

LITERATURE & CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

BBA (II SEMESTER)

B.A/B.Sc. (III SEMESTER)

COMMON COURSE IN ENGLISH

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UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Calicut University, P.O. Malappuram, Kerala, India-673 635

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LITERATURE & CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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CONTENTS	PAGES
MODULE - 1	04 – 31
MODULE – 2	32 – 45
MODULE – 3	46 - 86

MODULE – 1

GLOBALISATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

CONTENTS

1. Fighting Indiscriminate Globalization- VANDANA SHIVA
2. Riches – Ramachandra Guha
3. Sharing the World – Amartya Sen
4. Confronting Empire – Arundhati roy
5. Villages for sale in Vidarbha – Dionne Bunsha
6. Future of our Past - Satchidanandan

UNIT – 1

FIGHTING INDISCRIMINATE GLOBALISATION

Vandana Shiva

Objectives

At the end of this unit you will:

1. have an idea of India's economy and social life in the sixty years since independence
2. Have understood how far we are being exploited by globalization and modernization.

Introduction to the Author

Vandana Shiva (1952-) is an environmental activist, physicist and eco feminist. She is one of the leaders in the crusade against environmental problem, deforestation, appropriation of land in the name of industrialization and pollution. During the 1970s she participated in the Chipko Movement. Vandana Shiva has been a relentless campaigner in the fields of agriculture, biodiversity, biotechnology, bio-ethics and genetics engineering.

In 1991 she started Navadhanya, which has grown into a proactive movement for seed-saving and organic farming. She has also setup the Bija Vidhyapeet or Seed University to spread the message about holistic living.

Vandana Shiva won the Right Livelihood Award in 1993 (the Alternate Nobel Prize). Apart from this she received the Order of the Golden Ark in 1993, The Pride of the Doon in 1996, the Golden Plant Award in 1997 and the Pellgrino Artusi Award in 2000.

Introduction

Vandana Shiva analyses India's social and economic life in the last sixty years since independence. She evaluates the fruits of modernization and finds it somewhat bitter. In the following interview given by her to the famous scholar Ramin Jahanbegloo, she makes her point loud and clear.

Glossary (Pages 3 – 5)

(I think there are..... Decision-makers)

Indiscriminate	-	that which cannot be differentiated
Misconceived	-	wrongly understood
Sprawl	-	spread
Strangling	-	suffocating
Perversion	-	falsification
Fragile	-	weak

Summary (Paras 1-2) Pages 3-5

As an answer to Ramin Jahanbegloo's question Vandana Shiva analyses India's sixty years of independence. She goes through the country's economic and social life during this period. The results of modernization did not reach the poor, rural people, who really need it. According to her there are three aspects of sixty years of independence. The first one is that, overall, there was a commitment to the larger public good made by those who were interested in their own vested interests. There were attempts to do things in the national interest. The Green Revolution, for example, meant to increase food production, used chemical fertilizers to help produce more foods which is a bad thing but considering that the production was focused on growing rice and wheat to meet food security it's a good step. Presently modernization is taking the leftovers of western society's evolution as India's tomorrow. Today's Delhi, has changed from a walled city with its own community dynamism and limits, to a world city which is over populated, grabbing the lands of the nearby formers. Thus we have two steps of modernization, one Nehruvian and the other Gandhian. Vandana Shiva prefers the latter one to the former.

The dream of our forefathers and even their work exists with those who rule today. Nothing positive of the ideas of our forefathers remain. As a part of the globalization project, national sovereignty and freedom have been thrown away. Competitiveness is only destroying the rights of the poor people. Awards given by the government and the industries are received by those who violate the laws the most. In globalised India with the partnership between global corporates and the elites, the elites consider that they can take wealth away from their own brothers and sisters. From this we can understand that there are values still alive in society but they are not in the hands of the decision makers.

Glossary

Unleash : let loose
Patent : copyright
Implement : put into practise
Appropriated : take forcibly

Paras 3 & 4.

(Two aspects of Gandhiji's principles)

Summary

Regarding Gandhiji's ideals and principles, Shiva is attracted by two aspects of his thoughts. One is freedom and the other one is self reliance. Through the Navdanya movement she started to accomplish self reliance. This movement aims at saving seeds and promoting organic farming. This was against the World Health Organization (WTO) methods of getting patents on life-giving products, unleashing genetically engineered organisms and controlling world health and food care. Satyagraha is the only solution to control them. When law abuses human freedom, our duty is to exercise non cooperation and civil disobedience. Thus Satyagraha can prevent a bad law from being implemented. Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is assumed to uproot millions of poor from their soil. This is dictatorship and not democracy. To fight it out, the only weapon that can be used is Satyagraha.

The second concept that has inspired Vandana is Gandhi's idea of Swaraj. This is a very deep notion of freedom. Swaraj means exercising power but one cannot exercise power without taking responsibility. Rights flow out of responsibility and there are no short cuts to rights.

Paragraphs 9 – 10

(I have visited Psychotherapist)

Glossary (Pages 7 – 9)

Embody : include

Slog : work steadily

Litigation : going to law

Schizophrenia: a sort of mental disorder.

Summary

Vandana Shiva has visited more than two to three thousand villages in the last fifteen years. There are two levels at which her work involves traveling to the villages. First, the work for resistance, the work done to fight the WTO, unfair patent rights and the growth of genetically – engineered seeds. Secondly the work connected with helping farmers with seed saving and organic farming.

Regarding her funds for the work, the Government of India will fund her to start a soil lab, the National Commission of women will fund her to organize public meetings on the impact of globalization on women. She teaches in some universities to get money besides being helped by friends.

By working as a delegate in the Government and also fighting against it in the Supreme Court, she partly helped the official system to overcome its diseases.

Paragraphs 10 – 12

(It's an organic.... outside of that)

Glossary (Pages 9 – 12)

Fuelled - intensified

Mutate - change

Farce - useless and foolish

Retrieve - get back

Sustainable - help to maintain

Telawala - door to door vegetable vendor.

Summary

Living democracy is a paradigm she presents as an alternative to corporate globalization. Earth democracy means freedom to all, the ancient idea of *vasudeva kutumbakam* is an aligned concept. It means to preserve our ecological treasures. It also means that our natural resources will not be appropriated from us. Corporates should not be permitted a) to dictate where and how people

should live b) to patent our resources. Living democracy is very much opposite to dead democracy. We have to move beyond the partnership of the state, the market and the corporations. People can regain their freedoms and democracies in this centralized state of living democracy.

There are two levels at which India must contribute to the idea of earth democracy as a 'shared planet'. At the first level we can't allow the corporates to own all the lands of this country and reduce the country to a market place for their automobiles. We need to guarantee democracy of mobility to all, the cyclist also and not just the car. The second thing that we need is to understand that India is the largest sustainable ecological resource. So that, while the government is busy bringing in supermarkets, we need to bear in mind that forty million people get employment through door-to-door delivery. Shiva salutes the *telawala*.

This has divided India into two classes: a consuming class and a sacrificing class. The former accept globalization with interest but the latter find it very hard to live.

Essay

1. Summarize Vandana Shiva's responses from this interview in about 300 words, covering the main aspects and highlighting the ones that you consider the most important in today's context.

Vandana Shiva, in an interview given to Ramin Jahan begloo, puts forward certain points important in present day India. It is an attack on globalization. The signing of GATT has given the liberty to multinational corporates to open up markets in our country. There was a commitment to the larger public good even by those who were working in their own vested interest. Green Revolution is an example for this. The effects of this Revolution did not reach the common man. Modernization in a very brutal form is taking the leftovers of western society's evolution as India's tomorrow. Cities have turned into huge carbon footprints with their overcrowded population. The land of farmers is taken away by corporates.

Nehruvian and Gandhian models of modernization happened side by side. Vandana Shiva prefers the latter ideal. Human values and even freedom was destroyed by globalization. Earlier, competitiveness in terms of strangling others was considered anti-social behaviour and those indulging in it were social outcasts. But these outcasts are now on the top of the social and political ladder. Even the awards given by the government and the industries are for those who have violated the law the most. Everywhere we see the exploitation of the weaker sections. The corporates prosper and the rulers support their growth. They get more than enough wealth and the poor is pushed down into more and more poor conditions.

Vandana Shiva, inspired by Gandhiji's ideals started the Navadanya movement. This movement aimed at saving seeds and promoting organic farming. The farmers should be self-sufficient and not depend on multinationals for seeds. The rights of people displaced by SEZs is also addressed in Shiva's activism.

Shiva raises the concept of 'earth democracy' as a necessity in this context. It is democracy of mobility. The Indian philosophy of 'Vasudev Kudumbakam' is more conducive to living democracy. Through this ideal we can preserve our ecological treasures. We accept the right of the *telawala* to work in the wake of chain supermarkets. Corporates should not get a chance

to dictate where and how people should live. Through living democracy we need to fight for freedom and democracy.

Vandana's analysis of Indian society since 1991 depends on the stage when globalization was given a free access in India. People belonging to the underprivileged groups, who are deprived of their rights should organize against this exploitation according to Vandana. Democracy is dead in the hands of the corporates. It has to be given life. Globalization is accepted with great interest by the consuming class but the same becomes hard for the sacrificing class.

Short Essay

2. What would be your ideal of 'earth democracy'? Answer in about 100 words.

The system of democracy we have now is a dead democracy. It lacks many aspects. Those who are representing this system for us do not take care of the public or look into their problems. They are not ready to find solutions for the problems faced by the common people. They encourage us with promises during the election campaign. These candidates after getting elected will deliberately forget the people to whom they have given unnecessary promises, for the next five years. Here we find democracy has changed into dictatorship. In place of this type of dead democracy earth democracy engages with the rights of all. Democracy of mobility is also ensured. Great importance should be given to modes of conveyance which will decrease carbon foot prints. The national and international supermarkets extend a threat to our millions of hawkers. This can be controlled only by restricting the starting of supermarkets.

Short Answer Questions

3. In a few sentences each, answer the following
- I. To what extent can we now recapture the Gandhian ideal of self-reliance by Indian farmers? Can we avoid a commercial interface altogether? Why?

The able bodied members of the families of the Indian farmers can depend on manual labour. By this way the Gandhian ideal of self-reliance can be recaptured to some extent. Cattle breeding will help them in organic farming.

- II. What do you think Vandana Shiva would say in response to the question: What should we do now to minimize the effects you speak about? How can we make the bitter fruits of modernization sweet?

Vandana resisted globalization through the Gandhian method of Satyagraha. She opposes the government in the matter of appropriation of land, water etc.

- III. Where would you think Vandana Shiva would like to live? In a village? In a tribal settlement? or In a campus where she can influence students like you?

She would like to live in a village.

UNIT – 2

RICHES

Ramachandra guha

Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Understand the idea of outsourcing.
2. Get an idea of the position of India in the globalised context.

Introduction to the Author

Ramachandra Guha (1958) is a historian and biographer. His work, *India after Gandhi* – a history of post-independent India, is a great work of history mingled with biography. In *A corner of the Foreign Field*, he uses the game of cricket to explore wider themes of caste discrimination, religious conflict and national identity. *The Unquiet Wood: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* is one among his major works of environmental history.

Introduction

India is a land of contrasts. This is evident in all its fields – ethnic, geographical and cultural. It has always been so. And now is added a dose of globalization. To assess and analyse India we need a wide-angle lens. Western countries are looking eastward at India and measuring its potential for the future. Ramachandra Guha, here, is putting forward his views with regard to how the westerners look at India with admiration.

Paragraphs 1 and 2

(In 2004 the Indian economy..... wanted them back.)

Glossary

Unprecedented	:	unmatched
Stump	:	base
Democratic challenger	:	one who challenges freedom in a country
Reinstate	:	restore
Stoke	:	add fuel to
Protectionist regime	:	the system of government that takes measures to protect the country's economic interest
Bangalored	:	brought to Bangalore
Outsourcing	:	the method of giving the work of a company to service providers outside the company

Summary

The wealth of Indians rather than their poverty was the main subject of debate in the 2004 American Presidential election. In several campaign speeches, John Kerry, the Democratic challenger expressed fear of jobs going east. He feared that if President Bush was re-elected American jobs will be Bangalored (transferred to Bangalore). This was the first time that a presidential candidate had

singled out an Indian city by name as a threat to American interests. There were many other examples. In 2002 a computer programmer from Florida and a woman member of the New Jersey Senate complained about Americans losing jobs to Indian computer firms and professionals. All of them were responding sympathetically to the Americans who had lost their jobs to Indians. Americans wanted them back.

Paragraphs 3 and 4

(In December 2003 firm and its workers)

Glossary

Clients	-	customers
Wrenching change	-	a sudden violent change
Lay off	-	losing job
Brewing storm	-	a trouble beginning to develop
Succumbed	-	yielded
Poetic Justice	-	a state of rewarding good and punishing evil
Thwart	-	prevent

Summary

In December 2003 the influential Business week ran a cover story on “The Rise of India”. It said that there were now more IT engineers in Bangalore and they were mostly doing work for American clients. This ‘techno take-off is wonderful for India, but terrifying for many Americans’ it stated. State legislatures in America were under pressure and some of them even cancelled contracts with Indian firms. This was not the situation in America alone, but existed in several countries. There were protests all over UK, when British Rail outsourced timetable enquiries to India. In 2006 both French and Belgian politicians expressed their concern at the sale of their biggest steel firm, Arcelor, to Indian company called Mittal steel.

Paragraphs 5 and 6

(Some commentators..... In the twenty-first century)

Glossary

Paranoid	-	fearful
Benighted	-	ignorant
Giddy	-	too excited
Recalibrated	-	corrected

Summary

Some commentators praised India ‘as a good place to do business’. To them India is ‘Asia’s other power house’. In India the individual is king and everywhere we can witness expansion. Every Indian businessman, artist and designer is looking forward to expanding their influence across the globe.

According to Thomas Friedman, twenty years ago India was a land of snake charmers, poor people and Mother Teresa. But now it is also a country of brainy people and computer wizards. Jeffrey Sachs, the Columbian University economist, celebrated 'India's historic escape from poverty' in one of his books.

Paragraphs 7 and 8

(This was a coupling..... become a dictatorship)

Glossary

Implication	-	suggestion
Coupling	-	join two parts
Paranoia	-	fear

Summary

Some strategic analysts argued that India was the 'newest Asian Tiger' and in course of time it will be the biggest by surpassing China. All the economic powers of the world like US, UK, France want to establish and improve relations with India. Thus India may become a kingmaker or perhaps the king.

The source of all these predictions can either be from fear or from wonder and admiration. For through most of India's history as an independent nation it has heard altogether different tunes being sung. With every communal riot, failure of the monsoon and with every death or killing of a major leader, it was forecast that India will abandon democracy and hug dictatorship.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

(Those earlier..... elect of the earth)

Glossary

Stemmed	-	arose
Embarrassment	-	discomfort
Callously	-	indifferently
Heterogeneity	-	opposite in quality
Manifest	-	clear
Deprivation	-	taken away from

Summary

Those who predicted doom for India began to praise India. Now newspapers and magazines carry stories with captions 'Global Champs' and 'on the way to number one'. This instilled self confidence among Indians. India in the future will be raised to the position of an imperial power.

All these flying praises are premature because there is abject poverty among the majority of Indians although there are a few areas of affluence. But soon India will take its position among elite countries. According to Guha it is a mistake to denounce India as going down; it is also a mistake to see India as becoming a super power.

Essay

1. 'Indians who read reactions praise from the western world often get carried away into thinking that the task of progress is over and we have arrived as a great player on the world scene. This is not true'. Explain why you think the above statement is the most important one and expand upon the idea in about 300 words.

India, once considered as the land of snake charmers and poor people, now, after two decades, is a land of intellectuals and those who can create magic on computers. India's image has been re-moulded by this new concept. India is no longer the poor intellectually backward undeveloped country where there was only ignorance and poverty. The Newsweek wrote the glorifying title about India, 'Asia's other Powerhouse'. This magazine also praised India by stating the country to be 'a good place to do business and 'an investment worthy partner'. In the spheres of trade and industry, India is seen as a rival by other great technologically improved nations. This is a thrilling fact since it shows India's quick march into the field of modern technology. Most of the Indian business magnates are excited over their prospects in the globalized Indian economy. They think that their task of progress is over and they have arrived at a steady position. But this is not true at all.

China is the most populated country in the world with India coming second. This itself shows that things are not easy for India. Nearly 80% of the population lives below or on the border of the poverty line. This large group doesn't get employment chances, a good meal a day, house to live in or medical care. At the same time big businessmen and rich ones are comfortable with all the amenities of life.

As far as the government is concerned it is turning a blind eye to the problems of the poor. For everyone globalization and competitiveness are the all powerful factors. This leads to capitalist consumerism which is totally against socialism. The poor labourers can't compete in the market. Their lives are made miserable by inflation and artificial scarcity of food items. As the government is not providing social security to the common people, they are suffering extremely in this helpless state. Most of the farmers lost their land and work due to the industrialization of agriculture.

Many international agreements and contracts like the GATT have been signed by the government. This has made agriculture a matter of loss.

Today India faces many problems. Our government, political parties and people together have to find out a solution for this. If most of the people are in poverty, devoid of even their basic needs, the country can't be considered developing in any way.

Short Essay

1. The author quotes Newsweek magazine. "It is as if hundreds of millions of people have suddenly discovered the keys to unlock their potential' Examine the context in which this statement was made. What do you think were the 'keys' that the Indian people suddenly

discovered? Did these keys have anything to do with globalization? Write your comment in about 100 words.

President George W. Bush visited India in 2006. In connection with this, the Newsweek made the above mentioned statement. The same magazine glorified India calling the nation as 'Asia's other Power House'. The keys the businessmen and urban youth found in India were the ones to open new opportunities in the fields of business, architecture, art and industry. Indians in town areas are highly enthusiastic. Businessmen are eager to get chances and prospects. They want to spread their influence throughout the world. They are very hopeful of their future. All these optimistic trends are related to globalization. India has become a global village with cyber accesses to everything.

2. Why are India and China spoken about together in many articles about the future of nations?

India and China are two great nations in Asia. Both the countries have abundant natural resources and manpower. China's great growth in science and technology has been recognized. China has been described as Asia's 'tiger in front'. India is now being praised as 'Asia's newest Tiger'. Both the countries have been praised as rising to global economic prominence. India's large youth population and its democratic traditions will soon see it in the front outdistancing China, so says the vigilant audience.

Answer these in a few sentences each

1. What is your opinion about President Obama's moves to prevent jobs leaving American Shores? Is the policy workable in a globalised world? How will it affect India?

Most of the western countries including America suffer from economic recession. As a result of this many banks and firms had to be closed down there. This resulted in unemployment. It is Obama's duty as the President of U.S. to protect the job opportunities of his country. This policy of protecting his people is against globalization. It will affect Indian IT companies.

2. The author mentions New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman's 2005 book. Though he does not mention the title, he probably means *The World is Flat* which went on to become a best seller. How does the author quote Friedman?

Thomas Friedman wrote that twenty years ago India was known as a country of snake charmers, poor people, and Mother Teresa. Today its image has been corrected. Now it is also seen as a country of brainy people and computer wizards.

3. 'It is a closely interconnected world'. Briefly mention three major ways in which the world is 'interconnected'.

Markets have been opened up all over the world by Globalization. IT engineers in major cities of India are working for American clients. They are also working for big corporations like General Electric and also for the farmers of Kansas to have their tax returns filed. China is the largest country demanding steel. Without this country steel industry would be in danger.

UNIT – 3

SHARING THE WORLD

Objectives

Amartya Kumar Sen

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

1. understand the various dimensions of globalization
2. understand how globalization has made a positive contribution to the world.

About the Author

Amartya Kumar Sen (1933-) is the first Indian economist who won the most coveted Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998. His contribution to welfare economics and theory of social choice is well known. Sen's insights as an economist are different. In the collection of essays *The Argumentative Indian*, Sen attempts to understand Indian history and identity by focusing on the tradition of public debate. Sen was awarded Bharata Ratna in 1999 and Companion of Honour from the UK in 2000.

Introduction

What is Globalization? As we know Globalization means the process by which developments in one region can shape the lifestyles of people in other regions. The effects of globalization are subtle and controversial. You have already read the opinion of Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha. According Vandana Shiva economic globalization is anti-Gandhian while Ramachandra Guha accounts how the world looks at India with admiration. Here in this unit Amartya Sen is discussing the various dimensions of globalisation and how we should attempt to manage this phenomenon that is a firm reality.

Paragraphs 1 and 2

(Justice, it has been argued..... relations of minds.)

Glossary

Explicitly	:	openly
Persuading	:	forcing or influencing
Contrariness	:	defiance
Obduracy	:	stubbornness
Shunning	:	avoiding

Summary

The requirement of justice that it should not only be done, but must also be 'seen to be done', must be kept in mind while discussing the pros and cons of globalization. We can argue that economic globalization is an excellent overall goal and is making positive contributions in the contemporary world. At the same time there is difficulty in making the poor see its positive results. So what are the reasons that make it difficult for everyone to see that globalization is undoubtedly good? Let's discuss it.

There are many right minded people who cannot accept globalization as a great boon for the deprived people of the world. This makes us understand that there is something wrong with the system as it is practiced today since many people in less prosperous countries find it difficult to see this system in their interest. While talking of justice within a country, the philosopher John Rawls spoke of the need for public reasoning and a public framework of thought to meet the challenge of non-meeting of minds. This could be applied to the issue of globalization also while assessing the ends and also ways and means of appropriate globalization. The goal of globalization is concerned with not just commodity relations but also with the relations of minds.

Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5

(When a year ago..... into its shell.)

Glossary

Coherence	:	unity
Discernability	:	ease in understanding
Pervasive	:	spreading
Penury	:	poverty
Deployment	:	assigning of resources to get best results
Clamour	:	demand in a noisy way
Skepticism	:	doubt

Summary

Once, the Secretary- General of the United Nations prepared a report on globalization and interdependence to bring about greater understanding of the issue. In it questions that deal with transparency of assessments and understanding the benefits were mentioned.

The achievements of globalization are accepted in many parts of the world. The global economy has brought prosperity to quite a few different areas in the world. A few centuries ago prosperity was in the hands of only a few ones. But now this has changed to a better state. The reasons for this change are economic interrelations and development of modern technology.

Paragraphs 6, 7, 8 & 9

(In fact, the pre-eminent..... that can be made)

Glossary

Rubbishing	-	dismissing something as nonsensical
Rhetoric	-	persuasive speech
Attribution	-	credit
Alleged	-	suspected
Empirical	-	depending on experiment and observation
Potentials	-	qualities
Appalling	-	shocking

Summary

It is not good to degrade globalization. Instead we have to arrange for making the benefits of globalization more fairly distributed.

There is a belief that in the globalised stage, the poor get poorer. But this is entirely wrong. The causes of poverty lie in the nature of domestic economic and social policies. Only with appropriate domestic policies can global economic relations flourish. Through the expansion of basic education, health care, land reform and facilities for credit global economic relations can flourish.

The enthusiasts for globalization often say that the poor are getting less poor and not more poor. Even if the poor were to get just a little richer, this doesn't suggest that the poor get a fair share of the benefits of globalization. The only solution for this problem is to distribute the gains fairly.

Essay

1. In an essay of about 300 words, compare and contrast Amartya Sen's view of economic globalization with that of Vandana Shiva.

Amartya Sen in this extract gives us an idea of globalization which is different from the views of Vandana Shiva. Both their essays have very few similarities but many contrasts. The fact is that globalization has influenced all spheres of life to a great extent. The effects of globalization are always controversial. For Vandana Shiva it is a process which is anti-Gandhian. It always stands for the corporates and supplies their necessities. It affects the common man's lives negatively. But Amartya Sen is of the opinion that globalization has created many chances. But its effects are controlled by those in power. Sometimes they do not use it for the benefit of the people as a whole and instead use it for the privileged few.

According to Amartya Sen economic globalization is not at all defective. It is very good goal that the present world can reach out to. It can make impressive and positive contribution. The poorest may not be able to understand its positive effects. According to Vandana Shiva, the dreams of our forefathers have not been fulfilled. The rights of the poor are destroyed in the name of competitiveness. The powerful corporates have taken over all the benefits. Most of the poor are being turned out of their own lands by the Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

There is something wrong with the system of globalization as it is seen today. This is understood by the fact that Amartya Sen says that many right-minded people believe that globalization has not done anything in the way of welfare for the poor. Sen argues that globalization has brought prosperity to many in the world. Poverty and short life spans which existed a few centuries ago have changed for the better today. Prosperity which was in the pockets of some has gone to the common man. These changes are due to the development of modern science.

Vandana Shiva agrees that there has been success in the fields of industry and agriculture with the Green Revolution. However the results of globalization did not reach the common people. India in the name of modernization is adapting the remains of western society's evolution. Globalization has divided India into two classes – a consuming class and a sacrificing class.

Amartya Sen is of the opinion that poverty cannot be solved by denying the poor the benefits of modern technology. Instead of denying the benefits we can distribute the advantages of globalization among the common man. It can flourish with appropriate domestic policies through the expansion of basic education, health care, land reform and facilities for credit. These are good subjects for public discussion and should come in place of blind criticisms.

Short Essay

1. 'Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done'. In about 100 words, explain the meaning of this as it applies to economic globalization.

As Lord Hewart put it in his famous judgment in 1923, justice should clearly be seen to be done. The results of justice are to be enjoyed by the people. When considering the pros and cons of globalization, people should see that they enjoy the fruits of justice. Economic globalization is a very good aim and it makes a very positive contribution in the present world. Most of the common people do not know that globalization is a blessing for everyone. It is difficult to convince them also. But this doesn't mean that it is bad. We have to examine the reasons for which there is difficulty in making all see that globalization is good.

Answer the following in a few sentences each.

1. Dr. Sen says "There are good reasons to argue that economic globalization is an excellent overall goal. In your opinion, what could be some of these reasons?"

The achievements of globalization are visibly impressive in many parts of the world. Global economy has brought prosperity to many in the world. A few centuries ago only a few enjoyed prosperity. But economic interrelations and deployment of modern technology have changed the world for better.

2. 'The poor are getting poorer'. Does the author agree or disagree with this idea? What reasons does he give?

The author does not agree with the idea. The domestic policies of the government are the reason for poverty. Gains are got from co-operation. It is doubtful whether the distribution of gains is fair or acceptable.

3. What domestic policies does Dr.Sen suggest in order to bring the gains of globalization to more people?

The gains of globalization can be brought to more people by appropriate domestic policies like the expansion of basic education, health care, land reform and facilities for credit.

4. The author writes: The goal of globalization cannot be concerned only with commodity relations while shunning the relations of the mind. Explain this idea.

Globalization does not exist in the production and distribution of commodities alone. John Rawl's analysis of critical assessment was largely confined to issues of justice with in a country, but it can be extended to global arguments also. It has to be extended if we are trying to assess the ends, and also the ways and means of appropriate globalization.

UNIT – 4

CONFRONTING EMPIRE

Arundhati Roy

Objectives

At the end of the unit you will be able to understand:

1. What corporate globalization means
2. What dangers they bring to a developing country
3. The role of each Indian confronting this empire.

Introduction to the Author

Arundhati Roy (1961 –), the Indian who won the Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things* is well known for making many innovations in language. She is an environmental activist. She has raised her voice against the nuclear policies of the Indian government. She has written many articles regarding social issues. She won the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 and the Sahitya Academy Award in 2006.

Introduction

A lot of activists have now come up with their protests against corporate colonization. Arundhati Roy is one among them. They are convinced of the fact that international companies have taken up the place of Britishers, our, former colonizers. And now these companies are the rulers of the marketplace. They have spread their branches into the economics of all the countries. Unfortunately, sucking out the livelihoods of the downtrodden, they marginalized the have-nots of developing countries like India. The poor, rural populations are also falling prey to their gigantic leaps.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3

(When we speak and the Indian elite)

Look at the title of this lesson ‘confronting empire’...

What does it mean?

In the modern concept it is the World Bank, IMF, WTO and multinational corporations. It is even their subsidiaries like nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and terrorism. All these concepts go together with the project of corporate globalization.

India, the world’s biggest democracy is at present at the forefront of the corporate globalization project. Corporation and privatization are being welcomed by the government and the rich.

Paragraphs 4 – 8

(The dismantling... suffer them)

Glossary

Dismantling	-	separating into parts
Massive	-	huge
Impoverished	-	made poor
Pesticides	-	poisonous chemical used to kill insects
Dispossessed	-	one whose land, property is taken away
Spiraling	-	decreasing in the form of a spiral
Chaos	-	confusion
Frustration	-	disappointment
Disillusionment	-	relieved from wrong beliefs.
Myth	-	imaginary person or thing
Disparity	-	difference, inequality
Quell	-	suppress

Summary

Massive privatization and labour ‘reforms’ are pushing people out of their land and even from their jobs. Many of the farmers who have become poor are committing suicide. In this situation of total disappointment and national disillusionment fascism grows freely.

The free market weakens democracy. The difference between the rich and the poor increases fast. The fight to buy up all the resources is also becoming greater. The press is not free, the court does not dispense with justice.

The countries of the Northern part of the earth including US strengthen their borders and accumulate weapons of mass destruction. All these together form the new Empire. This greatly increases the distance between those who make the decisions and those who have to suffer under those decisions.

Paragraphs 9 – 18

(Our fight..... her breathing)

Glossary

Momentum	-	speed got by movement
Poised	-	balanced
Canopy	-	overhanging covering
Plundered	-	robbed
Lay siege to	-	try to win
Iniquitous	-	evil
Stubbornness	-	inflexibility
Relentlessness	-	harshness

Arundhati Roy wants to know how we would be able to resist this Empire. In India the movement against corporate globalization is gathering speed. It may become the only real political force to fight against religious fascism.

Looking directly into this conflict, we find that we are losing as it is, against the Empire. But indirectly, we can, each of us resist it in our own way and overcome it. We have exposed it in all ways. If we refuse to buy what they are selling, the corporate revolution will be defeated. Those who support globalization projects are very few and those who work against it are many. Upon this idea we can build up a new world.

Long Essay

1. Bring together the various threads of Arundhati Roy's arguments against globalization, in about 300 words.

Arundhati Roy does not see any virtue at all in the globalization economy. She sees corporate globalization as a violent attacker of lifestyles in developing countries. She calls this an Empire. It is the World Bank, IMF, WTO and other multinational corporations and their subsidiaries like nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and terrorism all coming together. Corporate globalization is always against the poor. India, the world's largest democracy is at present at the forefront of the corporate globalization project. The Indian Government and the rich are welcoming corporatization and privatization.

Most of the impoverished farmers are frustrated because they have lost their land and also their jobs. Due to this they are committing suicide and deaths as a result of starvation are also common. In such a situation fascism develops well.

The free market does not threaten national sovereignty, it weakens democracy. As the difference between the rich and the poor grows, the fight to buy up all the resources increases. The authoritarian governments use force to subdue any sort of opposition. The court and press sometimes will be used by them for their benefit. This becomes an Empire. This greatly increases the distance between those who make the decisions and those who have to suffer them. What we want is to eliminate this distance. We must fight against this growing Empire. In India the movement against corporate globalization is gathering momentum and is to become the only real political force to counter religious fascism.

The corporates are spreading a net of exploitation in the name of war against terrorism. The countries of the Northern part of the world are strengthening their borders and stockpile weapons of mass destruction.

Arundhati Roy does not see any virtue at all in a globalized economy. She wants an alternative to corporatized globalization.

Short Essay

In about 100 words, explain whether you have any disagreements with any of her arguments and why?

Arundhati Roy is against corporate globalization. She calls this an Empire which is a violent attacker of lifestyles in developing countries. It is against the poor. She mentions about

a movement against it as the only force to challenge religious fascism. She declares openly that governments that allow and even encourage such international corporates to get into their market places are doing a disservice to their own people. She makes efforts to fight and defeat globalization. But there are no major political parties on her side because she does not have clearly defined political ideology. The poor has no well defined way to organize themselves. They should know their enemy and a way to defeat this enemy.

Answer the following in a few sentences each.

- i. In what sense are “empire” and “imperialism” used by the author?

The loyal confederation, the obscene accumulation of power, the greatly increased distance between those who make the decisions and those who have to suffer them, all these together form ‘Empire’.

Imperialism is closely related to this Empire. It includes corporate globalization with the government, court and press with it. People are prevented from moving freely in imperialism.

- ii. The author says, ‘we have made the Empire drop its mask’ what do you think she means by this statement?

The author means that all those who laid siege against the ‘Empire’ have brought it into the open. Now it is exposed in all its cruelty.

- iii. Mr.Roy suggests that the Empire should be destroyed by “depriving it of oxygen”. Does she suggest any ways to do this? What are they?

She wants us to refuse buying what the corporates are selling – their ideas, their vision of history, their wars, their weapons, and their idea of inevitability. We can win over their Empire with our art, music, literature, stubbornness, joy, brilliance and relentlessness and our ability to tell our own stories.

- iv. The author is convinced that economic globalization encourages the expansion of terrorism and religious intolerance. Do you think she makes a strong argument for this in her piece?

The author does not make a strong argument against globalization but gives us some hints to understand that corporate globalization has given rise to nationalism, terrorism and other dangerous aspects.

UNIT – 5

VILLAGES FOR SALE IN VIDARBHA

Dionne Bunsha

Objectives

At the end of this unit you will be able to see

1. How globalization can affect a small village
2. How the cotton farmers suffered in the complicated network of international commodities trade.

About the Author

Dionne Bunsha (Born 1973) is Senior Assistant Editor for Frontline magazine and writes in lyrical prose on human rights, politics, wildlife conservation and climate change. Her articles - “Gone with waves” on the fishing villages of south Gujarat, “Back to the Basics” on the farm crisis, “Dam Lies” on the Narmada River Dam, “Red Carpets For Lions, Red Card For people” on displaced lions and adivasis in Madhya Pradesh and “Sugar Daddies” on the problems of the small time sugarcane farmers reflect a deep concern for those who get a rough deal in the democratic system. She is also the recipient of numerous awards like the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties for her work on communal violence in Gujarat and Sanskrit Award for Journalism (2003), Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards for Books and for Environmental reporting in 2007.

Introduction

This article throws light on the fact that privatization and liberalization have destroyed the prosperous Indian farmers and villagers. Poverty struck the cotton and rice farmers, soya, vegetable and fruit farmers to a great extent so that most of them left their small farms and went to Mumbai in search of jobs. The futility of their search brought them back home. This resulted in the suicide of most of them; some were even ready to sell their kidneys. The cruel policies followed by the government have caused a situation in which the poor of Vidarbha were ready to sell their villages. Dionne Bunsha brings out these facts clearly in the article.

Paragraph 1, 2 and 3

(“Kidney sale centre.....Stomachs and go to sleep”)

Glossary

Sprawled	-	spread out disorderly
Ramshackle	-	that which will collapse at any time
Novel	-	new and strong
Plight	-	condition
Grim	-	serious
Self-esteem	-	self-respect
Roaming	-	wandering

Summary

A banner can be seen sprawled across a bamboo tent at Shingnapur Village in Maharashtra. It proclaims “Kidney Sale Centre”. The farmers are on the verge of suicide, since they are all ruined by debt. Now they are threatening to sell their kidneys and have invited the Prime Minister and the President to inaugurate this kidney shop.

Residents of villages like Shingnapur, Dorli, Lehegaon, Shivni Rasulpur in the Vidarbha region have declared that their villages are up for sale. At least two cases of suicide by farmers appear everyday in the local newspapers. Earlier some of the farmers even had money to dig wells on their fields. But now no one can afford to pay farm laborers, there’s no food at home, no clothes and people are roaming like dogs. They just drink water to fill their stomachs and go to sleep.

Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6

(This once- prosperous-----there are only 160)

Glossary

Brunt	-	tolerate the chief strain
Ensured	-	guaranteed
Procures	-	gets
Deserted	-	made alone

Summary

In these villages of eastern Maharashtra the production cost of all the crops, especially that of cotton has multiplied three to five times, but its market price has fallen. Farmers are facing huge losses and have to borrow heavily from money lenders or from banks. Since most of them have defaulted on loan payments the banks are unwilling to extend fresh loans.

It is the end of the harvest season, but the government has not even opened procurement centers to buy cotton. Places, that were once crowded with farmers selling their products, are now deserted. Government procurement is just 6.25 lakh quintals this season where as it was 185 lakh quintals last season. Last year the government opened 410 procurement centers. This year, there are only 160.

Paragraph 7, 8 and 9

(Once cotton was considered -----says Jawandhia.)

Glossary

Tariff	-	a list of taxes published by the government
Infrastructure	-	the basic structures
Hiking	-	raising

Summary

Once cotton was regarded “white gold” and Vidarbha’s black soil was perfect for its cultivation. The government has since then withdrawn market controls, tariffs and subsidies for agriculture, leaving Indian farmers to compete with farmers in United States and the European Union. Retail prices have doubled but farmers are forced to sell their produce at half the price. The government does not even provide proper infrastructure such as irrigation or marketing facilities. The central government can protect its producers from imports and crashing international prices by hiking the import duty on cotton.

Paragraph 10 to 20

The U.S, the E.U..... Will be put up for sale.

Glossary

Pesticide - insect killer

Summary

The U.S., the E.U., Japan and Canada restrict trade from developing countries by keeping tariffs on food products at 350 percent to 900 percent. In India ‘free market’ does not apply to all agricultural goods. Maharashtra’s politically powerful sugar cooperative lobby has ensured that sugar remain protected. Farmers in the region are threatening to abandon agriculture and to sell their kidneys. People are so desperate that some would really sell their kidneys if given a chance.

All classes of villagers have been affected by the economic slowdown. Most of the villagers began to sell off their cattle and go to Mumbai searching for some jobs. What happens is that these people come back disappointed to their villages.

Besides the cotton farmers, orange, soya and dairy farming face crises and have fallen into very bad conditions of life. This will lead to total poverty.

Long Essay

1. In about 250 words, write an essay on the condition of farmers in the villages in Vidarbha during a bad cotton season.

The Indian farmer is hard-working, technology-friendly, and willing to adopt new cropping patterns and methods. But, far away from the field he ploughs, governments and trade bodies are taking decisions that can have a ‘domino’ effect. This is because India is part of the world market, where global forces dictate terms. They operate far away from the farmer’s village, but the shockwaves are felt in every village home.

Residents of various villages in the Vidarbha region have declared that their village is up for sale. At least two cases of suicide by farmers appear everyday in local newspapers. They have nothing now.

In these villages of eastern Maharashtra the production cost of all the crops, especially that of cotton has multiplied, but its market price has fallen. Farmers are facing huge losses and have to

borrow heavily from money lenders or from banks. Even at the end of the harvest season, the government has not even opened procurement centres to buy cotton. Places that were once crowded with farmers selling their products, are now deserted. Once cotton was regarded as 'white gold' and Vidharbha's black soil was perfect for its cultivation. The government has withdrawn market controls, tariffs and subsidies for agriculture, leaving Indian farmers to compete with farmers in United States and the European Union. Retail prices have doubled and farmers are forced to sell their produce at half the price. The government does not even provide proper infrastructure.

In India 'free market' does not apply to all agricultural goods. Maharashtra's politically powerful sugar cooperative lobby has ensured that sugar remains protected. Farmers in the region are threatening to abandon agriculture and to sell their kidneys. People are so desperate that some would really sell their kidneys if given a chance.

All classes of villagers have been affected by the economic slowdown. As a result of globalization and liberalization, the prices that a farmer gets for his crop can drop sharply. In a single season it can replace prosperity with poverty and bring family to starvation. This is where governments have to step in, not only with checks and balances of tax structure, but also with relief measures close to the ground.

Short Answers

2. Does globalization always bring poverty to small farmers? Can this be avoided?

No, globalization does not always bring poverty to small farmers. By giving checks and balances of tax structure, subsidy for fertilizers, seeds etc. we can avoid poverty of small farmers.

3. Why are cotton and soyabean grown to such a large extent in the Vidarbha region? Can the farmers change to other crops instead?

Black soil is perfect for the cultivation of cotton. Vidarbha has such a type of soil. No, the farmers cannot change to other crops instead of cotton because other crops will not prosper in black soil.

4. Can insurance be offered to farmers to protect them against losses? What do you think will be the practical issues?

As the tariff on imports is low, the cotton imported into India becomes cheap. This resulted in the decrease of the price of cotton. The farmers were unable to compete with these prices. They could not even pay back the loan they took from money lenders. So offering insurance to farmers will not save them, instead the government should increase the duty on imports. They should also give subsidy to the farmers.

UNIT – 6

FUTURE OF OUR PAST

Satchidanandan

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to understand:

1. Globalization in its real sense.
2. How we have forgotten our cultural past.
3. How we can bring it back

Introduction to the Author

K. Satchidanandan is a well known writer in Malayalam. He is also a poet of national and international fame. He has represented India at several international literary events. The Government of Italy honoured him with Knighthood. The Government of Poland awarded him with India-Poland Friendship Medal. He has been an activist for environment and human rights.

Introduction

Satchidanandan starts with an analysis of Amartya Sen's viewpoint on globalization. He proceeds to equate globalization with the desire for dominance and hegemony by the west.

Satchidanandan exposes globalization with all its falsehoods. He also lists all the characteristics and deeds of Internationalism, which is what Sen is highlighting, as against globalization. Then he focuses on the subject of culture.

Paragraph I

(There are, no doubt.... nations and regions.)

Glossary

Demise	-	death
Interpreter	-	translator
Sinister	-	threatening
Deprivations	-	a state of being needy
Contingent	-	dependent
Hegemony	-	one nation or state becoming supreme over another
Metallurgy	-	the process of separating metals from their ores
Galaxy	-	a large group of intellectuals
Sectarian	-	supporting a section
Irrationality	-	not of reason
Outright	-	absolute

Summary

There are, no doubt, many ways of looking at the phenomenon of globalization. Baudrillard called globalization, 'the greatest form of violence in our times'. Noam Chomsky too has been an informed critic of sinister designs of the US behind the façade of globalization. Amartya Sen however has a slightly different view. He points to the global moral protests against the process of globalization and tries to look at both sides of the argument. He finds merit in some of the issues raised by the protesters while also critiquing some of their arguments.

In the earlier periods of history, globalization meant a movement of knowledge and technology from the east to the west. This has happened in the case of mathematics or metallurgy or the technologies of the production of paper and gunpowder, of printing, magnetic compass, wheel barrow, rotary fan, the crossbow, of building the iron-chain suspension bridge or making kites. Sen suggests fairer distribution of the benefits of globalised economy. He does not agree with the outright rejection of globalization but suggests the institutional modifications that will promote global equity as the solution to these economic ills. There is also the need to open global fronts to fight inequalities of class, race and gender, environmental crises. They should also take up similar issues demanding understanding across nations.

Paragraph 2

(After reading..... control to internationalism)

Glossary

Acute	-	extreme
Unipolar	-	one sided
Mono-acculturation	-	method of becoming adapted to a single culture
Culinary	-	related to cooking
Psychosis	-	mental disorder
Callous	-	cruel
Unscrupulously	-	in a way not guided by conscience
Mutilation	-	to injure
Indigenous	-	native
Cosmologies	-	theories about the origin and nature of the universe
Multilingualism	-	use of two or more languages

Summary

Satchidanandan respected Amartya Sen as a champion of democracy and social justice in our troubled times. Amartya Sen's ideas suggest the positive aspects of globalization and they are in fact ideas that properly belong to the concept of internationalism. Globalization as practiced today is a recent phenomenon that has emerged from the unipolar situation of the world after the break-down of the Soviet Union and the changes in Eastern Europe. For the champions of globalization, the world is a consumer chain and the accent is always on the market while for the genuine internationalist, the world is a creative space and the accent is on culture. Internationalism believes in the mutual

recognition of life-styles, cultural pluralism, and respect for difference and concern for identities. Globalization is all for central control and a command economy. The US promotes fear psychosis and mutual suspicion between nations. This is to create and maintain a war atmosphere. In such a situation they will be able to sell their weapons of war. Globalization is always followed by violence in knowledge and the destruction of social and historical aspects. Globalization is indifferent to environmental pollution. Internationalism is deeply concerned about material and spiritual ecology. If re-colonization is the agenda of globalization, decolonization is central to internationalism.

Paragraph 3

(The question that is.... an aggressive imperialism)

Glossary

Scenario	-	an outline of a planned series of events
Ethnicity	-	civilization
Anthropology	-	study of human beings
Terrain	-	environment; land
Alienates	-	isolates
Indigenous	-	belonging naturally to
Oblivion	-	forgotten
Dramaturgy	-	the art of writing plays and producing them
Catastrophic	-	causing destruction
Aggressive	-	violent

Summary

The question, what is the future of our past, assumes special significance in the present scenario of globalization that is trying to bring back colonial imaginaries through discourses of domination. Languages are another major casualty. Every language is rich with the cultural memories of the people who have been using it. The death of a language is the death of all that it carries. While we are all for English as a creative medium and even a medium of liberation, we need to be critical of its absolute hegemony as a language of power, of the world market and of an aggressive imperialism.

Paragraph 4 and 5

(The tendency..... all that wrong)

Glossary

Off shoot	-	the shoot growing from a main stem; effect
Diagnose	-	determine the nature of a disease
Manipulate	-	influence
Pessimism	-	negativity

Summary

The tendency to look at culture as an industry is only a side branch of the market-view of things that globalization approves and promotes. It has also produced its own forms of entertainment

causing people to turn away from genuine art and intellectual writing. The market-oriented globalization looks at culture as an industry. This culture industry debases public taste and ruins long established value system.

Paragraphs 6 & 7

(Hegemonic to relive the past)

Glossary

Consensus	-	general agreement among a group of people
Autonomy	-	independence
Heterogeneity	-	disimilarities
Ecstasy	-	intense emotion
Decisive	-	important
Affluence	-	riches
Ethos	-	culture
Virago	-	strong warlike woman
Voyeur	-	a person who gets sexual satisfaction by looking at sensuous visuals
Overstatement	-	exaggeration
Bulldozing	-	getting something forcefully
Nouveau	-	one who has recently become rich
Avant-grade	-	experimental thinking
Countered	-	worked against
Disentangle	-	straighten out
Perception	-	opinion

Summary

The exercise of power in institutions of culture is seldom direct and visible; it is so subtle that it even appears as a kind of freedom. The communication network is an example. Popular fiction, film and television often fill the silences of the people with the articulations of dominant groups. Even book reviews and art write-ups are beginning more and more to resemble advertisements. Success is always identified with affluence and power; the best models are not Gandhi or Medha Patkar, but Ibrahim Dawood and Narendra Modi.

The culture of silence and consent promoted by the mass media can be countered only by developing democratic plurality in cultural practice. We need to fight Western Universalism with cultural pluralism and not through blind revivalism and status-quoism. Every cultural battle is the battle of memory against forgetting and needs to retrieve and understand the past critically in order to build a future that recognizes yet is not forced to relive the past.

Long Essay

1. Analyse the arguments K.Satchidanandan puts forward against globalization in not more than 300 words.

Satchidanandan starts his article with an analysis of Amartya Sen's view points on globalization. Dr.Sen has taken a "balanced" view of globalization, pointing out its many merits and warning us against its defects. Dr.Sen doesn't find anything wrong in the idea of globalization and what is not right is that the policies of distribution of gain are not put in place by the government.

The author then proceeds to list all the characteristics and deeds of Internationalism and Globalization. Globalization believes in world dominance by one nation. Internationalism depends on the co-existence of all nations. The result of globalization is not the spread of knowledge and technology, while it is the result of Internationalism.

History, in its earlier period showed that globalization was transfer of knowledge and technology from the East to the West. It stood for the benefit of humanity.

Globalization as practiced today is a recent phenomenon that has emerged from the unipolar situation of the world after the break-down of Soviet Union and the changes in Eastern Europe. What Amartya Sen considers as the benefits of globalization is really the results of internationalism.

Globalization gives commands while internationalism believes in negotiation. Globalization considers the world as a consumer chain and thus, for it, the market is the most important aspect it needs. Internationalism promotes diverse culture. So for it the world is a creative space. Globalization believes in centralization and a command economy whereas internationalism believes in distributing power.

Globalization destroys the environment. It is indifferent to environmental pollution. It is trying to bring back colonial imaginaries through discourses of domination. It destroys history, languages and regional cultures. Giving many such examples, Satchidanandan gives us a clear picture of the culprit Globalization and demands for its prosecution.

In a few sentences each, answer the following:

(i) The author quotes Amartya Sen, who pointed out that knowledge flowed from East to West in the past. In your opinion, does such a flow still continue?

In the earlier period globalization meant a movement of knowledge and technology that flowed from the East to the West. For example, in the case of mathematics or metallurgy or the technologies of production of paper and gunpowder, of printing, magnetic compass, wheel barrow, the rotary fan etc. This flow still continues.

(ii) What is culture industry? Describe its negative aspects.

Culture industry is a tool in the hands of those who stand for globalization. They use it for exploitation. Even truth can be made and sold in retail culture shops. It turns away people from genuine art and intellectual writing.

(iii) Every cultural battle is the battle of memory against forgetting. Explain why the author urges us not to forget our past.

We must not forget our rich culture. Globalization through its market forces and mass media network make us forget our past. We must fight against this.

MODULE – 2

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

CONTENTS

1. Basic Rights : Kumar Vikal
2. Disgrace : Swami Wahid Kazmi
3. Who are you ? : Sundara Ramaswamy
4. The Tree of Violence : Namdeo Dhasal

UNIT – 1

BASIC RIGHTS - CAN YOU MAKE OUT?

Kumar Vikal

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will:

1. Get the picture of the atrocities caused by terrorism
2. Understand the meaning of Right to live

Introduction

What can be more precious than life? If life itself is gone, what is the value of anything else?

The right to life is the most basic of human rights. Denying this right is the most extreme crime. But terrorism and the mindless violence that it lets loose is today's most potent challenge to the very concept of human rights. Terrorism strike anywhere at any time and destruction is their goal.

Even without the monster of terrorism, we have our own demons in society to threaten the right to life. Many girl babies are killed before they are born or soon after many suspects are tortured and killed by security personnel.

Many youngsters are killed merely because they dared to marry against the wishes of their families.

We violate the most basic human right - the right to life, often for selfish reasons or because of a mistaken sense of honour.

Then there is the monster called poverty that stalks our villages, looking for victims. Too often, there are slow deaths, many of them young children dying of hunger and malnutrition.

Keki Daruwala in his poem, "The Death of Distinctions" says.

"Hunger is everything

It is the thicket and the boar in the thicket.

When hunger rages

Yudhishtir and Duryodhana become meaningless".

The poet is saying that hunger removes distinctions between people. Hunger is a great leveler.

The instinct to eat and stay alive is a basic instinct of all living creatures. The right to food is a basic human right, because it implies the right to life itself. When hunger is gnawing the belly, how can anyone care for the dangers?

Liberty is another basic human right. It implies the physical freedom to move around to one's own free will. Equally precious is the right to dignity.

The poem by Kumar Vakil raises the basic question of right to life. Blood, hunger and tears have no religion, region, caste or identity.

Glossary

Splattered	-	splash with a continuous noisy action
Welled up	-	like water overflowing from a well
Creed	-	set of principles or beliefs

Summary**Stanza I**

The poet asks people to say whether the blood lying splattered on the road belongs to a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian or it belongs to a brother or sister. He asks us to smell it and answer. Blood has no religion. It is same for all human beings.

Stanza II

In this stanza the poet points to a tiffin-carrier that lies half-hidden among the stones on the road. These stones that are scattered on the road may be those thrown at one another by people during communal riots. The sweet smell of bread is still emanating from that tiffin-carrier. The poet asks again whether that smell belongs to any caste. Here the poet states that food has no caste.

Stanza III

The aftermath of the riots and bomb blasts is described in this stanza. Bloodstained clothes, worn-out shoes, broken cycles, books and toys are scattered everywhere. The poet wants to know if anyone can tell him the nationality of these scattered things.

Stanza IV

A mother is waiting for her daughter, who will never return from school, because she is also a victim of the riot. Tears well up in the eyes of the mother. The poet again asks answer for the creed of those tears.

Man fights each other for the sake of religion, caste, creed and culture. All these things are man-made and he does everything to win. But everything is in vain. The blood that flows through the veins of man and tears that flows down from his eyes have no religion. By posing these rhetorical questions the poet brings out the irrationality of divisions in society.

Long Essay

1. What is the link between terrorism and basic human rights? The poet Kumar Vikal seems to be asking us to look at his word painting and weep, to smell the blood, to feel the pain. Describe your emotions and thoughts after reading it.

The poem reveals the tragic face of an Indian road after a communal riot. It is actually a picturization of what is happening in our society. A school going child is killed in the riot. Blood has no religion or gender. It inflicts pain only. The poet asks people to say whether the blood lying splattered on the road belongs to a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian or it belongs to a brother or sister. People are killing each other in the name of religion.

A tiffin-carrier lies half-hidden among the stones on the road. These stones that are scattered on the road may be those thrown at each other by people during communal riots. The sweet smell of bread is still emitting from the tiffin-carrier. The poet asks again whether that smell belongs to any caste.

Blood stained clothes, worn-out shoes, broken cycles, books and toys are scattered everywhere. All these things have no nationality. These images show that the victims of communal riots are innocent children. Another heart-rending picture in the poem is that of a mother waiting for her daughter who will never comeback. Tears well up in her eyes and her daughter is gone forever.

Terrorism and the mindless violence that it lets loose is today's most potent challenge to the very concept of human rights. Denying this right is the most extreme crime. Terrorism strikes anywhere at any time. Destruction is its goal. They may strike at busy and crowded places. Innocent people belonging to different religions, castes, nationality etc. are falling prey to the cruel hands of terrorism.

Through this poem, the poet Kumar Vikal has succeeded in creating a picture of the atrocities caused by terrorism.

2. In a few sentences each, answer the following:

i. Where there is hunger, Yudhishtira and Duryodhana mean nothing. Explain what is meant by this.

Ans Hunger is a leveler. There are no distinctions between people, if there is hunger. It's a real experience.

ii. The right to dignity means_____ (Finish the idea giving examples from your own experience)

UNIT – 2

DISGRACE

Swami Wahid Kazmi

Objectives

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

3. understand the evil of casteism and untouchability
4. discern the human rights violations that exist in our society.

Introduction to the Author

Swami Wahid Kazmi was born in 1945 in the historical town of Antari, Madhya Pradesh. He published his first story in Dharmayug in 1969. His areas of interest include history, archaeology, culture, ancient India poetry, music and criticism. He is frequently invited to speak on radio programmes on issues of history, archaeology and philosophy.

Introduction

Swami Wahid Kazmi's story "Disgrace" appeared in the November 7, 2004 issue of 'The Hindu'. Originally titled "The Scourge", the tale was translated by Ira Rajan. Ira Raja teaches in the Department of English, University of Delhi.

Untouchability is a cancer that has been eating our society from ancient time onwards. This has been handed down from generation to generation. Caste system was at first a kind of division of labour. Then it became a tool in the hands of the upper caste people to exploit and marginalize the lower castes. Millions of Indians are still 'untouchables' in this scared land of Gandhiji, Buddha and Ambedkar. They live in a parallel universe of isolation. All Indians are violating the basic human rights of other Indians. Many Indian writers reflect all these conditions through their writings. Swami Wahid Kazmi is one of them.

Glossary

Ablaze	-	on fire
Wrapped	-	covered
Dented	-	injured
Raggedy	-	somewhat torn
Frowning	-	smile mockingly
Brooding	-	think about for a long time
Benefactor	-	a person who has helped
Kaloota	-	an untouchable
Brazen	-	shameless
Whimpered	-	making frightened sounds weakly
Furious	-	angry
Hurling	-	throwing violently
Grabbed	-	snatched
Yelped	-	a short and sharp cry

A mail train reached the station. It's time for breakfast and the passengers were taking out their food and refreshments. A small group of beggar children can be seen, stretching their hands or begging bowls towards the passengers. These urchins are wrapped in dirty, greasy clothes. Among them was a 10-year old girl begging for alms. She climbed into a three tier A.C sleeper coach with a sad expression and begging voice. When this girl climbed down from the coach, her hands were full of quarter and half scraps of poories and parathas, a few whole rotis, some cooked dry vegetable and even a bit of pickle. She was really happy. Other children were frowning and brooding over their empty hands or gulping the small pieces of what they have got. Driving them off the beggar girl went straight towards the toilet built under a tree. She wrapped those food items in a cloth and buried it under the tree.

After sometime she returned to the tree. What she saw there was really heartrending for her. A young beggar boy sat calmly, legs outstretched, eating the rotis. He had eaten a very large portion. She was all in rage to see that a "Kaloota" had touched her food. This she could not tolerate. She wanted to know why the boy touched her food. The reply was that it was hunger that made him touch

her food. She abused him a lot, grabbed the remaining rotis and threw it into the drainage. Some crows and a skeletal dog engulfed those pieces.

The boy disappeared. One of the few men who had gathered there asked the girl, the reason for throwing the rest of the roti. She replied to them with hatred that the Kalua boy is a wretched sweeper.

The girl was starving. She had begged for scraps of food and hidden them away like a valuable treasure. Yet, because it had been touched by the ‘unclean’ hands of a sweeper, she threw them away for the dogs and crows to eat.

Was she being cruel and unkind? Or was she thinking the way she had been taught to think, behaving the way she had always been expected to behave? Did she even know why she should hate Kalua? It’s up to you to think....

1. Long Essay

The story describes many violations of human rights. Identify them in the context and discuss how the author deals with these issues. What emotions do the incidents in the story raise in your mind? Answer in about 300 words.

Many violations of human rights are pictured in this short story called “Disgrace”. Untouchability, casteism, child labour widening gap between rich and the poor are some of the violations of human rights that can be witnessed in Indian Society.

A train has just reached the station and beggar children were there in the platform. A girl of 10 years climbed the AC compartment and came out with a handful of food. Without sharing it with anyone, she buried it under a tree. After sometime she saw a beggar boy eating her treasure. It was so shocking for her that she was in uncontrollable rage to see an ‘untouchable’ sweeper boy touching and defiling her food. She grabbed the remaining food and threw it into the drainage. Three or four crows swooped down, took them and flew away. A stray dog was yelping greedily.

The untouchability of an ‘untouchable’ caste is a permanently fixed attribute that is meant to be inherited from generation to generation. Millions of Indians are still “untouchable” in this land of Gandhi and Ambedkar. They live in a parallel universe of separate housing, separate wells, separate festivals - in other words separate worlds. Every day Indians are violating a basic human right of other Indians. In this short story a ten – year old girl acts like this not by herself but she was made to act like this by the society. She is the representative of many other children, in whose mind the society had sowed the seeds of this evil prejudice. With food on one side and this evil concept of an untouchable on the other, she prefers the second one. She thinks that food acquired by begging was defiled by the touch of a beggar boy.

When the mail train reaches the station we can see a number of children begging among the clouds of smoke. This is a common sight on Indian platforms. These children are denied education, food, clothing and parental care. They go about begging and eat what they get. This is not their mistake but the system and the society forces them to put on the garb of a beggar. A large scale awareness programme is needed to make at least a small change. Stories like these can open the eyes of many.

Short Essay

2. How does hunger play a role in the story “Disgrace”? Is it more important to the girl than caste? Write your answer in about 100 words.

Untouchability, beggary, casteism are some of the basic themes of the story “Disgrace”. Caste is a social, political, cultural and economic construct. At the same time all living creatures experience the biological urge to eat. The 10 year old girl in this story climbed into an AC compartment and managed to obtain half scraps of pooris and parathas, a few whole rotis, some cooked dry vegetable and a bit of pickle. She hid it under a tree. Even though she is utterly in need of that food, she threw it away for the dogs and crows to eat. The reason is that they had been touched by the unclean hands of a ‘sweeper’ and ‘Kaloote’. “This Kalua is a wretched sweeper,” the girl spat and walked away wearily. The girl herself is a beggar, yet she cannot tolerate an ‘untouchable’ touching her food. The boy is used to such experiences. So he is not shocked. There is nobody to complain or protest against this. When it comes to the choice of hunger or caste, hunger is pushed aside and caste comes up. This is evident from the attitude of the beggar girl.

In a few sentences each, answer the following:-

- i. What is meant by ‘Kaloote’? Why does the girl use that term when she is talking to the boy

“Kaloote” means a ‘dark black thing’. The girl gets angry to see that her food was touched by an ‘untouchable’. She used that term when she was talking to the boy to stress the point that he is a boy belonging to the untouchable caste of sweepers.

- ii. Why do you think the story is called ‘Disgrace’? Who should feel most ashamed and why?

The title is apt for the story because practicing untouchability and casteism is a disgrace to our society. All are created equal, so each of us has to consider and respect others’ individuality. This little girl is only acting according to what the society had imprinted on her mind.

- iii. Does the boy sound angry, sad or indifferent after the girl abuses him? Why did he react like this?

No, the boy stood there expressionless. He is not shocked, because he has been used to such treatment. This little girl is only a representative of the society.

- iv. When the girl threw away the rotis some crows and a starving dog ate them eagerly. What is the author trying to convey here?

Casteism exists only in the life of human beings. There are no such things among animals. For them hunger is the basic instinct that should be satisfied at any cost.

UNIT – 3

WHO ARE YOU

Sundara Ramaswamy

Objectives

This unit will enable you to :

3. Undergo introspection and bring out the prejudices in your mind.
4. Understand the dark face of all the prejudices like caste, religion, region, language etc.

Introduction to the Author

Sundara Ramaswamy (1931 – 2006), novelist, translator and essayist is one of the greatest writers of modern Tamil literature. He began his literary career in 1951 translating Thakazhi Sivashankara Pilla's Malayalam novel *Thottiyude Makan* into Tamil and writing his first short story, 'Muthalum Mudivum'. His poetry collection *Nadunisi Naaykal* created waves in the literary circles of Tamil Nadu. Almost all of Ramaswamy's writings have appeared in limited circulation magazines which, though reaching only a limited readership have contributed to serious literary work in Tamil during the last fifty years. He is equally well known as a critic. Ramaswamy has received the Asan Memorial Award for poetry. He is also the recipient of the 'Iyal Award' presented by the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Toronto. The 'Katha Coodamani' Award came his way in 2004.

Introduction

We judge others not by their worth as human beings, but by their appearance, the colour of their skin, their caste, their religion, their language. We measure all the ways in which they are different from us. We judge ourselves not by whether we are good persons but by what others think of us.

How does this attitude affect human rights?

The inner prejudices put a strain on our relationships and lead us into conflict. Wars begin in the minds of men. Sometimes they begin as simple prejudices that are not even recognized as dangerous time – bombs.

We are wearing labels according to our birth, place of origin, caste and religion - not because we are forced to do so, but because we have chosen to do so. The 'fetter' and the 'handcuffs' are our own prejudices that make us prisoners. We are not ready to act against the evils of our social system.

In this poem the poet is pointing out the areas of differences between people - caste, region language, religion, complexion, rituals and customs etc. Social reformers are also pointing out these things as the 'faultlines' of our society. The poet has used an ironic tone to express his view that we are living in a deep pit of prejudice. India's goal of making a just and equitable society will be in danger if we don't open our eyes, cast off the fetters and throw away the labels.

After creating our constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that there is nothing wrong with our constitution. If things go wrong under the constitution, the reason will not be that it is a bad constitution, but because Man is vile.

Who are the people who make the law? They all are people from among us. If people have prejudices in their hearts, it will find its way into the way the law works, and make it imperfect.

This poem “Who are You?” is the translated version of Sundara Ramaswamy’s Tamil poem “Ni Yaar” ?

Glossary

Who are you?	: a direct and abrupt question of introspection
Cremate	: burn up the dead body
Cart-loads	: loads of bullock carts. It’s used as the means of communication in the interior parts of Tamil nadu
Fetters	: chains
Muzzle	: anything that prevents free speech
Bandages	: we are unable to see the truth since our eyes are blind- folded by prejudice
Vile	: evil

Summary

Stanza I

In the first stanza of the poem, the poet is asking man to make introspection into the identity of each one of us. He asks different questions like - Are you really a human being, what is your hometown, your language, what colour are you etc. Our country is divided into different castes, languages, sub-castes and religions. There are upper castes and lower castes and many lower castes are untouchables. All these along with the colour of our skin, rituals, customs, and the kind of food we eat are the labels, fetters and handcuffs for us. The poet wants to know all details precisely.

Stanza II

The poet asks what customs and rituals we are following. He wants to know whether we are vegetarians or non-vegetarians. Different castes and communities have their own Gods and worship it according to their own way. The poet wants detailed and precise answers to these questions.

Stanza III

Here he asks whether we bury or cremate our dead ones. He wants to know which practice each one follows. He enquires whether there is a higher or lower status in our places of employment. In this stanza the poet is of the view that we all have our own prejudices which make handcuffs and chains for our hands and ankles. We are also unable to see the truth because we are blind with our prejudices. It also plants us in a deep pit so that we are not able to speak freely. The poet employs a tone of irony in all his questions and proves that human beings are guilty and have inferiority complex, so that our quality of being a human is only seen in shape and appearance. Finally the poet wants to know our home town, caste etc.

Long Essay

1. "It is impossible to have a casteless classless society". Argue both sides of this statement in about 300 words.

Sundara Ramaswamy, in his poem 'Who are You' reveals the present state of human beings where they are not free in their own prejudices of religion, caste, sub caste, language, region, colour etc. we judge ourselves by what others think of us. Caste and class are created by man himself. Both will be harmful to our rights. They are also tools of exploitation. A division in society and also in man's mind is mentioned clearly in the poem. These are the prejudices of different kinds. Man has to think about the condition in which he has fallen into by opening his eyes widely to see. Without a free expression of himself not only man but also the whole world will be in danger. This will in turn destroy all the goodness in us and in this world.

We judge others not by their worth as human beings but by their appearance, the colour of their skin, their caste, their, religion, their language, we measure all the ways in which they are different from us. We judge ourselves not by whether we are good persons but by what others think of us.

We are wearing labels according to our birth, places of origin, caste and religion... not because we are forced to do so. The 'fetters' and 'handcuffs' are our own prejudices that make us prisoners. We are not ready to act against the evils of our social system.

In this poem the poet is pointing out the areas of differences between people.... caste, region, language, religion, complexions, rituals and customs. Social reformers are also pointing out these things as the 'faultlines' of our society. The poet had used an ironic tone to express his view that we are living in a deep pit of prejudice. India's goal of making a just and equitable society will be in danger if we don't open our eyes, cast off the fetters and throw away the labels.

After creating our constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that there is nothing wrong with our constitution. If things go wrong under the constitution, the reason will not be that it is a bad constitution, but because man is vile.

The questions that the poet asks in this poem are related to an open and just understanding of the feelings and rights of others. Those prejudices and inequalities are actually a hurdle in the ladder of human prosperity.

Short Essay

1. The poet mentions a number of factors that divide people from one another. In your experience, which are the factors that create prejudice in people's minds? Can you explain why? Write your answer in about 100 words.

A number of factors create prejudices in people's mind. We judge others not by their worth as human beings but by their appearance, the colour of their skin, their caste, their religion their language. The inner prejudices put a strain on our relationships and lead us into conflict. Wars begin in the minds. People are not broad minded. A simple difference in idea can lead to a great war. Tagore himself had said in one of his poems that our country will

progress only if its minds are devoid of narrow thoughts and distinctions. We have to consider the rights of others. Each individual has to help the other and walk hand in hand without any prejudices. Then only we can create a country pure like a clear stream.

Short Answer Questions

1. What does the poet Sundara Ramaswamy mean by the opening lines ‘who are you? Are you really a human being?’
Ans: The poet is asking us to make introspection. We are still in the fetters and handcuffs of our own prejudices. So he is doubtful whether man can be considered as a human being or not.
2. What are the labels, fetters and handcuffs that the poet points out in his poem ‘who are you?’
Ans: The labels, fetters and handcuffs that the poet points out in his poem ‘who are you?’ are our language, nativity, caste, sub-caste, religion, colour of the skin, rituals, the god we worship, food etc.
3. What does the poet mean by ‘bandages’ and ‘muzzles’ in the poem ‘who are you?’
Ans: ‘Bandages’ means the prejudices that make our eyes and minds blind. ‘Muzzle’ means anything that prevents the speech.

UNIT – 4

THE TREE OF VIOLENCE

Namdeo Dhasal

Objectives

At the end of the unit you will understand ;

1. the condition of India during the Emergency period.
2. how social violence is eating our country

Introduction to the Author

Namdeo Dhasal (born 1949) is Maharashtra’s leading writer, poet and Dalit activist. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kendra Sahitya Akademi. He was born in a former ‘Untouchable’ community and received no formal education. Following the example of the American Black Panther Movement, he setup the Dalit Panthers with the help of his friends. His main collections of poetry include *Golpitha* (1972), *Moorkh Mhataryane*, *Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi*, *Mee Marle Suryachya Rathaache Saat Ghoode* etc...., Apart from Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award in 2004, Dhasal received the Padma Shri in 1999.

Introduction

“The Tree of Violence” is a long poem, having as its origin folk sources. The poem was written when India was going through a historically troubled period. The poem uses the persona of a

folk story teller to capture one of the turning points in India's recent history and to create a magic realist fable. Dhasal's poem ignores the dominant and upper class and focuses on dalit life. This was a new voice in Marathi and Indian poetry using folk imagination and folk poetics to create an artistic form of immense sweep and power – the poem is like a pictorial organization with its vivid imagery.

Glossary

Gulal	-	vermilion
Rampage	-	go wild
Sophistry	-	false argument to deceive someone
Etiquette	-	manners
Reel	-	a shock
Propensities	-	tendencies
Warping	-	cause to become twisted from the natural shape
Berserk	-	crazy
Unanimously	-	generally
Endorsed	-	authorized
Decimate	-	destroy
Jitters	-	extreme nervousness
Gnawing	-	biting with the front teeth
Tangled	-	twisted
Their condition was like Hamlet's –	-	confused , 'to be or not to be'
Fouled	-	contaminated
Molten lava	-	hot liquid flowing out of a volcano
Bragged	-	boasted
Fusillades	-	discharging of fire arms
Bulldozed	-	destroyed
Gallows	-	a wooden frame used to hang people
Ghettos	-	a place where group of people with a particular race, religion or nationality live
Pennants	-	banners
Cornucopia	-	abundant supply

Summary

The poet likens social violence to a tree. This is because a tree has to be planted, watered and protected from woodcutters. It has to be allowed to flourish.

This tree of violence is deliberately planted with our own hands in our own front yard. It is being watered with the blood of our own men, women and children. Here what the poet states is that like a tree they planted violence. Its roots and branches grew fearfully fast. Finally, it covered every corner of the land sucking up the goodness and righteousness from the soil. The tree hid out the sun of justice and human values. The tree danced and sang as criminals sucked out the nation's lifeblood to feed it. Then the poet enlists a chain of events and the poet describes the course of our recent history in words that evoke colourful images.

The whole nation seems to be blind to the danger of this tree. A holy man, Jayaprakash Narayan, looks at this tree and is shocked at its evil power. He tries to warn the nation. He suffers a stroke and goes into a coma. This is where the media comes in. They reported that he fell ill because he looked at the tree. They even predicted that he would die.

He was a man who was loved by everyone. So the government was also worried in this situation. But he did not die. He recovers and talks about the dangers of the tree to everyone. Ordinary Indians are being suppressed. The tree of violence represented by a few criminals and influential people are making the country bleed and even breathless.

The government awakes from its unconscious state and sends out its servants with their nailed boots. They trample over fields and farms and ruins the lives of many. Violence is seen everywhere. They declared Emergency. Ministers are helpless, not knowing how to tackle the tree. People who supported freedom begin to search the roots of the tree. They found them in the bank vaults of the capitalists, in the treasuries of the Zamindars and even under the throne of the Empress. Here the reference is to the Prime Minister who imposed the Emergency, Indira Gandhi. People began to cut down the tree. At last the tree has been cut and the prisoners were released. But the tree is not dead for ever. It may grow in other forms. In place of that big tree many trees will be born. When we think it is killed, it is actually not. This gives a warning that we are always fated to have social violence forever. The poem thus seems to end on a note of pessimism.

Long Essay

1. The year the poem was written was 1975. Study the events leading up to the declaration of the Emergency that year, and interpret the poem in the light of those events. Write your answer in about 300 words.

The year the poem was written was 1975. It was a period of historic turmoil for India. In the same year, Indira Gandhi proclaimed Emergency. The situations that led to the Emergency were not of sudden origin. It was the end of certain social and political events that happened in the country. The poem uses the persona of a folk story teller to recapture one of the turning points in India's recent history to create a fable.

The tree of violence is planted by our own hands in our front-yard. This tree represents the violence done against the people under the cover of democracy. This tree is watered with the blood of our own men, women and children. As a result of this the tree grew into such a state with its own identity.

No one saw the danger of the tree. But a holy man, Jayaprakash Narayan saw the danger and warns his people. Though he falls ill, recovering from it he tells the people how

the Indians are being suppressed and how a few criminals and people with influence are making the country bleed of its wealth.

The government starts worrying and sends its servants. With their nailed boots they trample over fields and farms. Many poor people have their lives ruined as the servants do more damage than the tree itself. It is here that the Emergency is declared. Those who went to question the government were imprisoned. The supporters of democracy were caught and jailed but the voices for freedom cannot be silenced.

A new search begins for the roots of the tree. The roots were finally found in the bank vaults of the capitalists, the treasuries of the Zamindars and even under the throne of the Empress. Here the reference is to the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

Finally it is cut down. The poet is pessimistic when he warns that we are fated to have social violence forever. In place of one tree, many trees will be flourishing.

Answer the following in a few sentences each.

1. What would have happened if the 'holy man' had not walked by the tree one day?
The whole country is blind to the danger of the tree of violence. Without this holy man, we would not have understood this danger.
2. The poet says, "Those who brought up the tree laughed their way to the gallows". What does he mean?
Indira Gandhi's government declared Emergency. Opposition party leaders and those who protested were jailed.
3. How will "the tree of violence fulfill the role of a tree of wish fulfillment"?
The tree will change its form with new and false promises to deceive people. People who believe this will elect them again. This will give them chance to show their anti-poor policies.

MODULE III

THE GENDER QUESTION

UNIT -1 LEARNING TO BE A MOTHER: SHASHI DESHPANDE

UNIT -2 DINNER FOR THE BOSS: BHISHAM SAHNI

UNIT -3 ARUNA : RINKI BATTACHARYA

UNIT -4 CHILD MARRIAGES ARE LINKED TO POVERTY : USHA RAI

UNIT -5 ORGANISING FOR CHANGE : ELA BHATT

UNIT -6 MEDEA: NABANEETA DEV SEN

UNIT -7 THE SUMMING UP: KAMALA DAS

UNIT – 1

LEARNING TO BE A MOTHER

SHASHI DESHPANDE

Objectives

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

- (i) understand Shashi Deshpande's attitude towards motherhood.

About the Author

Shashi Deshpande (1938-) is a versatile writer and a woman activist working for the cause of Women's Liberation Movement. There are ten novels, four children's books, as well as translations from Kannada and Marathi into English to her credit. She published her first collection of short stories in 1918, and her first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, in 1980. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009. Many of her novels and short stories have been translated into various Indian and European languages. Her latest novel is *In the country of Deceit*.

Besides fiction, she has written articles on literature, language, on Indian writing in English, feminism and women's writing, which have been collected in a book *Writing from the Margin*. She has written the script for the Hindi feature film *Dhrishti* and translated two plays of the Kannada dramatist, Shiriranga, as well as his memoirs, into English.

She lives in Bangalore with her husband Dr. D.H. Deshpande.

Introduction to the Passage

In all patriarchal societies, we can see some degree of unfair discrimination between the way men and women, or even boys and girls, are treated. 'Patriarchy' literally means 'father's rule'. The 'man of the house' is in charge of the family. It is he who makes the decisions and controls the other members, especially the women. The woman is expected to be a helper and nurturer, raising the children and tending to the family's needs.

This image of the woman as mother and nurturer is deeply ingrained in the human psyche. Many people think that the most important role of a woman in her life is to become a mother and thereby fulfilling her destiny. Very few have the courage to point out that Motherhood is not a manufactured mould into which you can pour and set every woman. One such woman of courage is Shashi Deshpande. She does not consider motherhood as a sacred one. To her, motherhood is one among the many roles a woman has to perform.

Summary

Shashi Deshpande begins her essay by quoting Anne Tyler.

People always talked about a mother's uncanny ability to read her children, but that was nothing compared to how children could read their mothers.

The author says that it is from our mothers that we learn about motherhood. Early in childhood, she was taught to believe that motherhood is a state of perfect grace, and that every mother is an ideal of patience, love and unselfishness. She learnt that love springs naturally and spontaneously in her the

moment she becomes a mother and that nobility and goodness follow just as naturally. She also learnt that a mother can never be unjust or unfair, that she loves her children equally. But the reality is quite different from what the author thought to be.

Even as a child, the author realized that mothers want their children to be what they are not and not to be what they are. Mothers hold out their love like a carrot- a prize for good behaviour. This love is not unconditional and can, sometimes be taken away. Mothers can be partial and even play off one child against another.

As Deshpande grew older, she came to realize a few more things-that mothers thwart their children's ambitions, stifle their desires and try to get things through their children. A mother's sacrifice can become a rope to tether her children to herself and it can be used as a weapon in the never-ending mother-child warfare.

Her actual experience of motherhood was very different from the ideal she had been taught to imagine. When she became a mother, the author knew that childbirth is not only a hideously painful process, but a cruel and ugly one as well. She howled like an animal in pain. Motherhood is achieved only after a painful physical struggle. She realized that she didn't suddenly change and become an entirely different person when she became a mother. She was the same person she had been earlier and she found out that motherhood is a state of vulnerability. Her own performance as a mother filled her with feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

Deshpande's mother had lost her mother when she had been only an infant and her idealization of this mother-role was a fantasy that she indulged in. And therefore, the guilt that she indulged in. And therefore, the guilt that the author heaped on herself was because she could in no way come near this fantasy figure. This fantasy is in the very air we breathe. This mother is a part of our lives, embedded in myths and stories.

And now, there are the movies. Our own movies carry this idea to the extreme. Movies portray a mother as pure and simple. All her dreams, her desires, her ambitions, her joys and sorrows centre on her children. There's nothing for herself. Even the thought of sexuality is blasphemy.

The author laughed at this white-clad unreal figure. She has mocked her and rejected her. Yet, she has an uneasy feeling that somehow that cliched stereotype has wriggled her way into her subconscious. There are so many questions that the author seems to have no answers for at all. She seems to be confused when she thinks of herself as a mother. She wrote a story called *Death of a child* in which a woman decides to abort an unwanted foetus. Later, she wrote a novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, which has a mother-daughter conflict at its core. Deshpande admits that both these stories are devoid of sentimentality. At the same time, she says that the mother figures in these stories can never be unloving because only when there is love is there conflict.

When one becomes a mother, one does not automatically shed all her personality and become just a mother. She is the same person who has lived and developed for years before becoming a mother. Motherhood is neither sacred nor holy-it is natural. Nature wants the women to nurture the child she has produced. The child becomes an extension of the mother. Nature's goal is birth and survival and nothing more.

Shashi Deshpande says that we have to accept the truth that mothers are human, as well as mothers. And, therefore, mothers can be selfish, mothers can be cruel, mothers can want freedom

from clinging- all this, even while they are loving their children and nurturing them. So, motherhood is something that cannot be calibrated.

It is when she comes to herself as a writer and a mother that things get even more complicated. Even before she began writing, motherhood affected her idea of herself as a thinking, intelligent and rational person. She began writing when her younger son was three. It was a casual desultory kind of writing at first. But, slowly it began to absorb her and the problems began. She then realized that writing can be as demanding as children. It can be as possessive as children. This is a struggle for any woman; for a mother it is hopeless.

However, Deshpande says that she got married, she had children, she began writing and none of these were conscious choices. She drifted into all of them. And she was determined to do justice to all these things. She realized that selflessness and creativity are uneasy partners. Creativity demands that you put yourself first. And to put oneself, one's work first- is to fail one's children. Children, even if they are proud of her achievements, are never very comfortable with the thought of their mother having a life of her own.

Bernard Shaw described parenthood as one of the most difficult professions. But people take up them without having any qualifications for it. Shashi Deshpande thinks that she was not qualified to be a mother. She was short-tempered, lacked patience, wanted freedom, hated to be clung to. She has been inefficient, confused, unreasonable, and tyrannical, screamed at her children, cried on their shoulders, and shared her sorrows with them. She wanted to be a very good mother, a friend to her children, always there when needed. But, she has not been able to do any of these.

She has rejected the concept of self-sacrifice or any sacrifice. What she did for her children was what she wanted to do. She has never tried to possess her children. The author suggests that the way to look at motherhood is to treat it as one of the many roles of a woman, not a state that defines her and puts her in a box, but a role that helps her to grow as a human being. 'I'm human being first and a mother next' she concludes.

Glossary

Page 89

Uncanny : mysterious

Nugget : bits; pieces

Page 90

Refuge : shelter from danger or distress

Bewilderingly : confusingly

Thwart : cross the path of; obstruct

Stifle : suffocate; choke

Tether : tie securely or bind

Howl : cry as a wolf or dog

Ignominy : public disgrace; humiliation

Page 91

Vulnerability	:	state of being liable to damage, pain etc.
Ecstasy	:	excessive joy
Torment	:	extreme pain; suffering
Rage	:	Violent anger; wrath
Trifle	:	thing of very little value
Tangle	:	mesh; confused knot
Unravel	:	make clear; solve
Snarl	:	a knotted or tangled mass

Page 92

Embedded	:	placed in a mass of matter
Instigated	:	incited
Squeezed	:	crushed
Perish	:	destroy
Blasphemy	:	(here) a very serious crime
Clichéd	:	out dated
Stereotype	:	fixed immovable types
Wiggled	:	twist to and fro
Lurk	:	lie in wait; be concealed

Page 93

Abort	:	miscarry
Foetus	:	fully developed embryo in the womb
Devoid	:	destitute; free
Pliable	:	easy to be bent
Cuddling	:	holding close and lovingly in one's arms
Astound	:	overcome with surprise
Glimpse	:	momentary flash; hurried view
Nurture	:	bring up
Instill	:	introduce ideas etc. into one's mind
Clinging	:	holding tight
Sadistic	:	of getting pleasure from inflicting physical or psychological pain on another or others.
Batter	:	strike hard and often

Page 94

Calibrated	:	adjusted; regulated
Wrench	:	a violent twist
Wail	:	cry; lament
Rationalization	:	bringing into conformity with reason
Morass	:	mess; chaos
Desultory	:	skipping from one subject to another without order; unmethodical

Page 95

Conserve	:	keep from change, loss or destruction
Kathe Kollwitz	:	(1867-1945) German painter, etcher and lithographer
Fritters	:	wastes; squanders

Page 96

Bernard Shaw	:	George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) Dublin born critic, playwright and novelist
Whack	:	strike with a hard blow
Monster	:	grotesque animal
Haunt	:	frequent; intrude upon continually
Facet	:	one side of a cut gem

Page 97

Toting	:	adding, here, carefully nurturing like a small child
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Answer the following questions.

1. *That Long Silence* is written by.....
Shashi Deshpande
2. Patriarchy literally means.....
father's rule
3. According to Deshpande, motherhood is neither sacred nor holy, it is.....
natural
4. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is written by.....
Shashi Deshpande

Short Answer Questions

1. What was the ideal of motherhood that Shashi Deshpande had during her childhood?

When she was a child, she had learnt that a mother is like God. To hurt her is to commit a sin. She learnt that a mother is constantly sacrificing herself for her children. She also learnt that love springs naturally and spontaneously in her the moment she became a mother and that nobility and goodness follow just as naturally.

2. Why Shashi Deshpande says that mothers hold out their love like a carrot?

Shashi Deshpande says that mothers hold out their love like a carrot—a prize for good behaviour. This love is not unconditional and can be taken away at anytime. Mothers can be partial and even play off one child against another.

3. What does Shashi Deshpande tell about her childbirth experience?

When Deshpande became a mother, she knew that childbirth is not only a hideously painful process, but a cruel and ugly one as well. She howled like an animal in pain. Motherhood is achieved only after a painful physical struggle.

4. What does Shashi Deshpande tell about motherhood?

According to Shashi Deshpande, motherhood is neither sacred nor holy, it is natural. Nature wants the mother to nurture the very vulnerable young life she has produced; it links her to it in such a way that the child becomes an extension of herself.

5. The author quotes Bernard Shaw about parenthood being a difficult job taken up by people who are not qualified for it. Explain what Shaw meant.

Bernard Shaw described parenthood as one of the most difficult professions. But people take up them without having any qualifications for it. He means that people should be taught how to be good parents before they become parents.

6. Explain the following in a couple of sentences each:

a) ... a mother's sacrifice can become a rope.

Mothers who say that they want nothing for themselves, try to get things through their children and thwart their children's ambitions. A mother's sacrifice can become a rope to tether her children to herself because it can be used as a weapon in the never-ending mother-child warfare.

b) ...mothers as shown in movies.

Movies portray a mother as pure and simple. She has no desires at all, not even the simplest one of hunger. All her dreams, desires, ambitions, joys and sorrows centre on her children.

C ...guilt is never far away.

Shashi Deshpande says that selflessness and creativity are uneasy partners. Creativity demands that you put yourself first. Children of all ages expect their mothers to put them first and so the author says that guilt is never far away.

Short Essay Question

1. Fantasy Mother

Shashi Deshpande, sometimes quarrelled with her children over some trifles. Much later, when she could look back on that period in her life with detachment, she could unravel some

facts before her. Deshpande's mother has lost her mother when she had been only an infant and her idealization of this mother-role was a fantasy that she indulged in. And therefore, the guilt that she heaped on herself was because she could in no way come near this fantasy figure. All of us are carrying these fantasy mothers about in their minds. This idea is in the very air we breathe. Thus mother is a part of our lives, embedded, in myths and stories. There is the story of the mother who so loved her son. She could deny him nothing. And so the son instigated by the cruel young woman he loved, asked her for her heart. And when he was rushing to his beloved with his mother's heart in his hand, he fell and the heart said, "my son, my son have you heart yourself?" No woman can refuse the halo such a story promises all mothers.

Essay Question

1. Explain Shashi Deshpande's attitude towards motherhood in the light of her essay "Learning to be a Mother".

All patriarchal societies consider woman as mother and nurturer and such an image of the woman is deeply ingrained in the human psyche. Many people think that the most important role of a woman in life is to become a mother and thereby fulfilling her destiny. Shashi Deshpande questions this very concept of motherhood. She does not consider motherhood as a sacred one. To her, motherhood is one among the many roles a woman has to perform.

When she was a child, she had learnt that a mother is like God. To hurt her is to commit a sin. She learnt that a mother is constantly sacrificing herself for her children. She learnt that a mother is one's refuge. She learnt that childbirth is a painful but joyous process. Love springs naturally and spontaneously when one becomes a mother and mobility and goodness descend upon her naturally. She also learnt that a mother can never be unjust or unfair.

But, even as a child, she realized that mothers hold out their love like a carrot-a prize for good behaviour. This love is not unconditional and can, sometimes be taken away. Mothers can be partial and even play off one child against another. As she grew older, she came to realize a few more things - that mothers can thwart their children's ambitions. A mother's sacrifice can become a rope to tether her children to herself. It can be used as weapon in the never-ending mother-child warfare.

When Deshpande became a mother, she knew that childbirth is not only a hideously painful process, but a cruel and ugly one as well. She realized that she didn't suddenly change and become an entirely different person when she became a mother. She was the same person she had been earlier and she found out that motherhood is a state of vulnerability. Her actual experience of motherhood was very different from the ideal she had been taught to imagine. And her own performance as a mother filled her with feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

Deshpande says that there is a fantasy mother figure in everybody's mind. This mother is a part of our lives, embedded in myths and stories. Movies carry this idea to the extreme. Movies portray a mother as pure and simple. To them she is an embodiment of selfless love. When one becomes a mother, one does not automatically shed all her personality and become just A Mother.

Deshpande says that motherhood is neither sacred nor holy, it is natural. Nature wants the mother to nurture the vulnerable young life she has produced; it links her to it in such a way that the child becomes an extension of herself.

She says that when a mother becomes a writer, things get even more complicated. The author means that selflessness and creativity do not go together. Creativity demands that you put yourself first. Children expect their mothers to put them first and so she says guilt is never far away. But the author rejected the concept of self-sacrifice or any sacrifice. What she did for her children was what she wanted to do. She has never tried to possess her children.

The author suggests that the way to look at motherhood is to treat it as one of the many roles of a woman, a role that helps her to grow as a human being. And she came to the conclusion that she was a human being first, a mother next.

UNIT – 2

DINNER FOR THE BOSS

BHISHAM SAHNI

Objectives

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

- i) get the modern day reality about mother - son relationship
- ii) understand the problems that the old face in today's society

About the Author

Bhisham Sahni (1915-2003) is one of the most distinguished of contemporary writers in India. He pursued an academic career as well as a creative one, being both a creative writer and a lecturer at a Delhi University college. His first collection of short stories *Bhagya Rekha* (The Line of Fate) was published in 1953. He has translated several Russian books into Hindi. He has also edited a literary journal called *Nai Kahaniyan*. His novel *Tamas* earned him his name and fame which won him Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. It is one of the most powerful novels about the Partition of India ever written. Written thirty years after the Partition, the narrative is both non-judgemental and reflective. The chilling memories of the blood bath and the thought-provoking analysis of the consequences of communalism are relevant in present day India too. He has published seven novels and nine collections of short stories.

Apart from the Sahitya Akademi Award, he won many other awards including the Distinguished Writer Award of the Punjab Government, the Lotus Award of the Afro Asian Writers' Association and the Soviet Land Nehru Award. In 1998, he was given the Padma Bhushan by the President of India.

Introduction to the Passage

There is a general belief that women are always dependent on men throughout their lives. Girls and women are told from an early age that men are their protectors. Women are daughters, wives and mothers of men. Their identity is derived from these relationships, and their worth is weighed in

these terms. They are 'dependents' of the men, and therefore their subordinates. Indeed, Indian society still struggles to define and 'slot' any woman who does not fall into these pre-defined categories. If a woman is unmarried, she may be suspected to be a woman of loose morals; if she has no children, she may be seen as a curse on her husband's and if she is a widow, she could be hastily bundled away somewhere where her inauspicious shadow cannot touch others.

Too often, when a woman has completed her 'useful' life of bearing and raising children, she is treated as a non-person by her own family; a burden to be endured rather than a treasure to be cherished, a source of embarrassment rather than pride, a creature whose emotions and feelings mean less than nothing. This is the story of one such unfortunate old lady.

Summary

The story is about an old lady, her son Mr. Shamnath and his wife. Mr. Shamnath and his wife were busying themselves with arranging the rooms for the visit of the boss and his friends. Chairs, tables, side tables, napkins, flowers, they were all there on the verandah, neatly arranged. Suddenly a problem reared up before Shamnath. What about mother? He did not know what to do with the old woman. He did not want his old mother to come before the boss and so he discussed the matter with his wife.

First, they thought of sending her to the next door old woman. But they soon gave up that idea. Then Shamnath suggested a plan that they could tell his mother to finish her meal early and retire to her room so that his boss and his friends wouldn't see her. Even though the proposition sounded right, Shamnath's wife said that it would not be a good idea. The old lady had the habit of snoring and since her room was next to where dinner would be served, the guests would know about her presence.

He was very anxious to please his boss. He turned round and looked at his mother's room. Her room opened onto the verandah. As his gaze swept over the verandah, a thought flashed through his mind. He went to his mother's room. Since morning his mother had been nervous at the goings-on in the house. She seemed to be very anxious because she knew that the big boss from her son's office was coming to their house and she wished everything should go well.

When Shamnath told his mother to finish her meal early that evening, she reminded her son that she would have to skip dinner because meat was cooked in the house. Mr. Shamnath had fixed everything. But he still felt anxious. He arranged his mother like a puppet or a rag doll in a chair in the Verandah. He told her not to snore, not to sit with her feet lifted up.

As time passed, mother's heart started pounding heavily. If the boss came to her and asked her some question, what would she say? She was scared of English Sahibs. She felt like going away to her widow-friend, but she lacked the courage to defy her son's orders. She kept sitting there, dangling her legs from the chair.

Mr. Shamnath's dinner had reached a crescendo of success. Everything was going superbly. The Sahib liked the Indian dishes and the Memsahib the curtains, the sofa covers, the decor. After dinner, they came out of the drawing room. When they reached the Verandah Mr. Shamnath saw his mother sitting exactly as he had left her but both her feet were on the seat and her head swayed from side to side. She snored, heavily. Mr. Shamnath seethed with anger.

The Sahib walked up to Shamnath's mother and greeted her with a 'namaste'. He extended his right hand and shook hands with her. Shamnath was nervous and had been trying to impress upon

the boss that his mother was an illiterate, ignorant village woman. But everybody was so impressed with the old woman's simplicity. They wanted her to sing. And she sang two lines of an old wedding song. Everybody was so happy and Shamnath's anger suddenly changed into joy.

When all the guests had departed, Mr. Shamnath went to his mother and thanked her. He wanted his mother to make a *phulkari* for his boss. Then she expressed her wish to go to Haridwar and spend the rest of her life there in meditation. But Mr. Shamnath told his mother to stay there and also wanted her to make a *phulkari* for his boss so that he could please his boss and thereby get a promotion. At last she agreed to her son's wish.

There are deep bonds that bind this mother and son. They share a history. They are what they are, and they will continue in the orbits they have made for themselves. Unseen, unrecognized, the contours of the relationship have been drawn over the decades. But the origins of the relationship are rooted in the age-old image of a mother as a giver, carer, and sacrificer to the very end of her life.

Glossary

Page 99

Assign	:	allot; give
Cue	:	catch word
Inauspicious	:	unlucky; ill-omened

Page 100

Provoke	:	excite; rouse
Tangled hair	:	twisted hair

Page 101

Smudged	:	smeared
Bric-a-brac	:	old curiosities
Reared	:	lifted; erected
Dangling	:	hanging loosely from
Hag	:	an ugly old woman
Proposition	:	proposal, statement

Page 102

Promptly	:	quickly
Nuisance	:	offence, annoyance

Page 103

Stickler	:	one who stickles or insists
Meticulous	:	over careful about details
Oddity	:	strangeness
Shrivel	:	contract or wither into wrinkled state

Lack-lustre : lacking energy or vitality

Dubiously : doubtfully

Loafer : One who wastes time

Page 104

Defy : resist openly

Crescendo : reaching maximum loudness

Regale : give pleasure

Jovial : gay; merry

Anecdotes : short, usually amusing, stories about some real person or event

Cynosure : centre of attraction

Page 105

Seethe : be agitated by anger

Titter : laugh with a stifled sound

Flustered : nervous or confused

Expansive : open; liberal

Clumsy : awkward

Giggle : laugh in a nervous and silly way

Mumble : speak indistinctly

Ebb : decline

Page 106

Couplet : two lines of verse

Pomegranate : a round fruit with a thick reddish skin which contains lots of small seeds with juicy flesh around them.

Imploring : earnestly requesting

Asperity : roughness; harshness

Feeble : weak

Pathetically : sadly; pitifully

Veered : changed direction

Page 107

Crumble : break into small pieces

Rattle : clatter

Page 108

Dozed off	:	fell half asleep
Frail	:	weak
Suffuse	:	pour over

Page 109

Get a lift	:	get a higher post
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Answer the following questions.

1. *Bhagya Rekha* is a collection of short stories written by.....
Bhisham Sahni
2. Bhisham Sahni won the Sahitya Akademy Award for.....
Tamas
3. Mr. Shamnath wanted to please his boss for.....
getting promotion
4. Shamnath wanted his old mother to make a.....for his boss.
Phulkari

Short Answer Questions

1. What was the problem that reared up before Shamnath?
Shamnath had invited his boss to dinner and so he busied himself with arranging the rooms. Suddenly a problem reared up before Shamnath. What about mother? He did not know what to do with the old woman. He did not want his boss to see his mother.
2. What did Mr. Shamnath want his old mother to do?
Shamnath wanted his mother to finish her meal and retire to her room early. He also told her not to snore and not to sit with her feet lifted up.
3. Why did mother's heart start pounding heavily?
Shamnath's mother was an illiterate woman. She was scared of English Sahibs and she had no idea what to reply when Shamnath's boss asked her some question. Her heart began to pound heavily at these thoughts.
4. How did the Sahib behave to Shamnath's mother?
The Sahib politely greeted the mother with a 'namaste' and extended his right hand and shook hands with her. He was greatly impressed with the old woman's simplicity and straight forwardness.
5. Why did Shamnath object to his mother's request to go to Hardwar?
If his mother went to Hardwar, then there would be nobody to make a *phulkari* for the boss. And so it would affect his chance for promotion. That is why he objected to his mother's request.

Short Essay Question

1. How did Mr. Shamnath entertain his boss?

Mr. Shamnath had invited his boss to dinner. Mr. Shamnath and his wife busied themselves with arranging the rooms. Chairs, tables, side tables, napkins, flowers, they were all there on the verandah, neatly arranged. A bar was improvised in the drawing room. He did not want his boss to see his old mother. He took extreme care to entertain his boss. Mr. Shamnath's dinner had reached the crescendo of success. The topics changed with every change of drinks. Everything went superbly. The Sahib liked the Indian dishes and the Memsahib the curtains, the sofa covers, the decor. The Sahib had shed his reserve and regaled the audience with anecdotes. The Sahib chanced to see Shamnath's mother and he was impressed with her simplicity. Shamnath's mother sang two lines of an old wedding song at his request. Shamnath wanted his mother to make a phulkari so that he could present it to his boss. In this way, he entertained his boss.

Essay Question

1. Comment on the relationship between Shamnath and his mother in the story "Dinner for the Boss"

The story, "Dinner for the Boss", revolves round the relationship between Mr. Shamnath and his old mother. Women have been assigned their roles in the grand drama of life, and the scripts are handed out in early childhood, so that they can become word-perfect and never miss a cue. Too often, when a woman has completed her 'useful' life of bearing and raising children, she is treated as a non-person by her own family; a burden to be endured rather than a treasure to be cherished, a source of embarrassment rather than a pride, a creature whose emotions and feeling mean less than nothing. Bhisham Sahni presents such an unfortunate old lady in this story.

Mr. Shamnath does not have any real concern for his mother's feelings. When he invites his boss to his house for dinner, he is very much worried about his old mother. He does not want his old mother to appear before the boss. So he gives his mother some instructions to keep her away from the sight of his boss. He tells his mother to finish her meal and retire to her room early that evening so that his boss will not see her. When he is reminded that she will have to skip dinner because meat was cooked in the house that day, he is indifferent.

Mr. Shamnath wants to please his boss because he expects a promotion. And so he does not want his old mother to come before his boss and spoil the great chance. He arranges his mother like a puppet or a rag doll in a chair in the verandah. He tells her not to snore, not to sit with her feet lifted up. However, his boss chances to see the old lady and he is very much impressed with her simplicity and straight forwardness.

The boss is the device that the author uses to bring out the relationship between mother and son. Mr. Shamnath takes his cues from the boss, and so do the other guests. The boss greets the old lady politely; so Shamnath decides to let her interact with the guests. The boss wants the old lady to sing a song. And she has to sing two lines of an old wedding song at the command of her son. The boss and all the guests applaud her singing, so Shamnath tries to

use the occasion to impress his boss by talking about phulkari. Shamnath treats his old mother as a tool to manipulate to get what he wants.

Shamnath's mother asks her son for permission to go to Hadwar so that she might spend the rest of her life there in meditation. Shamnath objects to her request because if his mother goes to Hardwar there will be no one to make phulkari for the boss. In that case he will not get the promotion. This selfish thought makes him object to her request and not his love towards her. His mother protests that she is too old to start making a phulkari. But Shamnath reminds her about his promotion and so his mother agrees to make a phulkari for the boss. This shows the old lady's true love and affection towards her son Shamnath.

There are deep bonds that bind this mother and son. They share a history. They are what they are, and they will continue in the orbits they have made for themselves. But the origins of the relationship are rooted in the age-old image of a mother as a giver, carer, and sacrificer to the very end of her life.

UNIT – 3

ARUNA: BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

RINKI ROY BHATTACHARYA

Objectives

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

- (i) understand how gender stereotyping in childhood leads to unhappy marriages

About the Author

Rinki Roy Bhattacharya is the daughter of distinguished film maker Bimal Roy. She began her career as a freelance journalist in 1966 and had articles published in *The Economic Times*, *The Indian Express* and many other periodicals. Her deep involvement with films is due to her work in assisting her husband, Basu Bhattacharya in script writing, designing sets and costumes for several of his films that won National awards. She made her debut into making documentary films with *Char Diwari*, a documentary which deals with wife-beating. She has made a number of films and documentaries for the Department of Women and Children and for the Information Ministry. Her fictional work, *Unveiled* was commissioned by the Doordarshan. Her most significant works are *Behind Closed Doors* and *Janani: Mothers, Daughters and Motherhood*.

Rinki Bhattacharya has served as Jury at Cracow (Poland), Amsterdam International festival of Documentary films and Festival of Shorts and Documentaries, Mumbai, IAWRT. Rinki is the British Council Scholar (1995) and selected a VIP Guide for the Enduring Image Exhibition, Mumbai, 1998.

Introduction to the Passage

Both boys and girls learn early in life that they have to fulfill different expectations. This can be hard for both. Boys are being 'trained' for their future role as protectors, defenders and providers. Girls are being 'programmed' for their primary role as nurturer, caretaker, and housewife. Gender

stereotyping, the 'rehearsal' for adulthood, leads to unequal treatment in childhood. When a daughter in India is seen as a liability and a burden, it is logical to pay for the privilege of seeing her 'married off'. Despite all the laws and all the speeches, the dowry system still continues. Many poor families are ruined just by getting a daughter married in style. There is still no guarantee that she will be treated well or that her in-laws will not ask for more dowry. Like many other degrading systems, dowry too is often condoned as being part of 'tradition' and 'custom'.

The commodification of women and commercializing of the solemn rite of marriage are so routine that they are accepted as 'tradition' without questioning, even by educated young men and women. The girl, unable to heed her own instincts, unwilling to hurt her parents, unsure of what lies ahead, is 'married off'. This happens not only in poor rural families but in cultured, educated, middle-class families too. In this poignant account of a child bride whose marriage turned into a nightmare, Rinky Roy Bhattacharya paints the picture of a young girl whose life became a life sentence.

Summary

Aruna, a child bride, tender in years and emotions, was thrown into a loveless marriage with a much older, selfish, cruel and controlling tyrant. Her father did not ask Aruna's consent when he decided to marry her off. They were eight sisters. She was told by her father that her husband's was a wealthy family and they would allow her to finish her education. To Aruna's complaint of not seeing the boy, her father replied that he had seen the boy and also added that the marriage was for her own good.

She had implicit faith in her family, and although she was hurt and indignant inside, she could neither protest nor revolt. Her father told her that the boy was studying medicine and she could go abroad with him. She was plunged into a state of disbelief and confusion, and the very fact that she would be allowed to study compensated for the unreasonableness and suddenness of the whole thing.

During the traditional Bengali marriage-the moment of *subhodrishti* is literally the first glimpse of a bride has of her husband. Her *subhodrishti* was shockingly disappointing. He was so much older, and obese - contrary to her vision of the man she would want to marry.

The situation became worsened when she reached her in-laws' ancestral home in Jhansi. The feudal atmosphere, the women in purdah and the rules imposed on her stifled her. She was reminded all the time that she was the *bahu* of that wealthy family. The first night shocked her. She was forced to endure a sexual relationship with her husband. She had no say whether and when she would bear children.

Her husband Naren was always 'demanding'. He was a tyrant, a bully. During one of his violent outbursts against her, while running down the steps in fright, she fell and lost the child in her womb. After recovering from the miscarriage, she told her husband that she wanted to study. But he answered with an emphatic 'no'. He slapped her repeatedly. Unable to bear the insult and physical assault, she decided to end her life. But the attempt failed as the pistol was empty of cartridges. The mother-in-law was a helpless onlooker and she regretted that they should not have brought an educated girl like Aruna as their *bahu*. After some months, Naren's mother committed suicide.

After her mother-in-law's death, demands and restrictions on Aruna increased. Slowly Aruna began to conform to her new family life. She learned to cook, to entertain. Her three children became the reason for her living. She was not allowed to raise them according to her ideas of morality, or discipline. She could go out only with friends the family approved. She was beaten,

burned and physically abused to make her 'obedient'. When she tried to seek support from her parents, they sent her back to her in-laws to try and 'adjust'. Even when she attempted suicide, there was no change in the attitude of any member of the family.

She was traumatized and devastated. Unable to cope, she fled to another country. Her younger sister Gita helped her fly to the U.S. In the U.S Aruna resumed her education. Her first job was with a consulate. She did all kinds of odd jobs to maintain herself. Finally she took her Doctorate.

Her research was about women's issues. This helped her understand herself as well as others. She returned to India after all those years hoping to do something for the women there.

Post script

Aruna's experiences were recorded in the winter of 1982. Aruna had tried hard but failed to get the legal custody of her 14 year old son, Babloo. A lawyer friend suggested Aruna to forget her hopeless legal battle and whisk away her son to the U.S. She flew to Delhi in early February 1983. With the help of her air-hostess sister, Aruna took a midnight flight back to the U.S. with her son. In the course of the next few years, both her daughters joined Aruna. They married and settled down in the U.S. The twist in this tale was that her husband had a change of heart later in his life, and regretted his treatment of Aruna. She too found it in her heart to make a journey to nurse him through an illness.

The gender stereotyping that this husband and wife experienced in childhood almost certainly contributed to the turmoil of their marriage.

Glossary

Page 111

Cradle : swinging cot or bed
Nurture : upbringing

Page 112

Liability : obligation
Degrade : reduce to lower rank; debase
Negotiate : confer; bargain

Page 113

Solemn : devout; somber
Poignant : stinging; arousing pity or sadness

Page 114

Arbitrariness : randomness
Motivate : induce; provide with a motive

Page 115

Implicit : implied; involved
Plunged : immersed

Glimpse	:	momentary flash
Pomp	:	great show
Pageantry	:	splendid display
Stifle	:	suffocate; choke
Segregate	:	separate from others; isolate
Page 116		
Tyrant	:	despot; oppressor
Bully	:	insolent quarrelsome fellow
Resentful	:	showing bitter feelings
Humiliate	:	mortify
Indignant	:	angry; scornful
Page 117		
Dominate	:	have commanding influence over
Ruthless	:	cruel; pitiless
Corrupt	:	contaminate; pollute
Diatribes	:	bitter criticism
Page 118		
Inflict	:	impose
Degradation	:	deterioration; disgrace
Repulse	:	drive back; beat off
Unleash	:	free from a leash
Endure	:	tolerate
Page 119		
Assault	:	sudden attack; onslaught
Insane	:	mad; crazy
Alimony	:	allowance to a legally separated wife
Page 120		
Fend	:	ward off; offer resistance
Torrential	:	violent, rushing water in a river
Fortitude	:	courage in adversity; power of endurance
Beacon	:	signal light
Gnaw	:	bite little by little
Scarred	:	marred or disfigured
Page 121		
Postscript	:	part added to a letter
Dejected	:	depressed

Page 122

Mellowed	:	calmed down
Profound	:	having great knowledge; deep
Herald	:	proclaim; announce
Enhance	:	increase

Answer the following questions.

1. *Behind closed Doors* is a work by.....
Rinki Roy Bhattacharya
2.means the first glimpse of a bride has of her husband.
Subhodrishti
3. Aruna's younger sister Gita was.....
an air hostess
4. Aruna's research was about.....
women's issues

Short Answer Questions

1. What was the culture shock Aruna experienced when she reached her in-laws in Jhansi?
The feudal atmosphere, the women in purdah, and the strict rules imposed by the males in the house stifled her. She was not used to an atmosphere of this kind.
2. What was Naren's reaction when Aruna expressed her wish to study?
When Aruna told her husband that she wanted to study, he answered with an emphatic 'no'. He slapped her repeatedly.
3. What was the attitude of Naren's mother towards Aruna?
Naren's mother was sympathetic and she regretted that they should not have brought an educated girl like Aruna as bride to the conservative village family. She did not want Aruna to endure the same tyranny she had.
4. Who helped Aruna fly to the US and how did she spend her days there?
Aruna's sister Gita was a hostess with an international airlines. She helped her fly to the U.S. There she resumed her education, worked in a consulate. She did all kinds of odd jobs to maintain herself. Finally she took her Doctorate.
5. How did Aruna's research help her?
Aruna's research was about women's issues. This helped her understand herself as well as others. Her pain had become universal. She returned to India hoping to do something for the women here.
6. What was the lawyer friend's suggestion to Aruna?
Aruna's lawyer friend suggested her to forget her hopeless legal battle and whisk her son away.

7. What was the most amazing climax of Aruna's life?

The most amazing climax of Aruna's life was how her husband transformed himself. Age had mellowed Das. He bowed before Aruna. Das realized that his power tools for emotional blackmail were useless.

Short Essay Question

1. Naren's attitude towards his wife Aruna.

Aruna was married off at the age of 15 to a much older, selfish and cruel dominating tyrant. Naren was interested in her body, in her flesh. He behaved like a beast. She was forced to endure a sexual relationship with her husband. She had no say in whether and when she would bear children. This violent element in his nature stifled her. He was always dominating. During one of his violent outbursts against her, while running down the steps in fright, she fell and lost the child in her womb. After recovering from the miscarriage, she told her husband that she wanted to study. But Naren answered with an emphatic 'No'. He used abusive language against her and slapped her repeatedly. She was traumatized and devastated. So she fled to the U.S. In course of time, a wonderful transformation occurred to her husband. He regretted his cruelties to Aruna.

Essay Question

1. Explain the element of domestic violence in the story 'Aruna: Behind closed Doors'.

In this story "Aruna: Behind Closed Doors", Rinki Roy Bhattacharya paints an unforgettable word picture of a young girl whose life became a life sentence. In traditional societies, marriage can often be an unequal partnership with unfair distribution of rights and responsibilities. The man's instinct to dominate and control is probably a throwback to the subtle messages he received right from childhood. The girl, unable to heed her own instincts, unwilling to hurt her parents, unsure of what lies ahead, is married off. Aruna in this story is such a girl.

Aruna was married off at the age of 15 to a much older, selfish and cruel dominating tyrant. Her father, though liberal in outlook, did not seek her consent when he decided to marry her off. She was told that her husband was a rich man and the family would allow her to continue her education. When Aruna said that she had not seen the 'boy' her father said that they had seen him. She was not allowed to have her own choice.

Her 'Subhodrishti' was shockingly disappointing. He was older, obese-contrary to her vision. The situation became worsened when she reached her in-laws' home in Jhansi. The feudal atmosphere, the women in purdah, and the strict rules imposed by the males in the house stifled her. She was not used to such an atmosphere before. She was always reminded that she was the 'bahu' of that wealthy family. The first night shocked her. Her husband was interested in her body, in her flesh. She was forced to endure a sexual relationship with her husband. She had no say in whether and when she would bear children. This violent element in his nature stifled her.

Naren was always demanding. He was a tyrant, a bully. During one of his violent outbursts against her, while running down the steps in fright, Aruna fell and lost the child in her womb. After recovering from the marriage, she told Naren that she wanted to study. But he answered with an emphatic 'No'. He slapped her repeatedly. Unable to bear the insult and

physical assault, she decided to end her life. But the attempt failed as the pistol was empty of cartridges. When she tried to seek support from her parents, they sent her back to her in-laws to try and adjust. Her own parents did not offer the emotional support she needed.

Aruna was not supposed to have friends. She was expected to serve her husband and his parents even at the cost of her own sleep and health. Slowly she began to conform to her new family life. Her three children became the reason for her living. She was traumatized and devastated. She fled to the U.S. with the help of her younger sister Gita, after failing in the attempt to get legal separation from her husband. There she resumed her education, worked in a consulate. Finally she took her Doctorate. In course of time, a wonderful transformation occurred to her husband. He regretted his cruelties to Aruna.

The gender stereotyping that this husband and wife experienced in childhood certainly contributed to the turmoil of their marriage. This may determine how people manage their relationships with the opposite sex.

UNIT – 4

CHILD MARRIAGES ARE LINKED TO POVERTY

USHA RAI

Objectives

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

- (i) understand the evil practice of child marriage.
- (ii) know the major reasons that lead to child marriages.

About the Author

Usha Rai started her career as a press reporter more than four decades ago. Since then she has published many books and specializes in the development and education sectors, women's issues, environment and rural development as well as NGO movements. She is also a founder member of the Indian Women's Press Corp in Delhi and has been Deputy Director, Press Institute of India. Usha Rai, a pioneer in writing on women's empowerment issues has been focusing on the falling sex ratio of the girl child due to sex selective abortions. She is the recipient of the Chameli Devi Award and F.A.O. UN Award.

Introduction to the Passage

Child marriage is an evil social practice. In spite of all efforts to stop this evil custom it continues. Laws are defied, pleas by social workers are spurned, and even specific bans are ignored. Child marriage is still common in many parts of India, notably in Rajasthan, where an auspicious time of the year is set aside for mass marriages of children. The child brides are sometimes only two years old. The girls are 'married off', often with money changing hands among the families, and are often brought home again to work in the fields or tend the goats till puberty signals the departure to the in-laws' home.

Child marriage that persists even in the Twenty first century despite decades of campaigning and legislation against it, must be a symptom of a very deep-rooted disease. Many activists and social workers are convinced that this disease is poverty. So it becomes essential to eradicate poverty at the early as possible.

Summary

There is a wise saying in Rajasthani to the effect that “till a girl can grind five kilograms of wheat and carry two pots of water, she is not old enough to go enough to go her in-laws”. This means that a girl is marriageable at the age of 15 or 16 which is when she is equipped to do the above work.

‘Akha Teej’ is an occasion in which thousands of marriages will take place all over Rajasthan irrespective of whether the bride is two or 15 years old. For three to four days all work ceases in fields, factories and government offices as it is the marriage season and time for rejoicing.

Rajasthan has a very good women’s development programme, which sets as a model for the rest of the country. But it seems to have done nothing to stop the practice of child marriage. The women’s department was able to stop 13 child marriages with the help of the police and the panchayat samities. But it failed to prevent two cases of child marriages in which the girls were married to men old enough to be their fathers for a bride price. Six-year-old Thanedharni of Ramghar panchayat samiti, Jaipur district, was married to 40 year Bodh Ram for bride price of 16,000 claimed by the girl’s alcoholic father.

At Vatika village of Sanganer panchayat samiti, also in Jaipur district, a 14 year old was married to a man of 45 with a wife and four children. The marriage could not be stopped because the girl’s uncle, who had given shelter to her and her widowed mother, had been promised a bride price of Rs.30,000. Young girls are often sold off to much older men for a few thousands of rupees. The lure of the money is too strong for the law to stop it.

The women’s department has no objection to a woman living with any man of her choice but it rightly views with concern the sale of young girls for a bride price to much older men. The District Women’s Development Agency (DWDA) encourages parents to put in a fixed deposit the money they would spend on the wedding. The interest gathered can be used for the same girl’s wedding after a few years.

The author mentions that social workers find it easier to influence poorer families to postpone child marriages rather than the richer families of some communities. So poverty is not the only disease here. Tradition is one of the hardest things to fight. When everyone in the village is arranging early marriages for their daughters, it would be very difficult for parents to go against the trend and face criticism.

The deep-rooted custom of child marriage is based on economic and social compulsions. While urban intellectuals denounce child marriages, the villagers are agonized by their poverty. If their economic status improves, the number of child marriages would automatically go down.

In dalit families in Rajasthan, child marriage is said to have some ‘advantages’. The girl is out grazing cattle the whole day, and even if she is raped her in-laws will still accept her. The parents feel relieved of their responsibility when the girl is married.

The child Marriages Restraint Act of 1978 has failed to be a deterrent because the punishment is too mild, a fine of Rs.1000 and simple imprisonment of 15 days. If the groom is between 18 and 21 years of age women are exempt from punishment.

Since customs and traditions are too strong, Rajasthan’s social workers are asking villagers to delay the ‘Muklava’, the young bride’s entry into the house of her husband.

One word Answer Questions

1. The term 'Muklava' means.....
the bride's entry into the house of her husband
2. Akha Teej is an occasion when.....
hundreds of little boys and girls enter into matrimony
3. DWDA is.....
the District Women's Development Agency

Short Answer Questions

1. 'Customs and traditions cannot be washed away. What does the author mean?
Like any other deeply entrenched social custom, child marriage too cannot be wiped away by legislation or persuasion alone. Rajasthan's social workers fail to stop child marriages and for the time being they request the villagers to delay the 'Muklava', the young bride's entry into the house of her husband.
2. The author says, "child marriages keep women from developing to their full potential". How and why?
Poverty, tradition and age old custom are some of the chief reasons for child marriages. Girls between two and fifteen years old are often married off to much older men for a few thousands of rupees and thus they are kept from developing to their full potential. They are deprived of education.
3. The punishment for the girl's father in the case of a child marriage is a fine of Rs.1000 and or imprisonment for 15 days. Is this enough to discourage the practice?
As the punishment is too mild, it cannot discourage the practice of child marriage. If the groom is between 18 and 21 years of age, women are exempt from punishment.
4. What is Akha Teej?
Akha Teej is an occasion in which thousands of marriages will take place all over Rajasthan irrespective of whether the bride is two or 15 years old. For three to four days all work ceases in fields, factories and government offices as it is the marriage season and time for rejoicing.
5. Why is child marriage said to have some advantages in dalit families?
In dalit families in Rajasthan, child marriage is said to have some advantages. The girl may be out grazing cattle the whole day, but even if she is raped, her in-laws would accept her. The parents feel relieved of their responsibility when the girl is married. She is not however, sent to her new home till she is 13 or 14.

Short Essay Question

1. Discuss whether poverty is the main reason for child marriage. What other reasons do you think possibly exist?

Child marriage is a social evil which is still common in many parts of India, particularly in Rajasthan. Poverty, tradition and age old custom are responsible for child marriages. The deep rooted custom of child marriage is based on economic and social compulsions. While urban intellectuals denounce child marriages, the villagers are agonized by their poverty. When everyone in the village is arranging early marriages for their daughters, it would be very difficult for parents to go against the trend and face criticism. Early marriages also give security to a girl of a lower caste. She may be out grazing cattle the whole day, but even if she is raped, her in-laws would accept her. The parents feel relieved of their responsibility when the girl is married. She is not, however, sent to her new home till she is 13 or 14. Parents who have agricultural land and cattle tend to keep the girls with them as long as they can help them in the fields. The child marriages Restraint Act of 1978 failed to be a deterrent because the punishment is too mild, a fine of Rs.1,000 and simple imprisonment of 15 days.

Essay Question

1. Explain the evil practice of child marriage that persists in Rajasthan even today.
Child marriage is an evil social practice which is still common in many parts of India, notably in Rajasthan, where an auspicious time of the year is set aside for mass marriages of children. Sometimes, the child brides are only two years old. They are 'married off' often with money changing hands among the families, and are then brought home again to work in the fields or tend the goats till puberty signals the departure to the in-laws' home.

Poverty, tradition and age old custom are responsible for child marriages. The deep rooted custom of child marriage is based on economic and social compulsions. While urban intellectuals denounce child marriages, the villagers are agonized by their poverty. Tradition is one of the hardest things to fight. When everyone in the village is arranging early marriages for their daughters, it would be very difficult for parents to go against the trend and face criticism.

Akha Teej comes around every year, and hundreds of little boys and girls enter into matrimony. They are between two and fifteen years to age. For three to four days all work ceases in fields, factories and government offices as it is the marriage season and time for rejoicing. In dalit families in Rajasthan, child marriage is said to have some 'advantages'. The girl may be out grazing cattle the whole day, but even if she is raped, her in-laws would accept her. She is not, however, sent to her new home till she is 13 or 14. The parents feel relieved of their responsibility when the girl is married. Among Jats and Gujjars, who have agricultural land and cattle, parents tend to keep the girls with them as long as they can help them in the fields.

Rajasthan has a very good women's development programme. But it seems to have done nothing to stop the practice of child marriage. Young girls are often sold off to much older men for a few thousands of rupees. The lure of the money is too strong for the law to stop it. There is the District Women's Development Agency (DWDA) which encourages parents to put in a fixed deposit the money they would spend on the wedding so that it gathers interest and could be used a few years later, for the same girl's wedding.

Social workers find it easier to influence families of the lower castes who are poorer than those of affluent Baniyas and Jats. As far as possible the DWDA avoids police intervention. But in Rajpura Basti of Jaipur, police help was sought to stop the marriage of a

five-year-old. To no one's surprise, the police enforce the law only for poor families. When the rich get their little children married, the police look the other way. The child Marriages Restraint Act of 1978 failed to be a deterrent because the punishment is too mild, a fine of Rs.1,000 and simple imprisonment of 15 days.

Child marriage in Rajasthan is deeply rooted in traditions and customs that cannot be wiped away by legislation or persuasion alone. So Rajasthan's social workers request the villagers to delay the 'Muklava', the young bride's entry into the house of her husband. The winds of change must slowly erode this social practice till it begins to be seen as a matter of shame rather than pride.

UNIT – 5

ORGANISING FOR CHANGE

ELA BHATT

Objectives

- (i) how Ela Bhatt opened up a whole world of new opportunities to generations of rural women.

About the Author

Ela R. Bhatt (born 1933) began her career as a lecturer of English at the SNDT Women's University at Mumbai. She went on to become a trade unionist in the Textile Labour Association. She was a member of the Rajya Sabha and the Planning Commission of India. She has held important positions in a number of institutions and organizations in the course of her career namely the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad; Friends of Women's World Banking, India; International Coalition of Women and Credit, New York; world Commission on Urban Future, Berlin and Women in Informal Employment Globalising Organising, Boston. A lawyer by training, Dr. Bhatt is a respected leader of the international labour, co-operative, women, and micro-finance movements. She is best known as the founder and General Secretary of SEWA-Self Employees Women's Association.

Ela Bhatt received the Padma Shri in 1985 and the Padma Bhushan in 1986. In 1996 she received the Viswa Gurjari Award.

Introduction to the Passage

According to everyone's definition, the role of a woman as housewife does not count for anything. She is often considered as 'unemployed' while she is multi-tasking as cook, cleaner, caretaker of children and perhaps tutor. The most valuable job in life has no 'value' because it cannot be directly equated with money. A 'working wife', according to the accepted definition, is one who earns an income, usually by going out of the house to work. It may add to her value as a member of the family, and perhaps this may reflect in the way she is treated.

Equal pay for equal work is a demand that women's activists have been raising in many countries, with varying degrees of success. Men still earn more for similar jobs than women do, but the disparities are decreasing. With the help of social service organizations and activists, many rural women have shown that they can be enterprising, quick to learn, quality-conscious and ambitious.

Ela Bhatt founded SEWA (Self-employed women's Association), an organization that enjoys international fame for the way it has helped rural women to form co-operatives and become entrepreneurs. In this passage, she tells a series of happy accidents that led her to a fulfilling career and opened the door to opportunity and prosperity to thousands of women in rural India, who would otherwise have lived out their lives in aimless drudgery.

Summary

Ela Bhatt was born on September 7, 1933, into a Nagar Brahmin family in Ahmedabad. Her mother was Vanalila Vyas, the daughter of Dr. Manidhar Prasad who had been a freedom fighter. Her father was Sumant Bhatt, the son of a lawyer. She was greatly influenced by the rich cultural and political background of the two families.

She grew up in a large house in the old part of Surat. Her home was close to the house of the state Congress party president. At that time, the Congress party was struggling to free the country from the shackles of the British Empire. There was also a printing press nearby which printed pamphlets and newsletters for those who protested British rule. Ela was not allowed to go there because of the political atmosphere there. She saw a lot of political activity in her neighbourhood in the cause of India's freedom and also its suppression by the British.

Ela's mother had to discontinue her education because of her early marriage. So she decided to give her children higher education which was denied to her. Her mother wrote poems or ghasals. Ela's father was a lawyer. They spent their summer vacations travelling to the seashore, hill stations or forests. Her parents were very keen that their children should do well at school.

Ela was 14 years old and had just graduated from high school when India became independent on August 15, 1947. She got admitted to College, acquired a new bicycle and began to realize the dimensions of her own independence. Apart from the formal courses she learnt charcoal drawing, photography and music. As a member of the Youth Congress, she volunteered to participate in a sample census, riding around the slums of Surat everyday on her bicycle in the company of other volunteers. This experience opened her eyes to the terrible poverty in which the slum dwellers lived their whole lives. She met another volunteer Ramesh Bhatt and in the course of working together, they became fond of each other and wanted to get married. Her family disapproved of her choice of husband because he was from a poor family. They also disapproved of her visiting poor families in the slums. Ela won them over with quiet determination. She practised living in austerity for a whole year.

After finishing her law degree in 1955, she applied for a job with the Textile Labour Association (TLA) in Ahmedabad. She was selected and she was in put charge of a women's wing under TLA. She visited the slums where the women lived. She went everywhere on her Lambretta. The job gave her a chance to visit the women in their homes and to understand their specific problems.

In 1956, Ramesh Bhatt got a master's degree in both economics and law. Ela's parents were impressed and finally approved of her choice. They were married on April 20, 1956. After their marriage, they lived in a house on the campus of *Gujarat Vidyapith* where Ramesh had a teaching job. They lived in a Gandhian way, with service being their goal. Ela raised her two children. She applied for the post of assistant employment officer and was selected. But she found bureaucratic procedures a bit restricting and so she gave up her job to help the TLA prepare for the Indian National Trade Union Congress to be held in Ahmedabad in July 1968.

Two major events propelled her into the vocation she eventually chose. The first was the closing of two major textile mills in 1968. The men who were laid off were organizing protests and their wives did a variety of jobs as loaders, vendors, tailors, housemaids and so on. She realized that the informal sector had no work security or insurance. The second event was a communal riot in Ahmedabad. In 1969, there were riots between Hindus and Muslims. The TLA members were allowed to go out to restore peace and so she went with some others to the affected areas. It was her first contact with the horror of violent death.

She got a chance to attend a training programme in Israel offered by their national labour union, *Histadrut*. She realized how labour unions could also act as cooperatives. She felt excited by the thought of unionizing women not only against someone, but also for themselves. This visit provided her with the vital thrust she needed for her future work. She wrote an article about the low wages the head-loaders were given and it was published in newspapers. Effectively, the wages for head-loading went up.

Then she organized a meeting with the women who sold used garments. They willingly paid a membership fee of Rs.3 per year. That was the beginning of the self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). They registered SEWA as a labour union on April 12, 1972, with the help of the TLA. They surveyed eight urban trades and the core problem became apparent that the workers did not own their tools and they had no access to capital.

The idea of a bank of their own came from one of their workers, Chandraben. They started a cooperative bank called Manila SEWA Sahakari Bank Ltd. in May 1974. They created bank pass-books with photographs for identity, as many women were illiterate. However, many of them wanted to learn how to sign their own names and thus, banking led to literacy.

Glossary

Page 131

Hectic	:	busy
Disparity	:	inequality; difference
Blurred	:	stained
Outlet	:	the passage outward; means of exit or escape
Entrepreneur	:	one who undertakes an enterprise

Page 133

Vocation	:	a career or occupation
Shackles	:	fetters
Ostensibly	:	apparently
Pamphlet	:	small book; short essay
Sedition	:	incitement to rebellion
Resent	:	show bitter feelings
Inculcate	:	impress persistently
Gauge	:	measure; estimate

Page 134

Obvious	:	easily discovered or understood
Stunned	:	bewildered
Curb	:	restrain

Page 135

Unwittingly	:	unintentionally
Propel	:	drive forward; cause to move
Lay-off	:	to put an employee out of work, especially, temporarily

Page 136

Vendors	:	sellers
Scrap	:	fragment; remnant
Exorbitant	:	overpriced; very expensive
Vital	:	essential
Thrust	:	push or drive with force

Page 137

Pittance	:	scanty remuneration
Stoutly	:	strongly
Hurdles	:	obstacles
Uphill task	:	difficult work

Answer the following questions.

- Who found SEWA?
Ela Bhatt
- TLA is.....
Texile Labour Association
- The name of the national labour union in Israel is.....
Histadrut
- SEWA is.....
Self-Employed Women's Association

Short Answer Questions

- Why was Ela not allowed to go to the printing press?
The press printed pamphlets and newsletters for those who were protesting British rule and were largely underground for fear of being arrested for sedition. That is why Ela was not allowed to go there by her parents.

2. How did Ela meet Ramesh Bhatt?

When Ela was in her second year of college, India's first census was about to begin. Members of the Youth Congress were asked to help in conducting field tests in selected samples. That was when she met Ramesh Bhatt for the first time. He was energetic and handsome, an obvious leader.

3. Why did Ela's parents disapprove of Ramesh Bhatt?

Ela's parents disapproved of her choice of husband because Ramesh came from a poor family and was the son of a textile worker.

4. Who founded the Textile Labour Association (TLA)?

The TLA had been set up by Anasuyaben Sarabhai, Shankarlal Banker and Mahatma Gandhi. It was an association that had a reputation for settling disputes through discussions.

5. What were the two major events that propelled Ela Bhatt into the vocation?

The first was the closing of two major textile mills in 1968. The men who were laid off were organising protests and their wives did a variety of jobs to maintain their families. The second event was a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad.

6. What was the beginning of the Self-Employed Women's Association?

Ela Bhatt got a chance to attend a training programme in Israel organized by their national labour union, Histadrut. There she saw how labour unions could also act as cooperatives. Inspired by this, she organised a meeting with a group of women who sold used garments. They willingly paid a membership fee of Rs.3 per year. That was the beginning of the Self-Employed Women's Association.

7. How did banking lead to literacy?

The SEWA started a bank called Manila SEWA Sahakari Bank Ltd. in May 1974. They created bank pass-books with photographs for identity as many of the women were illiterate. However, many of them insisted on learning to sign their own names and thus, banking led to literacy.

Short Essay Question

1. The events that led to the establishment of SEWA.

In the course of her survey work, Ela Bhatt noted that there were thousands of women recycling waste cloth, making bidis, collecting scrap, stitching, vending vegetables and pulling carts. These jobs went unrecognized and earned them pitiful amounts. They were constantly borrowing money at exorbitant rates of interest. She felt sad about the enormous burdens that women carried in their daily lives. It was then she got a chance to attend a training programme in Israel organized by their national labour union, Histadrut. There she saw how labour unions could also act as cooperatives. She felt excited by the thought of unionizing the women not only against someone, but also for themselves. Coming back to India, she organized a meeting with a group of women who sold used garments. They willingly paid a membership fee of Rs.3 per year. That was the beginning of the Self-Employed Women's Association.

Essay Question

1. Describe how the life of a woman in a slum in Ahmedabad would have changed because of Ela Bhatt.

Ela Bhatt chose social service as her career so that she could empower the marginalised women and she became the beacon lighting up the path to a more meaningful life for many women. She altered people's attitude to poverty; she changed fixed mind-sets; she turned glum pessimism into optimism; and she drew a road map for other social workers to follow. Above all, she opened up a whole world of new opportunities to generations of rural women.

There are two major events that propelled her into the vocation of social service that she eventually chose. The first was the closing of two major textile mills in 1968. The men who were laid off were organizing protests and their wives did a variety of jobs as loaders, vendors, tailors, housemaids and so on. She realized that the informal sector had no work security or insurance. They were nameless and faceless as far as the state was concerned.

The second event was a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad. At that time, TLA members were allowed to go out to restore peace and so she went with some others to the affected areas. One might they saw bleeding corpses in the curfew areas. She helped to put the bodies onto a military truck to be taken to the public crematorium. It was her first contact with the horror of violent death. Many families had lost their homes and their jobs and were desperately poor.

In the course of her survey work, she noted that there were thousands of women recycling waste cloth, making bidis, collecting scrap, stitching, vending vegetables and pulling carts. These jobs went unrecognized and earned them pitiful amounts. They were constantly borrowing money at exorbitant rates of interest. Ela felt sad about the enormous burdens that women carried in their daily lives.

It was then she got a chance to attend a training programme in Israel organized by their national labour union, Histadrut. There she saw how labour unions could also act as cooperatives. She felt excited by the thought of unionizing the women not only against someone, but also for themselves. This visit provided her with the vital thrust she needed for her future work. Coming back to India, she organized a meeting with a group of women who sold used garments. They willingly paid a membership fee of Rs. 3 per year. That was the beginning of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). They started a cooperative bank called Manila SEWA Sahakari Bank Ltd. in May 1974. They created bank pass-books with photographs for identify, as many of the women were illiterate. However, many of them insisted on learning to sign their own names and thus, banking led to literacy. In this way, she opened the door to functional literacy for hundreds of women in Ahmedabad. She gave them self-respect and showed them the way to earn a livelihood.

UNIT – 6

MEDEA

NABANEETA DEV SEN

Objectives

- (i) understand how Nabaneeta Dev Sen portrays the man-woman relationship through her characters Manas and Rupa.

About the Author

Nabaneeta Dev Sen (born 1938) is a well known Bengali writer. A Professor of Comparative Literature at the Jadavpur University in Calcutta, Nabaneeta has made a study of the *Ramayana* and has translated Chandrabati's Bengali *Ramayana* of the sixteenth century to which she has added a critical introduction. She had dabbled in all genres, being a poet, a playwright and a novelist. Her fictions mainly reflect the social, political and psychological problems of contemporary Bengali life. They include comments on such social issues as the breakup of the joint family and the problem of the second generation Non Resident Indian families as well as AIDS, homosexuality and child abuse. She has received a number of Awards which include President's Award, the Padmashree and the award of the Sahitya Akademi.

Introduction to the Passage

The terms 'feminism' and 'Women's Movement' are often used interchangeably. Although both are concerned with women's right to equality, their origins and original emphasis were very distinct. Feminism is an ideology of resistance to men's scheme of organizing society with women as inferiors. It teaches both men and women to understand that women are not valued in the personal, social, political or cultural spheres as they should be. The Women's Movement began in Europe in the middle of the Nineteenth century in the form of a struggle for voting rights, legal rights and rights to property, and the right of a woman to have custody of her children if the marriage failed. In India, the women's movement has taken up a demand for reservations for women in parliament and legislatures; or to more severe punishment for rape, dowry harassment and violence against women; or to a ban on sex determination tests that lead to abortions of female foetuses. Women everywhere share a common cause that women should be equal partners with men in the journey and adventure of life.

Women's struggle for equality has a history. Ancient Greek myth speaks of Medea who was married to Jason. Jason, who went on the famous quest for the Golden Fleece, comes back to Corinth after his adventures to settle to a married life with Medea. But Jason had been unfaithful to Medea; he had married a princess for her wealth. He declares he still loves Medea and wants to share his life with her. He asks for her forgiveness. But Medea plans an elaborate and unusually cruel revenge on her husband, including the killing of their own children in front of his very eyes.

We can find Medea in many avatars, in the fertile creative imaginations of many writers. Playwright Nabaneeta Dev sen's Medea is called Rupa/Rupsa. Her modern 'Medea' shows us the depths of a woman's hurt and loss, and how she unerringly picks the most vulnerable spots in a man's armour to take her revenge.

Summary

The play begins on a deserted station platform. Manas, a middle-aged man is seated on a hold-all. He is striking matches in repeated attempts to light a cigarette. It is now that a woman enters and Manas is surprised to meet his wife. Manas enquires about the two children, Tutu and Ratan. But the woman pretends that she does not know the children. He calls the woman by her name 'Rupa' and asks her whether she remembers her Manas. She admits that her name is Rupsa Mullick. The man tells her that he is Manas Mullick. Then she says that the name sounds familiar.

When Manas again asks about the two children, she says that she got the children with the help of Mother Teresa and they are staying in a hostel. She also tells him that she is going to McCluskiegunj to bring the children home for the *puja* vacation. She says that they are orphans. Manas seems to be shocked to hear her referring to the children as orphans.

Manas tries to convince her that he is her husband by reminding her about the birth of their two children. He also tells Rupa about her sister-in-law Sonali. But Rupa says that she does not have a sister-in-law. Manas then realizes that Rupa is still angry with him and so he confesses everything to her. He says that he misses his two children Tutu and Ratan terribly.

Rupa seems to be firm in what she says. She says that her father married her off in great style with all the ceremonies. They lived in the railway quarters. Hearing this, Manas asks about the man that she is talking about as her husband. Then she says that her husband died in a train accident. Manas is all the more shocked to hear this. Rupsa then tells him that her husband had a little physical problem and was unable to have children. At this point, Manas gets angry and he tells her that Ratan was the reason they had to marry. Within hardly seven months of their marriage, Ratan was born.

Manas, then, confesses that he has been fraudulent at his job. He told everything to Sonali. It was Sonali who advised him to leave the country. He admits that he had no option but to run away. Rupsa still continues to talk in a way which confuses Manas.

Manas begs for her forgiveness. But Rupsa is furious. She wants to call the police to put Manas in jail. Manas falls at her feet and hiding his face in her lap, admits all his wrongs. She says that she has no children and she walks away leaving Manas in utter confusion.

When the play ends, Manas stands alone on the shadowy, dim, and empty stage. When all the sound and the moving lights fade, Manas sits down dejectedly on the hold-all, picks up his cigarette packet, and strikes a match.

After the play, the director comes to the stage and asks a question to the audience. To whom does this drama really belong: Jason or Medea?

If this drama belongs to Jason, in the guise of Manas, Why?

- (i) Manas was the one who started the whole chain of events by betraying Rupa and having an affair with the sister-in-law, Sonali.
- (ii) He is the one who approaches Rupa and starts the whole conversation which forms the body of the play.
- (iii) He is the one who is left alone on the station platform when the train has departed.

- (iv) He is the one who will never be sure what happened to his children.
- (v) He will doubt his own sanity. Was that really his estranged wife Rupa? Was she a stranger? Was she a ghost of his imagination?
- (vi) Manas is the real victim of this tragedy.

But if this drama belongs to Medea, in the guise of Rupa. Why?

- (i) She is the woman wronged; that is what the story is about.
- (ii) She holds the power to forgive or to take revenge.
- (iii) She has undergone stress and misery because her husband was unfaithful to her.
- (iv) She has had to bring up her children without a father.
- (v) Maybe she will regret her decision to reject his apology.
- (vi) Rupa is the real victim of this tragedy.

If this drama belongs to the man-woman relationship. Why?

- (i) In a marriage, the husband and wife come to know each others' weaknesses. They know what will hurt the other the most. When love turns to anger, gentleness can turn to revenge.
- (ii) Rupa knows instinctively that Manas will be hurt if she suggests that he was unable to have children. He will be hurt if she suggests that the children are not his at all.
- (iii) The story is not about one man and one woman. It is about betrayal, remorse and revenge.

If this drama belongs to the playwright. Why?

- (i) There was a Manas but no Rupa. The Rupa he saw and spoke to was only in his tortured imagination.
- (ii) There was a Rupa but no Manas. The Manas she met and talked to was only in her tortured imagination.
- (iii) Manas actually died in a train accident eight years ago. Or may be eight days ago. Rupa has gone almost insane after that. She imagines all kinds of things.
- (iv) There is a Manas, and there is a Rupa. But there is no railway station. The author imagines their meeting. After all, is it not a huge coincidence that these two should meet on a deserted station platform?

Glossary

Page 140

Scorn	:	extreme contempt; derision
Harassment	:	annoyance
Urge	:	stimulate
Humiliation	:	abasement; mortification

Page 141

Irresistible	:	too strong to be resisted
Gruesome	:	fearful; depressing
Unerring	:	making no error

Page 142

Dabble	:	sprinkle
Suburb	:	outlying part of a city or town
Intermittent	:	stopping and starting again

Page 143

Ridiculous	:	unreasonable; absurd
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Page 144

Foster children	:	adopted children
Ceaseless	:	without stopping
Frantic	:	furious; wildly excited

Page 145

Shreds	:	fragments
Embarrass	:	perplex; puzzle

Page 146

Vague	:	indistinct; doubtful
Vanish	:	disappear; fade
Agitate	:	stir violently; excite

Page 147

Gravely	:	seriously
Garbage	:	refuse; worthless matter
Rancid	:	fetid; disgusting
Stench	:	foul smell
Vivid	:	clear
Fetch	:	go and get
Freak	:	most unusual

Page 148

Aping	:	imitating
Impulsively	:	inclined to act suddenly without thought about the consequences

Page 149

Hassle	:	difficulty
Intolerable	:	unbearable
Exasperate	:	enrage; inflame
Confide	:	trust wholly
Anguish	:	extreme pain; agony
Fraudulent	:	take; counterfeit

Page 150

Swindler	:	person who cheats
Grab	:	snatch; seize

Page 151

Cherish	:	nurture; take care of
Trance	:	ecstatic or exalted state
Snub	:	rebuff
Nuisance	:	offence; annoyance

Page 152

Cacophony	:	disharmony
Deject	:	depress; sadden

Answer the following questions.

1. Manas' sister-in-law is.....
Sonali
2. The author of the Greek tragedy Medea is.....
Euripedes

Short Answer Questions

1. How does Manas describe the day when Ratan was born?

There was a storm the day Ratan was born. Rupa had been in great pain, suffering for three days. She was terrified each time the thunder rolled or the lightning struck and that was the month of Sravan.

2. What does Rupa say about her husband?

Rupa says that her husband was in the railways. They lived in the railway quarters. His frequent transfers made them more around a great deal. He died in a train accident.

3. Rupa tells Manas that the children are in a hostel in McCluskiegunj. Yet when she leaves, she says, 'McCluskiegunj? Where is that?' Why does she do this? Rupa is the woman wronged.

She has undergone stress and misery because her husband was unfaithful to her. She is insane to a certain extent and she wants to confuse her deceitful husband by her talk. That is why she wonders where McCluskiegunj is.

Short Essay Questions

1. After reading this play, do you feel more sympathy towards Manas or towards Rupa? Explain your reasons.

This drama belongs to Medea in the guise of Rupa. She is the woman wronged and that is what the story is about. Her husband had an affair with the sister-in-law, Sonali and so he has betrayed Rupa. Rupa has undergone stress and misery because of her husband's unfaithful nature. She has had to bring up her children without a father. When Manas meets her after ten years, he confesses that he has been fraudulent to her. It was Sonali who advised him to leave the country and now Manas feels extremely sorry for what he has done to Rupa. So he apologizes to Rupa. But Rupa denies everything and tells him that she does not know Manas and also tells him that they have no children by the names Tutu and Ratan. We are not sure whether she is sane or insane. All her reactions are the result of her sufferings and humiliation followed by his betrayal. Really, we feel more sympathy towards Rupa than towards Manas.

Essay Question

1. Comment upon the title of the play 'Medea'?

Nabaneeta Dev Sen's play 'Medea' has been modelled upon the famous play of Euripides' 'Medea'. The story is that of a passionate woman whose love turns into hatred when she was betrayed by her lover. In Euripides' 'Medea', the hero Jason has been unfaithful to his wife Medea because he marries another woman for her wealth. But later Jason declares he still loves Medea and wants to share his life with her. He asks for her forgiveness. Medea plans an elaborate and unusually cruel revenge on her husband, including the killing of their own children in front of his very eyes.

Medea is born again and again in many avatars in the many centuries and in many countries, in the fertile creative imaginations of many writers. Nabaneeta Dev Sen's Medea is called Rupa/Rupsa. Jason has taken on the likeness of Manas. Dev Sen's 'Medea' shows us the depths of a woman's hurt and loss, and how she unerringly picks the most vulnerable spots in a man's armour to take her revenge.

In Dev Sen's play, Medea is betrayed by Manas. Manas has been unfaithful to his wife as he had an affair with his sister-in-law Sonali. It was Sonali who advised Manas to leave the country. It is because of mere chance that Manas meets his wife on a deserted suburban railway platform. It is he who approaches Rupa and starts the whole conversation which forms the body of the play.

Rupa is the woman wronged and she holds the power to forgive or to take revenge. She has undergone stress and misery because her husband was unfaithful to her. She has had to bring up her children without a father. When Manas asks her about the children, she says that she does not have any children by the names Tutu and Ratan. Actually Rupa is trying to torture Manas denying his of his fatherhood. Rupa knows instinctively that Manas will be

hurt if she suggests that he was unable to have children. He will be hurt if she suggests that the children are not his at all.

Rupa is the real victim of this tragedy. Both the plays deal with the theme of betrayal, remorse and revenge. Hence the title 'Medea' seems to be very apt for this play.

UNIT -7

THE SUMMING UP

KAMALA DAS

Objectives

- (i) Appreciate the quality of Kamala Das' poetry.
- (ii) Address the gender issue.

About the Author

Kamala Das (1934-2009) is one of the most well known writers in India. She is known in Malayalam under the pseudonym Madhavikutty. In her later years, she converted to Islam and called herself Kamala Surayya. There are many short stories and poems to her credit. She is a confessional writer. Her work in three volumes in Malayalam (*Balyakala Smaranakal*, *Neermathalam Pootha Kalam* and *Ottayadi Pathakal*) can best be described as fictional autobiography and is noted for its eloquence and its lyrical simplicity. When *My Story* was published in Malayalam under the title *Ente Katha*, it attracted a lot of uncomplimentary response. Translated into many foreign languages, *My Story* is one of the most widely read of her works. Her poetry in English on love, betrayal and anguish celebrates the freedom that women yearn for. She founded a national political party, Lok Seva Party and it was unsuccessful.

Kamala was Vice Chairperson of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi and the Kerala Forestry Board. She is the recipient of the Asian Poetry Prize, the Kent Award of English Writing from Asian countries, Asan World Prize, Ezhuthachan Award, Sahithya Akademi Award, Vayalar Award, Kerala Sahithya Akademi Award and the Muttathu Varkey Award.

Introduction to the Poem

In her lifetime, a woman has to play many roles: in her family, in her household and in the outside world. Some she is born to do, some she is taught or forced to do and some she chooses for herself. In most societies, girls are trained from childhood to play the roles of daughter, wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. Many women, raised from girlhood to be wives and mothers, find that the roles are unfamiliar after all, and they have to write their own scripts as they go along.

Why should a woman not assert:

I am a poet. I am also a wife, a mother, a woman. But above all I am a poet. If that makes me a rebel, then that is what I am.

In doing this, she is not rebelling against the moral system. She is rebelling against the fixed and unfair slot that society has decided she should fit into, ignoring the individual in her.

Kamala Das had the courage to assert this throughout her adult life. As she awaited the end of life, her sensibility continued to reach beyond the issue of gender; it was a commentary on the entire human condition.

Summary

In this poem “The Summing Up”, Kamala Das makes an attempt to sum up her life. At the same time, she wonders how it is possible to do so in ten minutes or a few hundred words. It was an unscripted life, with no route maps to follow, no agenda to complete, no set goals to reach.

Kamala Das says that life is a voyage on the uncharted seas. Life is a flight over ports which have no radars to warn of dangers or to direct the right course of the flight. By “endless worship at plundered shrines”, Kamala Das means that life is a meaningless worship. In a plundered shrine the deity is missing. Worship at a deityless temple is of no use. It may be wasted devotion to undeserving causes or people. It may be her endless attempt to conform to meaningless traditions.

Kamala Das says that her arms which once embraced a dear one, with the scent of talc, are now weak and skinny. There is no one in that embrace. There was love once, but now it is changed to pain. The reference may be to the death of a child. Strangers have come to wipe her tears. She may be referring to the nurses and doctors who have come to tend her in the hospital.

The poet once wanted to change the world with her poetry, with her rhetoric. She wanted people to see the truth as she saw it. But now cynicism is in the driver’s seat and asks her what made her think that she could change the world.

As life ebbs, she is still raging against the tide. But she is also beginning to acknowledge that the end is near. Time’s fury is tamed and stilled as it waits for breath to cease. She appeals to the world not to judge her harshly, because she is their kith and kin. She has always expressed the complexities of the human condition, about things many of us experience but cannot verbalise. She has gathered all our laments into song.

Her summing up is not just the summing up of one life. It could be the summing up of life itself—the endless searches, the loves, the losses, the flying, the landing, the freedom, the dependence, and ultimately death. Poetry was Kamala Das’ life and her life itself was her best poem.

Glossary

Page 156

Require	:	demand; direct to do
Prompt	:	ready and quick in action
Assert	:	affirm positively
Pseudonym	:	a fictitious name assumed
Eloquence	:	persuasive speech; oratory

Page 157

Yearn	:	desire strongly
Voyage	:	long journey by sea
Uncharted	:	not explored

Plunder	:	seize goods by force; pillage
Withered	:	dry and shrivel up
Oyster	:	bivalve shellfish
Scent	:	pleasant smell
Tend	:	attend to
Linger	:	lag behind; to loiter

Page 158

Fury	:	rage
Jelled	:	solidified; crystallised
Kith and kin	:	friend and relation

Answer the following questions

1. Kamala Das is known under the pseudonym?
Madhavikutty
2.is Kamala Das' autobiography.
My story
3. "The strangers who have come to wipe my tears..." who could be the strangers?
The doctors and nurses who came to nurse her.

Short answer questions

1. What does Kamala Das mean by 'voyage on uncharted seas' and 'flight over radarless ports'?
Kamala Das says that her life was an unscripted life, with no route maps to follow, no agenda to complete, no set goals to reach. Life is a voyage on the unexplored seas. Life is also a flight over ports which have no radars to warn of dangers or to direct the right course of the flight.
2. What does the poet mean by 'endless worship at plundered shrines'?
In a plundered shrine the deity is missing. Worship at a deityless temple is of no use. Life is a meaningless worship. It may be wasted devotion to undeserving courses or people.
3. Why does Kamala Das say that 'the brackets of her withered arms' are empty?
Her arms which once embraced a dear one, a child with the scent of talc, are now weak and skinny. There is no one in that embrace now. The reference may be to the death of a child.
4. Comment on the line, 'I am your kith and kin/I gathered your laments into a song'.
She appeals to the world not to judge her harshly, because she is their kith and kin. She has always expressed the complexities of the human condition, about things many of us experience, but cannot verbalise. She has gathered all our laments into song.

Short Essay Question

1. Comment on 'The Summing Up' as a poem of summing up of life itself.

In this poem 'The Summing Up', Kamala Das makes an attempt to sum up her life. She wonders how it is possible to do so in ten minutes or a few hundred words. She says that her life was an unscripted life, with no route maps to follow, no agenda to complete, no set goals to reach. She was married at the age of 14 to a much older man. Thus she became a wife, a mother and yet the soul of a poet in her did not remain dormant. She rebelled against the social traditions. She was a remarkable human being who embodied the essence of what it is to be true to oneself. She wanted to change the world with her poetry. She wanted people to see the truth as she saw it. As life ebbs, the poet foresees her approaching end. Time's fury is tamed and stilled as it waits for breath to stop. 'Do not judge me harshly' says the poet in farewell. Kamala Das is our kith and kin because she has always expressed the complexities of the human condition. She has gathered all our laments into song. Her summing up is not just the summing up of one life, but the summing up of life itself.

Essay Question

1. Discuss in what ways gender issues and expectations may hinder the expression of a person's individuality.

Even in the twenty-first century, women are seen as 'the second sex' to be protected, yet exploited. Women are warned to stay in the shadows, and within the confines of manmade boundaries. In the midst of this stubbornly patriarchal environment, there are the rumblings of a gender revolution. Women are becoming more aware of their rights. There are many women's liberation movements working all over India. There are many women activists who share their experience and views with us through their writings. Shashi Deshpande, Rinki Battacharya, Usha Rai, Ela Bhatt, Nabaneeta Dev Sen and Kamala Das are some of the chief women writers.

Shashi Deshpande questions the age-old concept of motherhood as a sacred one. She points out that Motherhood is not a manufactured mould into which you can pour and set every woman. Her actual experience of motherhood was very different from the ideal she had been taught to imagine. Her own performance as a mother filled her with feelings of guilt and inadequacy. She suggests that the way to look at motherhood is to treat it as one of the many roles of a woman. 'I am a human being first and a mother next', she concludes. In "Dinner for the Boss", Bhisham Sahni tells the story of an unfortunate old lady who is treated as a non-person by her own family, a creature whose emotions and feelings mean less than nothing. Rinki Roy Battacharya tells the story of Aruna, a child bride whose marriage turned into a nightmare. Aruna is thrown into a loveless marriage with a much older, selfish, cruel and controlling tyrant. So the best years of her life become hell on earth as she endures beating, branding, conjugal rape, and emotional blackmail. However, at the end Aruna becomes successful in getting a good education and a satisfying career because of her own confidence and will power.

Usha Rai says that child marriages are linked to poverty. Child marriage is still common in many parts of India, notably in Rajasthan, where an auspicious time of the year is set aside for mass marriages of children. In dalit families in Rajasthan, child marriage is said

to have some advantages. The girl is out grazing cattle the whole day, and even if she is raped her in-laws will still accept her. This is seen as an advantage.

In her story, Ela Bhatt gives a series of happy accidents that led her to a fulfilling career and opened the door to opportunity and prosperity to thousands of women in rural India, who would otherwise have lived out their lives in aimless drudgery. She established the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and also started a cooperative bank called Manila SEWA sahakari Bank.

Nabaneeta Dev Sen's 'Medea' is an exemplification of Euripides' Medea which tells the story of love, marriage, betrayal and revenge in the modern world. Kamala Das through her poem 'The Summing Up' makes an attempt to sum up her life. She wanted to change the world with her poetry. She wanted people to see the truth as she saw it. She rebelled against the moral system. She also rebelled against the fixed and unfair slot that society has decided she should fit into, ignoring the individual in her. She appeals to the world not to judge her harshly, because she is their kith and kin. She gathered all our laments into song. Her summing up is not just the summing up one life but the summing up of life itself. Poetry was her life and her life itself was her best poem.

Everywhere in the world, women, with increasing support from men of a younger generation, are attempting to break the mould. In India, women are asking for a greater role in governing the country. We are heading towards a time when women will no longer need tears to be shed for them.