteen stories. To this number may doubtless be added stories written earlier, such as "God Sees the Truth, But Waits", and later, such as "Alesha Gorshok," which share the same stylistic and thematic profile.

A third person narrator tells all of the stories. Most commonly, the narrator's voice closely resembles that of the popular characters, and his outlook is sympathetic to them. The degree of his sympathy may vary, however. Often, as in "What Men Live By," "Two Old Men" and "The Tale of Ivan the Fool," the narrator identifies closely with the characters. Occasionally the narrator's stance is more objective and neutral, as in "Two Brothers and the Gold." In no case is the voice of the narrator sarcastic, as it can often be in Tolstoy's depiction of upper class society.

The syntactic foundation of all the stories is the simple sentence, pruned of all but essential elements and frequently elliptical. Longer sentences tend to be constructed of a string of principal clauses rather than subordinate clauses grouped around a main one. Constructions have either a Biblical or a popular colouring, or both. In most of the stories, the narrative is markedly popular. The popular flavour is achieved by the consistent inversion of literary word order in the sentence (e.g., "Ne mog eshche ia poniat'..." ["not able still was I to understand..."] instead of "ia eshche ne mog poniat'..." ["I still was not able to understand..."]) and the use of popular lexical material. This material is often proverbial and sometimes from folklore, for example, the traditional opening phrase of the skazka, "zhil-byl" (literally, "there lived-there was") which appears in many of these stories. On the other hand, Tolstoy often, especially in the moralizing conclusions of the stories, introduced a tone of solemnity reminiscent of Biblical language. The Bible is actually quoted in nine of the stories, either in text or as epigraph. The influence of Biblical language affects nearly all of the stories. It is the clearest in the language of divine characters such as the angels in *What Men Live By* and *Two Brothers and the Gold*, the heavenly voice in "Where Love Is, *There Is God Also*. Normally, whenever the narrative touches directly upon the underlying thematic sense of the work, as in the moralizing conclusion of *The Candle*.

The stories for the people, with their absence of complex metaphorical language, maximally simplified syntax, syntactic inversion, peasant words and expressions, and the use of many devices and motifs from both folklore and Scripture; exemplify an innovative and coherent writing style. We may confidently agree with B.M. Eikhenbaum and S.P. Bychkovxv that they represent a remarkable stylistic departure from Tolstoy's earlier work. Tolstoy's use of language was studied, conscious, deliberate, and directed both at the creation of a popular tonal quality and at the avoidance of his former "literary" style, with its tendency to syntactic and lexical complexity, foreignisms, and lengthy periodicity.

All the stories for the people are more or less openly didactic and may even present a moral formally, as in "The Godson." Characters are most often developed through their actions and words. Occasionally the narrator characterizes his heroes directly, but usually he confines himself to brief physical descriptions. Very rarely, and nowhere at length, are the psychological processes of the characters described directly. This is another important distinction between the stories for

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the people and Tolstoy's other works, both early and late, where one continues to encounter the frequent use of devices such as interior monologue and stream of consciousness. The reason for this is surely to be found in Tolstoy's desire to remain true to the spirit of folklore in developing his popular style. Events usually occur in simple chronological order, but they also occur, according to folk conventions, in groups of three, as in "What Men Live By," "Where Love Is, There Is God Also," "The Tale of Ivan the Fool" and several others. Plot in these stories does not take on the complex forms with which Tolstoy experimented in such non-popular late works as The Death of Ivan Il'ich and Resurrection (Voskresenie), with their use of flashbacks and shifting points of view on the events described.

The Christian teaching as Tolstoy had come to understand it in the late 1870s and 1880s unites the "Stories for the People" thematically. In his long essay What I Believe (V chem moia vera, 1882), he reduced Christianity to five moral imperatives, derived from the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. v-vii and parallels). Briefly stated, the five commandments are: (1) do not be angry; (2) do not lust; (3) do not swear—that is, under an oath, surrender free moral choice to the will of others; (4) do not resist the evil doer with force; and (5) love all people alike. These commandments, their corollaries and the effects of disobeying them (or, more generally, the will of God, which they represent) provide a complete thematic summary of the "Stories for the People."

The commandment to avoid anger is prominent in "Evil Allures, But Good Endures," "A Spark Neglected Burns the House," and "Little Girls Wiser Than Their Elders"; its corollary, forgiveness, is the theme of "The Repentant Sinner.'' The injunction against lust never appears in the stories for the people. The injunction against oath taking appears as a theme in "The Tale of Ivan the Fool" when is unable to raise an army in Ivan's kingdom because the people refuse to promise allegiance. In "Two Old Men," Elisei, the morally superior of the two characters, attaches little importance to the vow he has sworn to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land when it conflicts with an obligation to assist others who are in need. The fourth commandment, not to resist evil with force, is the subject of "The Candle," "The Tale of Ivan the Fool" and "The Godson." The only positive commandment, to love all people alike, is at the heart of most of the best known stories for the people: "What Men Live By," "Two Old Men," "The Three Hermits" and "Where Love Is, There Is God Also."

The five remaining stories deal with the evil that comes from ignorance of or disobedience to the Christian teaching. Their theme is excess. In "How Much Land Does a Man Need," it takes the form of greed for more land than needed; in "The Imp and the Crust"—the misuse of a bumper crop of grain to produce strong drink; in "Il'ias—the contrast between the hero's current contentedness with poverty and his former anxiety with wealth. " Two Brothers and the Gold" and "A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg" condemn the use of money as a replacement for active human concern.

The stylistic unity of the stories for the people is the product of a number of linguistic and larger structural devices, which they share. Proverbs, sayings, and other bits of popular wisdom were incorporated into the stories. As early as 1862, Tolstoy stated that he intended to write a series of brief stories, each of which was to be inspired by, and offer an explanation of, a striking popular saying (8:302).

Example: Often such sayings were used as the titles of stories. "Gde liubov', tam i Bog" ("Where Love Is, There Is God Also"), "Bog pravdu vidit, da ne skoro skazhet" ("God Sees the Truth, But Waits"), "Vrazh'e lepko, a Bozh'e krepko" ("Evil Allures, But Good Endures"), and "Upustish' ogon'—ne potushish'" ("A Spark Neglected Burns the House").

The majority of the stories rework existing popular narratives, such as those of the famous Skazitel' ("teller of tales"), VP Shchegelenok, from whom Tolstoy obtained the subjects of "What Men Live By" and "Two Old Men.'' Another familiar model used by Tolstoy was the

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lubok or illustrated text. Not itself a form of folklore, it was well-known to the popular audience. The word lubok (from lub, the inner bark of the lime tree, or from lubochnaia koroba, the phrase designating the box used by peddlers to transport their goods) was known from the early 17th century. Essentially, the lubok consisted of a picture (or a series of pictures) accompanied by a printed text which might be explanatory or narrative as the case required. Many of the shorter stories for the people (e.g., "Little Girls Wiser Than Their Elders," ''Evil Allures, But Good Endures," and "Il'ias") were modelled on the lubok and printed, often as separate sheets, with an accompanying picture. Finally, Tolstoy made use of folklore anthologies as sources for the stories. "The Godson," "The Repentant Sinner," "The Workman Emel'ian and the Empty Drum," "The Three Hermits" and "The Imp and the Crust" are all closely modelled on religious legends or fairy tales found recorded in the collections made by A.N. Afanas'ev and other folklorists.

Finally, Tolstoy quoted freely from scripture and adopted some mannerisms typical of the Bible and other religious literature. This element is most frequently found in the epigraph (where it has a significance not unlike that of the proverbs used as titles) or at the climax of the story or, where there is a moral, in the passage where it is explained. Assuming that to the popular, Orthodox reader Biblical language would be both familiar and authoritative; Tolstoy may have used it to add weight to the moral teaching of his stories.

It may be thought unlikely that works so overtly burdened with didactic purpose and directed at so specific an audience would have much chance of being artistically memorable. In the case of many of these stories, especially the very brief ones, this prediction proves all too accurate. Yet such stories as "God Sees the Truth, But Waits," "What Men Live By," "Two Old Men,'' "The Three Hermits," "Where Love Is, There Is God Also" and "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" possess high artistic value.

Caution The works represent a masterful achievement in the creation—from heterogeneous, although related, elements – of a unified style, which yet permits a modicum of flexibility and is singularly well adapted to its solemn moral purpose.

6.6 How Much Land Does a Man Needs – Summary

The protagonist of the story is a peasant named Pakhom, whose wife at the beginning can be heard complaining that they do not own enough land to satisfy them. He is a man of humble means who lives a decent life. However, after his sister-in-law has bragged that city folk have a much better life than country peasants do, Pahom bemoans the fact that he does not own land. He states, "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!" Little does he know that the Devil is sitting close by and listening?

The Devil says, "All right! We shall see about that. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power."

Shortly thereafter, Pahóm manages to buy some land from a woman in his village. He works hard, makes a profit and is able to pay off his debts and live a more comfortable life. However, he is not satisfied and, after a **peasant** told him about the opportunity to own more land, he moves to a larger area of land... Pahóm grows more crops and amasses a small fortune, but it is still not content. Now another character tells him of another opportunity to own more land.

Pahóm hears (from a tradesman) about the Bashkirs, a simple people who own a huge amount of land deep in Central Asia. After a long trek, Pahóm meets the Bashkirs on the vast steppe. He is prepared to negotiate a price for as much land as possible, but before he can do so, the Bashkirs make him a very unusual offer, the same one that they make to anyone who wishes to buy land from them.

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For one thousand rubles (a large sum in those days), Pahóm can buy as much land as he can walk around in one day. He has to start at daybreak and mark his route with a shovel at key points along the way. As long as he returns to the starting point before sunset, the land that he has marked off will be his. If he fails to return on time, he will lose his money and receive no land. He is delighted, as he believes that he can cover a great distance and has chanced upon the bargain of a lifetime.

Pahóm is certain that he can cover a great distance and that he will have more land than he could have ever imagined. That night, Pahóm has a surreal foreboding dream in which he sees himself lying dead at the feet of the Devil (who changes appearances – peasant, tradesman, chief of the Baskirs), who is laughing.

The next day, with the Bashkirs watching from the starting point, Pahóm sets off at a good pace as soon as the sun crests the horizon. He covers a lot of ground, marking his way as he goes. At various points, he begins to think that he should change direction and work his way back, but he is constantly tempted by the thought of adding just a bit more land. The day wears on and, as the sun begins to set, Pahóm discovers that he is still far from the starting point. Realizing that he has been too greedy and taken too much land, he runs back as fast as he can to where the Bashkirs are waiting. He arrives at the starting point just in time just before the sun sets. However, as the Bashkirs cheer his good fortune, Pahóm drops dead from exhaustion. His servant buries him in an ordinary grave only six feet long, thus ironically answering the question posed in the title of the story.

6.7 Analysis

"How Much Land Does a Man Need?" is an 1886 short story by Leo Tolstoy about a man who, in his lust for land, forfeits everything.

Since Adam and Eve ate the fruits from the Tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, humans desired to take possession of more than they need in benefit of themselves. Human desires have brought many of us away from our original natures that God gave in the beginning. We often waste our time that has been given pursuing materialistic things. The theme of the story "How much land does a man need?" by Leo Tolstoy clearly delivers its message that greed as no boundaries and will bring you to death.

Tolstoy tells that greed starts from coveting of other's possessions. He starts his story with two women, arguing about whose life was better; a life with or without possessions. As the two continued, the master of the house, Pahom, thought to himself, "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!" Pahom's thought that he would not do any sin if he had land started the whole process of greed and triggered the Devil to grant him his wishes for land. Therefore, Pahom ended up with lands to himself by the power of the Devil. When we covet other's possessions and let greed take over our mind, we often give in to the works of Devil over our lives. This showed how greed could make us fall into Devil's work.

As the story progresses, Tolstoy conveys his message that greed has no boundaries. When Pahom gained land, he became possessive of the land and caused disputes with his neighbours. Due to threats by the neighbours, Pahom moved to a larger land where he could possess and grow more crops for himself. Whenever there was an opportunity to gain more land, Pahom, full of greed, moved to the other land to satisfy him. However, everywhere he moved, he was not satisfied with what he had. He looked for more and better land even though what he had was enough for him. Pahom's actions reflect the characteristics of greed again. As what Tolstoy tried to tell, greed has no boundaries. What we have with us does not seem satisfactory, and it keeps us to look for more.

Tolstoy ends his story with an excellent example. On Pahom's last trip to find land, he gained an opportunity to gain land as much as he wanted. Pahom made a deal that he would gain the land

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that he made mark on if he came back to the starting point before sunset. Pahom, full with greed, walks beyond his limits. As a result, Pahom had to run to get back to the starting point. When he did, he died of exhaustion. The landowner, who saw this happen, buried Pahom. The only land he needed in the end was eight feet long, three feet wide land. The end of the story teaches us how much we actually need in life. After death, we do not carry or bring anything with us. Use the time given for better things than to satisfy your greed.

Many people in the world today believe that we need possessions and wealth to live a happy life. They often waste their time trying to gain more for themselves. As Tolstoy tries to tell us, we should not have agreed on materials that are meaningless, but we should do what is worthy. As the story said, the only thing we need in the end, is a little piece of land.

6.8 Various Aspects of the Story

Tolstoy's short story – "How much land does a man need?"–is a religious-morality tale which can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but which seems primarily concerned with the destructive consequences of human ambition. The story is about a man named Pahom – a peasant farmer– who desires to acquire more land, acquires some land, but is not satisfied and needs to acquire more. Eventually he over-reaches, forfeits all his accumulated wealth and causes his own death. The message to take from the story may be as simple as a warning against biting off more than you can chew, or we could say simply that the story shows how human nature pushes us to want more and more. We are never content with our lives, no matter how well off we may be; and, while trying to improve our standard of living, we put ourselves in danger of ending up with nothing.

However, the story can be understood as presenting a message of greater complexity.

What Tolstoy gives us is a didactic tale, a story meant to teach a moral or religious lesson. His purpose likely was to show how greed and an excessive desire for earthly wealth could destroy a person. Along with this, Tolstoy offers a lesson about the consequences of ignoring spiritual needs and the state of one's soul, in favour of acquiring more and more material wealth. In general, it is a story of what can happen when humans become too ambitious and greedy. There are similar stories in myth, religious scripture, and secular literature.

Example: The story of King Midas and his "golden" touch. In Genesis, the Tower of Babel is a brief account of how the excessive ambition of humans is struck down by God.

An important element in Tolstoy's story is a boast by the farmer, Pahom, that if he had enough land he would not fear anyone, not even the Devil. This is heard by the Devil who says to himself:

"All right! We shall see about that. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you!"

The Devil then sets in motion the series of events that eventually end as Pahom forfeits everything including his life.

Therefore, we have a story in which Tolstoy teaches a lesson about humility and the need to fear and respect the Devil, or at least recognize the power he can exert over us. For those who do not believe in the Devil, the mythical character can be seen as personifying those aspects of our nature, which are destructive and can eventually lead to our complete demise. This is probably how Tolstoy would have us read the story.

Nevertheless, there are different ways that we can interpret and react to the story. We can take it in terms of its religious message, or in terms of a philosophical/ethical teaching, or maybe in terms of a teaching about social good. Today, we can even see it as making a point about our

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ecological awareness; and we can read it in the context of our consumer-driven economic system. Let us take each of these in turn.

Religious Aspect

The story teaches that humans need to the state of their soul, rather than material wealth, with an eye to eternity rather than temporal, earthly reality.

When you own so much (stuff) that you lose track of all that you possess, you have passed the point of owning too much. When you become so enslaved to acquiring more and holding on to what you have, you have lost sight of the real purpose of living.

Social Aspect

Here we would ask how the ambitions of an individual to acquire great wealth affects the greater affected? Does Pahom have any responsibility to the human community of which he is part? Or is it true that individual effort to improve one's prospects is his only thing that should concern each person, and that others have to look out for themselves?

Ecological Aspect

In today's world, a world of overpopulation, dwindling natural resources, and the increasingly destructive affect that human activity has on the environment, we can raise the question of how the drive to acquire more and more wealth by the many individuals and groups of individual's affects the natural environment of which we are all part. In other words, we can point out that nobody acts in a vacuum, isolated from natural world. What we do has significant effect on the quality of our environment (air, water, land). We use up the earth's resources and add to the waste that accumulates in our lands and oceans. When our contemporary Pahoms work to accumulate more and more wealth, are the needs of the earth and environment respected?

Task How much …… does a person need?

While completing this task, you might also distinguish between need desire and merit.

- How much wealth does a person need?
- How much population that the earth need?
- How much wealth and power does a society need? At what point does it become inconsistent with a good life for the citizens?

Take great care in how you respond. Remember, the Devil might be listening!

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The famous novel …… was published in 1869.
2. *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* was is published in ……..
3. Tolstoy's book *What I Believe* is about ……..
4. …… visits Pahóm dream.
5. "If I had plenty of land, I wouldn't fear the devil himself," said ……..

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6.9 Summary

- Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was a Russian author best known for his novels War and Peace (1869) and Anna Karenina(1877) which are considered to be the greatest novels of realist fiction.
- He was born on August 28, 1828 to Princess Marie Volkonsky and Count Nicolas Tolstoy.
- His non-violent resistance approach towards life has been expressed in his works such as The Kingdom of God is Within You, which is known to have a profound effect on important 20th century figures, particularly, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi.
- The fundamental aim of Tolstoy's nature was a search for truth, for the meaning of life, for the ultimate aims of art, for family happiness, for God.
- Tolstoy used ordinary events and characters to examine war, religion, feminism and other topics.
- Most critics comment on Tolstoy's work to be very effective in making his fiction appears to be very realistic and lifelike. They also feel that his examinations on psychology and society, which he developed later throughout his career, were very efficient.
- At that time, various important events took place such as the publication of the Communist Manifesto and the changing of Russian tsars from Nicholas' abdication to the start of a new government, which would lead to the Russian Revolution.
- "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" is an 1886 short story by Leo Tolstoy about a man who, in his lust for land, forfeits everything.

6.10 Keywords

Epic: A long poem narrating heroic deeds of a hero or derived from a legendary figure or oral tradition.

Gospels: The teachings of Christ given by the four gospels St John, St Matthew, St Luke and St Mark.

Martin Luther King Jr.: An American clergyman, activist, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement.

Procrastinate: To delay or postpone an action.

Rebel: A person who stand up in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or leader.

6.11 Review Questions

1. What did Pahóm's avarice (greed) earn him in the end? Why does Pahóm die in his pursuit of the land?
2. What physical obstacles does he experience? What realization does he make? What fear does he have? Who is Pahóm concerned with here?
3. What dream does Pahóm have the night before his journey? What is the dream's warning (foreshadowing)?
4. What does Pahóm do to please/bribe the Bashkirs? What is different about the way the Bashkirs offer land to Pahóm?
5. As you read through "How Much a Man Needs" chart some of the significant moments in the story and their future results.

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6. What criteria do the two sisters use to judge each other's lives? By which of these criteria—or another—do you tend to evaluate your life?
7. What is the Bashkírs' "one thousand rubles a day" policy? What is the real test of the policy?
8. A dealer told Pahon about wonderful distant land. What did he tell Pahon that Pahon should do to make the owners of the land like him enough to give him land?
9. Why does Pahóm die in his pursuit of the land? How much land does it take to bury him?
10. How is the story an allegory? What is the message that Tolstoy is trying to send?
11. Based on the title 'How Much Land Does a Man Need', what do you predict the moral of this story might be?
12. How did Pahon change his attitude toward his neighbours once he became a landowner himself?
13. Toward the end of the walk, Pahom is hot and becomes terribly sleepy. He thinks, "An hour to suffer, a lifetime to live." How does this observation by Pahom foreshadow the outcome of the story?
14. As Pahom's actions indicate, one of the lessons this story teaches is that the more people have, the more they want. Do you agree with this statement?
15. Might the peasant actually be the devil in disguise? If so, what is the devil hoping to accomplish?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. War and Peace
2. 1886
3. Christian beliefs
4. Devil
5. Pahóm

6.12 Further Readings

Book

Orwin Tussing Donna. *The Cambridge to Tolstoy* (2002), Cambridge University Press.

Online links

http://tara-tolstoy.tripod.com/id2.html

http://wesleyku.wordpress.com/2011/04/08/literary-analysis-%E2%80%9Chow-much-land-does-a-man-need%E2%80%9D-2011/

http://www.gradesaver.com/author/leo-tolstoy/

http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/sep/11.htm

http://www.philosophylounge.com/learn-tolstoys-morality-tale-land-man/

http://www1.umn.edu/lol-russ/PopLit/overview_of_the_life_and_works_of_leo_tolstoy.htm

http://www1.umn.edu/lol-russ/PopLit/Tolstoy%20and%20Popular%20Literature.htm

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Unit 7: The Agony of Win by Malavika Roy Singh

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the author Malavika Roy Singh
- Understand the story 'The Agony of Win'

Introduction

You will read the short story *The Agony of Win* by Malavika Roy Singh in this unit. Singh is a short story writer who has written a couple of short stories, several of which have been published online.

7.1 About the Author

Malavika Roy Singh was a financial analyst before taking up writing full time. She left her corporate job to fulfil her great desire for writing. An avid reader, Singh is fond of reading science fiction, thrillers, fantasy and fiction. Her passionate desire to read fuelled the longing for writing in her.

Singh lives in Noida, India and spend most of her time in reading, writing and cooking. She is a great short story writer and indulges in writing for blogs and magazines.

Did u know? Miracle at House No 3 is Malavika Roy Singh first attempt with writing a fantasy novel.

7.2 The Agony of Win – Summary

The Agony of Win is a simple short story about a woman who falls for her sister's husband, Sunil. She goes on to have an alleged affair with Sunil, which both of them tries to keep under wraps.

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However, Amrita is aware that she is not doing the right thing but is completely smitten by the charms of her brother-in-law. Without thinking of the consequences, she comes closer to Sunil, betraying her twin sister and family. What happens to her clandestine relationship is the crux of the story.

7.3 The Agony of Win – Story

"Why is the measure of love loss? Why are there more downs than ups in love? Why is there more dejection than affection?" The questions in her mind were endless and tearing her apart.

Amrita slumped on to her revolving chair. As she probed into the disturbing episodes of her life with Sunil, she kept on questioning the integrity of her futile attempts.

Shaking her head, a swollen eyed Amrita looked up and asked, "Have I been too foolish to judge him or is it simply a one sided affair?"

Seeing her friend in sheer distress, Sangeeta looked at her and sighed.

"Look, I think you know what it is, so there's no point in starting it all over", Sangeeta replied coldly, who was now pouring a cup of coffee from the coffee machine.

Half-choking, Amrita replied, "What do you mean starting all over? You think it's my entire fault, isn't it?"

"As a matter of fact, I do", replied Sangeeta calmly, who sat with the steaming coffee, flipping over the pages of a women's magazine. No sooner had she said those words that Amrita burst into tears again.

The whining and wailing continued to the point of hitting Sangeeta's nerves. Irritatingly, she got up, threw the remaining coffee into the sink and banged her fist on the kitchen slab. She turned around and shot back, "For goodness sake, get a hold on you. Do you have any idea of what a mess you've made of your life?" "When I tried to get you back on track, you did not listen, so at least now you should not be whining, complaining or even expecting me to support you in this muddle."

Sangeeta picked up her bag hurriedly and said, "I'm out of here because I don't really think you need my advice or support. You will do what you feel is right, no matter how wrong it is, so let's just not waste each other's time". Saying this, Sangeeta, who looked half-angry, half fed-up, threw the magazine on the table and closed the door behind her with a loud bang.

More than the sound, the words made Amrita flinch. They had hit the target at the right spot and they had because they were absolutely true and spoken from the heart.

Brooding and now almost regretting over her acts, Amrita zoomed into her past, the day when she had first set her eyes on Sunil. It had been the day when Sunil, with his family had come home, seeking hand for marriage. However, the proposal had been for her twin sister, Madhu and not hers.

Amrita was never approached with matrimonial subjects as then, she used to shun the concept of matrimonial bliss. A young Amrita, who had remained quite unapologetic and unabashed after refusing several marriage proposals, did regret later when she found a charming man in Sunil. Good looks and educational qualification had bowled Amrita head over heels. After all a management graduate in late seventies was a big deal and charming enough for her middleclass household.

As for Sunil, his physical attributes had done him quite good in the past and he had sailed quite smoothly. A fling of affairs was prima facie to that. However, no option had looked as lucrative as Amrita as she was a perfect, unsuspicious plot, allowing him to exploit her financial and emotional resources to the fullest.

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Soon after marriage, a flamboyant Sunil was often found teasing his sister-in-law more than quite often. What started as a leg-pulling gesture turned into something forbidden by the rest of the family members. Within a couple of years, the blossoming charm became a thorn in the eye of the married sister.

Then one fine day, the catastrophe had hit. "I don't want you to talk to her." An enraged Madhu had finally blurted out sharply to her husband.

"Why? What happened?" inquired Sunil with a well-cast concerned, innocent look on his face. However, Silent outside but his insides were restless. He cursed his fate, which was going all haywire. He had already played his game well and was already on the receiving end of his efforts, when the bomb had exploded.

Despite the imploring look, Madhu had waved away her husband's consoling pursuits and carried on, "I just don't like the way you two huddle and scheme things in corners. It looks strange and now people also have started saying stuff." "You don't understand what all I have to hear from them", she cried out.

"So you care about people and not me? Is it a kind of an accusation?" he had asked innocently.

Madhu was firm and she had replied, "Yes it is. Considering your old habits, I am bound to think like that but, let me remind you if you don't mend you ways, I'll have to speak to her." With that, she had barged out of the room, picking up her two-year old son then.

And indeed the warning came in like a life threatening disease to Amrita. After just a few days since the duo left, Madhu had called Amrita.

"Enough damage has occurred and I and my family are not in a position to bear another blow, especially if it is from my own sister. So please promise me that you will never share any kind of communication with Sunil from now on."

Amrita was devastated. No communication, no connection? How will she survive alone in the lonely bad world? She had started cherishing the companionship as it was a route to freedom from monotony and loneliness. A bond, from which she had expected support and friendship, and maybe a harmless little more, stood ruined by the foolishness of her sister, who she thought had a narrow-minded approach.

When the matter was confided by Amrita into her close friend, Sangeeta, she too had surprisingly no supportive words to soothe her.

"I think she is right. Even I would've reacted the same way as Madhu has."

Amrita still remembers how coldly and unsympathetically Sangeeta had continued, "You've got to understand dear that you might be ruining their marriage in the hope of a friendship, which will spell nothing but doom into not just one but many people's lives." For Sangeeta the only way to maintain dignity was by severing all ties with the man who had brought a whole new meaning into Amrita's lonesome world. What if she had to splurge material comforts on him? In return, he gave her peace of mind, which was more vital than anything else was.

Had she told her to sever all ties with the rest of the world, the idea would have seemed sensible but the actual plan suggested, was heart wrenching. However, Amrita did not execute the plan. On the contrary, she had stuck to her wisdom.

Irrespective, of the harshness in those words, she had gone ahead to share a clandestine relationship with Sunil, which remained out of focus from the eyes of the other family members.

Since then, her secret world with Sunil had been challenging. Her life had witnessed several turns of betrayal by Sunil but each time she rose as a winner. Her desperation and foolish wisdom had allowed her to have Sunil as a trophy at the cost of her dignity.

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Amrita was rejoicing her moments in fool's paradise, when the brick hit her again. A couple of months ago, a credit card fraud had left Amrita a little better than bankrupt. Family members had poured in financial support but, the one from whom she expected the most had backed off.

"I have a family to look after dear. I cannot go about giving you a lakh of rupees. That is just too much for me. I am a married man Amrita, you can't expect this from me", a frustrated Sunil had suddenly spoken to her harshly over the phone.

"See Amrita, I cannot let my family suffer because of you. It's the question of my children's future, damn it", a heartless voice had boomed through the receiver.

The familial concern in his voice had surprised Amrita. She remembered how she had generously extended her unconditional love over him again and again. She had splurged a fortune on him and much more on his children and now there the chameleon was, changing to his true colours.

Amrita wiped the fresh tears from her face. She was shaking badly. More than Sangeeta's words, her own foolishness was driving her crazy.

Infuriated by herself, she slowly got up and went to the washroom. As she checked herself in the mirror, she found an irrational but, a self-assumed smart woman staring back, who had been fooled again and again by life, by love. She had spent more than half of her life clinging onto the words of a deceptive man, who had been cleverly sweet for material reasons. How foolishly had she allowed herself to fall prey to him? Even though she knew the answer to this, she could not help but think of him. She still found herself eagerly waiting for his phone call.

As if through telepathy, the phone rang and was soon answered by the answering machine.

A familiar cherry sounding voice of Amrita said "I'm not at home, please leave a message".

Amrita froze when she heard the voice.

"Hi, Sunil here", a firm masculine voice spoke. "Congrats on clearing away the credit card mess. I knew you would get out of the mess. Do call me soon" and the line had gone dead.

Amrita tiptoed near the telecom, picked it up, and heard the tape again. In a fit a rage, she banged the handset on the wall, shattering it completely. She stared blankly at the bits and pieces of the tangible item that had been the sole and integral link into her world of fantasy.

Overcome by guilt and remorse, she decided to give herself one last chance. Shivering badly, she bent down to gather the remnants of the handset, forcing herself to accept defeat and rise as a winner, yet again.

7.4 Analysis

If you know you are doing something wrong then you should be prepared for the consequences. That is what happened with Amrita. Another latent theme of the story is that not anybody should sacrifice his or her self-respect and self-esteem for anything in the world. People should also not let others hurt their self-respect and self-confidence.

When Amrita realised the true nature of Sunil, she decided to end things. This throws the light on the fact that you are responsible for your actions. If the other person is doing a wrong thing, it is his responsibility and not yours. However, in this case, both Amrita and Sunil did the wrong thing. Sunil's selfish nature is clearly depicted in the scene in which he proclaims that he is a married man with a family to take care of. His denial in lending a helping hand to Amrita and later calling her to sort out things is the final blow to their clandestine relationship.

A person is responsible for his or her own happiness, if you depend on others to make you happy, you are probably in for a big surprise. Also, do what you think is right and appropriate

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for you and what will make you happy. However, your happiness should not become the cause of someone else's misery.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. *Miracle at House No 3* is Malavika Roy Singh first stint with writing a fantasy novel.
2. Sangeeta said, "Congrats on clearing away the credit card mess. I knew you will get out of the mess."
3. Sunil exploited Amrita emotionally and financially.
4. Sunil was Amrita's cousin sister Madhu's husband.
5. Malavika Roy Singh worked as a financial analyst before becoming a fulltime writer.

7.5 Summary

- *The Agony of Win* is a simple short story about a woman who falls for her sister's husband, Sunil. She goes on to have an alleged affair with Sunil, which both of them tries to keep under wraps.
- Though Amrita is aware that she is not doing the right thing but she is completely smitten by the charms of her brother in-law.
- Without thinking of the consequences, she comes closer to Sunil, betraying her twin sister and family. Sunil's selfish nature is clearly depicted in the scene in which he proclaims that he is a married man with a family to look after.
- When Amrita realised the true nature of Sunil, she decided to end things. This throws the light on the fact that you are responsible for your actions.
- A person is responsible for his or her own happiness, if you depend on others to make you happy, you are probably in for a big surprise.

7.6 Keywords

Futile: To be useless.

Infuriate: To become very angry and impatient.

Integrity: To be honest with strong moral principles.

Remorse: To feel guilty about something.

Telepathy: The communication of thoughts and ideas via unknown means.

7.7 Review Questions

1. Write a note on Malavika Roy Singh.
2. What is the theme of the story 'The Agony of Win'? Elaborate.
3. Do you think Amrita's relationship with Sunil is justified? Give reasons.
4. How would have Madhu reacted if she comes to know about Amrita and Sunil's alleged affair?

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5. What according to you should be the end of the story 'The Agony of Win'? Explain.
6. Describe the condition of modern women and traditional women in the metropolitan cities.
7. What is your take on extramarital affairs. Discuss.
8. Justify the title *The Agony of Win*.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

7.8 Further Readings

Books

The Agony of Win by Malavika Roy Singh

Miracle at House No 3 by Malavika Roy Singh, Serene Woods Publications

Online links

http://serenewoods.com/author_details.php?id=1500

http://www.induswomanwriting.com/the-agony-of-win.html

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Unit 8: Love Lives beyond the Tomb by John Clare

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the life and times of the poet John Clare
- Describe the writing style of John Clare
- Understand the poem 'Love Lives beyond the Tomb'

Introduction

John Clare was an English poet, the son of a farm labourer, who came to be known for his celebratory representations of the English countryside and his lamentation of its disruption. His poetry underwent a major re-evaluation in the late 20th century and he is often now considered to be among the most important 19th century poets. His biographer Jonathan Bate states that Clare was "the greatest labouring-class poet that England has ever produced. No one has ever written more powerfully of nature, of a rural childhood, and of the alienated and unstable self".

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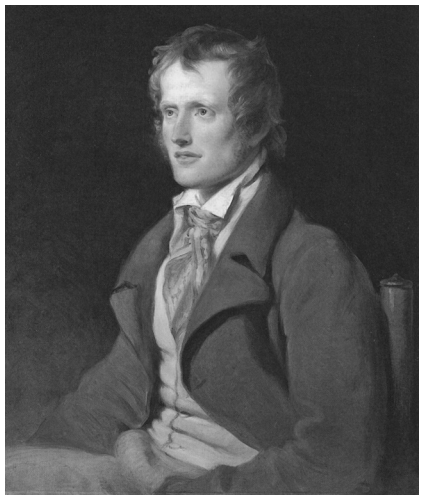
Though Clare had limited access to books, his poetic gift, which revealed itself early, was nourished by his parents' store of folk ballads. Clare was an energetic autodidact, and his first verses were much influenced by the Scottish poet James Thomson. Early disappointment in love—for Mary Joyce, the daughter of a prosperous farmer—made a lasting impression on him and served as a source of inspiration.

Clare, who grew up in a household with a father who could barely read and a mother who was illiterate, was a powerful user of the English language but one who was never comfortable with its grammatical conventions. In a modern society increasingly comfortable with spoken poetry rather than words on a printed page, Clare's work seemed newly significant. Public fascination likewise resulted from the fact that Clare was institutionalized in an asylum in later years. The precise nature of his illness is elusive, his madness seems at least to have begun with his realization that he was at fundamental odds with the artistic culture in which he worked, and that life, as a result, was beginning to twist its way around him.

8.1 About the Author

John Clare was born in Helpston, six miles to the north of the city of Peterborough. In his lifetime, the village was in the Soke of Peterborough in Northamptonshire and his memorial calls him "The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet". Helpston now lies in the Peterborough unitary authority of Cambridgeshire.

Figure 8.1: John Clare



Source: http://historymatrix.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/clare.jpg

8.1.1 Early Life

John Clare became an agricultural labourer while still a child; however, he attended school in Glinton church until he was twelve. In his early adult years, Clare became a potboy in the Blue Bell public house and fell in love with Mary Joyce; but her father, a prosperous farmer, forbade her to meet him. Subsequently he was a gardener at Burghley House. He enlisted in the militia, tried camp life with Gypsies, and worked in Pickworth as a lime burner in 1817. In the following year, he was obliged to accept parish relief. Malnutrition stemming from childhood may be the main culprit behind his 5-foot stature and may have contributed to his poor physical health in later life.

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8.1.2 Early Poems

Clare had bought a copy of Thomson's *The Seasons* and began to write poems and sonnets. In an attempt to hold off his parents' eviction from their home, Clare offered his poems to a local bookseller named Edward Drury. Drury sent Clare's poetry to his cousin John Taylor of the publishing firm of Taylor & Hessey, who had published the work of John Keats. Taylor published Clare's Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery in 1820. This book was highly praised, and in the next year, his Village Minstrel and other Poems were published.

8.1.3 The Middle Years

John Clare had married Martha ("Patty") Turner in 1820. An annuity of 15 guineas from the Marquess of Exeter, in whose service he had been, was supplemented by subscription, so that Clare became possessed of £45 annually, a sum far beyond what he had ever earned. Soon, however, his income became insufficient, and in 1823, he was nearly penniless. The Shepherd's Calendar (1827) met with little success, which was not increased by his hawking it himself. As he worked again in the fields his health temporarily improved; but he soon became seriously ill. Earl FitzWilliam presented him with a new cottage and a piece of ground, but Clare could not settle in his new home.

Clare was constantly torn between the two worlds of literary London and his often-illiterate neighbours as well as between the need to write poetry and the need for money to feed and clothe his children. His health began to suffer, and he had bouts of severe depression, which became worse after his sixth child was born in 1830 and as his poetry sold less well. In 1832, his friends and his London patrons clubbed together to move the family to a larger cottage with a smallholding in the village of Northborough, not far from Helpston. However, he felt only more alienated.

Christopher North and other reviewers noticed his last work, the Rural Muse (1835), favourably, but this was not enough to support his wife and seven children. Clare's mental health began to worsen. As his alcohol consumption steadily increased along with his dissatisfaction with his own identity, Clare's behaviour became more erratic. A notable instance of this behaviour was demonstrated in his interruption of a performance of The Merchant of Venice, in which Clare verbally assaulted Shylock. He was becoming a burden to Patty and his family, and in July 1837, on the recommendation of his publishing friend, John Taylor, Clare went of his own volition (accompanied by a friend of Taylor's) to Dr Matthew Allen's private asylum High Beach near Loughton, in Epping Forest. Taylor had assured Clare that he would receive the best medical care.

8.1.4 Later Life

During his first few asylum years in High Beach, Essex (1837–1841), John Clare re-wrote famous poems and sonnets by Lord Byron. His own version of Child Harold became a lament for past-lost love, and Don Juan, A Poem became an acerbic, misogynistic, sexualised rant redolent of an ageing Regency dandy. Clare also took credit for Shakespeare's plays, claiming to be the Renaissance genius himself. "I'm John Clare now," the poet claimed to a newspaper editor, "I was Byron and Shakespeare formerly."

In 1841, Clare absconded from the asylum in Essex, to walk home, believing that he was to meet his first love Mary Joyce; Clare was convinced that he was married with children to her and Martha as well. He did not believe her family when they told him she had died accidentally three years earlier in a house fire. He remained free, mostly at home in Northborough, for the five months following, but eventually Patty called the doctors in. Between Christmas and New Year in 1841, Clare was committed to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum (now St Andrew's Hospital).

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He died on 20 May 1864, in his 71st year. His remains were returned to Helpston for burial in St Botolph's churchyard. Today, children at the John Clare School, Helpston's primary, parade through the village and place their 'midsummer cushions' around Clare's gravestone (which has the inscriptions "To the Memory of John Clare The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet" and "A Poet is Born not Made") on his birthday, in honour of their most famous resident.

8.2 Poetry

In his time, Clare was commonly known as "the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet". His formal education was brief, his other employment and class-origins were lowly. Clare resisted the use of the increasingly standardised English grammar and orthography in his poetry and prose, alluding to political reasoning in comparing 'grammar' (in a wider sense of orthography) to tyrannical government and slavery, personifying it in jocular fashion as a 'bitch'. He wrote in his Northamptonshire dialect, introducing local words to the literary canon such as 'pooty' (snail), 'lady-cow' (ladybird), 'crizzle' (to crisp) and 'throstle' (song thrush).

In his early life, he struggled to find a place for his poetry in the changing literary fashions of the day. He also felt that he did not belong with other peasants. Clare once wrote,

"I live here among the ignorant like a lost man in fact like one whom the rest seems careless of having anything to do with—they hardly dare talk in my company for fear I should mention them in my writings and I find more pleasure in wandering the fields than in musing among my silent neighbours who are insensible to everything but toiling and talking of it and that to no purpose."

It is common to see an absence of punctuation in many of Clare's original writings, although many publishers felt the need to remedy this practice in the majority of his work. Clare argued with his editors about how it should be presented to the public.

Clare grew up during a period of massive changes in both town and countryside as the Industrial Revolution swept Europe. Many former agricultural workers, including children, moved away from the countryside to over-crowded cities, following factory work. The Agricultural Revolution saw pastures ploughed up, trees and hedges uprooted, the fens drained and the common land enclosed. This destruction of a centuries-old way of life distressed Clare deeply. His political and social views were predominantly conservative ("I am as far as my politics reaches 'King and Country'—no Innovations in Religion and Government say I."). He refused even to complain about the subordinate position to which English society relegated him, swearing, "With the old dish that was served to my forefathers I am content."

John Clare early work delights in both nature and the cycle of the rural year. Poems such as Winter Evening, Haymaking and Wood Pictures in summer celebrate the beauty of the world and the certainties of rural life, where animals must be fed and crops harvested. Poems such as Little Trotty Wagtail show his sharp observation of wildlife, though The Badger shows his lack of sentiment about the place of animals in the countryside. At this time, he often used poetic forms such as the sonnet and the rhyming couplet. His later poetry tends to be more meditative and use forms similar to the folk songs and ballads of his youth. An example of this is Evening.

His knowledge of the natural world went far beyond that of the major Romantic poets. However, poems such as I Amshow, a metaphysical depth on a par with his contemporary poets and many of his pre-asylum poems deal with intricate play on the nature of linguistics.

8.2.1 Clare's Poems about Love

In his '*The Morning mist is changing blue*', Clare focuses on a chance meeting with a pretty maid and celebrates the effect this has upon him whereas in '*I dreamt not what is to woo*' Clare adopts the

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persona of a woman who describes the complexity of the pain and pleasure experienced when uncertainty characterises a relationship. *First Love's Recollections* is characterised by a yearning for what has gone before. Throughout the poem the speaker nostalgically reflects on an earlier period in his life when Mary, possibly Mary Joyce, with whom Clare fell in love, a woman who was to become his muse and as he described metaphorically his "second wife", responded to his love and life seemed full of possibilities. In *An Invite to Eternity*, Clare, uncharacteristically, moves away from the natural landscape and sets his poem in a world beyond death. On the other hand, in *Love and Memory*, the speaker remains alive and his ladylove dies. As we know, Mary Joyce died young at the age of 41; it is possible to read this poem as Clare's testament of his loss, and of the pain, he experiences having only memories left to create images of Mary. *The Spring returns, the pewit screams*, like several others we have encountered, deals with the loss of love and in particular Clare's loss of Mary Joyce whereas *Say what is love* is another short poem that deals with Clare's loss of Mary Joyce. In short rhyming couplets, he traces the pain of loss and attempts to unravel the nature of love. In contrast to some of the sentiments about love, readers have seen in the collection so far, *Love Lives beyond the Tomb* appear to celebrate the enduring nature of love that the speaker asserts lives beyond death.

8.3 Revival of Interest in the 20th Century

Clare was relatively forgotten during the later 19th century, but interest in his work was revived by Arthur Symons in 1908, Edmund Blunden in 1920 and John and Anne Tibble in their ground-breaking 1935 2-volume edition. Benjamin Britten set some of 'May' from A Shepherd's Calendar in his Spring Symphony of 1948, and included a setting of The Evening Primrose in his Five Flower Songs.

Copyright too much of his work has been claimed since 1965 by the editor of the Complete Poetry, Professor Eric Robinson, though these claims were contested. Recent publishers have refused to acknowledge the claim (especially in recent editions from Faber and Carcanet) and it seems the copyright is now defunct.

The largest collection of original Clare manuscripts are housed at Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery, where they are available to view by appointment.

Tampering with what Clare actually wrote continued into the later twentieth century; sadly, even Helen Gardner felt the need to emend not only the punctuation but also the spelling and grammar in The New Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1950 (1972).

Since 1993, the John Clare Society of North America has organised an annual session of scholarly papers concerning John Clare at the annual Convention of the Modern Language Association of America.

Notes The John Clare Trust in 2005 bought the thatched cottage where he was born. In May 2007 the Trust gained £1.27m of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and commissioned Jefferson Sheard Architects to create a new landscape design and Visitor Centre, including a cafe, shop and exhibition space. The Cottage at 12 Woodgate, Helpston has been restored using traditional building methods and is open to the public.

In 2013, the John Clare Trust received a further grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help preserve the building and provide educational activities for youngsters visiting the cottage.

8.4 A Romantic Poet

Notes

John Clare is often considered the quintessential nature poet of the Romantic era. He was acclaimed as a "nature poet" from the time his first volume, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, appeared in 1820. Unlike Robert Burns, whose extended education undercut his claims for status as a "primitive" or "rustic," Clare was an uneducated field labourer who produced direct, sensuous lyrics recording the natural world around his native village of Helpston in Northamptonshire. He grew up surrounded by, and interacting with, the pastoral plants and animals that were so characteristic of life in English villages and towns in the early 19th century: thrushes and thistles, skylarks and sunflowers, badgers and buttercups. His love of, and sensitivity to, these precise details of his environment is perhaps unrivalled in the English language. Although influenced by his reading of James Thomson, William Cowper, William Wordsworth, and George Gordon, Lord Byron, his striking poetic style and manuscript idiosyncrasies reveal a powerful verbal immediacy that makes him unique among the poets of his era:

While ground larks on a sweeing clump of rushes
Or on the top twigs of the oddling bushes
Chirp their 'cree creeing' note that sounds of spring
And sky larks meet the sun wi flittering wing
Soon as the morning opes its brightning eye
Large clouds of sturnels blacken thro the sky
From oizer holts about the rushy fen
And reedshaw borders by the river Nen
(from "March," *The Shepherd's Calendar*)

Clare's unselfconsciousness came at a price, however. By 1837, he was committed to an asylum at Epping Forest and later to Northampton Asylum for the remainder of his life. Some of his most powerful and moving lyrics were written during his periods of "insanity." Their power, immediacy, and profound personal and psychological awareness leave the critic with little that can usefully be said about such lines:

I hid my love in field and town
Till e'en the breeze would knock me down.
The bees seemed singing ballads o'er
The fly's buzz turned a lion's roar;
And even silence found a tongue
To haunt me all the summer long:
The riddle nature could not prove
Was nothing else but secret love.
("Song," 1842-64)

John Clare was a Romantic's dream come true. While Coleridge and Wordsworth had declared that modern poetry should speak with the voice of the rural poor, they could only mimic that voice. They were always one step removed from the world their poetry sought to describe. Clare, however, seemed to spring directly from the soil he wrote about. Throughout his life, even after he had found fame as a poet, he laboured in the fields around his Northamptonshire home. His poetry described the world he knew with precise lyricism, offering a connection with nature that cut out the middle-class middlemen.

He embodied the rural fantasies of the Romantics, and, in his brief period of celebrity, he fulfilled their democratic ideals. In the words of his publisher John Taylor, Clare gave voice to 'the unwritten language of England'. He was a kind of noble savage from the fens, teased and feted on his rare forays into literary London.

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Taylor also published Keats, and although the two poets never met, they exemplified rival strands in Romantic poetry. Clare said that Keats 'often described nature as she appeared to his fancies and not as he would have described her had he witnessed the things he described'. While the Londoner waxed lyrical on the nightingales in his mind, the Northamptonshire peasant described the real thing, marvelling that 'so famed a bird/should have no better dress than russet brown'. In his poem, 'The Nightingale's Nest', Clare pursues the nightingale's song into her nest – 'an hermit's mossy cell' – where five eggs lie, of 'deadened green or rather olive brown'.

This querying attention to detail epitomises Clare's poetry: he is looking into the nest, seeing it for what it is, and simultaneously seeing it in words. Even in the finished poem, you can glimpse the notes he made while peering between the branches, and hear him struggling to do justice to these embryonic nightingales, which will one day fuel Keatsian fantasies, but which are for now simply brown-green eggs.

It is ironic that Clare's poetic communion with nature was achieved at the expense of his place in the community. As a child, some fancied his bookishness 'symptoms of lunacy'. He would 'as leave confessed to be a robber as a rhymer,' he said. Later, he carried scraps of paper and stubby pencils into the fields with him, and wrote up his collected observations in bouts of fevered creativity. These manic periods were followed by melancholy, and when the bottom dropped out of the poetry market after Byron's death in 1824, Clare's swift return to obscurity exacerbated his tendency towards depression.

His mind was haunted by 'blue devils', and Jonathan Bate suggests that he may have threatened suicide. A change of address (three miles to the neighbouring village) further upset him, and at his family's request, Clare was removed to an Essex asylum in 1837.

Bate diagnoses Clare with manic depression, and argues that various factors combined to tip him over into full-blown psychosis. He wonders whether a fall on the head caused lasting damage, and suggests that Clare's celebrity alienated him from his fellow villagers, who were afraid that he would stick them in his next book. One doctor even blamed Clare's illness on an addiction to 'poetic prosing'. Bate allows all these possibilities, but refuses to provide answers where there are none. His sensitivity to Clare's mental landscape equals Clare's own atonement to the world around him.

In the asylum, Clare's symptoms worsened: 'nature to me seems dead,' he wrote; 'and her very pulse seems frozen to an icicle [sic] in the summer sun'. After four years, he absconded, dispensing volumes of poetry liberally around Epping Forest. It took him four days to walk the hundred miles home; without money, he was reduced to eating roadside grass, which he found as tasty as bread.

Bate's account of this manic walk is deeply moving. For the great poet of external phenomena was now living a life of the mind, absorbed in his own delusions. A few miles from home, a woman leapt down from a cart and tried to persuade him to get in with her. He thought she was mad. In fact, she was his wife.

Clare was returned to another asylum, where he spent the remaining third of his life, occasionally composing poetry, more often staring into space, ruminating on what he described as 'the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems'. From that shipwreck, Jonathan Bate has salvaged a life that is, like Clare's poetry, both lucid and quizzical, rich in colour but devoid of easy consolations.

8.5 Understanding John Clare

John Clare is usually considered one of the Romantic poets and this is an identification, which he probably would have welcomed. He was an admirer of Byron and a particular fan of Wordsworth, whose work he found "so natural and beautiful" even after, he confessed, expecting to dislike it.

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Though Clare never really has to know the major Romantics, he moved on the edges of their circle. On his rare visits to London, he met Coleridge on one trip and, in fact, shared Keats's publisher, John Taylor. Clare's poems reflect some of the values and explore many of the themes associated with the Romantic poets though his preoccupations and beliefs are occasionally at odds with theirs.

The Romantic poets were passionate about the natural world, seeing in it reflections of the eternal. (They did tend to differ from each other about what they imagined the eternal to be.) Clare's preoccupation with nature was considerable but it had a different source from other Romantics: he was of the country in a way that none of the others were. Born in the village of Helpstone (now Helpston) in Northamptonshire in 1793 and raised there, he was the son of an illegitimate thresher and the grandson of a shepherd (though his paternal grandfather had been a schoolteacher) and lived in this area (in the same house until he was thirty-eight) throughout his life. He had little formal education after the age of twelve but was an avid and eclectic reader, borrowing books and saving money to pay for his own growing collection. Though he claimed that, above all, he would have liked to write the popular tale, Cock Robin, he was a discerning critic. Until his poetry attracted the attention of patrons who were able to subsidise him, he held down a variety of short-lived menial jobs ranging from ploughboy, under gardener, lime burner, potboy to general bar person and even, briefly, private soldier. He had also educated himself to a high enough standard to give private lessons to the children of his neighbours. However, in his final long confinement in Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, which lasted from 1841 to his death in 1864, his occupation was given as "gardening".

Clare began writing poetry secretly as a boy. He would read out examples to his parents, which he pretended were others' works, which he had copied to help him practise his handwriting. Local booksellers, clergy and gentry took him under their wings and, eventually, he began to be published as "the Northamptonshire Peasant" by John Taylor, who happened to be the cousin of a Stamford grocer. Clare embarked on the life of a minor celebrity, at least locally, and the tag of "Peasant Poet" outlived him. He seems always to have been slightly ambivalent about it. He wrote that he had become "the stranger's poppet show" and that his wife and mother complained of the stream of visitors to the house. However, he courted his celebrity to some extent, was very watchful of other local poets whose fame might eclipse his own and always presented his work to the publisher with idiosyncratic spelling, a minimum of punctuation and numerous dialect expressions and grammar. He also claimed that he wrote "in great haste" and never revised his work. He declared himself, with some pride, "untutored" and insisted that "I will not use low origin as an excuse for what I have written", remarking dryly that "the Fens are not a literary part of England".

Clare's obsession with nature had another spur: in 1809, Parliament agreed on legislation, which enclosed a great deal of England's common land. Ordinary people, such as Clare, were now forbidden to roam over vast areas where they had previously been allowed to go. This was a particular blow to Clare. He had been rather private as a boy – he described himself as "timid and superstitious" – and he loved to skip school or church (preferring, as he said, "the religion of the fields") to embark on long walks in the country where he would think or write. However, he became more sociable and his autobiographical writings reveal the sort of scrapes, usually involving women or drink, typical of a young man of his background. This fervent enthusiasm for solitary rambles was a habit that he maintained until he was incarcerated (and even after – early in 1841, he escaped from an asylum in Epping Forest and walked the eighty miles home).

Unlike some of the Romantics, whose origins were less humble and whose rural leanings are sometimes sentimental, Clare's countryside is known in detail. It is the recognisable country of his own experiences, as Wordsworth's was the Lakes. So his poems are full of the Fens with their characteristic sweeps of flat land, large skies, woods, specific animals, plants and their habitats and habits and, crucially too, the relationships and personalities of the people who lived there. These were the subjects not only of Clare's poetry but also of all his writings and he is a complete

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authority on them, examining them with minute precision. He wrote a natural history of his area and his autobiographical sketches are a fascinating record of all the people he knew, very sharply and amusingly recollected. He believed in them, trusted their instincts, and respected their loyalties and traditions. In addition, he believed in the power of nature to inspire, to protect, to nurture and to delight. Some critics have stressed that Clare identifies poetry and nature – not just allowing that poetry can record nature but also that they are the same creative, imaginative impulse.

The outlook of the child was privileged in Clare as it was in others of the Romantics. His poems frequently feature "noising children" whose enthusiasm for life is portrayed as exemplary – and though his village youths will often rob a nest, they will put in a hard day's work and take pleasure in it. He wrote in his autobiographical sketches that he had found "nothing but poetry about childhood, nothing of poetry about manhood" - a classic Romantic sentiment.

Like many of the Romantics, Clare had a conventional set of religious beliefs. Unlike many of them, he did not bring nameless neo Grecian deities into his work although his personification of nature and the seasons sometimes suggest that he saw them as real entities and he could be vague. In his autobiography, he wrote, "I feel a beautiful providence ever about me." He tended to stick to a simple belief in God, was a fan of John Wesley and had a particular aversion for religious cant or hypocrisy. "Act justly, speak truth, love mercy" was the basis of his creed; in matters of religion, he said, "With the old dish that was served to my forefathers I am content. I never did like the runnings and racings after novelty in anything." (His poetry notably reveres the ancient and the traditional, whether this is people, customs, old buildings, even long-standing stretches of wood.) He was superstitious but a little ashamed of being so.

Clare's was an unexpectedly complex personality. To an extent, he led something of a fantasy life, visualising himself as a Dick Whittington, the poor boy who rose to fame, not sure, where he fitted in. He had a strong sense of his vocation as a poet and of the mission of poetry itself. His autobiographical writings reveal him as refreshingly honest, sensible, self-deprecating, intelligent and funny, capable of some very sophisticated writing, which was characterised by long, finely turned sentences. He was, by his own admission, scruffy and awkward, often diffident in the presence of strangers, absent-minded and disposed to be easily led and sometimes, he felt, duped. "My whole life has been a first of April," he wrote gloomily in his journal. He confessed that he had a "heated spirit" which inclined him to bursts of temper. Weak health, physical and later mental, overshadowed his life from birth. His love life could be complicated: though he seems to have worked hard at his marriage to Martha (Patty) Turner (he said that he "esteemed her by choice") and was clearly devoted to their children, he might not have married her but for her pregnancy and he never forgot his first love, Mary Joyce. It is thought that Mary's family considered him a poor match for her and he met Patty soon after the break-up of his relationship with Mary. However, in his asylum years, he frequently referred to Mary as his wife and several of his love poems mention her by name. She died unmarried shortly after his mental health began to break down irretrievably.

The poems themselves differ quite markedly in quality from each other. Clare has often been compared with Thomas Hardy, and like him, he has composed some verses which seem little more than childish ditties; whereas some of his poems not only deal with profound subject matter but feature majestic lines, precise diction, evocative imagery and elevated and sustained argument. Most have the ring of truth about them if only in the accurately observed detail of his surroundings. Clare's preference was for "the verse that mild and bland/Breathes of green fields and open sky"; and this, in general, he achieves in his own work.

8.6 Love Lives beyond the Tomb – Poem

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, which fades like dew—

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I love the fond,
The faithful, and the true
Love lives in sleep,
'Tis happiness of healthy dreams
Eve's dews may weep,
But love delightful seems.

'Tis seen in flowers,
And in the even's pearly dew
On earth's green hours,
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

'Tis heard in spring
When light and sunbeams, warm and kind,
On angels' wing
Bring love and music to the wind.

And where is voice,
So young, so beautiful and sweet
As nature's choice,
Where Spring and lovers meet?

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, the flowers, and dew.

I love the fond,
The faithful, young and true.

8.7 Reflections

John Clare begins this poem using enjambment, forcing the reader to stop and consider before he qualifies his thoughts with 'The tomb – the earth'. Thus, a sense of the endurance of love is created; an emotion that the speaker suggests can defy even death. The tone then becomes more wistful as the speaker says 'I love the fond,/The faithful and the true.'

Stanza two develops the idea of love's all-encompassing nature as we are told 'Love lives in sleep' and is 'The happiness of healthy dreams'. Clare now moves on to link his ideas about love to nature and the landscape that surrounds him. The language becomes celebratory as Clare suggests that love can be found in the beauty of nature, in 'flowers', 'the even's pearly dew', 'On earth' and in the 'eternal blue' of the sky.

The burgeoning new life of spring is fused, in stanzas four and five, with lovers and the delights of young love. Here Clare seems to move towards a celebration of young love that, like the spring, offers so much possibility and promise. The poem concludes with an echo of the first stanza but now the young have become the focus of the speaker's attentions. As the speaker still asserts that 'Love lives beyond/The tomb, the earth, the flowers and dew', there is a suggestion, at the end of this poem, that perhaps it is embraced more fully by the young who believe themselves to be 'faithful … and true.'

Task Make notes on the poem and while writing consider the way Clare weaves his love of the natural landscape into his feelings about human love and look carefully at the conclusion in contrast to the opening of the poem.

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8.8 Analysis of the Poem

John Clare's poetry can be difficult for three reasons. "Love Lives Beyond the Tomb" was written after 1860 therefore falls within what Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter, editors of *John Clare: Poems Chiefly from Manuscript,* call the "Asylum Poems" (4-6). This leads to **the first difficulty** with understanding Clare's poems. After a difficult peasant's labouring life and some small financial assistance from his London patrons, Clare's family agreed to have him hospitalized for delusions of having once been Shakespeare and Byron. Poems written during the asylum years may have more challenging structural elements than his earlier poems.

This leads to a **second difficulty.** Clare was the son of illiterate peasant farmers from a village of similarly illiterate farmers. He did not receive proper education. Yet his style featured some unorthodox irregularities about punctuation. His publishers changed much of it yet only under the pressure of protests from Clare who viewed the irregularities as the best way to express his ideas; he called these editors the "awkward squad" (Blunden and Porter). This leads to the **third difficulty.** While Clare spoke and wrote in the standard contemporary English of the educated, he intentionally maintained elements of his village dialect directly incorporated in his poems or indirectly incorporated through influence on syntax and expressions.

If we **analyse** the parts that are causing you trouble and give a **small sample paraphrase,** you should be able to form your own paraphrase with little trouble.

I love the fond ... Eve's dews ...: The only way to understand this is to **get past the punctuation irregularities.** The whole should be read as though written like this:

I love the fond, the faithful, and the true. Love lives in sleep, 'tis happiness of healthy dreams. Eve's dews may weep, but love delightful seems.

First: "the fond" etc., refers to people who are fond of him, faithful to him and true to him (or fond, faithful, true of and to each other).**Second:** "love lives ... dreams" means that, during his asylum years, he may not be in the arms of love yet love lives in his sleeping dreams and that gives him happiness. **Third:** "eve's dews ..." refers to the dews that fall at evening (eve). He is metaphorically comparing the evening dew to weeping eyes but he contradicts the sorrow envisioned with the weeping by contrasting it to the delightful love he dreams about.

On earth's green ... angels' wing ...: This must be understood in terms of all that comes before it. The whole section is this:

'Tis seen in flowers,
And in the even's pearly dew
On earth's green hours,
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

'Tis heard in spring
When light and sunbeams, warm and kind,
On angels' wing
Bring love and music to the wind.

The **first questions to ask** are, "What does"'Tis seen" refer to? What is it that is seen?" The answer comes from the stanzas above: "Love lives ... love delightful seems." Thus what "'Tis seen" is love. Next ask, "Where is love seen?" It is ('Tis) seen *in flowers, in pearly dew* on grass, in twilight hours when grass looks freshly green from dew, in*heaven's eternal blue* of darkened night. It is also *heard in the spring*(birds' songs), seen in light's *sunbeams.* It is also seen on the wings of the many angels ("angels' wings") that give *love and music to the wind.*

The last part is the puzzling "Where ...?" question. In **paraphrase form,** the **question** is: Where is the voice of love that is so young, fair and sweet, that is nature's choice of loveliest sounds,

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and that must be found where nature joins in harmony with love? The **answer** is: Love is everywhere, even in death, even in the tomb, even in flowers and dew.

The trick to understanding "Where Spring and lovers meet?" is to know exactly what syntax (sentence structure) it is part of. Is it a question that stands alone as an individual question all on its own? Or is it the last part of a larger question? If it is part of a larger question, what is the overall context? And, furthermore, is there an answer in the text to whatever the question actually is?

One difficulty in sorting this out is that this poem was written after 1860, as part of what Blunden and Porter call Clare's "Asylum Poems." Clare was permanently admitted to a hospital after 1841 for treatment of delusions following years of peasant labour, inadequate earnings and feelings of dislocation because he no longer thought, spoke or acted like a peasant though he continued to work and live the peasant life he was born into. The Asylum Poems are rarely dated and were not kept in chronological order. "Love Lives Beyond the Tomb" is one that is undated, yet, based on handwriting, subject and paper, Blunden and Porter place it after 1860; thus, Clare had been hospitalised at least twenty years when he wrote it.

The punctuation and orthography (spelling of words) had always been irregular in Clare's poems because he clung to his peasant dialect. The Asylum Poems continue this pattern and add a further complication by variations in structure. This all is relevant to "Love Lives Beyond the Tomb" because of its chronological position in Clare's corpus of work. What this means is that it takes a little effort to see how the lines go together to convey his meaning. Let us look at the things to ask and work out the meaning of "Where Spring and lovers meet?"

1. Is it a question that stands alone as an individual question? No, it is not. It looks that way because of the orthographically odd capitalization of "What".

2. Is it the last part of a larger question? Yes, the punctuation that precedes "What" is a comma, not an end-stop. Thus it is part of the larger sentence that comes before it:

   And where is voice,
   So young, so beautiful and sweet

   As nature's choice,
   Where Spring and lovers meet?

3. What is the overall context of the larger question? In the preceding stanza, Clare has just explained where love is heard using the beautiful compound metaphor of warm sunbeams and soft angels' wings bringing love and music to the listener's heart on the wind. Now Clare is asking, by using a metonymy and an analogy, where to find the one he loves in the symbolic place where spring and lovers are met in harmonious accord. The syntax is creative, but the punctuation is helpful. Re-read the poetic sentence like this paraphrase:

   And where is voice (being so young, so beautiful and as sweet as nature's perfect choice) in the place of harmony between spring and lovers?

   The metonymy is "voice." In this type of metonymy, "voice" stands in for, substitutes for, the voice of the one he loves: it is the one he loves that he looks for, not the voice [metonymy: a substitute of one representative characteristic for the whole thing]. Perhaps his beloved sings angelically, so he thinks of her as his "voice."

   The analogy is "[as] sweet as nature's choice". He is making a comparison between the choicest nectars of nature and his beloved, who he says is as sweet as nature's choicest nectars ("choice": metonymy).

4. Is there an answer in the text to the question? Yes, there is. He says that wherever "voice" is, their love lives beyond the tomb, the flowers, and the dew – their love lives beyond the confinement of the asylum.

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Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, the flowers, and dew.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. Jonathan Bate was John Clare's …….
2. The …… is the last work of Clare.
3. Clare died on …… and was buried in St Botolph's churchyard.
4. *Say what is love* is another short poem that deals with Clare's loss of ……..
5. Clare's first volume, ……, appeared in 1820.

8.9 Summary

- John Clare was an English poet, the son of a farm labourer, who came to be known for his celebratory representations of the English countryside and his lamentation of its disruption.
- In his time, Clare was commonly known as "the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet".
- In his early life, he struggled to find a place for his poetry in the changing literary fashions of the day. He also felt that he did not belong with other peasants.
- John Clare was a Romantic's dream come true. While Coleridge and Wordsworth had declared that modern poetry should speak with the voice of the rural poor, they could only mimic that voice.
- Clare said that Keats 'often described nature as she appeared to his fancies and not as he would have described her had he witnessed the things he described'.
- Clare has often been compared with Thomas Hardy, and like him, he has composed some verses which seem little more than childish ditties; whereas some of his poems not only deal with profound subject matter but feature majestic lines, precise diction, evocative imagery and elevated and sustained argument.
- In *Love Lives Beyond the Tomb,* a sense of the endurance of love is created; an emotion that the speaker suggests can defy even death.
- *Love Lives Beyond the Tomb* is one that is undated, yet, based on handwriting, subject and paper, Blunden and Porter place it after 1860.

8.10 Keywords

Acerbic: Something that is sharp and forthright.

Autodidact: A person who has self-studied to achieve a status in life.

Malnutrition: The medical condition that arises due to lack of nutrition by not getting enough to eat, eating nutritious food.

Misogynist: A person who dislikes or is extremely prejudiced against women.

Redolent: To be strongly suggestive or reminiscent of something.

Volition: The faculty and power of using one's will.

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8.11 Review Questions

1. Explore the ways in which Clare's writing reflects some of the basic principles of Romanticism.
2. Imagination was seen as the key to Romantic poetry. How do you feel John Clare explores the use of the imagination throughout this collection of poems?
3. The fusion of pain and pleasure is a key concept in Romantic thinking. How do you feel this is explored in John Clare's poetry?
4. John Clare's writing is characterised by his passion for nature. Consider the ways Clare presents his relationship with nature throughout this collection of poems.
5. Clare saw himself as a man on the outside of society. Within his writing, how does he explore this sense being an outsider?
6. Much of Clare's poetry concerns itself with isolation and loneliness. Consider the ways in which these emotions are explored within this collection of poems.
7. Critically analyse the poem *Love Lives Beyond the Tomb.*
8. Write a note on Clare's poems catering to the theme of love.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. Biographer
2. *Rural Muse*
3. 20 May, 1864
4. Mary Joyce
5. *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*

8.12 Further Readings

Books

Bate, Jonathan. (2003). *John Clare: A Biography*, Picador.

Haughton, Hugh, et al., ed., (1994). *John Clare in Context,* Cambridge.

Heawood, Jonathan. *John Clare: A Biography.*

Online links

http://blogs.dickinson.edu/romnat/2011/06/07/john-clare/

http://intranet.cramlingtonlv.co.uk/english/a2/johnclareworkbook.pdf

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Unit 9: The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed by Wilkie Collins

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and times of Wilkie Collins
- Analyse works and writing style of Collins
- Understand the themes and nature of 'The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed'

Introduction

William Wilkie Collins (8 January 1824–23 September 1889) was an English novelist, playwright, and author of short stories. His best-known works are *The Woman in White, The Moonstone, Armadale* and *No Name*.

A skilful manipulator of intricate plots, Collins is remembered as a principal founder of English detective fiction. Critics, although as popular in Collins's day as the works of such Victorian luminaries as Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and William Thackeray, frequently dismissed his novels of intrigue and suspense, as sensationalist fiction. By the 20th century, Collins began to receive recognition for his innovations in the detective genre, for his unconventional

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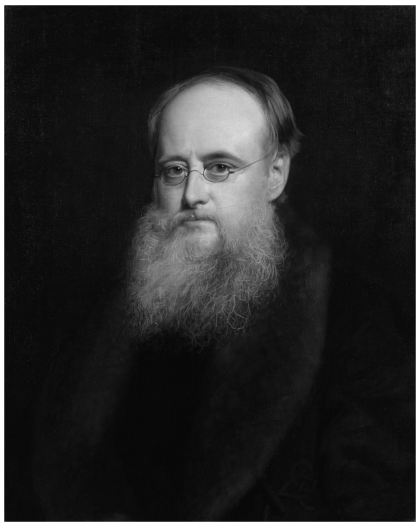
representation of female characters, and for his emphasis on careful plotting and revision, a practice that foreshadowed modern methods.

After Dark is Wilkie Collins's first collection of six short stories, published in 1856. Collins provides a narrative framework, 'Leaves from Leah's Diary', set in 1827. Leah Kerby's husband, William, is a poor travelling portrait-painter forced to abandon his profession for six months in order to save his sight. Leah realises that if she acts as amanuensis William can support them by turning author. This situation may have been prompted by a period of eye-trouble suffered by Collins's father. In the preface to After Dark, Collins also acknowledges the painter W.S. Herrick as his source for the facts on which 'A Terribly Strange Bed' and 'The Yellow Mask' are based.

9.1 About the Author

Collins was born at 11 New Cavendish Street, Marylebone, London, the son of well-known Royal Academician landscape painter, William Collins and his wife Harriet Geddes.

Figure 9.1: Wilkie Collins



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/86/(William)_Wilkie_Collins_by_Rudolph_Lehmann.jpg

9.1.1 Early Life

Named after his father, Collins swiftly became known by his second name (which honoured his godfather, David Wilkie). The family moved to Pond Street, Hampstead, in 1826. In 1828 Collins's brother Charles Allston Collins was born. Between 1829 and 1830, the Collins family moved twice, first to Hampstead Square and then to Porchester Terrace, Bayswater. Wilkie and Charles received their early education from their mother at home. The Collins family was deeply religious, and Collins's mother enforced strict church attendance on her sons, which Wilkie did not like.

In 1835, Collins began attending school at the Maida Vale academy. From 1836 to 1838, he lived with his parents in Italy and France, which made a great impression on him. He learned Italian while the family was in Italy, and began learning French, in which he would eventually become fluent. From 1838 to 1840, he attended The Reverend Cole's private boarding school in Highbury. At this school, a boy who would force Collins to tell him a story before allowing him to go to sleep bullied him. "It was this brute who first awakened in me, his poor little victim, a power of

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which but for him I might never have been aware...When I left school I continued story telling for my own pleasure", Collins later said.

In 1840, the family moved to 85 Oxford Terrace, Bayswater. In late 1840, he left school and was apprenticed as a clerk to the firm of tea merchants Antrobus & Co, owned by a friend of Wilkie's father. He disliked his clerical work, but remained employed with the company for more than five years. Collins's first story "The Last Stage Coachman" was published in the Illuminated Magazine in August 1843. In 1844, he travelled to Paris with Charles Ward. That same year he wrote his first novel, Iolani, or Tahiti as It Was; a Romance. In 1845, Iolani was submitted to Chapman and Hall, but it was rejected. The novel went unpublished during his lifetime. Collins said of the novel: "My youthful imagination ran riot among the noble savages, in scenes which caused the respectable British publisher to declare that it was impossible to put his name on the title page of such a novel." It was during the writing of this novel that Collins's father first learned that his assumptions that Wilkie would follow him in becoming a painter were mistaken.

William Collins had intended for Wilkie to be a clergyman, and was disappointed in his son's lack of interest in such a career. In 1846, he instead entered Lincoln's Inn to study law on the initiative of his father who wanted him to have a steady income. Wilkie only showed a slight interest in his law studies, and most of his time with friends and in working on his second novel Antonina, or the Fall of Rome. After his father's death in 1847, Collins produced his first published book, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A., published in 1848. The family moved to 38 Blandford Square soon after, where they used their drawing room for amateur theatricals. In 1849, Collins exhibited a painting, "The Smugglers' Retreat", at the Royal Academy summer exhibition. Richard Bentley published Antonina in February, 1850. Collins went on a walking tour of Cornwall with artist Henry Brandling in July and August 1850. Collins managed to complete his legal studies, and finally called to the bar in 1851. Though he never formally practiced law, he used his legal knowledge in many of his novels.

9.1.2 Early Writing Career

An instrumental event in Collins's career occurred in March 1851, when a mutual friend introduced him to Charles Dickens, the painter Augustus Egg. They became lifelong friends and collaborators. In May of that year, Collins acted with Dickens in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's play *Not So Bad as We Seem*. Among the audience was Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Collins's story "*A Terribly Strange Bed*," his first contribution to Household Words, appeared in April 1852. In May 1852, he went on tour with Dickens's company of amateur actors, again performing *Not So Bad as We Seem*, but with a more substantial role. Bentley published Collins's novel Basil in November. During the writing of Hide and Seek, in early 1853, Collins suffered what was likely his first attack of gout, which plagued him for the rest of his life. He was ill from April until early July. He stayed with Dickens in Boulogne from July to September 1853, afterwards touring Switzerland and Italy with Dickens and Augustus Egg from October to December. Collins published *Hide and Seek* in June 1854.

During this period, Collins extended the variety of his writing, publishing articles in George Henry Lewes's paper The Leader, short stories and essays for Bentley's Miscellany, dramatic criticism, and the travel book Rambles Beyond Railways. Dickens's theatrical company at Tavistock House performed his first play, The Lighthouse in 1855. Smith, Elder in February 1856, published his first collection of short stories, After Dark. His novel A Rogue's Life was serialised in Household Words in March 1856. Around this time, Collins began using laudanum to treat his gout. He became addicted to it, an addiction he struggled with later in life.

He joined the staff of Household Words in October 1856. In 1856-1857, he collaborated closely with Dickens on the play The Frozen Deep, first performed at Tavistock. Collins's novel The Dead Secret was serialised in Household Words from January to June 1857 and published in

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volume form by Bradbury & Evans. Collins's play The Lighthouse was performed at the Olympic Theatre in August. The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices, based on Dickens's and Collins's walking tour in the north of England was serialised in Household Words in October 1857. In 1858, he collaborated with Dickens and other writers on the story "A House to Let".

In 1858, Collins began living with Caroline Graves and her daughter Harriet. Caroline came from a humble family, having married young, had a child, and been widowed. Collins lived close to the small shop kept by Caroline, and the two may have met in the neighbourhood in the mid-1850s. He treated Harriet, who he called "Carrie", as his own daughter, and helped to provide for her education. Excepting one short separation, they lived together for the rest of Collins's life. Although Collins disliked the institution of marriage, he remained dedicated to Caroline and Harriet, considering them his family.

According to biographer Melisa Klimaszewski, "The novels Collins published in the 1860s are the best and most enduring of his career. *The Woman in White, No Name, Armadale*, and *The Moonstone*, written in less than a decade, show Collins not just as a master of his craft, but as an innovator and provocateur. These four works, which secured him an international reputation, and sold in large numbers, ensured his financial stability."

The Woman in White was serialised in All the Year Round from November 1859 to August 1860, and was a great success. The novel was published in book form soon after serial publication ended, and reached an eighth edition by November 1860. Due to his increased stature as a writer, Collins resigned his position with All the Year Round in 1862 in order to focus on novel writing. During the planning of his next novel, No Name, he continued to suffer from gout; this time it especially affected his eyes. Serial publication of No Name began in early 1862, and finished in 1863. His continued to suffer from gout and his addiction to opium became a serious problem.

At the beginning of 1863, he travelled to German spas and Italy for his health with Caroline Graves. In 1864, he began work on his novel Armadale, travelling in August to do research for it. It was published serially in The Cornhill Magazine from 1864 to 1866. His play *No Thoroughfare*, co-written with Dickens, was published as the 1867 Christmas number of All the Year Round, and dramatised at the Adelphi Theatre on December 26, afterwards lasting for 200 nights before it was taken on tour.

His search for background information for Armadale took him to the Norfolk Broads and the small village of Winterton-on-Sea. Here he first met and began a liaison with Martha Rudd, a 19-year-old girl from a large, poor family. A few years later, she moved to London to be closer to him. His novel The Moonstone was serialised in All the Year Round from January to August 1868. His mother, Harriet Collins, died that same year. During his writing of The Moonstone, while he was suffering an attack of acute gout, Caroline left him and married a younger man named Joseph Clow. Caroline had wanted to marry Collins, but he had resisted.

Collins' and Martha Rudd's daughter Marian was born in 1869. After two years of marriage, Caroline left her husband and returned to Collins. Collins divided his time between Caroline, who lived with him at his home in Gloucester Place, and Martha who was nearby. When he was with Martha he assumed the name William Dawson, and she and their children used the last name of Dawson themselves. This arrangement continued for the rest of Collins's life.

9.1.3 Later Years

In 1870, his novel *Man and Wife* was published. This year also saw the death of Charles Dickens. Dickens's death caused tremendous sadness for Collins. He said of his early days with Dickens, "We saw each other every day, and were as fond of each other as men could be." Collins's second daughter with Martha Rudd, Harriet Constance, was born in 1871. *The Woman in White* was dramatised and produced at the Olympic theatre in October 1871. His novel Poor Miss Finch was

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serialised in Cassell's Magazine from October to March 1872. His short novel Miss or Mrs? was published in the 1872 Christmas number of the Graphic. His novel The New Magdalen was serialised from October 1872 to July 1873. His younger brother Charles Allston Collins died later in 1873. Charles had married Dickens' younger daughter, Kate.

In 1873-74, Collins toured The United States and Canada giving readings of his work. He met American writers including Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mark Twain, and began a friendship with the photographer Napoleon Sarony who took several portraits of him. Collins's and Martha Rudd's son, William Charles, was born in 1874. His novel The Law and the Lady was serialised in the Graphic from September to March 1875. His short novel The Haunted Hotel was serialised from June to November 1878. His later novels include Jezebel's Daughter (1880), The Black Robe (1881), Heart and Science (1883), and The Evil Genius (1886). In 1884, Collins was elected Vice-President of the Society of Authors, founded by his friend and fellow novelist Walter Besant.

The inconsistent quality of his dramatic and fictional works in the last decade of his life was accompanied by a general decline in his health, including diminished eyesight. He was often unable to leave his home, and had difficulty writing. During these last years, Collins focused on mentoring younger writers, including the novelist Hall Caine, and helping to protect other writers from copyright infringement of their works. His writing became a way for him to fight his illness, and not allow it to keep him bed-ridden. Carrie also served as an amanuensis for several years.

Collins died on September 23, 1889, at 82 Wimpole Street, following a paralytic stroke. He is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, West London. His grave marker describes him as the author of The Woman in White. Caroline Graves died in 1895 and buried with Collins. Martha Rudd died in 1919. Collins's last novel Blind Love, left unfinished at his death, was finished and published by Walter Besant in 1890.

9.2 Works

Collins's works were classified at the time as "sensation novels," a genre seen nowadays as the precursor to detective and suspense fiction. He also wrote penetratingly on the plight of women and on the social and domestic issues of his time. For example, his 1854 *Hide and Seek* contained one of the first portrayals of a deaf character in English literature. As did many writers of his time, Collins published most of his novels as serials in magazines such as Dickens's All the Year Round and was known as a master of the form, creating just the right degree of suspense to keep his audience reading from week to week. Sales of All The Year Round increased when *The Woman in White* followed *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Collins enjoyed ten years of great success following publication of The Woman in White in 1859. His next novel, No Name combined social commentary – the absurdity of the law as it applied to children of unmarried parents – with a densely plotted revenge thriller. Armadale, the first and only of Collins's major novels of the 1860s to be serialised in a magazine other than All the Year Round, provoked strong criticism, generally centred upon its transgressed villainess Lydia Gwilt, and provoked in part by Collins's typically confrontational preface. The novel was simultaneously a financial coup for its author and a comparative commercial failure: the sum paid by Cornhill for the serialisation rights was exceptional, eclipsing by a substantial margin the prices paid for the vast majority of similar novels, yet the novel failed to recoup its publisher's investment. *The Moonstone*, published in 1868, and the last novel of what is generally regarded as the most successful decade of its author's career. Despite a somewhat cool reception, it was from both Dickens and the critics, a significant return to form and re-established the market value of an author whose success in the competitive Victorian literary marketplace had been waning in the wake of his first "masterpiece."

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Notes Viewed by many to represent the advent of the detective story within the tradition of the English novel, The Moonstone remains one of Collins's most critically acclaimed productions. T.S. Eliot states it as "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels...in a genre invented by Collins and not by Poe," and Dorothy L. Sayers referred to it as "probably the very finest detective story ever written".

Various factors (most often cited are the death of Dickens in 1870 and thus the loss of his literary mentoring; Collins's increased dependence upon laudanum; and a penchant for using his fiction to rail against social injustices) appear to have led to a decline in the two decades following the success of his sensation novels of the 1860s. His novels and novellas of the 1870s and 1880s, while by no means devoid of merit or literary interest, are generally regarded as inferior to his previous productions and receive comparatively little critical attention today.

The Woman in White and The Moonstone share an unusual narrative structure, somewhat resembling an epistolary novel, in which different portions of the book have different narrators, each with a distinct narrative voice (Armadale has this to a lesser extent through the correspondence between some characters). The Moonstone, being the most popular of Collins's novels, is considered a precursor to detective fiction, such as Sherlock Holmes.

After The Moonstone, Collins's novels contained fewer thriller elements and commentary that is more social. The subject matter continued to be sensational, but his popularity declined. The poet Algernon Charles Swinburne commented: "What brought good Wilkie's genius nigh perdition?/Some demon whispered—'Wilkie! Have a mission."

9.3 Writing Style

Wilkie Collins is most notably credited with creating the sensation genre with his novel The Woman in White (1860) and writing the first full-length detective story, The Moonstone (1868). Collins is writing style is characterized by an emphasis on creating a convincing atmosphere of suspense and intrigue. The Woman in White, arguably his most successful work, shows Collins at his peak in terms of plotting and characterization. In *The Woman in White*, Collins borrows key elements from the gothic tradition while updating and innovating the already popular genre. He does this by changing the settings of his stories, moving them from foreign countries, such as France and Italy, to England. He also bombards the reader with documents, reflecting the age of information in which he lived. He takes a somewhat outdated writing style and contemporizes it to his time.

In The Woman in White, Collins contemporizes the gothic novel in two important ways. The first way is through transgressive gender characterizations. Collins is widely known for creating characters that do not fit into the specific moulds of male and female. His female characters often show masculine resolution and courage in deciphering mysteries within a particular novel. His male characters frequently show a softer, more feminine side whereby they express their innermost emotions as well as exercising feminine intuition. One of the ways in which Collins illustrates his transgressive gender characterizations is through his use of documents within the text of the story itself to indicate one character's textual possession of another.

Example: Two of the three, works by Collins examined here feature first person narrators who control the information the reader receives about other characters in the stories.

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9.4 Wilkie Collins and the Form of the Novel

Collins' depiction of his era is forcefully gripping. The novelists Balzac, Scott, and Cooper were the favourites of his youth, and his works share with theirs the breaking of new ground in fiction: Collins, reacting to Dickens and Thackeray, desired to be a trail-blazer.

Example: In The Moonstone, Collins precariously shifts narrative points-of-view, anticipating such 20th century novelists as Conrad and Joyce. His keen eye for detail, his humanity, and his sympathy for women are reflected in his letters, but these change abruptly in form after the publication of The Woman in White (1860), which marks his perfection of the epistolary technique. He measures up to Scott in structure, and to Balzac in innovation.

Collins changed the train schedule in The Woman in White after Times reviewer pointed out an error in a serial episode: verisimilitude mattered very much to Collins. In his scrupulous attention to such realistic details, he again anticipates later novelists. Eliot and others have credited him with being the father of the modern mystery novel, even though he may not have been aware that he was creating a genre—after all, The Moonstone is subtitled "A Romance." However, he consciously developed the mystery subgenre in new ways as he explored new realms.

9.5 Conclusion

At his best, Collins created a legacy of enduring characters. He uses the figure of the artist, such as Walter Hartright from The Woman In White, in a variety of ways. He endows Hartright with both masculine and feminine characteristics to make him seem more fallible and real. Walter is able to serve a parental function, providing an outlet for the subconscious to reveal itself. He is a more developed version of a character Collins originally creates in his short story "A Terribly Strange Bed," a tale, which was first published in 1852, eight years before The Woman in White.

In "A Terribly Strange Bed," an artist, who remains unnamed, has been hired to paint the portrait of a wealthy man named Faulkner. At the beginning of the story, the artist writes: "Mr. Faulkner, like many other persons by whom I have been employed, took it into his head that he must assume an expression, because he was sitting for his likeness; and, in consequence, contrived to look as unlike himself as possible, while I was painting him". The artist reveals that many of the people he paints believe themselves to be something they are not. Mr. Faulkner contrives "to look as unlike himself as possible" because he believes he is assuming the proper pose for a portrait. Through an unnatural expression, he contrives to mask his true nature in favour of an assumed one. It is up to the artist to find Faulkner's true nature and subsequently his true expression. Faulkner is "the most difficult likeness" the artist has "ever had to take," because he erects a barrier, keeping the artist psychologically and creatively at a distance from himself.

Once the sitter begins to reminisce about his past, the barrier he put up between himself and the artist collapses. The artist notes: "in the interest of his subject he soon completely forgot that he was sitting for his portrait – the very expression that I wanted came over his face – I proceeded towards completion in the right direction and to the best purpose". The storytelling process frees Faulkner from a controlled emotional state to an uncontrolled one, where he can assume a natural expression. The artist is put into a position of power. He can manipulate his subject to give him the pose he wants by taking the sitter from outside of himself to inside of himself.

While there are two distinct roles in "A Terribly Strange Bed," that of the artist and that of the storyteller, Mr. Faulkner, the framed narrative technique reveals the artist himself to be a storyteller by relating to the reader the tale Faulkner has told him. He is similar to

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Walter Hartright, another man who is both visual artist and storyteller. Like Hartright, who possesses the textual body of Anne Catherick, whose story he relates, the artist textually possesses the body of Faulkner, whose story he relates to the reader. The artist also possesses the physical body of Faulkner because he is painting him and manipulating the man so that he will give the artist a natural expression.

When he has finished telling his story, about a time in his youth when he was almost killed in a gaming house in Paris, Faulkner starts in his chair because while he has been telling his story, he has forgotten he has been sitting for his portrait. He thinks he has been the worst model the artist has ever had. The artist replies: "On the contrary, you have been the best…I have been painting your expression and while telling your story you have unconsciously shown me the natural expression I wanted". The storytelling process frees Faulkner from a controlled emotional state to an uncontrolled one, where he can assume his natural expression.

The artist is an early form of Walter Hartright. Both exert control over others by relating tales. By becoming storytellers, they both assume a position of authority, which they do not experience in their everyday lives as middle class artists. The storyteller is of the utmost importance to Collins. He expresses himself through characters like Walter Hartright and the artist in "A Terribly Strange Bed." These artist figures embody the artist in Collins himself. He was an artist who used words instead of paint to create a compelling portrait of human character. He reflected the nineteenth century's age of information, by writing novels where documents play a crucial role in the telling of the story. He used these documents, whether they were narratives, letters, plays or court documents, to manipulate the gender roles of his characters. Characters like Marian Halcombe and Valeria Woodville defy assumptions of the time that women were naturally passive, unable to take action for them. Artist figures like Walter Hartright and the portrait painter in "A Terribly Strange Bed" perform traditionally feminine, expressive tasks, such as attentively listening to others and collecting information. Collins's fictional world shows a potential for a greater equality between men and women. Personal documents, whether journals, letters, or plays, give their creators power, regardless of whether the writer is male or female. Another unique contribution of Collins is that by setting his stories in England, Collins was able to successfully update the gothic novel and create a new form of literature, the sensation novel. The sensation novel stresses the importance of personal narrative, that increases the intensity of the story. Although Collins did not ultimately fulfil the promise, he showed in his most successful work, The Woman in White. His storytelling legacy lives on and can be appreciated in the 21st century.

9.6 Critical Reception

Collins has been called "the father of the English detective novel" and many critics have observed that his principal strength lies in his expert manoeuvring of characters through complex plots. Indeed, he is credited with having influenced Dickens in this area. While Collins has sometimes been criticized for his weak characters, scholars have acknowledged that he nevertheless provided the prototypes for many stock characters that were to people subsequent detective fiction. Sergeant Cuff of *The Moonstone* exhibits characteristics that have shown up in later generations of fictional detectives, and Count Fosco of *The Woman in White* is recognised as the model for the devilishly charming villain. Commentators have also noted that many devices that seem today to be tired clichés—from mistaken identities to cursed jewels—were introduced by Collins. In addition to assessments of Collins's influence on detective fiction, many modern critics have begun the process of examining issues of gender and culture in his gothic and sensation novels, noting the way Collins departed from the traditions of popular fiction to create an insightful and subtly critical portrait of Victorian society in his works.

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9.7 The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed – Summary

'The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed' was originally published on 24 April 1852 as Collins's first contribution to Household Words.

Faulkner, the narrator, tells how as a young man he visited a low class-gambling house in Paris. After breaking the bank, he accepts accommodation rather than risk taking his large winnings home late at night. The canopy of the four-poster bed is attached to a screw by which it can be lowered from the room above to suffocate unsuspecting victims. Unable to sleep, Faulkner discovers the danger, escaping to return with the police.

Did u know? Greville Phillimore (1881) used the same plot in Uncle Z: and for 'The Inn of the Two Witches' (1913), a tale by Joseph Conrad who claimed never to have read Collins's story.

9.8 The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed – Story

Shortly after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's; but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social nomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For Heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's, to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise." "Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us; as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see." In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house, the back of which you have drawn in your sketch.

When we got upstairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. However, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance; they were all types—lamentably true types—of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism—here there was nothing but tragedy—mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, longhaired young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning up of the cards, never spoke. The flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black won, and how often red—never spoke. The dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned greatcoat, who had lost his last soul, and still looked on desperately, after he could play no longer—never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh, but the spectacle before me was something to weep over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge in excitement from the depression of spirits, which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunately, I sought the nearest excitement, by going to the table and beginning to play. Still more

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unfortunately, as the event will show, I won—won prodigiously; won incredibly; won at such a rate that the regular players at the table crowded round me; and staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was Rouge et Noir. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the Theory of Chances—that philosopher's stone of all gamblers! In addition, a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practiced it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables—just as I frequented ballrooms and opera houses—because they amused me, and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

However, on this occasion it was very different—now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success first bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played according to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win—to win in the face of every recognized probability in favour of the bank. At first, some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my colour; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums, which they dared not risk. One after another, they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. A deep-muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages interrupted the silence, every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table—even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. Nevertheless, one man present preserved his self-possession, and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and whispering in English, begged me to leave the place, satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times, and only left me and went away after I had rejected his advice (I was to all intents and purposes gambling drunk) in terms that rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried, "Permit me, my dear sir—permit me to restore to their proper place two napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honour, as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours—never! Go on, sir—Sacre mille bombes! Go on boldly, and break the bank!"

I turned round and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout. If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling, bloodshot eyes, mangy moustaches, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order, and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw—even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph of that moment, I was ready to "fraternize" with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier has offered pinch of snuff; clapped him on the back, and swore he was the most honest fellow in the world—the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. "Go on!" cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy—"Go on, and win! Break the bank—Mille tonnerres! my gallant English comrade, break the bank!"

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And I did go on—went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out, "Gentlemen, the bank has discontinued for to-night." All the notes and all the gold in that "bank," now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!

"Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir," said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. "Tie it up, as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army; your winnings are too heavy for any breeches-pockets that ever were sewed. There! that's it—shovel them in, notes and all! Credie! what luck! Stop! Another napoleon on the floor! Ah! sacre petit polisson de Napoleon! have I found thee at last? Now then, sir—two tight double knots each way with your honourable permission, and the money's safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! Hard and round as a cannon ball—Ah, bah! If they had only fired such cannon balls at us at Austerlitz—nom d'une pipe! If they only had! Now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of Champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!"

Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! Hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

"Bravo! The Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulate the vivacious blood of France. Another glass? Ah, bah!—the bottle is empty! Never mind! Vive le vin! I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half a pound of bonbons with it!"

"No, no, ex-brave; never—ancient grenadier! Your bottle last time; my bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French Army! The great Napoleon! The present company! The croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters—if he has any! The Ladies generally! Everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of Champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire—my brain seemed aflame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the Champagne amazingly strong?

"Ex-brave of the French Army!" cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, "I am on fire! How are you? You have set me on fire! Do you hear my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of Champagne to put the flame out!"

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle-eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated "Coffee!" and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord, they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule, which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

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"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones—"listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of the house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery!) to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home—you must, my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner to an enormous extent by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses. Need I say more? Ah, no, no! You understand me! Now, this is what you must do—send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again—draw up all the windows when you get into it—and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this; and you and your money will be safe. Do this; and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice."

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a draught. Almost instantly afterwards, I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of a steam engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out that I felt dreadfully unwell—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

"My dear friend," answered the old soldier—and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke—"my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in your state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. I am going to sleep here; do you sleep here, too—they make up capital beds in this house—take one; sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings to-morrow—to-morrow, in broad daylight."

I had but two ideas left: one, that I must never let go hold of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lay down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. Therefore, I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages and up a flight of stairs into the bedroom, which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand, proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-hand stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it; then sat down in a chair and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better The change for my lungs, from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied, the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gaslights of the "salon" to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom-candle, aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night through the streets of Paris with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels, so I determined to lock, bolt, barricade my door, and take my chance until the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion; looked under the bed, and into the cupboard; tried the fastening of the window. Then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a

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feathery litter of wood-ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow. I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but also that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide-awake, and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled—every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now I thrust my arms over the clothes; now I poked them under the clothes; now I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go; now I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting posture. Every effort was in vain; I groaned with vexation as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors; to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger; in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room—which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window—to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources, the multitude of associations, which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track—or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more. There was, first, the bed I was lying in; a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris—yes, a thorough clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz—the regular fringed valance all round—the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts witho particularly noticing the bed when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilled, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to the brick floor. Then two small chairs, with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow-chair covered with dirty-white dimity, with my cravat and shirt collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing table, adorned by a very small looking glass, and a very large pincushion. Then the window—an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the feeble candle dimly showed me. It was a picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward—it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

This picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward too—at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy and not an interesting object, and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat—they stood out in relief—three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favoured by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up. It could not be at the stars; such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again—three white, two green.

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While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England—the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward, through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance, though I had never given the picnic a thought for years; though, if I had tried to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us, we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless, remembering, quite involuntarily, place, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every kind, which I had thought forgotten forever; which I could not possibly have recalled at will, even under the most favourable auspices. In addition, what cause had produced in a moment the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

I was still thinking of the picnic—of our merriment on the drive home—of the sentimental young woman who would quote "Childe Harold" because it was moonlight. I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements, when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder; my attention immediately came back to present things more vividly than ever, and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again. Looking for what?

Good God! The man had pulled his hat down on his brows! No! The hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers—three white, two green? Not there! In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, and his shading hand? Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back and looked up. Was I mad? Drunk? Dreaming? Giddy again? or was the top of the bed really moving down—sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth—right down upon me, as I lay underneath? My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly paralysing coldness stole all over me as I turned my head round on the pillow and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowzy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly. Moreover, steadily and slowly—very slowly—I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been on more than one occasion in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up, motionless, speechless, and breathless. The candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top, and still my panic-terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay—down and down it sank, till the dusty odour from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment, the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sidewise off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder. Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to

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watch the bed-top. I was literally spellbound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; if a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended—the whole canopy, with the fringe round it, came down—down—close down; so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me from beneath to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down; there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amid a dead and awful silence, I beheld before me—in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France—such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it, I could not move, I could hardly breathe, but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment, I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever fit, which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep, in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it. However, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed—as nearly as I could guess—about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling, too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became in appearance an ordinary bed again—the canopy an ordinary canopy—even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move—to rise from my knees—to dress myself in my upper clothing—and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed by the smallest noise that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking towards the door.

No! No footsteps in the passage outside—no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above—absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought of what its contents might be!) without making some disturbance was impossible; and to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an entresol, and looked into a back street, which you have sketched in your view. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hairbreadth, my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a House of Murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time—five hours, reckoning by suspense—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently—in doing it with all the dexterity of a housebreaker—and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be

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almost certain destruction! Next, I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran a thick water pipe, which you have drawn—it passed close by the outer edge of the window. The moment I saw the pipe I knew I was saved. My breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me!

To some men the means of escape, which I had discovered, might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough—to me the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gymnastics, to keep up my pupil powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I already had one leg over the windowsill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me, but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder as well as their victim. Therefore, I went back to the bed and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! Dead silence still in the passage—I had only heard the night air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the windowsill—and the next, I had a firm grip on the water pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off at the top of my speed to a branch "Prefecture" of Police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighbourhood. A "Sub-prefect," and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder, which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story, in a breathless hurry and in very bad French, I could see that the Sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on, and before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bareheaded), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors and ripping up brick flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say that when the Sub-prefect was a little boy, and was taken for the first time to the play, he was not half as much pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the gambling-house!

Away we went through the streets, the Sub-prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath as we marched at the head of our formidable posse comitatus. Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it; a tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at a window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police—then came more knocks and a cry of "Open in the name of the law!" At that, terrible summons bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand, and the moment after the Sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter half-dressed and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue, which immediately took place: "We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house?"

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away; he remained. Show us to his bedroom!"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Sous-prefect, he is not here! He—"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Garcon, he is. He slept here—he didn't find your bed comfortable—he came to us to complain of it—here he is among my men—and here am I ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin! (calling to one of the subordinates, and pointing to the waiter) collar that man and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk upstairs!"

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Every man and woman in the house was secured—the "Old Soldier" the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept, and then we went into the room above. No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The Sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be careful taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced, and we saw a deep raftered cavity between the floor of this room and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through a cavity there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers covered with felt; all the complete upper works of a heavy press—constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and when taken to pieces again, to go into the smallest possible compass—were next discovered and pulled out on the floor. After some little difficulty, the Sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly, as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the Sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. "My men," said he, "are working down the bed-top for the first time—the men whose money you won were in better practice."

We left the house in the sole possession of two police agents—every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The Sub-prefect, after taking down my "process verbal" in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really been smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother me?" "I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the Sub-prefect, "in whose pocket-books were found letters stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost everything at the gaming table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that you entered? Won as you won? Took that bed as you took it? Slept in it? Were smothered in it? In addition, were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers and placed in their pocket books? No man can say how many or how few have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead machinery a secret from us—even from the police! The dead kept the rest of the secret for them. Goodnight, or rather good-morning, Monsieur Faulkner! Be at my office again at nine o'clock—in the meantime, au revoir!"

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. I discovered that the Old Soldier was the master of the gambling-house—justice discovered that he had been drummed out of the army as a vagabond years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villainies since; that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the Old Soldier and his two head myrmidons, they went to the galleys; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious" and placed under "surveillance"; and I became, for one whole week (which is a long time) the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious playmakers, but never saw theatrical daylight; for the censorship forbade the introduction on the stage of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure, which any censorship must have approved: it cured me of ever again trying "Rouge et Noir" as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with asks of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be forever associated in my mind with the sight of a bed canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the

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night. Just as Mr. Faulkner pronounced these words, he started in his chair, and resumed his stiff, dignified position in a great hurry. "Bless my soul!" cried he, with a comic look of astonishment and vexation, "while I have been telling you what is the real secret of my interest in the sketch you have so kindly given to me, I have altogether forgotten that I came here to sit for my portrait. For the last hour or more I must have been the worst model you ever had to draw from!" "On the contrary, you have been the best," said I. "I have been trying to catch your likeness; and, while telling your story, you have unconsciously shown me the natural expression I wanted to insure my success."

Note by Mrs. Kerby.

I cannot let this story end without mentioning what the chance saying was, which caused it to be told at the farmhouse the other night. Our friend the young sailor, among his other quaint objections to sleeping on shore, declared that he particularly hated four-post beds, because he never slept in one without doubting whether the top might not come down in the night and suffocates him. I thought this chance reference to the distinguishing feature of William's narrative curious enough, and my husband agreed with me. However, he says it is scarcely worthwhile to mention such a trifle in anything as important as a book. I cannot venture, after this, to do more than slip these lines in modestly at the end of the story. If the printer should notice my few last words, perhaps he may not mind the trouble of putting them into some out-of-the-way corner. L. K.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. …… is Wilkie Collins's first collection of six short stories, published in 1856.
2. …… introduced Collins's to Charles Dickens in an instrumental event in March 1851.
3. His novel *Armadale* was published serially in …… from 1864 to 1866.
4. Collins last novel *Blind Love* was finished posthumously by ……..
5. Walter Hartright is a character from the novel ……..

9.9 Summary

- William Wilkie Collins (8 January 1824–23 September 1889) was an English novelist, playwright, and author of short stories. His best-known works are *The Woman in White, The Moonstone, Armadale*, and *No Name*.
- After Dark is Wilkie Collins's first collection of six short stories, published in 1856. Collins provides a narrative framework, 'Leaves from Leah's Diary', set in 1827.
- Collins's story *A Terribly Strange Bed*, his first contribution to Household Words, appeared in April, 1852.
- Collins and Charles Dickens became lifelong friends and collaborators.
- In *A Terribly Strange Bed*, an artist, who remains unnamed, has been hired to paint the portrait of a wealthy man named Faulkner.
- Collins has been called "the father of the English detective novel" and many critics have observed that his principal strength lies in his expert manoeuvring of characters through complex plots.
- Collins's works were classified at the time as "sensation novels," a genre seen nowadays as the precursor to detective and suspense fiction.

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9.10 Keywords

Manipulator: A person who has the ability to influence others in a deceitful way.

Novella: A short novel or a long short story.

Posthumously: Happening after the death of the originator such as posthumous awards.

Precursor: A person or a things that comes before of the same kind.

9.11 Review Questions

1. Did you like *The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed*? Why or why not?
2. Has anyone had an experiences that relate to places or experiences in the book?
3. Critically analyse *The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed*.
4. *The Traveller's Story of a Terribly Strange Bed* is considered to be one of the first mystery and thriller stories. When the book was written 150 years ago, readers had fewer distractions – no computers or television, for example. Any comment on the author's writing style in light of the times?
5. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot? Did the plot take turns you did not expect, or did you find it predictable?
6. Did you find the characters believable? Which of the characters did you like the most? Which did you dislike?
7. Write a note on the writing style of Wilkie Collins.
8. Discuss the Collins' other works and his critical appreciation by other literary geniuses.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. *After Dark*
2. Augustus Egg
3. The Cornhill Magazine
4. Walter Besant
5. *The Woman in White*

9.12 Further Readings

Books

Nayder Lillian. (1997) *Wilkie Collins*. Twayne Publishers.

O'Neli Philip. (1988) *Wilkie Collins: Women, Property, and Propriety*. Barnes & Nobel Books, USA.

Online links

http://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=honors_projects

http://www.c-s-p.org/flyers/9781847181091-sample.pdf

Unit 10: Beggarly Heart by Rabindranath Tagore

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know more about Rabindranath Tagore
- Analyse Tagore's writing style and works
- Explain Romantic influence on Tagore
- Understand Tagore's poem 'Beggarly Heart'

Introduction

Rabindranath Thakur, anglicised to Tagore (7 May 1861–7 August 1941), sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music. Author of *Gitanjali* and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. In translation, his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into

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Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern South Asia.

A Pirali Brahmin from Kolkata, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At age sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym BhânusiC ha ("Sun Lion"), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. He graduated to his first short stories and dramas—and the aegis of his birth name—by 1877. As a humanist, universalist internationalist, and strident anti-nationalist he denounced the Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

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—or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India's Jana Gana Mana and Bangladesh's Amar Shonar Bangla.

Tagore is distinguished for being a man with numerous dimensional personalities and is the most eminent Bengali renaissance poet, philosopher, essayist, critic, composer and educator who dreamt of a harmony of universal humanity among the people of different origin through freedom of mind and spiritual sovereignty. Rabindranath Tagore occupies a fore position in the galaxy of the prophets of Humanism. He became the first-ever Asian writer to be awarded a Nobel Prize in 1913 for translated version of his cycle of song-poems entitled *Gitanjali*. Tagore played a very important and a noteworthy part in India's freedom struggle and his efforts were appreciated by both Gandhi and Nehru and after independence, India chose a song of Tagore "Jana Gana Mana Adhionayaka" as its National Anthem. *Gitanjali* is Tagore's poetry, which had earned him remarkable success.

The poem that is covered in this unit is a part of *Gitanjali* and while studying this unit you will also learn about Tagore's other works in music, stories, novels and poems.

10.1 Music

Tagore was a prolific composer with 2,230 songs to his credit. His songs are known as rabindrasangit ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised. Influenced by the thumri style of Hindustani music, they ran the entire gamut of human emotion, ranging from his early dirge-like Brahmo devotional hymns to quasi-erotic compositions. They emulated the tonal colour of classical ragas to varying extents. Some songs mimicked a given raga's melody and rhythm faithfully; others newly blended elements of different ragas. Yet about nine-tenths of his work was not bhanga gaan, the body of tunes revamped with "fresh value" from select Western, Hindustani, Bengali folk and other regional flavours "external" to Tagore's own ancestral culture. Scholars have attempted to gauge the emotive force and range of Hindustani ragas:

"….the pathos of the purabi raga reminded Tagore of the evening tears of a lonely widow, while kanara was the confused realization of a nocturnal wanderer who had lost his way. In bhupali he seemed to hear a voice in the wind saying 'stop and come hither'. Paraj conveyed to him the deep slumber that overtook one at night's end."

Tagore influenced sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarodiyas Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan. His songs are widely popular and undergird the Bengali ethos to an extent perhaps rivalling Shakespeare's impact on the English-speaking world. It is said that his songs are the outcome of five centuries of Bengali literary churning and communal yearning.

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For Bengalis, the songs' appeal, stemming from the combination of emotive strength and beauty described as surpassing even Tagore's poetry, was such that the Modern Review observed, "[t]here is in Bengal no cultured home where Rabindranath's songs are not sung or at least attempted to be sung ... Even illiterate villagers sing his songs". A.H. Fox Strangways of *The Observer* introduced non-Bengalis to rabindrasangit in The Music of Hindustan, calling it a "vehicle of a personality ... [that] go behind this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize."

In 1971, Amar Shonar Bangla became the national anthem of Bangladesh. It was written—ironically—to protest the1905 Partition of Bengal along communal lines: lopping Muslim-majority East Bengal from Hindu-dominated West Bengal was to avert a regional bloodbath. Tagore saw the partition as a ploy to upend the independence movement, and he aimed to rekindle Bengali unity and tar communalism. Jana Gana Mana was written in shadhu-bhasha, a Sanskritised register of Bengali. It is the first of five stanzas of a Brahmo hymn composed by Tagore. It was first sung in 1911 at a Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress and was adopted in 1950 by the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of India as its national anthem.

10.2 Paintings

At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France—were held throughout Europe. He was likely red-green colour blind, resulting in works that exhibited strange colour schemes and offbeat aesthetics. Tagore was influenced by scrimshaw from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from British Columbia, and woodcuts by Max Pechstein. His artist's eye for his handwriting was revealed in the simple artistic and rhythmic leitmotifs embellishing the scribbles, cross-outs, and word layouts of his manuscripts. Some of Tagore's lyrics corresponded in a synesthetic sense with particular paintings.

"…Surrounded by several painters Rabindranath had always wanted to paint. Writing and music, playwriting and acting came to him naturally and almost without training, as it did to several others in his family, and in even greater measure. However, painting eluded him. Yet he tried repeatedly to master the art and there are several references to this in his early letters and reminiscence. In 1900 for instance, when he was nearing forty and already a celebrated writer, he wrote to Jagadishchandra Bose, "You will be surprised to hear that I am sitting with a sketchbook drawing. Needless to say, the pictures are not intended for any salon in Paris, they cause me not the least suspicion that the national gallery of any country will suddenly decide to raise taxes to acquire them. However, just as a mother lavishes most affection on her ugliest son, so I feel secretly drawn to the very skill that comes to me least easily According to R. Siva Kumar's *The Last Harvest: Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore*. He also realized that he was using the eraser more than the pencil, and dissatisfied with the results he finally withdrew, deciding it was not for him to become a painter."

Rabindra Chitravali, edited by noted art historian R. Siva Kumar, for the first time makes the paintings of Tagore accessible to art historians and scholars of Rabindranth with critical annotations and comments. It also brings together a selection of Rabindranath's own statements and documents relating to the presentation and reception of his paintings during his lifetime.

The Last Harvest: Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore was an exhibition of Rabindranath Tagore's paintings to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, India and organised with NGMA Delhi as the nodal agency. It consisted of 208 paintings drawn from the collections of Visva Bharati and the NGMA and presented Tagore's art in a very comprehensive way. Art Historian R. Siva Kumar curated the exhibition. Within the 150th birth anniversary year it was conceived as three separate but similar exhibitions, and travelled simultaneously in three circuits. The first selection was shown at Museum of

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Asian Art, Berlin, Asia Society, New York, National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Petit Palais, Paris, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, National Visual Arts Gallery (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Ontario, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

10.3 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 from 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. In Ghare Baire, matters of self-identity (jâti), personal freedom, and religion are developed in the context of a family story and love triangle. In it an Irish boy orphaned in the Sepoy Mutiny is raised by Hindus as the titular gora—"whitey". Ignorant of his foreign origins, he chastises Hindu religious backsliders out of love for the indigenous Indians and solidarity with them against his hegemon-compatriots.

In Jogajog (Relationships), the heroine Kumudini—bound by the ideals of Shiva-Sati, exemplified by Dâkshâyani—is torn between her pity for the sinking fortunes of her progressive and compassionate elder brother and his foil: her roue of a husband. Tagore flaunts his feminist leanings; pathos depicts the plight and ultimate demise of women trapped by pregnancy, duty, and family honour; he simultaneously trucks with Bengal's putrescent landed gentry. 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 new arrogance. Kumudini, Biprodas' sister, is caught between the two as she is married off to Madhusudan. She had risen in an observant and sheltered traditional home, as had all her female relations.

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 a poet protagonist. It contains elements of satire and postmodernism and has stock characters that gleefully attack the reputation of an old, outmoded, oppressively renowned poet who, incidentally, goes by a familiar name: "Rabindranath Tagore". Though his novels remain among the least appreciated of his works, they have been given renewed attention via film adaptations by Ray and others: Chokher Bali and Ghare *Baire* are exemplary. In the first, Tagore inscribes Bengali society via its heroine: a rebellious widow who would live for herself alone. He pillories the custom of perpetual mourning on the part of widows, who were not allowed to remarry, who were consigned to seclusion and loneliness. Tagore wrote of it: "I have always regretted the ending".

10.4 Stories

Tagore's three-volume Galpaguchchha comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles. Tagore associated his earliest stories, such as those of the "Sadhana" period, with an exuberance of vitality and spontaneity; zamindar Tagore's life in Patisar, Shajadpur, Shelaidaha, and other villages cultivated these traits. Seeing the common and the poor, he examined their lives with a depth and feeling singular in Indian literature up to that point. In "The Fruit seller from Kabul", Tagore speaks in first person as a town dweller and novelist imputing exotic perquisites to an Afghan seller. He channels the lucrative lust of those mired in the blasé, nidorous, and sudorific morass of sub continental city life: for distant vistas. "There were autumn mornings, the time of year when

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kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Kolkata, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it [...] I would fall to weaving a network of dreams: the mountains, the glens, the forest [...]."

The Golpoguchchho (Bunch of Stories) was written in Tagore's Sabuj Patraperiod, which lasted from 1914 to 1917 and named for another of his magazines. These yarns are celebrated fare in Bengali fiction and are commonly used as plot fodder by Bengali film and theatre. The Ray film Charulata echoed the controversial Tagore novella Nastanirh (The Broken Nest). In Atithi, which was made into another film, the little Brahmin boy Tarapada shares a boat ride with a village zamindar. The boy relates his flight from home and his subsequent wanderings. Taking pity, the elder adopts him; he fixes the boy to marry his own daughter. The night before his wedding, Tarapada runs off—again. Strir Patra (The Wife's Letter) is an early treatise in female emancipation. Mrinal is wife to a Bengali middle class man: prissy, preening, and patriarchal. Travelling alone she writes a letter, which comprehends the story? She details the pettiness of a life spent entreating his viraginous virility; she ultimately gives up married life, proclaiming, Amio bachbo. Ei bachlum: "And I shall live. Here, I live."

Haimanti assails Hindu arranged marriage and spotlights their often dismal domesticity, the hypocrisies plaguing the Indian middle classes, and how Haimanti, a young woman, due to her insufferable sensitivity and free spirit, foredid herself. In the last passage, Tagore blasts the reification of Sita's self-immolation attempt; she had meant to appease her consort Rama's doubts of her chastity. Musalmani Didi eyes recrudescent Hindu-Muslim tensions and, in many ways, embodies the essence of Tagore's humanism. The somewhat auto-referential Darpaharan describes a fey young man who harbours literary ambitions. Though he loves his wife, he wishes to stifle her literary career, deeming it unfeminine. In youth, Tagore likely agreed with him. Darpaharan depicts the final humbling of the man as he ultimately acknowledges his wife's talents. As do many other Tagore stories, Jibito o Mrito equips Bengalis with a ubiquitous epigram: Kadombini moriya proman korilo she more nai—"Kadombini died, thereby proving that she hadn't."

10.5 Poetry

Tagore's poetic style, which proceeds from a lineage established by 15th and 16th century Vaishnava poets, ranges from classical formalism to the comic, visionary and ecstatic. He was influenced by the atavistic mysticism of Vyasa and other rishi-authors of the Upanishads, the Bhakti-Sufi mystic Kabir, and Ramprasad Sen. Tagore's most innovative and mature poetry embodies his exposure to Bengali rural folk music, which included mystic Baulballads such as those of the bard Lalon, which were rediscovered and popularised again by Tagore. They resemble 19th century Kartâbhajâ hymns that emphasise inward divinity and rebellion against bourgeois bhadralok religious and social orthodoxy. During his Shelaidaha years, his poems took on a lyrical voice of the moner manush, the Bâuls' "man within the heart" and Tagore's "life force of his deep recesses", or meditating upon the jeevan devata—the demiurge or the "living God within". This figure connected with divinity through appeal to nature and the emotional interplay of human drama. Such tools saw use in his Bhânusimha poems chronicling the Radha-Krishnaromance, which were repeatedly revised over the course of seventy years.

Tagore reacted to the half-hearted uptake of modernist and realist techniques in Bengali literature by writing matching experimental works in the 1930s. These include Africaand Camalia, among the better known of his latter poems. He occasionally wrote poems using Shadhu Bhasha, a Sanskritised dialect of Bengali; he later adopted a more popular dialect known as Cholti Bhasha. Other works include Manasi, Sonar Tori (Golden Boat), Balaka (Wild Geese, a name redolent of migrating souls), and Purobi. Sonar Tori's most famous poem, dealing with the fleeting endurance of life and achievement, goes by the same name; hauntingly it ends: Shunno

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nodir tire rohinu poºi/Jaha chhilo loe gêlo shonar tori—"all I had achieved was carried off on the golden boat—only I was left behind." Gitanjali is Tagore's best-known collection internationally, earning him his Nobel.

Tagore's poetry has been set to music by composers: Arthur Shepherd's triptych for soprano and string quartet, Alexander Zemlinsky's famous Lyric Symphony, Josef Bohuslav Foerster's cycle of love songs, Leoš Janáèek's famous chorus "Potulný šílenec" ("The Wandering Madman") for soprano, tenor, baritone. There were also the male chorus—JW 4/43, which was inspired by Tagore's 1922 lecture in Czechoslovakia that Janáèek 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 Anglo-Dutch composer Richard Hageman to produce a highly regarded art song: "Do Not Go, My Love". 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).

10.6 Politics

Tagore opposed imperialism and supported Indian nationalists, and these views were first revealed in Manast, which was mostly composed in his twenties. Evidence produced during the Hindu – German Conspiracy Trial and latter accounts affirm his awareness of the Ghadarites, and stated that he sought the support of Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake and former Premier Ôkuma Shigenobu. Yet he lampooned the Swadeshi movement; he rebuked it in "The Cult of the Charka", an acrid 1925 essay. He urged the masses to avoid victimology and instead seek self-help and education, and he saw the presence of British administration as a "political symptom of our social disease". He maintained that, even for those at the extremes of poverty, "there can be no question of blind revolution"; preferable to it was a "steady and purposeful education".

Such views enraged many. He escaped assassination—and only narrowly—by Indian expatriates during his stay in a San Francisco hotel in late 1916; the plot failed when his would-be assassins fell into argument. Yet Tagore wrote songs lionising the Indian independence movement Two of Tagore's more politically charged compositions, "Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo" ("Where the Mind is Without Fear") and "Ekla Chalo Re" ("If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone"), gained mass appeal, with the latter favoured by Gandhi. Though somewhat critical of Gandhian activism, Tagore played a major role in resolving a Gandhi – Ambedkar dispute involving separate electorates for untouchables, thereby mooting at least one of Gandhi's fasts "unto death".

10.7 Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati

Tagore despised rote classroom schooling: in "The Parrot's Training", a bird is caged and force-fed textbook pages—to death. Tagore, visiting Santa Barbara in 1917, conceived a new type of university: he sought to "make Santiniketan the connecting thread between India and the world [and] a world centre for the study of humanity somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography." The school, which he named Visva-Bharati, had its foundation stone laid on 24 December 1918 and inaugurated precisely three years later. Tagore employed a brahmacharya system: gurus gave pupils personal guidance—emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Teaching was often done under trees. He staffed the school, he contributed his Nobel Prize monies, and his duties as steward-mentor at Santiniketan kept him busy: mornings he taught classes; afternoons and evenings, he wrote the students' textbooks. He fundraised widely for the school in Europe and the United States between 1919 and 1921.

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10.8 Impact

Every year, many events pay tribute to Tagore: groups scattered across the globe celebrate Kabipranam, his birth anniversary, the annual Tagore Festival held in Urbana, Illinois; Rabindra Path Parikrama walking pilgrimages from Kolkata to Santiniketan; and recitals of his poetry, which are held on important anniversaries. Bengali culture is fraught with this legacy: from language and arts to history and politics. Amartya Sen scantly deemed Tagore a "towering figure", a "deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker". Tagore's Bengali originals—the 1939 Rabîndra Rachanâvalî—is canonised as one of his nation's greatest cultural treasures, and he was roped into a reasonably humble role: "the greatest poet India has produced".

Tagore was renowned throughout much of Europe, North America and East Asia. He co-founded Dartington Hall School, a progressive coeducational institution; in Japan, he influenced such figures as Nobel laureate Yasunari Kawabata. Tagore's works were widely translated into English, Dutch, German, Spanish, and other European languages by Czech indologist Vincenc Lesný, French Nobel laureate André Gide, Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, former Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and others. In the United States, Tagore's lecturing circuits, particularly those of 1916–1917, were widely attended and wildly acclaimed. Some controversies involving Tagore, possibly fictive, trashed his popularity and sales in Japan and North America after the late 1920s, concluding with his "near total eclipse" outside Bengal. Yet an astonished Salman Rushdie discovered a latent reverence of Tagore during a trip to Nicaragua.

By way of translations, Tagore influenced Chileans Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral; Mexican writer Octavio Paz; and Spaniards José Ortega y Gasset, Zenobia Camprubí, and Juan Ramón Jiménez. In the period 1914–1922, the Jiménez-Camprubí pair produced twenty-two Spanish translations of Tagore's English corpus; they heavily revised The Crescent Moon and other key titles. In these years, Jiménez developed "naked poetry". Ortega y Gasset wrote that "Tagore's wide appeal [owes to how] he speaks of longings for perfection that we all have [...] Tagore awakens a dormant sense of childish wonder, and he saturates the air with all kinds of enchanting promises for the reader, who [...] pays little attention to the deeper import of Oriental mysticism". Tagore's works circulated in free editions around 1920—alongside those of Plato, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, and Tolstoy.

Tagore was deemed over-rated by some. Graham Greene doubted that "anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously." Several prominent Western admirers—including Pound and, to a lesser extent, even Yeats—criticised Tagore's work. Yeats, unimpressed with his English translations, railed against that "Damn Tagore [...] We got out three good books, Sturge Moore and I, and then, because he thought it more important to know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation. Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English." William Radice, who "English[ed]" his poems, asked: "What is their place in world literature?" He saw him as "kind of counter-cultur[al]," bearing "a new kind of classicism" that would heal the "collapsed romantic confusion and chaos of the 20th century." The translated Tagore was "almost nonsensical" and subpar English offerings reduced his trans-national appeal:

[...] not anyone who knows Tagore's poems in their original Bengali can feel satisfied with any of the translations (made with or without Yeats's help). Even the translations of his prose works suffer, to some extent, from distortion. E.M. Forster noted [of] The Home and the World [that] "[t]he theme is so beautiful," but the charms have "vanished in translation," or perhaps "in an experiment that has not quite come off." Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India".

10.9 Analysis of Tagore and His Works

In his book Raga Mala, Ravi Shankar, the great musician, argues that had Rabindranath Tagore "been born in the West he would now be [as] revered as Shakespeare and Goethe." This is a

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strong claim, and it calls attention to some greatness in this quintessentially Bengali writer—identified by a fellow Bengali—that might not be readily echoed in the wider world today, especially in the West. For the Bengali public, Tagore has been, and remains, an altogether exceptional literary figure, towering over all others. His poems, songs, novels, short stories, critical essays, and other writings have vastly enriched the cultural environment in which hundreds of millions of people live in the Bengali-speaking world, whether in Bangladesh or in India. Something of that glory is acknowledged in India outside Bengal as well, and even in some other parts of Asia, including China and Japan, but in the rest of the world, especially in Europe and America, Tagore is clearly not a household name.

And yet the enthusiasm and excitement that Tagore's writings created in Europe and America in the early years of the 20th century were quite remarkable. *Gitanjali*, a selection of his poems for which Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, was published in English translation in London in March 1913 and was reprinted ten times by the time the award was announced in November. For many years, Tagore was the rage in many European countries. His public appearances were always packed with people wanting to hear him. Then the Tagore tide ebbed, and by the 1930s, the huge excitement was all over. Indeed, by 1937, Graham Greene was able to remark, "As for Rabindranath Tagore, I cannot believe that anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously."

The one hundred fiftieth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's birth, which we mark this year, is a good occasion to ask what happened.

The occasion has also generated some new books on Tagore, in addition to the distinguished ones that already exist. Harvard University Press has just published a very fine selection of Tagore's writings, *The Essential Tagore*, with translations by leading scholars from Bangladesh, India, Britain, and America. The book also has insightful editorial comments by the two editors, Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravarty. The book has an imaginative and original foreword by the excellent writer Amit Chaudhuri, with a very engaging analysis of "poetry as polemic."

The title of the book presumes that some of Tagore must be essential. However, given the comprehensive neglect of this writer in the contemporary English literary world, it could well be asked whether Tagore is indeed essential at all. We must also ask why a writer who evokes comparison with Shakespeare and Goethe tends to generate so little enthusiasm in Western countries today. There is surely some mystery here.

At one level, it is not particularly hard to see that his native readers can get something from Tagore's writings, especially his poems and songs that would be missed by those who do not read Bengali. Even Yeats, his biggest promoter in the English-speaking world, did not like Tagore's own English translations. "Tagore does not know English," Yeats declared, adding a little theory to his diagnosis, as he often did: "No Indian knows English."

Yeats was very willing to work with Tagore to overcome that handicap in the production of the English version of Gitanjali, though there are some serious problems with the Yeats-assisted translations as well. The more general obstacle to the appreciation of Tagore in English surely comes from the fact that poetry is notoriously difficult to translate. Even with the best effort and talent, it can be hard—if not impossible—to preserve the magic of poetry as it is transplanted from one language to another. Anyone who knows Tagore's poems in Bengali would typically find it difficult to be really satisfied with any translation, no matter how good. To this impediment must be added the fact that Tagore's poetry, which often takes the form of songs in an innovative style of lyrical singing, called Rabindrasangeet, has transformed popular Bengali music with its particular combination of reflective language and compatible tunes.

There is, in addition, the problem that Tagore's influence on Bengali writing is so gigantic and epoch-making that his innovative language itself has profound importance to the Bengali reading public. Kazi Nazrul Islam, almost certainly the most successful Bengali poet with the exception

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of Tagore, who was constantly expressing his admiration for the person whom he called, uniquely, "the world poet," has testified that Tagore had altogether transformed the Bengali language. In many different ways, Tagore's writings reshaped and reconstructed modern Bengali in a way that only a handful of innovative Bengali writers had done before him, going back all the way, a thousand years earlier, to the authors of Charyapad, the Buddhist literary classics that first established the distinctive features of early modern Bengali.

Not only is language a part of the story in the contrast between Tagore's appreciation at home and the indifference to him abroad, but a related component of the story lies in the extraordinary importance and unusual place of language in Bengali culture in general. The Bengali language has had an amazingly powerful influence on the identity of Bengalis as a group, on both sides of the political boundary between Bangladesh and India. In fact, the politically separatist campaign in what was East Pakistan that led to the war for independence, and eventually to the formation of the new secular state of Bangladesh in 1971, was pioneered by the bhasha andolon, the "language movement" in defence of the Bengali language.

The movement started on February 21, 1952, only a few years after the partition of the subcontinent, with a large demonstration at Dhaka University in what was then the capital of East Pakistan (and now of Bangladesh), when the police gunned down a number of demonstrators. This turned out to be a decisive moment in the history of what would later become Bangladesh. February 21 is celebrated each year in Bangladesh as the Language Movement Day, and this has resonance across the world, since UNESCO declared that day as the International Mother Language Day. Language has served as a very powerful uniting identity for Muslims and Hindus in Bengal, and this sense of shared belonging has had a profound impact on the politics of Bengal, including its commitment to secularism on both sides of the border in the post-partition world.

The extraordinary combination of Tagore's language and themes has had a captivating influence on his Bengali readers. Many Bengalis express their astonishment at the fact that people outside Bengal could fail to appreciate and enjoy Tagore's writings; and that incomprehension is at least partly due to underestimating the difference that language can make. E.M. Forster noted the barrier of language, as early as 1919, when Tagore was still in vogue, in reviewing the translation of one of Tagore's great Bengali novels, Ghare Baire, translated in English as *The Home and the World* (Satyajit Ray would later make it into a fine film.) Forster confessed that he could not make himself like the English version of the novel that he read. "The theme is so beautiful," he remarked, but the charms have "vanished in translation."

Therefore, the importance of language provides a clue to the eclipse of Tagore in the West, but it cannot be the whole story. For one thing, Tagore's nonfictional prose writings also have a gripping hold on the attention of Bengalis and of other Indians, but they are not seen abroad in a similarly admiring way at all. This is so despite the fact that these writings are much easier to translate: indeed, Tagore himself often presented these essays in very effective English about which it would be hard to grumble. In his essays and his lectures, Tagore developed ideas on a remarkably wide variety of subjects—on politics, on culture, on society, on education; and while they are regularly quoted in his homeland, they are very rarely invoked now outside Bangladesh and India. There has to be something other than the barrier of language in the lack of world attention to Tagore. In addition, this raises the larger question: how relevant, how important are Tagore's general ideas?

Perhaps the central issues that moved Tagore most are the importance of open-minded reasoning and the celebration of human freedom. This placed him in a somewhat distinct category from some of his great compatriots. Tagore admired Gandhi immensely, expressed his admiration of his leadership repeatedly, and did more than perhaps anyone else in insisting that he be described as "Mahatma"—the great soul. And yet Tagore frequently disagreed with Gandhi whenever he thought that the latter's reasoning did not go far enough. They would often argue with each other quite emphatically.

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Example: When Gandhi used the catastrophic Bihar earthquake of 1934 that killed a huge number of people as further ammunition in his fight against untouchability—he identified the earthquake as "a divine chastisement sent by God for our sins," in particular the sin of untouchability. Tagore protested vehemently, insisting, "It is all the more unfortunate because this kind of unscientific view of phenomena is too readily accepted by a large section of our countrymen."

Similarly, when Gandhi advocated that everyone should use the charka—the primitive spinning wheel—thirty minutes a day, Tagore expressed his disagreement sharply. He thought little of Gandhi's alternative economics, and found reason to celebrate, with a few qualifications, the liberating role of modern technology in reducing human drudgery as well as poverty. He also was deeply sceptical of the spiritual argument for the spinning wheel: "The charka does not require anyone to think; one simply turns the wheel of the antiquated invention endlessly, using the minimum of judgment and stamina."

Many of these issues remain deeply relevant today, but what is important to note here are not the particular views that Tagore advanced in these—and other such—areas, but the organizing principles that moved him. The poet who was famous in the West only as a romantic and a spiritualist was in fact persistently guided in his writings by the necessity of critical reasoning and the importance of human freedom. In addition, those philosophical priorities that influenced Tagore's ideas on education and his belief that education is the most important element in the development of a country. In his assessment of Japan's economic development, Tagore separated out the role that the advancement of school education had played in Japan's remarkable development—an analysis that would be echoed much later in the literature on development. He may have been exaggerating the role of education somewhat when he remarked that "the imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education," but it is not hard to see why he saw the transformative role of education as the central story in the development process.

Tagore devoted much of his life to advancing education in India and advocating it everywhere. Nothing absorbed as much of his time as the school in Santiniketan that he established. He was constantly raising money for this unusually progressive co-educational school. It was one of the early co-educational institutions in India. After learning that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, Tagore told others about it, or so the story goes, in a meeting of a school committee discussing how to fund a new set of drains that the school needed. His announcement of the recognition apparently took the eccentric form of his saying that "money for the drains has probably been found."

In his distinctive view of education, Tagore particularly emphasized the need for gathering knowledge from everywhere in the world, and assessing it only by reasoned scrutiny. As a student at the Santiniketan school, I felt very privileged that the geographical boundaries of our education were not confined only to India and imperial Britain (as was common in Indian schools then). We learned a great deal about Europe, Africa, the USA, and Latin America, and even more extensively about other countries in Asia. Santiniketan had the first institute of Chinese studies in India; my mother learned judo in the school nearly a century ago; and there were excellent training facilities in arts, crafts, and music from other countries, such as Indonesia.

Tagore also worked hard to break out of the religious and communal thinking that was beginning to be championed in India during his lifetime—it would peak in the years following his death in 1941, when the Hindu-Muslim riots erupted in the subcontinent, making the partitioning of the country hard to avoid. Tagore was extremely shocked by the violence that was provoked by the championing of a singular identity of people as members of one religion or another, and he felt convinced that this disaffection was being foisted on common people by determined extremists: "interested groups led by ambition and outside instigation are today using the communal motive for destructive political ends."

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Tagore became more and more anxious and disappointed about India and about the world in the years before his death, and he did not live to see the emergence of a secular Bangladesh, which drew a part of its inspiration from his reasoned rejection of communal separatism. With its independence, Bangladesh chose one of Tagore's songs ("Amar Sonar Bangla") as its national anthem, making Tagore possibly the only person in human history that authored the national anthems of two independent countries: India had already adopted another one of his songs as its national anthem.

All this must be very confusing to those who see the contemporary world as a "clash of civilizations"—with "Muslim civilization," "Hindu civilization" and "Western civilization," defined largely on religious grounds, vehemently confronting each other. They would also be confused by Tagore's own description of his own cultural background: "a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mohammedan, and British." Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather, Dwarkanath, was well known for his command of Arabic and Persian, and Rabindranath grew up in a family atmosphere in which a deep knowledge of Sanskrit and ancient Hindu texts was combined with the study of Islamic traditions as well as Persian literature. It is not so much that Tagore tried to produce a "synthesis" of the different religions (as the great Mughal emperor Akbar had attempted for a time), but his reliance on reasoning and his emphasis on human freedom militated against a separatist and parochial understanding of social divisions.

If Tagore's voice was strong against communalism and religious sectarianism, he was no less outspoken in his rejection of nationalism. He was critical of the display of excessive nationalism in India, despite his persistent criticism of British imperialism. And notwithstanding his great admiration for Japanese culture and history, he would chastise Japan late in his life for its extreme nationalism and its mistreatment of China and east and Southeast Asia.

Tagore also went out of his way to dissociate the criticism of the Raj from any denunciation of British people and British culture. Consider Gandhi's famous witticism in reply to the question, asked in England, about what he thought of British civilization: "It would be a good idea." There are some doubts about the authenticity of the story, but whether or not it is exactly accurate, the purported remark did fit with Gandhi's amused skepticism about claims of British greatness. Those words could not have come from Tagore's lips, even in jest. While he denied altogether the legitimacy of the Raj, Tagore was vocal in pointing out what Indians had gained from "discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all.... the large-hearted liberalism of nineteenth-century English politics." The tragedy, as Tagore saw it, came from the fact that what "was truly best in their civilization, the upholding of dignity of human relationships, has no place in the British administration of this country."

Tagore saw the world as a vast give-and-take of ideas and innovations. He insisted, "Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origin." He went on to proclaim, "I am proud of my humanity when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own. Let me feel with unalloyed gladness that all the great glories of man are mine." The importance of such ideas has not diminished in the divisive world in which we now live. If that gives at least a part of the answer to the question of why Tagore still matters, it also puts into sharper focus the strangeness of the eclipse of Tagore in the West after an initial outburst of enthusiasm.

In explaining what happened to Tagore in the West, it is important to see the one-sided way in which his Western admirers presented him. This was partly related to the priorities of Tagore's principal sponsors in Europe, such as Yeats and Pound. They were dedicated to placing Tagore in the light of a mystical religiosity that went sharply against the overall balance of Tagore's work. In Yeats's case, his single-minded presentation included adding explanatory remarks to the translation of Tagore's poems to make sure that the reader got the religious point, eliminating altogether the rich ambiguity of meaning in Tagore's language between love of human beings and love of God.

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However, a part of the answer to the puzzle of the Western misunderstanding of Tagore can be found, I think, in the peculiar position in which Europe was placed when Tagore's poems became such a rage in the West. Tagore received his Nobel Prize only a year before the start in Europe of World War I, which was fought with unbelievable brutality. The slaughter in that war made many intellectuals and literary figures in Europe turn to insights coming from elsewhere, and Tagore's voice seemed too many, at the time, to fit the need splendidly. When, for example, the pocket book of Wilfred Owen, the great anti-war poet, was recovered from the battlefield in which he had died, his mother, Susan Owen, found in it a prominent display of Tagore's poetry. The poem of Tagore with which Wilfred said good-bye before leaving for the battlefield (it began, "When I go from hence, let this be my parting word") was very much there, as Susan wrote to Tagore, with those words "written in his dear writing—with your name beneath."

Tagore soon became identified in Europe as a sage with a teaching—a teaching that could, quite possibly, save Europe from the dire predicament of war and disaffection in which it recurrently found itself in the early twentieth century. This was very different from the many-sided creative artist and emphatically reasoned thinker that people at home found in Tagore. Even as Tagore urged his countrymen to wake up from blind belief and turn to reason, Yeats was describing Tagore's voice in thoroughly mystical terms: "we have met our own image ... or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream." There is a huge gulf there.

Tagore argued for the courage to depart from traditional beliefs whenever reason demanded it. There is a nice little story by Tagore called "Kartar Bhoot," or "The Ghost of the Leader," illustrating this point. A wise and highly respected leader who received unquestioned admiration from a community had become, in effect, a kind of tyrant when he lived, and enormously more so after, he died. The story describes how ridiculously restrained people's lives became when the dead leader's recommendations are frozen into inflexible commands. In their impossibly difficult lives, when the members of the community pray to the dead leader to liberate them from their bondage, the leader reminds them that he exists only in their minds—that they are free to liberate themselves whenever they so decide. Tagore had a real horror of being bound by the past, beyond the reach of present reasoning.

Yet Tagore himself did not do much to resist the wrongly conceived reputation as a mystical sage that was being thrust upon him. Even though he wrote to his friend C.F. Andrews in 1920, at the height of his adulation as an Eastern messiah, "these people ... are like drunkards who are afraid of their lucid intervals," he played along without much public protest. There was some tension within Tagore's self-perception, which allowed him to entertain the belief that the East had a real message for the West. This conviction fitted rather badly with the rest of his reasoned commitments and convictions. There was also a serious mismatch between the kind of religiosity that the Western intellectuals came to attribute to Tagore (Graham Greene thought that he had seen in Tagore "what Chesterton calls 'the bright pebbly eyes' of the Theosophists") and the form that Tagore's religious beliefs actually took. One of his poems (I am taking the liberty of translating the lines into simple English, away from the biblical English that Tagore had been persuaded to use) perhaps best represents his religious inclinations:

Leave this chanting and singing and
telling of beads!

Whom do you worship in this lonely
dark corner of a temple with doors
all shut?

Open your eyes and see your God
is not before you!

He is there where the tiller is tilling
the hard ground and where the
path maker is breaking stones.

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He is with them in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with dust.

Even though an affectionate God, who inspires not fear but love, has a big role in Tagore's thinking, he is guided on all worldly questions not by any variety of mysticism but by explicit and discernible reasoning. This Tagore, the real Tagore, got very little attention from his Western audience—neither from his sponsors nor from his detractors. Bertrand Russell wrote (in letters to Nimai Chatterji in the 1960s) that he did not like Tagore's "mystic air," with an inclination to spout "vague nonsense," adding that the "sort of language that is admired by many Indians unfortunately does not, in fact, mean anything at all." When an otherwise sympathetic writer, George Bernard Shaw, transformed Rabindranath Tagore into a fictional character called "Stupendranath Beggor," there was no longer much hope that Tagore's reasoned ideas would receive the careful and serious attention that they deserved.

In Tagore's vision of the future of his country, and of the world, there was in fact much emphasis on reason and much celebration of freedom—precisely the subjects on which more discussion can have an enormously constructive role today. In a rousing poem, he outlined his vision of what he so strongly desired for his own country and for the whole world:

Where the mind is without fear and
the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic walls

The difficulty in Tagore's reception in the West itself can perhaps be seen as a particular illustration of a world "broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls."

The fragmentary distortions take distinct forms in different societies and different contexts. In arguing for a world in which "the mind is without fear and the head is held high," Tagore wanted to overcome all those barriers. He did not quite succeed; but the engagement in open-minded and fearless reasoning that Tagore championed so eloquently is no less important today than it was in his own time.

10.10 Tagore: A Poet of Western Romantic and Eastern Mystical Tradition

Tagore is in many ways influenced by the romantic tradition of the West. The most significant aspect of romanticism particularly that of early 19th century English literature, is a new and intense faith in the imagination. This is as true of Rabindranath Tagore as of Wordsworth and Coleridge, or Tennyson and Browning. The recorded fact that Rabindranath as a young man was especially fond of Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley and Browning lends weight to this literary assumption.

Although romanticism in Tagore is not purely a product of the impact of English poets, it is actually a combination of many diverse elements of the East and the West. Many particular as well as general elements of romanticism forge the link between Tagore and nineteenth century British romantic poets. Rabindranath and the romantic poets turned away from reason to imagination and intuition. Rabindranath's romantic imagination does not dwell upon the mundane, banal actualities of existence, but as in Blake and Bridges, on the visions of the mysterious universe and the Creator. Rabindranath, in his passionate search for the divine life, expresses the Devotee's intense experiences of pain, perplexity, and joy.

In portraying a harmonious and joyous relationship between Man and nature, in relying upon the authenticity of intuition rather than reason or sense-impression, in mystically visualizing

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the essential unity in the midst of diversity, and in the divine spirit that "rolls through all things" Wordsworth displays a greater affinity of spirit with Rabindranath than any other English poet. The oriental mystic thinks that the world is all Maya and illusion, and tries to pierce through this deceptive curtain and look beyond into the transcendental reality. Tagore's understanding of this reality, of our transcendental union with the eternal and divine being, apart from its specific Eastern element, bears a close resemblance to Wordsworth's perception of the divine.

Rabindranath, like Keats, was not content with merely expressing the accepted moral truths. His contemplative imagination discerned truth in beauty. Rabindranath in his lecture on "The Sense of Beauty" actually quotes Keats in expounding his own ideas regarding the relationship of Truth and Beauty.

Rabindranath, in *Gitanjali* and several other poems has sung of the relationship between our being and infinitude. In *Gitanjali*, Rabindranath writes, "He (God) is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking the stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust….Meet him and stand by him in toil and in the sweat of thy brow."

If in his mystical, rendering of the transcendental unity, Rabindranath recalls the ideas poetically expressed by Wordsworth, in his passionate singing of and devotion to the idea of liberty he shows an affinity of spirit with Shelley and Byron.

Although Tagore does not clearly attempt to fit the doctrines of evolution and other scientific ideas into his transcendental scheme, as Walt Whitman does, he nevertheless comes close to Whitman in expressing his impatience with the stark and bare facts of science. Tagore reveals his sense of impatience with the dry details of astronomy by quoting Walt Whitman's well-known poem "When I heard the learned astronomer." His comments on Whitman's poem clearly indicate his relationship with the spirit of the great American poet. Tagore writes, "The prosody of the stars can be explained in the classroom by diagrams, but the poetry of the stars is in the silent meeting of soul with soul…."

The affinity of the spirit between Walt Whitman and Tagore strikes a much deeper note. Whitman is a singer and prophet of American democracy while Tagore is the singer of Indian Renaissance and of his country's political fate. For instance, Tagore wrote a number of poems inspired by the threat of partition of Bengal in 1905-09.

It is pertinent to note that Romanticism in Rabindranath is observed in moving away from impersonal objectivity to an inwardly felt individuality, from the old Sanskrit classical order to the new notion of intensity, from a self-conscious creative originality, from prosaic directness in expression to myth, image and symbol.

As a poet, Tagore sets for himself a definite objective, that is, to sing about the tremendous mystical experiences of the sages. These experiences, which can have no rational claims, and cannot be logically understood, have an irresistible appeal for him essentially because of the unique similarity between the sensibilities of the ancient sages and that of the poet who acknowledges that "in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry I want thee, only thee."

Much of Tagore's ideology came from the teaching of the Upnishads and his own beliefs that god can be found through personal purity and service to others. He stressed the need for new world order based on transnational values and ideas, and the faith in "the unity of consciousness."

Tagore was a pure poet and not a theorist who would formulate a rigid system to describe the mystical experiences, which have for him a great emotive value. Unlike many mystics, who believe in the possibility of merging into the Absolute, Tagore always maintains a safe distance between "Thou and me."

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Thus, Romanticism in his work is related to his Vaishnava faith; he adheres to the doctrine of Bhakti; his intuitional awareness of the Divine, his mysticism, his idealism and his intense love of liberty. His poetry swings between two poles – a towering, rich, ennobling imagination and a deeply felt, intense experience. The high, majestic quality of his imagination combined with his intense personal awareness and experience makes him a dreamer of dreams as well as a realistic champion of humanistic values. He is one of those great poets who not only visualized a kingdom of heaven above common humanity, but also transformed this kingdom of earth into a genuinely blissful place.

10.11 Beggarly Heart

When the heart is hard and parched up,
come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life,
come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from
beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner,
break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one,
thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.

10.11.1 Summary of the Poem

The poet writes that when the grace from the world and life of the human is lost, he urges the Lord of Peace to fill himself and the world with his eternal peace, which will make everyone's life a harmonious one indeed. Tagore gave all through his life, through his paradisiacal imagination that envisioned a world of love, equality, honesty bravery, and spiritual unity of all the mankind. He sees the present humanity is infected with the greed, wealth and power and further leaves it to those who do evil to turn away from evil doings and horrific moral slumber. Tagore prayers for India and in turn he prays for the whole Humanity to experience the true peace and harmony in life by giving up evil and taking up good deeds. The Poet longs for deliverance from the evil deeds and wants to enjoy freedom in reality.

10.11.2 Critical Analysis

Beggarly Heart is a part of Tagore's masterpiece *Gitanjali*. His love for humanity by enforcing the values of humanity such as peace and harmony overall. Tagore's poetry *Gitanjali* reflects his desperate efforts to see the world to live in peace and harmony in reality. He strives hard and hard to foster the values of humanity and bring the happiness in the land by encouraging the masses to love one another, live in peace and lead a harmonious life full of contentment. Tagore's goal is to channelize the streams of nationalism to the direction of universalism by freeing human soul from all bondage and pettiness of the world and thereby transcending itself into a search for universal love and brotherhood that the Lord provides to the mankind.

Tagore chants this little prayer from his heart especially for those who are spiritually challenged and waits with great expectation for a benefitting and satisfying answer from God. When the heart is hard and parched up, make or become dry through intense heat: extremely thirsty, come upon Him with a shower of mercy. When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song. When tumultuous; very loud or uproarious: excited, confused, or disorderly; work raises its din; a

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loud, unpleasant, and prolonged noise: (din something into) instil information into (someone) by constant repetition: make a din; on all sides shutting him out from beyond, come to him, his lord of silence, with his peace and rest. Before answering anybody's prayer God keeps His silence for reasons unknown. Then at the moment that we least expect, things start moving in a mighty way that will start transforming all areas in our lives and around us. When his beggarly heart, meagre and ungenerous: poverty-stricken, sits crouched. Adopt a position where the knees are bent and the upper body is brought forward and down: (crouch over) bend over to be close to a crouching stance or posture, shut up in a corner, break open the door, his king, and come with the ceremony of a king. When desire blinds the mind with delusion; an idiosyncratic belief or impression that is not in accordance with a generally accepted reality: the action of deluding or being deluded; and dust, God–the Supreme Ultimate–He is the holy one, He is wakeful, come with His light and His thunder. These are the signs that God will reply in a mighty way.

Self Assessment

Choose the correct answer:

1. For his poem *Geetanjali*, which literary award did Tagore win?
   (a) Nobel Prize for Literature (b) Man Booker Prize
   (c) Pulitzer Award
2. In 1915, the British Crown gave Tagore a knighthood. However, a heinous incident made him return his knighthood. Which incident was it?
   (a) World War I (b) Jallianwala Bagh Massacre
   (c) Quit India Movement
3. The national anthem of yet another of India's neighbours is deeply influenced by Tagore's music. Which country is it?
   (a) Sri Lanka (b) Nepal
   (c) Pakistan
4. There is a style of singing which is now named after Tagore. What is it called?
   (a) Khayaal Gaayaki (b) Thumri
   (c) Rabindra Sangeet

10.12 Summary

- Rabindranath Thakur, anglicised to Tagore sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music.
- Tagore modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal.
- Tagore was a prolific composer with 2,230 songs to his credit. His songs are known as rabindrasangit ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised.
- Tagore influenced sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarodiyas Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan.

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- At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France—were held throughout Europe.
- Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them Chaturanga, Shesher Kobita, Char Odhay, and Noukadubi.
- Tagore's three-volume Galpaguchchha comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles.
- Tagore's poetic style, which proceeds from a lineage established by 15th- and 16th-century Vaishnava poets, ranges from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic.
- Tagore opposed imperialism and supported Indian nationalists, and these views were first revealed in Manast, which was mostly composed in his twenties.
- In *Beggarly Heart*, the poet writes that when the grace from the world and life of the human is lost, he urges the Lord of Peace to fill himself and the world with his eternal peace, which will make everyone's life a harmonious one indeed.

10.13 Keywords

Aristocrat: A member of the nobility or the ruling family.

Assassination: To murder someone for political or religious reasons.

Communalism: A principle of political organisation based on federated communes.

Indigenous: Native or originating from a place.

Polymath: A learned person or somebody with a great deal of knowledge.

Recrudescent: to recur or break out again.

Renaissance: The cultural movement spanning 14th to 17th century is responsible for the revival in European art and literature that spread to other parts of the world.

10.14 Review Questions

1. Write critical analysis of the poem *Beggarly Heart.*
2. "Tagore was a great poet". Elaborate your answer.
3. "Tagore's humanism is visible in his awareness of life's sufferings and problems." Do you agree? Explain.
4. Analyse Tagore and his major works in diverse fields.
5. Do you think that Tagore was deeply influenced by the English Romantic poets? Substantiate your answer.
6. Discuss Tagore was a nationalist and an ardent patriot.
7. "Tagore was more a poet of Nature, than of man or God." Analyse the statement.
8. "Tagore's poetry is about a self-disclosure in the eternal journey of man." Do you agree?
9. Write a note on the diction used in the poems of Tagore you have read.
10. What are the essential features of his poetry that create "essential music" in his poetry?

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Answers: Self Assessment

1. (a)
2. (b)
3. (a)
4. (c)

10.15 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 11: Next Sunday by R K Narayan

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life and times of R K Narayan
- Understand the writing style of R K Narayan
- Critically analyse 'Next Sunday'

Introduction

R K Narayan is the grand old man of Indian fiction. Besides fiction, he was also a good non-fictional essayist. That's why he won the first Indian Sahitya Akademi Award. All his books of fiction and non-fiction are excellent and must read by anybody who can read English. His language is very lucid and transparent. He writes for children and adults. His career spanned seven long and illustrious decades from the 1930s to the 1990s. As our study of paper is restricted to only R K Narayan as a non-fictional essayist, it is better to deal with his essays instead of novels and short stories. Almost throughout his career, R K Narayan wrote non-fictional pieces/essays. They were written at various times, which indicated his growth of mind as a writer like William Wordsworth. Starting with pieces written as a weekly contribution to the 'Hindu' in the late 1930s, Narayan's interest in the short form led him to comment, over the next few decades, on just about every aspect of the world around him that held his interest.

11.1 About the Author

R K Narayan's novels are like a box of Indian sweets: a highly coloured container conceals a range of delectable treats, all different in a subtle way, but each one clearly from the same place.

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There are fourteen novels in the oeuvre – enough to create a world. Enthusiasts of his work will read them all and return to them repeatedly.

Narayan's life spanned the 20th century, which meant that he belonged to both an old world and a new. At the time of his birth in 1906, the British Raj, that astonishing imperial conceit, was firmly in place, as were those iron-clad notions of caste that were to prove so difficult to shrug off. The British presence in India had brought with it a large civil service, an educational system, and railways – to all of which institutions the people of the subcontinent took with enthusiasm. However, it had also brought with it a language, and the literature, which that language created, and it is this, which proved a most productive legacy.

Although Narayan did not draw attention to his personal life, he did write a memoir, My Days, which tells us a great deal about his boyhood years and the inception and development of his literary career. His childhood was typical of that of a middle-class boy of the time. His father was the headmaster of a school, a somewhat stern figure in his professional life, and this connection with the world of education is very much apparent in the earlier novels, where schools, colleges, and the whole business of becoming educated play a major role. His father's job required mobility, and Narayan spent a number of childhood years living with his grandmother in Madras. Eventually, though, he joined his parents in Mysore, where he attended the school presided over by his father. He became a voracious reader, wading through the books and magazines, which arrived on his father's desk for the school library.

As he wrote in My Days:

My father did not mind our taking away whatever we wanted to read – provided we put them back on his desk without spoiling them, as they had to be placed on the school's reading-room table on Monday morning. Therefore, our weekend reading was full and varied. We could dream over the advertisement pages in the Boys' Own Paper or the Strand Magazine. Through the Strand, we made the acquaintance of all.

English writers: Conan Doyle, Wodehouse, W.W. Jacobs, Arnold Bennett, and every English fiction writer worth the name . . . Through Harper's and the Atlantic, and American Mercury we attained glimpses of the New World and its writers.

This sense of distance, of being a participant in a culture and yet not being of it, is a familiar feature of the literature of what is now the British Commonwealth and it is vividly portrayed in Narayan's novels. Colonialism hurt and damaged those subjected to it, but it would be inaccurate to portray the process as being a simple matter of subjugation and humiliation; it was far more complex than that.

Narayan remained in India – an Indian writer who was happy to be read by those outside India but who remained firmly within the world into which he had been born. The young Narayan was not a great scholar. Having failed his university entrance examinations, he spent a year reading and writing before he eventually succeeded in being admitted to the BA course at Maharaja's College.

During this year he acquired a copy of a book called *How to Sell your Manuscripts* and started to send his literary efforts off to magazines in London. He met with no success, encountering for the first time those pieces of paper so familiar, and yet so devastating, to the aspiring writer – the printed rejection slip. In due course, he completed his studies and graduated as a Bachelor of Arts. There then followed various attempts by his father and others to secure him a position. These were mostly unsuccessful, although they eventually bore fruit in the shape of a teaching post where he was immediately required to teach Tennyson's Morte d'Arthur to a class of burly and uncooperative boys who had no interest in poetry. His teaching career was a dismal failure and shortly afterwards he walked out of the school and returned home. That was that: he would become a writer. How many have made that decision, and how many have failed. And how many aspiring writers have written their first novel in the belief that it is fiction, only to

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discover that it is really about them, and, quite commonly, about their childhood. Swami and Friends, Narayan's first novel, is a novel of boyhood, which draws heavily on his own experiences.

The publication of a first novel is one thing; security in the literary world is another. *Swami and Friends* was well reviewed, but was not a commercial success. In the years that followed, Narayan had to seek a variety of different publishers, and it was to be some time before his reputation was secured amongst a wide international audience. His personal circumstances were also sometimes difficult. A few years later, his wife, Rajam, died of typhoid. Narayan was devastated. In *My Days,* he wrote, I have described this part of my experience of her sickness and death in The English Teacher so fully that I do not and perhaps cannot, go over it again. More than any other book, The English Teacher is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction . . . The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience.

R K Narayan is a much beloved novelist, and for very good reason. Although the books in this volume were all written more than half a century ago, they are the freshest, the most sparkling of gems. The struggle of the characters against social restrictions, their struggle to be something other than that which social destiny appears to be forcing them to be, are struggles with which we can all identify to a greater or lesser extent. As Samuel Johnson observed, many people waste part of their lives trying to be something they are not. Eventually, of course, they may come to realize what they really are, and if that happens to be a citizen of a small town, rather like Narayan's Malgudi, bound up with neighbours and their concerns, sewn into a family and a nation, and then there are very much worse fates than that.

R K Narayan in a way is a distracting though unobtrusive puzzle to many. Everyone is irresistibly attracted to the work of R K Narayan. A sense of overpowering intimacy is established and the characters become intimate personalities after our heart. Perhaps there is simple magic, the magic of delicious and divine humour that tickles and tantalizes, thrills and illumines, combining humanity, sympathy and love. He affects this comedic catharsis in the most compelling and in the most natural way in us. If one is not to be driven to distraction, cynicism, and depression by the bewildering couple of modern mechanical and insipid existence. The artificial life of the straining, confusing, drying modernity one is to take a dip in, nay, a full infusion of, the healthy, sweet, invigorating life-springs of R K Narayan's honour, which combines in a unique way life's comedy and pathos, sweetness and sadness.

Did u know? In 1980, R K Narayan was awarded the A C Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature and was made an Honorary Member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1989, he was made a member of the Rajya Sabha.

11.2 Writing Style

Narayan's writing style was simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like, thereby providing a greater ability to relate to the topic. Unlike his national contemporaries, he was able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without having to modify his characteristic simplicity to conform to trends and fashions in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Critics have considered Narayan to be the *Indian Chekhov*, due to the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humour in tragic situations. Greene considered Narayan more similar to Chekhov than any Indian writer. Anthony West of *The New Yorker* considered Narayan's writings to be of the realism variety of Nikolai Gogol.

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Critics have noted that Narayan's writings tend to be more descriptive and less analytical; the objective style, rooted in a detached spirit, providing for a more authentic and realistic narration. His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, provided a unique ability to fuse characters and actions, and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of the reader. A significant contributor to his writing style was his creation of Malgudi, a stereotypical small town, where the standard norms of superstition and tradition apply.

Narayan's writing style was often compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humour and energy of ordinary life while displaying compassionate humanism. The similarities also extended to their juxtaposing of the demands of society against the confusions of individuality. Although their approach to subjects was similar, their methods were different; Faulkner was rhetorical and illustrated his points with immense prose while Narayan was very simple and realistic, capturing the elements all the same.

Notes Narayan's fictional world very deftly brings to light a plethora of verbal and textual practices—whether they be the calligraphy of the signboard painter (*The Painter of Signs*) or the discourse of a "little magazine" (*Mr. Sampath*)—that have their own modes of authorization and circulation distinct from the increasingly universal molar institution of literature. These dispersed textual ties that sustain the nameless, ad hoc relationships that make the human aggregations of Narayan's imaginary town of Algoid as something other than microcosms of national-civilizational wholes. Inextricably intertwined with his elaboration of such radically experimental human relationships is syntax of love that is an extension of the intimacy between Narayan's artisans characters and the practice of their crafts but is not founded in templates of belonging—national, civilizational, familial, or conjugal.

11.3 Legacy

Narayan's greatest achievement was making India accessible to the outside world through his literature. He is regarded as one of the three leading English language Indian fiction writers, along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. He gave his readers something to look forward to with Malgudi and its residents. It is also considered to be one of the best novelists India has ever produced. He brought small-town India to his audience in a manner that was both believable and experiential. Malgudi was not just a fictional town in India, but also one teeming with characters, each with their own idiosyncrasies and attitudes, making the situation as familiar to the reader as if it were their own backyard.

"Whom next shall I meet in Malgudi? That is the thought that comes to me when I close a novel of Mr Narayan's. I do not wait for another novel. I wait to go out of my door into those loved and shabby streets and see with excitement and a certainty of pleasure a stranger approaching, past the bank, the cinema, the haircutting saloon, a stranger who will greet me I know with some unexpected and revealing phrase that will open a door on to yet another human existence."

—Graham Greene

Example: The Guide (1958) written in English by the Indian author R K Narayan. Like most of his works, the novel is based in Malgudi, the fictional town in South India. The novel describes the transformation of the protagonist, Raju, from a tour guide to a spiritual guide and then one of the greatest holy men of India.

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11.4 Adaptations

Narayan's book The Guide was adapted to film as Guide, a Hindi movie directed by Vijay Anand. An English-language version was also released. Narayan was not happy with the way the film was made and its deviation from the book; he wrote a column in Life magazine, "The Misguided Guide," criticising the film. The book was also adapted to a Broadway play by Harvey Breit and Patricia Rinehart, and was staged at Hudson Theatre in 1968 with Zia Mohyeddin playing the lead role and a music score by Ravi Shankar.

His novel Mr. Sampath was made into a Tamil film, Miss Malini, tarring Pushpavalli and Kothamangalam Subbu. Gemini Studios also produced a Hindi version with Padmini and Motilal. Another novel, The Financial Expert, was made into the Kannada movie Banker Margayya. Actor-director Shankar Nag into the television series Malgudi Days adapted swami and Friends, The Vendor of Sweets and some of Narayan's short stories. Narayan was happy with the adaptations and complimented the producers for sticking to the storyline in the books.

11.5 Division of Essays

R K Narayan's essays have been divided into three sections. The First group of short essays (Earlier Essays) was written over the earlier stages of Narayan's non-fiction carrier from 1930s to 1950s. The second group of short essays (Middle Period Essays) was written from 1950s to 1970s. The third stage of short essays (Later Period Essays) was written 1970s to 1990s. All these essays have been brought together under the rubric 'The World of the Writer'.

Task Make a list of all the awards and accolades that Narayan was bestowed with during his entire lifetime.

Critique of R K Narayan's Prose Essays

Let us study the prose essays of R K Narayan, section-wise/group wise.

11.5.1 Early Essays

Narayan wrote these essays during the late 1930s to 1950s for his weekly column in the Hindu. They are all set in the South India of Narayan's early years and showcase his ability to charm etch the characteristics of the world around him. They provide insights into Narayan's protagonists- the middle class common man. They are written in a light-vein.

11.5.2 Next Sunday

Next Sunday is a collection of weekly essays by R K Narayan published in 1960. The book provides insights into Narayan's writings and perspectives and the protagonists of his works - the middle class common man. The book also includes his reflections on the themes of and actions in his novels and short stories.

Next Sunday is the first essay in "Writerly Life". Here, R K Narayan says that everyone looks forward to Sunday. It is a day on which there are many things to do. A man plans to do the work of 48 hours that day. He wants to get up late. However, he is disturbed and gets up in a disappointed mood. It is not a good way to start the day. The charm of the day is lost at the very start. By the time he begins his work, the Sunday nearly has gone. He begins to notice the things in the house.

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He had no time to examine those things on other days. He is a hobbyist. He likes to repair things with his own hand. He wants to hang a picture, repair the radio and oil the watch. He sits like a great god in his workshop. However, he is unable to do anything because he finds many instruments are missing somewhere in the cupboard. The boys of him who stand near him want to escape from their father's scolding. Suddenly he sees his children playing in the next house. He finds that his children are not developing on the right times. He punishes them. The man finds that half the Sunday is left. There are only a few more hours left. He remembers his promises. He wants to fulfil them. He gets up after his rest. He thinks that he can take his family out on that day. Then he remembers how he spent the previous Sunday with children, howling with hunger at the bus stand. He says to his children to stay at home that day. He promises to take his family out 'the next Sunday'.

In "The Crowd", R K Narayan says that he likes Crowd. In a crowd, a man can attain great calm-he can forget himself for a few hours. He has seen many crowds when he is in Madras near radio stand at the Marina, Flower Bazaar road, Central Railway Station platform and Parry's corner to Moore market. There he was watched humanity in a dazzling variety and shape of colours, forms, voices, appeals and activities. He likes crowd at a temple festival. The misanthrope hates a crowd, misses the charm of life.

In the essay "Coffee", the author describes the story of Coffee and the way it came to India. Bababuden, a Muslim saint came from Mocha, bringing with him a handful of seeds and settled himself on the slope of a mountain range in Kadur district, Mysore state. This range was later named after him, and anyone can see his tomb while making a short trip from Chikmangulur. Later he describes the process of Coffee-making, which everyone does, but he gives many precautions for making tasty Coffee.

Thus R K Narayan's early essays cover a range of subjects which are common such as 'Restaurants', 'Gardening without Tears', 'Of Trains and Travellers', etc.

11.5.3 Middle Period Essays

R K Narayan wrote these essays for 'The Hindu' and other periodicals. They were written when he has at the peak of his career. These pieces represent various aspects of Narayan's engagement with Post-Independence India. One such essay is "Reluctant Guru". In 1969, Narayan was visiting professor at the University of Missouri, Kansas University. When he stepped into his very first class, R K Narayan found himself confronted with a very of elderly ladies, each brandishing a copy of 'The Guide' in her hand. This essay is an autobiographical essay. Here the Reluctant Guru is the author himself. He is exposed to the naiveté of American campus crowds. On tour as a D.V.P (Distinguished Visiting Professor), Narayan meets in shock but amused silence, a throng of people who thinks that India is only the land of snake charmers, Yoga, Mysticism, Philosophy, Fakirs and Black Magic. He professes to them on everything that is demanded of the land of Kama-Sutra. What comes out in this refreshing essay is the blinkered view the west has of the Eastern sub-continent, especially India. Humour is there and what sets the mood of the reader is the matchless symphony and humour, which unfolds the fact of India. The Bharat brand of English, the defence of the usual late corners in India, the world of culture mongers, a plea for a ministry of worry, brings out the best of R K Narayan's pungent and sparkling humour and his capacity to launch in any situation.

'The Newspaper Habit' is a funny essay about the reading habits of a newspaper. The man-in-a-hurry glances at the headings and summary and puts away the paper for a thorough study later in the day but he misses the sports column. The boy, who borrows the paper, detaches the sports page.

In the other essay "**The Lost Umbrella**", R K Narayan describes how he often forgets his umbrella at shops, for which he filed a detailed complaint with the police. R K Narayan says that an

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umbrella is a highly prized possession to anyone. It should be carried carefully without leaving it at any point of the journey.

The Later Essays are longer than the other two. R K Narayan wrote on the topics that were significant to him. One such essay is 'A Writer's Nightmare' (1988). This essay sums up a critical observation on censorship of writings and writers by the government parameters. It reveals R K Narayan's keen observation on the situation of writing in India. The essay is also a virtue of simplicity, precision, clarity and readability. Here, Narayan uses the minimum of words to achieve his purpose, and vocabulary has a modest usage. It is a sweet 'anecdote of dream' like qualities.

Through a dream like quality, Narayan observes the nightmare of a writer where he is pathetically subjugated and minimized by narrow restrictions of governmental dictation. In the world of 'Xingu', the kingdom of fantasy, the author dreams of and appointment of an officer called- 'Controller of Stories'. The controller of stories has the functionality of monitoring, regulating and reprimanding the bad stories altogether.

The purpose of such measurements is enhancing the 'writing skill and the content of the story'. Finally, what the government says is an object misery that if the procedures fail in achieving its goals, they should take the writing for themselves. At this stage, the dream shatters.

Narayan's observation is pivotal to that criticism of government censorship and parliamentary debates. Through bunter and situational laughter, he criticizes the tendency of curving of spontaneity of a writer by the governmental mechanism. 'Writing- be' it a story or any other literary piece must be a will of the author's powerful ambition through subjectivity or objectivity. A government should not regulate writers notably, Narayan's comic is very clear as he has hinted the hoax of parliamentary procedure through a questionnaire. "The Writer's Nightmare" is typically Narayan's social critique.

The other essays are on the topics like 'Love', 'Noble Prize Winners', 'English in India' and 'The Problem of the Indian Writer'. This group of essays includes a significant essay, "Misguided Guide", expressing Narayan's displeasure with the film 'Guide', based on his book, "The Guide".

Conclusion

Thus, all personal essays of R K Narayan are authentic descriptions of his life. They are drenched with wit, humour and with irony here and there.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1. Critics called Narayan the *Indian Chekhov* because of the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humour in tragic situations.
2. *My Dateless Dairy* is the autobiography of Narayan.
3. Swami and Friends is the first of a trilogy of novels written by R K Narayan.
4. Rabindranath Tagore won the first Indian Sahitya Akademi Award.
5. *The Newspaper Habit* is a funny essay about the reading habits of a newspaper.

11.6 Summary

- R K Narayan wrote non-fictional pieces/essays. They were written at various times, which indicated his growth of mind as a writer like William Wordsworth.

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- Next Sunday is a collection of weekly essays by R K Narayan published in 1960.
- He was born in Madras in 1906 and educated there and at Maharajah's College in Mysore.
- Narayan experienced rejection with the short stories, which he wrote, although he eventually succeeded in his ambition to get into print abroad when a piece he wrote for Punch magazine in London was accepted and produced a handsome fee of six guineas.
- Graham Greene played a vital role in Narayan's life as he helped him in publishing his first novel.
- His writing style was simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like.
- In "The Crowd", R K Narayan says that he likes Crowd. In a crowd, a man can attain great calm- he can forget himself for a few hours. He has seen many crowds when he is in Madras near radio stand at the Marina, Flower Bazaar road, Central Railway Station platform and Parry's corner to Moore market.
- In the essay "Coffee", the author describes the story of Coffee and the way it came to India. Bababuden, a Muslim saint came from Mocha, bringing with him a handful of seeds and settled himself on the slope of a mountain range in Kadur district, Mysore state.
- R K Narayan wrote these essays for 'The Hindu' and other periodicals. They were written when he has at the peak of his career. These pieces represent various aspects of Narayan's engagement with Post-Independence India.
- His prose essays are ideal to read because of funny, warm-hearted, satirical and yet serious aspects of those essays.
- The Later Essays are longer than the other two. R K Narayan wrote on the topics that were significant to him. One such essay is 'A Writer's Nightmare' (1988).

11.7 Keywords

Anecdote: A short amusing or interesting story about a real incident or person.

Catharsis: The purification or purgation of emotions, particularly pity and fear with the help of art, providing relief from repressed emotions.

Invigorate: To make one feel strong and full of energy.

Pathos: A power or quality that evokes sadness or pity.

Samuel Johnson: Also known as Dr Johnson, was an English writer who made great contributions to English literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer.

11.8 Review Questions

1. Write critical analysis on Narayan's writings.
2. Describe in detail the theme of *Next Sunday*.
3. What is the writing style of Narayan? How this style made him different from other writers and helped him gain popularity?
4. Write a brief biography of Narayan.

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5. What led Narayan to create a fantasy world, Malgudi? What is its significance?
6. Have you read any other work of Narayan? If not then read it and draw comparison and contrast between any of the two works of the author.
7. Narayan's greatest achievement was making India accessible to the outside world through his literature. Elaborate.
8. Write a note on Narayan as an essayist.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

11.9 Further Readings

Books

Narayan, R K *The Writerly Life: Selected Non-fiction*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, Print 2002.

Panduranga Rao. N, "The Art of R K Narayan", *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (July-1968), New Delhi.

Online links

http://boundary2.dukejournals.org/content/40/2/215.abstract

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Unit 12: A Lickpenny Lover by O Henry

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and times of O Henry
- Explain Henry's writing style
- Understand the themes and nature of Henry's works
- Analyse the works of the author O Henry

Introduction

William Sydney Porter (September 11, 1862 – June 5, 1910), known by his pen name O Henry, was an American writer. O Henry's short stories are known for their wit, wordplay, warm characterisation and clever twist endings. He was a prolific American short-story writer, a master of surprise endings, who wrote about the life of ordinary people in New York City. A twist of plot, which turns on an ironic or coincidental circumstance, is typical of O Henry's stories.

He wrote various stories, out of which *A Lickpenny Lover* is explained in this unit. You will read about the author, his writing style, themes and plots of his stories and will be able to understand his works.

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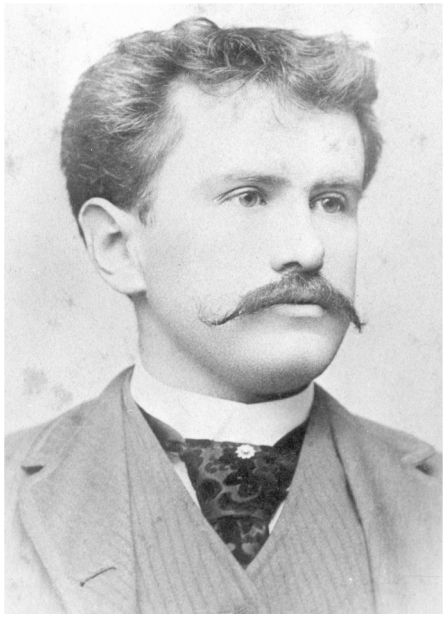
12.1 About the Author

William Sidney Porter was born on September 11, 1862, in Greensboro, North Carolina. He changed the spelling of his middle name to Sydney in 1898. His parents were Dr. Algernon Sidney Porter (1825–88), a physician and Mary Jane Virginia Swaim Porter (1833–65). They were married on April 20, 1858.

Figure 12.1: O Henry



Source: http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/MSNBC/Components/Photo/_new/120517-oHenry-vmed2p.jpg

12.1.1 Early Life

When William was three, his mother died from tuberculosis, and he and his father moved into the home of his paternal grandmother. As a child, Porter was always reading, everything from classics to dime novels; his favourite works were Lane's translation of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Porter graduated from his aunt Evelina Maria Porter's elementary school in 1876. He then enrolled at the Lindsey Street High School. His aunt continued to tutor him until he was fifteen. In 1879, he started working in his uncle's drugstore and in 1881, at the age of 19, he was licensed as a pharmacist. At the drugstore, he also showed off his natural artistic talents by sketching the townsfolk.

12.1.2 Move to Texas

Porter travelled with Dr. James K. Hall to Texas in March 1882, hoping that a change of air would help alleviate a persistent cough he had developed. He took up residence on the sheep ranch of Richard Hall, James' son, in La Salle County and helped as a shepherd, ranch hand, cook and baby-sitter. While on the ranch, he learned bits of Spanish and German from the mix of immigrant ranch hands. He also spent time reading classic literature. Porter's health did improve and he travelled with Richard to Austin in 1884, where he decided to remain and welcomed into the

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home of the Harrells, who were friends of Richard's. Porter took a number of different jobs over the next several years, first as pharmacist then as a draftsman, bank teller and journalist. He also began writing as a sideline.

Porter led an active social life in Austin, including membership in singing and drama groups. He was a good singer and musician. He played both the guitar and mandolin. He became a member of the "Hill City Quartet," a group of young men who sang at gatherings and serenaded young women of the town. Porter met and began courting Athol Estes, then seventeen years old and from a wealthy family. Her mother objected to the match because Athol was ill, suffering from tuberculosis. On July 1, 1887, Porter eloped with Athol to the home of Reverend R. K. Smoot, where they were married.

The couple continued to participate in musical and theatre groups, and Athol encouraged her husband to pursue his writing. Athol gave birth to a son in 1888, who died hours after birth, and then a daughter, Margaret Worth Porter, in September 1889. Porter's friend Richard Hall became Texas Land Commissioner and offered Porter a job. Porter started as a draftsman at the Texas General Land Office (GLO) in 1887 at a salary of $100 a month, drawing maps from surveys and field notes. The salary was enough to support his family, but he continued his contributions to magazines and newspapers.

In the GLO building, he began developing characters and plots for such stories as "Georgia's Ruling" (1900), and "Buried Treasure" (1908). The castle-like building he worked in was even woven into some of his tales such as "Bexar Scrip No. 2692" (1894).

His job at the GLO was a political appointment by Hall. Hall ran for governor in the election of 1890 but lost. Porter resigned in early 1891 when the new governor, Jim Hogg, was sworn in.

In 1894, he was accused by the bank of embezzlement and lost his job but was not indicted.

He then worked full-time on his humorous weekly called *The Rolling Stone*, which he started while working at the bank. *The Rolling Stone* featured satire on life, people and politics and included Porter's short stories and sketches. Although eventually reaching a top circulation of 1500, *The Rolling Stone* failed in April 1895 since the paper never provided an adequate income. However, his writing and drawings had caught the attention of the editor at the *Houston Post*.

While he was in Houston, federal auditors audited the First National Bank of Austin and they found the embezzlement shortages that had led to his firing. A federal indictment followed and he was arrested on charges of embezzlement.

12.1.3 Flight and Return

Porter's father-in-law posted bail to keep him out of jail. He was due to stand trial on July 7, 1896, but the day before, as he was changing trains to get to the courthouse, an impulse hit him. He fled, first to New Orleans and later to Honduras. While holed up in a Trujillo hotel for several months, he wrote *Cabbages and Kings*, in which he coined the term "banana republic" to describe the country, a phrase subsequently used widely to describe a small, unstable tropical nation in Latin America with a narrowly focused, agrarian economy. Porter had sent Athol and Margaret back to Austin to live with Athol's parents. Unfortunately, Athol became too ill to meet Porter in Honduras as Porter had planned. When he learned that his wife was dying, Porter returned to Austin in February 1897 and surrendered to the court, pending an appeal. Once again, Porter's father-in-law posted bail so Porter could stay with Athol and Margaret.

Athol Estes Porter died on July 25, 1897, from tuberculosis (then known as consumption). Porter, having little to say in his own defence, was found guilty of embezzlement in February 1898, sentenced to five years in prison, and imprisoned on March 25, 1898 at the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio. While in prison, Porter, as a licensed pharmacist, worked in the prison hospital

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as the night druggist. Porter was given his own room in the hospital wing, and there is no record that he actually spent time in the cellblock of the prison. He had fourteen stories published under various pseudonyms while he was in prison, but was becoming best known as "O Henry", a pseudonym that first appeared over the story "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" in the December 1899 issue of *McClure's Magazine*.

12.1.4 Later Life

Porter's most prolific writing period started in 1902, when he moved to New York City to be near his publishers. While there, he wrote 381 short stories. He wrote a story a week for over a year for the *New York World Sunday Magazine*. His wit, characterization, and plot twists were adored by his readers, but often panned by critics. Porter married again in 1907, to childhood sweetheart Sarah (Sallie) Lindsey Coleman, whom he met again after revisiting his native state of North Carolina.

Porter was a heavy drinker, and his health deteriorated markedly in 1908, which affected his writing. In 1909, Sarah left him, and he died on June 5, 1910, of cirrhosis of the liver, complications of diabetes, and an enlarged heart. After funeral services in New York City, he was buried in the Riverside Cemetery in Asheville, North Carolina. His daughter, Margaret Worth Porter, who died in 1927, was buried next to her father.

O Henry's stories frequently have surprise endings. In his day, he was called the American answer to Guy de Maupassant. Both authors wrote plot twist endings, but O Henry stories were much more playful. His stories are also known for witty narration.

Notes O Henry lets the reader think that they have it figured out the ending but they do not. He has something waiting for the readers at the end of the book. Something that would seem like it came from nowhere. Hyder E Rollins said, "The conclusion is an enigma." He has the reader under suspense until the last sentence. For example, in *The Gift of Magi*, where a husband sells his watch to buy some combs she worships, and the wife cut and sold her hair to buy her husband a chain for his watch. This ending came as a surprise because the readers might not have expected it in the beginning.

He also used to think that life is a surprise and that the unexpected continually happens. Responding to Henry's idea, Rollins said, "He is then a pure romanticist who strives earnestly for realistic effects." A Romanticist is a person who acts on impulse. They loath conformity and following rules. He calls Henry romanticist because of his idea that life is a surprise as it is spontaneous as you do not know what turn it will take, for the better or worse.

Most of O Henry's stories are set in his own time, the early 20th century. Many take place in New York City and deal for the most part with ordinary people: clerks, policemen, waitresses, etc.

O Henry's work is wide-ranging, and his characters can be found roaming the cattle-lands of Texas, exploring the art of the con man, or investigating the tensions of class and wealth in turn-of-the-century New York. O Henry had an inimitable hand for isolating some element of society and describing it with an incredible economy and grace of language. Some of his best and least-known work is contained in *Cabbages and Kings*, a series of stories each of which explores some individual aspect of life in a paralytically sleepy Central American town, while advancing some aspect of the larger plot and relating back one to another.

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Among his most famous stories are:

"The Gift of Magi" about a young couple who are short of money but desperately want to buy each other Christmas gifts. Unbeknownst to Jim, Della sells her most valuable possession, her beautiful hair, in order to buy a platinum fob chain for Jim's watch; while unbeknownst to Della, Jim sells his own most valuable possession, his watch, to buy jewelled combs for Della's hair. The essential premise of this story has been copied, re-worked, parodied, and otherwise re-told countless times in the century since it was written.

"The Ransom of Red Chief", in which two men kidnap a boy of ten. The boy turns out to be so bratty and obnoxious that the desperate men ultimately pay the boy's father $250 to take him back.

"The Cop and the Anthem" about a New York City hobo named Soapy, who sets out to get arrested so that he can be a guest of the city jail instead of sleeping out in the cold winter. Despite efforts at petty theft, vandalism, disorderly conduct, and "mashing" with a young prostitute, Soapy fails to draw the attention of the police. Disconsolate, he pauses in front of a church, where an organ anthem inspires him to clean up his life—and is ironically charged for loitering and sentenced to three months in prison.

"A Retrieved Reformation", which tells the tale of safecracker Jimmy Valentine, recently freed from prison. He goes to a town bank to case it before he robs it. As he walks to the door, he catches the eye of the banker's beautiful daughter. They immediately fall in love and Valentine decides to give up his criminal career. He moves into the town, taking up the identity of Ralph Spencer, a shoemaker. Just as he is about to leave to deliver his specialized tools to an old associate, a lawman who recognizes him arrives at the bank. Jimmy and his fiancée and her family are at the bank, inspecting a new safe, when a child accidentally is locked inside the airtight vault. Knowing it will seal his fate, Valentine opens the safe to rescue the child. However, much to Valentine's surprise, the lawman denies recognizing him and lets him go.

Did u know? O Henry published 10 collections and over 600 short stories during his lifetime.

Notes Porter gave various explanations for the origin of his pen name. In 1909, he gave an interview to *The New York Times*, in which he gave an account of it:

It was during these New Orleans days that I adopted my pen name of O Henry. I said to a friend, "I'm going to send out some stuff. I do not know if it amounts to much, so I want to get a literary alias. Help me pick out a good one." He suggested that we get a newspaper and pick a name from the first list of notables that we found in it. In the society columns, we found the account of a fashionable ball. "Here we have our notables," said he. We looked down the list and my eye lighted on the name Henry, "That'll do for a last name," said I. "Now for a first name. I want something short. None of your three-syllable names for me." "Why don't you use a plain initial letter, then?" asked my friend. "Good," said I, "O is about the easiest letter written, and O it is."

A newspaper once wrote and asked me what the O stands for. I replied, "O stands for Olivier, the French for Oliver." And several of my stories accordingly appeared in that paper under the name Olivier Henry.

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In the introduction to *The World of O Henry: Roads of Destiny and Other Stories* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1973),William Trevor writes that when Porter was in the Ohio State Penitentiary "there was a prison guard named Orrin Henry, whom William Sydney Porter . . . immortalised as O Henry".

The writer and scholar Guy Davenport offers another explanation: "The pseudonym that he began to write under in prison is constructed from the first two letters of *Ohio* and the second and last two of *penitentiary*."

Source: http://englishpapers.org/samples/essay-about-ohenry.html

12.2 Analysis of O Henry's Writing Style

Authors of short stories use elements of style to make their stories interesting. There are many elements of style used by authors. Irony and theme are often used in short stories. This is clearly shown in O Henry's short stories such as: "The Gift of the Magi," "The Lickpenny Lover," "The Midsummer Knights Dream," "The Cop and the Anthem" and "Ships." The short stories of O Henry use the element of theme to bring about ironic endings.

In "The Gift of the Magi", there are elements of theme throughout the entire story. One example of theme in the story is that poverty affected both the main characters Jim and Della. Jim and Della both lived in a poor neighbourhood with very little money. They both wanted to get each other a very meaningful Christmas present. Another element of theme in this story is that Jim and Della realize how much they love each other. Eugene Garcia fines that "In this trite little tale of mutual self-sacrifice between husband and wife, O Henry crystallized dramatically what the world in all its stored up wisdom knows to be of fundamental value in ordinary family life"(short story criticisms 192). The theme of this story should always be kept in mind that love is more important than money.

Another example of an element of style is irony. Each person selling something valuable to them shows irony in "The Gift of the Magi". Della had only saved up one dollar and eighty-seven cents to get Jim a Christmas present. Since she did not have enough money she went to a store and sold her hair. Jim at the same time went to a store to sell his watch for money for Della. They both got each other gifts with the money they had gotten from selling their items. The gifts that they sold each had something to do with what they had gotten each other. Della had gotten Jim a medallion for his watch, while Jim had gotten Della beautiful combs for her hair. Arthur Voss finds that it is ironic in "O Henry's famous story of the young married couple, each of whom sells a treasured possession to obtain money to buy a Christmas present for the other". The ironic conclusion of the story is that both Della and Jim were unable to use the gifts they had gotten each other.

The short story "A Lickpenny Lover" had a similar theme to "The Gift of the Magi." The reoccurring theme in "A Lickpenny Lover" was that money was not everything. Masie is a young shop girl who is attractive and hardworking. Irving Carter a millionaire asks Masie on a date. He had tried to impress her with his money. Instead, Masie did not think of Carter as a different person because of the money he had. She still saw him as a regular man who asked her on a date. Masie saw Carter as a wealthy man who did not like to use his money. Masie on the other hand did not like him more instead, she liked him less for not being more generous with it.

Irony had played a big role in the story "A Lickpenny Lover." One example of irony that occurs often was the misunderstanding of honest love. Garcia stated that in the story "Maize is incapable of knowing honest love from dishonest, and she is in consequence one of his least interesting women" (short story criticisms 193). When Masie was asked by Carter to get married, she did not take him seriously. Garcia thought that "Masie even with her eyes open, rejects, her wealthy suitor because she thinks that his promise to take her to faraway places only means that he

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wanted her to marry him and go down to Coney island for a wedding tour". Masie only thought that Carter was using a come on line towards her. This just shows how ignorant masie was when judging Carter for being cheap, when he really was planning to take her to Europe.

The Theme that is identified in the story "The Midsummer Night's Dream" is that Mary married for love and not for money. This is shown throughout the entire story by the letter that Marry wrote to her husband describing how much she had missed him. Garcia points out that in the story "There is a contrast between Gaines dream of his courtship days in a mountain resort and the letter he receives from his wife as he sits sweating in a hot office building". Gaines is in the office rather than in the country because he cannot afford it. He knows his wife enjoys it so he saves up to send her there. Since Gaines could not have, what he wanted he made it less important to him. An example of this occurs when he is saying that he "hates the country in the summer and that the city is a much nicer resort". He only says this because he is unable to go there.

The irony in "The Midsummer Knight's Dream" is that Gaines really liked the country and missed it. Gaines missed the country because he used to enjoy fishing, but now since he cannot go to the country he says he does not miss fishing. He only stayed in the city because could not afford to go to the country. Gaines decided to make the best of the situation by saying that the city was the best summer resort in the world to his assistant Adkins. Adkins could not understand that Gaines felt this way because he was unable to have something he wanted. He was used to getting what he wanted and a perfect example of this was his wife Mary.

Another story "The Cop and the Anthem" has shown a similar theme throughout the story. An important lesson learned in this story is that if you wish for something bad enough it might just come true. The main character of Soapy shows this. Donald Peel finds that in this story "in which a hobo tries unsuccessfully to get arrested so that he can get food and shelter and then is arrested after he decides that he will give up his vagabond ways" (The American Consciousness 230). This shows that Soapy could not change because of the circumstances that surrounded him. He really wanted to change for the better, but he was unable to because he was homeless and had a poor look about him.

In the story "The Cop and the Anthem" the ironic element, which is shown, is that when Soapy is ready to change he got what he originally wanted which was to get arrested and go to jail. Ironically, Soapy was in a church when he had decided to change his mind about his direction of his life. Then all of a sudden, a policeman had arrested him for trespassing and gave him six months in jail. Soapy had been arrested unintentionally, when at first he wanted to be arrested. He finally got what he really wanted, which was to go to jail, to eat and have a place to live for six months. This proves that a person who wants to change cannot always have the power to do it at that particular moment. In order to change it usually takes time; Soapy had found it out the hard way.

In the story "Ships", an example of theme is how the main character Johnny tries to overcome his poverty and change his position in life. He devises a plan to get rich quick for himself and the shop owner Mr. Hemstetter. Kent Bales explains that "In order to sell shoes, for example, a character imports cockleburs into the near paradise of Anchuria, O Henry's fictional Honduras"(American Writers Supplement 409). The cockleburs were at one point not selling to anyone and Johnny was losing money. O Henry would use made up places in his writings to help develop the theme as he did in "Ships". Therefore, that is why he had chosen a poor fictitious country in Central America. He shows how this can possibly happen in real life to people who want to get rich.

The Irony in the "Ships" is that Johnny who is poor and the factory owner, who is also poor soon, become rich in a short amount of time. When a company carrying cockleburs come to the island looking to sell them. The factories owner buys them, and then realizes no one is going to buy them. Bales states that "The enterprising exporter of the original barrel of cockleburs shows up

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with two ships full of the no longer necessary seeds, expecting to sell them to the factory he imagines must somehow use them"(American Writers Supplement). Johnny and the factory owner pout the cockleburs down on the beach. They put them down on the beach in order for people to buy shoes. After they make a lot of money, Johnny leaves the island. The person who grows the cockleburs now was stuck with much too many of them. Johnny now out of the country, because he realized that there was no more demand of shoes so he got out while he still would make money. Now everybody in the country had shoes to walk around in so there feet would not hurt.

Elements of style are important devices in helping authors put great emphasis on important issues in their stories. It also helps prove an author's point while writing a story. This is shown throughout many of O Henrys short stories by the example of poverty. O Henry has put great emphasis on the two important elements of style in his short stories, which is theme and irony. In the stories written by O Henry, many of them have shown different examples how the element of theme came to bring about ironic endings.

Task Read *the Gift of Magi* and *The Ransom of Red Chief* and critically analyse them.

12.3 O Henry and the American Spirit

If you ever feel you have lost your faith in the great American Romance, take a glance at the life of her brilliant short story writers, William Sydney Porter. He is proof of every aspect of the American dream – a self-educated man, jack of all trades, inhibiter of all frontiers, he lived the stories he so ingeniously crafted. Even the tragedies of his life have the glint of Romance: he fled to South American from accusations of embezzlement, returning later to certain imprisonment to comfort his beloved wife as she succumbed to tuberculosis. Thoroughly American, however, Porter did not buckle under his grief or his incarceration. He rebuilt his writing career from the confines of his Texas cell under the pseudonym of O Henry, a name which rapidly became synonymous with excellence in short stories, with the American spirit, with the vivacious, expanding, and progressing age of the late 19th century in which he worked and lived.

O Henry's style is mostly known for its surprising endings, but its brilliance extends far further. His works are fully of literary and classical allusions that are never heavy or obtuse and ever thoroughly American in their humour and assurance. He was the master of the witty, extended metaphor, the friendly, conversational style, the crafting of characters with perfectly chosen details that the reader feels immediately attached caught and transfixed in the brief moment of life. He was truly the American Dickens – culling his characters from every corner of American life, painting cowboys with as much veracity as he sculpted shop girls and New York clerks. Just as with Dickens, his love of humanity that breathes life into his stories. A love so strong and so contagious that these myriad of faces and facets of the American soul with which he fills his stories become beloved friends, members of a quirky family. One is certain, having lived awhile in his pages, to have walked the streets of the Great City on a summer night, unknowingly flirted with debutant posing as a shop girl, shared coffee and a smoke with reformed criminals, and breakfasted on pancakes amid tumbleweeds and coyotes.

All of which makes O Henry's signature twists so powerful. He sets your heart beating to the story world's pulse, enthrals you to their delightful reality, and, once you are caught heart and soul, he lets you in on the secret and shuts the door. It is the shutting of the door, the drawing of the curtains, the thrusting back into life that is at once so perfect and so devastating. One is shut out of the whole story, left with insatiable desire to know What Happens Next. Not so much for the sake of plot – a master of short stories, he timing and measure of plot is perfect – it is the fate

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of the beloved characters around which hum one's unanswerable questions. (If you want to see what I mean, read "The Skylight Room." One of the cruellest, yet most delightful endings in American literature.) It is here too that O Henry captures the American spirit in its paradox: he ignites in his reader the American willingness to love fully and quickly, to embrace life and humanity, while imbuing the beloved with American restlessness, her mesmerizing, and heart-breaking pioneering spirit. However, he tells is all with a wink and a smile, lest the tragedy be too heavy; the poignancy is not lost in humour, just softened and shortened, made more palpable for his ever so American audience.

12.4 Publishing History

Eight years after O Henry's death, in April 1918, the Twilight Club (founded in 1883 and later known as the Society of Arts and Letters) held a dinner in his honour at the Hotel McAlpin in New York City. His friends remembered him so enthusiastically that a committee met at the Hotel Biltmore in December 1918 to establish an O Henry memorial. The committee decided to award prizes in his name for short-story writers, and it formed the Committee of Award to read the short stories published in a year and to pick the winners. In the words of Blanche Colton Williams (1879–1944), the first of the nine series editors, the memorial intended to "strengthen the art of the short story and to stimulate younger authors."

Doubleday, Page & Company was chosen to publish the first volume of O Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories 1919. In 1927, the Society sold to Doubleday, Doran & Company all rights to the annual collection. Doubleday published The O Henry Prize Stories, as it came to be known, in hardcover, and from 1984–1996 its subsidiary, Anchor Books, published it simultaneously in paperback. Since 1997 The O Henry Prize Stories has been published as an original Anchor Books paperback.

Over the years, the rules and methods of selection have varied. As of 2003, the series editor chooses twenty short stories, each one and O Henry Prize Story. All stories originally written in the English language and published in an American or Canadian periodical are eligible for consideration. Three jurors are appointed annually.

The jurors receive the twenty prize stories in manuscript form, with no identification of author or publication. Each juror, acting independently, chooses a short story of special interest and merit, and comments on that story. The goal of The O Henry Prize Stories remains to strengthen the art of the short story.

12.5 A Lickpenny Lover: Story

There were 2,000 girls in the Biggest Store. Masie was one of them. She was eighteen and a saleslady in the gents' gloves. Here she became versed in two varieties of human beings – the kind of gents who buy their gloves in department stores and the kind of women who buy gloves for unfortunate gents. Besides this wide knowledge of the human species, Masie had acquired other information. She had listened to the promulgated wisdom of the 1,999 other girls and had stored it in a brain that was as secretive and wary as that of a Maltese cat. Perhaps nature, foreseeing that she would lack wise counsellors, had mingled the saving ingredient of shrewdness along with her beauty, as she has endowed the silver fox of the priceless fur above the other animals with cunning.

For Masie was beautiful. A deep-tanned blonde, with the calm poise of a lady who cooks butter cakes in a window. She stood behind her counter in the Biggest Store; and as you closed your hand over the tape-line for your glove measure you thought of Hebe; and as you looked again you wondered how she had come by Minerva's eyes.

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When the floorwalker was not looking Masie chewed tutti frutti; when he was looking she gazed up as if at the clouds and smiled wistfully.

That is the shop girl smile, and I enjoin you to shun it unless you are well fortified with callosity of the heart, caramels and a congeniality for the capers of Cupid. This smile belonged to Masie's recreation hours and not to the store; but the floorwalker must have his own. He is the Shylock of the stores. When he comes nosing around the bridge of his nose is a toll-bridge. It is goo-goo eyes or "git" when he looks toward a pretty girl. Of course not all floorwalkers are thus. Only a few days ago the papers printed news of one over eighty years of age.

One day Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, traveller, poet, automobiles, happened to enter the Biggest Store. It is due to him to add that his visit was not voluntary. Filial duty took him by the collar and dragged him inside, while his mother philandered among the bronze and terra-cotta statuettes.

Carter strolled across to the glove counter in order to shoot a few minutes on the wing. His need for gloves was genuine; he had forgotten to bring a pair with him. But his action hardly calls for apology, because he had never heard of glove-counter flirtations.

As he neared the vicinity of his fate he hesitated, suddenly conscious of this unknown phase of Cupid's less worthy profession.

Three or four cheap fellows, sonorously garbed, were leaning over the counters, wrestling with the editorial hand-coverings, while giggling girls played vivacious second to their lead upon the strident string of coquetry. Carter would have retreated, but he had gone too far. Masie confronted him behind her counter with a questioning look in eyes as coldly, beautifully, warmly blue as the glint of summer sunshine on an iceberg drifting in Southern seas.

And then Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, etc., felt a warm flush rise to his aristocratically pale face. But not from diffidence. The blush was intellectual in origin. He knew in a moment that he stood in the ranks of the ready-made youths who wooed the giggling girls at other counters. Himself leaned against the oaken trysting place of a cockney Cupid with a desire in his heart for the favour of a glove salesgirl. He was no more than Bill and Jack and Mickey. And then he felt a sudden tolerance for them, and an elating, courageous contempt for the conventions upon which he had fed, and an unhesitating determination to have this perfect creature for his own.

When the gloves were paid for and wrapped Carter lingered for a moment. The dimples at the corners of Masie's damask mouth deepened. All gentlemen who bought gloves lingered in just that way. She curved an arm, showing like Psyche's through her shirt-waist sleeve, and rested an elbow upon the show-case edge.

Carter had never before encountered a situation of which he had not been perfect master. But now he stood far more awkward than Bill or Jack or Mickey. He had no chance of meeting this beautiful girl socially. His mind struggled to recall the nature and habits of shop girls as he had read or heard of them. Somehow he had received the idea that they sometimes did not insist too strictly upon the regular channels of introduction. His heart beat loudly at the thought of proposing an unconventional meeting with this lovely and virginal being. But the tumult in his heart gave him courage.

After a few friendly and well-received remarks on general subjects, he laid his card by her hand on the counter.

"Will you please pardon me," he said, "if I seem too bold; but I earnestly hope you will allow me the pleasure of seeing you again. There is my name; I assure you that it is with the greatest respect that I ask the favour of becoming one of your fr – acquaintances. May I not hope for the privilege?"

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Masie knew men – especially men who buy gloves. Without hesitation she looked him frankly and smilingly in the eyes, and said:

"Sure. I guess you're all right. I don't usually go out with strange gentlemen, though. It isn't quite ladylike. When should you want to see me again?"

"As soon as I may," said Carter. "If you would allow me to call at your home, I – "

Masie laughed musically. "Oh, gee, no!" she said, emphatically. "If you could see our flat once! There's five of us in three rooms. I'd just like to see ma's face if I was to bring a gentleman friend there!"

"Anywhere, then," said the enamoured Carter, "that will be convenient to you."

"Say," suggested Masie, with a bright-idea look in her peach-blow face; "I guess Thursday night will about suit me. Suppose you come to the corner of Eighth Avenue and Forty-eighth Street at 7:30. I live right near the corner. But I've got to be back home by 11. Ma never lets me stay out after 11."

Carter promised gratefully to keep the tryst, and then hastened to his mother, who was looking about for him to ratify her purchase of a bronze Diana.

A salesgirl with small eyes and an obtuse nose, strolled near Masie, with a friendly leer.

"Did you make a hit with his nobs, Masie?" she asked, familiarly.

"The gentleman asked permission to call," answered Masie, with the grand air, as she slipped Carter's card into the bosom of her waist.

"Permission to call!" echoed small eyes, with a snigger. "Did he say anything about dinner in the Waldorf and a spin in his auto afterward?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Masie, wearily. "You've been used to swell things, I don't think. You've had a swelled head ever since that hose-cart driver took you out to a chopsuey joint. No, he never mentioned the Waldorf; but there's a Fifth Avenue address on his card, and if he buys the supper you can bet your life there won't be no pigtail on the waiter who takes the order."

As Carter glided away from the Biggest Store with his mother in his electric runabout, he bit his lip with a dull pain at his heart. He knew that love had come to him for the first time in all the twenty-nine years of his life. And that the object of it should make so readily an appointment with him at a street corner, though it was a step toward his desires, tortured him with misgivings.

Carter did not know the shop girl. He did not know that her home is often either a scarcely habitable tiny room or a domicile filled to overflowing with kith and kin. The street corner is her parlour; the park is her drawing room; the avenue is her garden walk; yet for the most part she is as inviolate mistress of herself in them as is my lady behind her tapestried four-walled chamber.

One evening at dusk, two weeks after their first meeting, Carter and Masie strolled arm-in-arm into a little, dimly-lit park. They found a bench, tree-shadowed and secluded, and sat there.

For the first time his arm stole gently around her. Her gold-bronze head slid restfully against his shoulder.

"Gee!" sighed Masie, thankfully. "Why didn't you ever think of that before?"

"Masie," said Carter, earnestly, "you surely know that I love you. I ask you sincerely to marry me. You know me well enough by this time to have no doubts of me. I want you, and I must have you. I care nothing for the difference in our stations."

"What is the difference?" asked Masie, curiously.

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"Well, there isn't any," said Carter, quickly, "except in the minds of foolish people. It is in my power to give you a life of luxury. My social position is beyond dispute, and my means are ample."

"They all say that," remarked Masie. "It's the kid they all give you. I suppose you really work in a delicatessen or follow the races. I ain't as green as I look."

"I can furnish you all the proofs you want," said Carter, gently. "And I want you, Masie. I loved you the first day I saw you."

"They all do," said Masie, with an amused laugh, "to hear 'em talk. If I could meet a man that got stuck on me the third time he'd seen me I think I'd get mashed on him."

"Please don't say such things," pleaded Carter. "Listen to me, dear. Ever since I first looked into your eyes you have been the only woman in the world for me."

"Oh, ain't you the kidder!" smiled Masie. "How many other girls did you ever tell that?"

But Carter persisted. And at length he reached the flimsy, fluttering little soul of the shopgirl that existed somewhere deep down in her lovely bosom. His words penetrated the heart whose very lightness was its safest armour. She looked up at him with eyes that saw and a warm glow visited her cool cheeks. Tremblingly, awfully, her moth wings closed, and she seemed about to settle upon the flower of love. Some faint glimmer of life and its possibilities on the other side of her glove counter dawned upon her. Carter felt the change and crowded the opportunity.

"Marry me, Masie," he whispered softly, "and we will go away from this ugly city to beautiful ones. We will forget work and business, and life will be one long holiday. I know where I should take you – I have been there often. Just think of a shore where summer is eternal, where the waves are always rippling on the lovely beach and the people are happy and free as children. We will sail to those shores and remain there as long as you please. In one of those far-away cities there are grand and lovely palaces and towers full of beautiful pictures and statues. The streets of the city are water, and one travels about in – "

"I know," said Masie, sitting up suddenly. "Gondolas."

"Yes," smiled Carter.

"I thought so," said Masie.

"And then," continued Carter, "we will travel on and see whatever we wish in the world. After the European cities we will visit India and the ancient cities there, and ride on elephants and see the wonderful temples of the Hindus and the Brahmins. And the Japanese gardens and the camel trains and chariot races in Persia, and all the queer sights of foreign countries. Don't you think you would like it, Masie?"

Masie rose to her feet.

"I think we had better be going home," she said, coolly. "It's getting late."

Carter humoured her. He had come to know her varying, thistle-down moods, and that it was useless to combat them. But he felt a certain happy triumph. He had held for a moment, though but by a silken thread, the soul of his wild Psyche, and hope was stronger within him. Once she had folded her wings and her cool hand had closed about his own.

At the Biggest Store the next day Masie's chum, Lulu, waylaid her in an angle of the counter.

"How are you and your swell friend making it?" she asked.

"Oh, him?" said Masie, patting her side curls. "He ain't in it any more. Say, Lu, what do you think that fellow wanted me to do?"

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"Go on the stage?" guessed Lulu, breathlessly.

"Nit; he's too cheap a guy for that! He wanted me to marry him and go down to Coney Island to see Luna Park and Dreamland for a wedding tour!"

12.6 Complete Stylistic Analysis of 'A Lickpenny Lover'

The extract under consideration comes from a collection of the short stories "The Voice of the City" written by a prominent American writer O Henry (William Sydney Porter). The book was firstly adopted in 1908 and contain many other stories - "A Comedy in Rubber", "One Thousand Dollars", "The Shocks of Doom", "Roses, Ruses and Romance", etc.

All pieces of literature created by this famous writer reveal his extraordinary style of writing. O Henry's short stories are known for their wit, wordplay, warm characterization and clever twist endings. In his day he was called the American answer to Guy de Maupassant. Both authors wrote plot win unexpected endings, but stories by O Henry were much more playful. Besides, his stories are also known for witty narration.

This prominent writer wrote primarily about his own time - the early 20th century. Most stories were set in New York and the characters were ordinary people. His brilliant writing style and his optimistic and often playful tone make O Henry's stories a delight to read.

From the point of view of presentation the story I have chosen is an extraordinary mixture of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person narration:

"That is the shop girl smile, and I enjoin you to shun it unless you are well fortified with callosity of the heart, caramels and a congeniality for the capers of Cupid."

"She stood behind her counter in the Biggest Store; and as you closed your band over the tape - line for your glove measure you thought of Hebe; and as you looked again you wondered how she had come by Minerva's eyes".

"His words penetrated the heart whose very lightness was its armour. She looked up at him with eyes that saw. And a warm glow visited her cool cheeks..."

It is not clearly known who is the narrator of the story, but seems like it is the author by himself. As an observer of the events, O Henry gives a detailed description of the main characters, their feelings and actions both directly and indirectly:

"There were 3,000 girls in the Biggest Store. Masie was one of them. She was eighteen and a saleslady in the gent's gloves."

"Will you please pardon me", he says, "if I seem too bold, but I earnestly hope you will allow me the pleasure of seeing you again."

"As Carter glided away from the Biggest Store with his mother in his electric runabout, he bit his lip with a dull pain at his heart. He knew that love come to him for the first time in all the 29 years of his life."

The basic theme of the story is the connection between being wealthy and being in love. An authoritative respectable 29 year - old man named Irving Carter by chance happens to drop into the Biggest Store and from the first sight falls in love in a beautiful young saleslady Masie, who is only 18. They seem to be people of quite different circles of society, with different ideas, interests and plans for the future. Still, the author represents a detailed description of both main characters and emphasizes on some features of their personalities with the help of a great number of stylistic devices.

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Thus, O Henry compares Masie to Maltese cat and Psyche, to mythological goddesses Hebe and Minerva describing her good - looking appearance with the help of simile and antonomasia:

"She had listened to the promulgated wisdom of the 2,999 other girls and had stored it in a brain that was as secretive and wary as that of a Maltese cat".

"Masie confronted him behind her counter with a questioning look in eyes as coldly, beautifully, warmly blue as the glint of summer sunshine on an iceberg in Southern seas".

"She curved an arm, showing like Psyche's through her shirt-waist sleeve..."

With the help of irony and repetition the author shows that even this female character is young, inexperienced and naive, she knows the way of behaving with men and that you don't have to believe them, but be exacting and harsh:

"If I could meet a man that got stuck on me the third time he'd seen me I think I'd get mashed on him."

"But I've got to be back home by eleven. Ma never lets me stay out after eleven."

"Masie knew men, especially men who buy gloves"

Afterwards, when feelings between Masie and Irving becomes mutual, the author describes an emotional state of the young girl using exclamations and rhetorical questions:

"The gentleman asked permission to call!" answered Masie with the grand air, as she slipped Carter's card into the bosom of her waist.

"Gee!", sighed Masie thankfully. Why didn't you ever think to that before?"

"Oh, aint you a kidder!" smiled Masie. "How many other girls did you ever tell that?"

As well with the help of exclamation and enumeration we get to know that Masie is a poor girl who is a little bit ashamed of the conditions in which she lives, maybe that is why the girl has to work being so young:

"Oh, gee, no!", she said emphatically. "If you could see our flat once!"

"The street-corner is her parlour, the park is her drawing-room, the avenue is her garden walk..."

At the end of the story when both Masie and Carter are sure that they are a perfect couple, the young girl is shown from a bit different side. She criticizes her man for being naive and greedy when discussing Carter with her friend Lulu in a store. The point is that Irving has an intention to marry her and take abroad, but Masie seems to understand him in a wrong way and believes that he is a poor liar:

"Oh, him?" said Masie, patting her side curls. "He ain't in it any more. Say, Lu, what do you think that fellow wanted me to do?"

"Go on the stage?" guessed Lulu, breathlessly.

"Nit; he is too cheap a guy for that. He wanted me to marry him and go down to Coney Island for a wedding tour!"

As far as we can assume, Masie is a two-faced person. Firstly she believes that her feelings with Carter are real (as she knows that he is a millionaire). On the other hand, Speaking when Masie realizes that he is just one of those talkative "cheap" guys who can promise much but do nothing, she breaks the relations with him.

Speaking about the other main character, Irving Carter, the first impression of him the author presents with the help of enumeration and irony:

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"One day Irving Carter, painter. millionaire, traveller, poet, automobiles happened to enter the Biggest Store."

"Filial duty took him by the collar and dragged him inside, while his mother philandered among the bronze and terra-cotta statuetts".

Using antonomasia and epithets O Henry tries to depict Carter's feelings end state of mind when he suddenly notices Masie at the counter. It is clearly that he falls in love with her:

"As he neared the vicinity of his fate be hesitated, suddenly conscious of this unknown phrase of Cupid's less worthy profession."

"And then Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, etc., felt a warm flush rise to his aristocratically pale face. But not from difference. The blush was intellectual in origin."

Within the setting of the events in the story Carter changes completely from a self-assured wealthy man to a shy half-hearted fellow. This is how O Henry portray him with the help of antithesis and metonymy:

"Carter had never before encountered a situation of which he had not been perfect master. But now he stood far more awkward than Bill or Jack or Mickey."

"His mind struggled to recall the nature and habits of shopgirls as he had read or heard of them."

His manner of behaving and intensions to be acquainted with Masie the author underlines using aposiopesis and anaphora:

"If you would allow me to call at your home, I - ... "

"He didn't know the shopgirl. He didn't know that her home is often either scarcely habitable tiny room or a domicile filled to overflowing with kith and kin."

Further development of the events shows that Carter desperately believes in his and Masie's future. The man asks her to marry him and in order to express his feelings O Henry uses repetition and polysyndeton:

"I can furnish you all the proofs you want", said Curter, gently. "And I want you, Masie. I loved you the first day I saw you."

"After the European cities we will visit India and the ancient cities there, and ride on elephants, and see the wonderful temples of the Hindus, and Brahmins, and the Japanese gardens..."

At the end of the story its getting clear that Carter is a man who is in love but at the same time who has no chance to be with the subject of his passion. As for Masie, she helps to understand how petty-minded and double-faced women can be. Firstly, her feelings towards Irving seem to be mutual, but when it turns out that he is "a cheap guy", all the feelings have gone.

Drawing a conclusion I would like to mansion that I'm greatly impressed by the story "A Lickpenny Lover". The speech of the author, profound American short-story writer O Henry is really bright and fertile. Using of various emphatic constructions, complex sentence structures and numerous stylistic devices makes the tone of this piece of literature humorous, ironical, passionate and intriguing.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The real name of O Henry was ……..
2. He was born on September 11, 1862, in ……..

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3. O Henry coined the term …… to describe the country, Honduras in his book *Cabbages and Kings.*

4. *The Gift of Magi* was published in ……..

5. The reoccurring theme in *A Lickpenny Lover* was that ……..

12.7 Summary

- William Sydney Porter (September 11, 1862–June 5, 1910), known by his pen name O Henry, was an American writer.
- Porter graduated from his aunt Evelina Maria Porter's elementary school in 1876. He then enrolled at the Lindsey Street High School.
- He then worked full-time on his humorous weekly called The Rolling Stone, which he started while working at the bank.
- Porter's most prolific writing period started in 1902, when he moved to New York City to be near his publishers.
- Porter was a heavy drinker, and his health deteriorated markedly in 1908, which affected his writing.
- Most of O Henry's stories are set in his own time, the early 20th century. Many take place in New York City and deal for the most part with ordinary people: clerks, policemen, waitresses, etc.
- "Cabbages and Kings" was his first collection of stories, followed by The Four Million. The second collection opens with a reference to Ward McAllister's assertion that there were only 'Four Hundred' people in New York City who were really worth noticing.
- "The Gift of the Magi," "The Lickpenny Lover," "The Midsummer Knights Dream," "The Cop and the Anthem" and "Ships," are his most popular stories.

12.8 Keywords

Embezzle: To steal or misappropriation of funds.

Immigrant: A person who leaves his native country and shift to a foreign country permanently.

Mandolin: A lute-like musical instrument with a pear shaped body and a fretted neck with four pairs of metal strings.

Pseudonym: A fake or fictitious name, especially used by a writer.

Wordplay: The clever and humorous exploitation of the connotations and vagueness of words, particularly in puns.

12.9 Review Questions

1. List four examples of O Henry's style of writing.
2. What literary term applies to O Henry's writing? Cite specific examples from stories which exemplify this term.
3. What happened to O Henry that had an effect on his writing? In what ways did this affect his writing?

Notes

4. Critically analyse *A Lickpenny Lover*.
5. Analyse the writing style and themes in O Henry's works.
6. O Henry has the reader under suspense until the last sentence. Elaborate.
7. Give a stylistic analysis of *A Lickpenny Lover*.
8. Write a note on O Henry's other popular works such as *The Gift of Magi*.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. William Sidney Porter
2. Greensboro, North Carolina
3. Banana republic
4. 1905
5. Money is not everything

12.10 Further Readings

Books

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