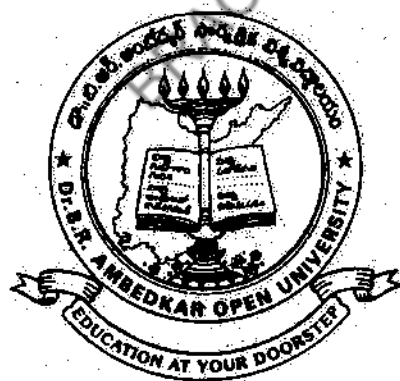


M.A. PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH

COURSE III

ENGLISH IN INDIA



"We may forgo material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forgo our right and opportunity to reap the benefits of the highest education to the fullest extent..."

-Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University

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2004

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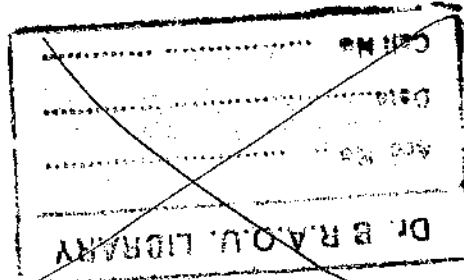
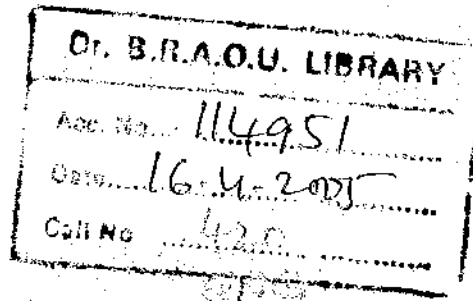
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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course on *English in India* is one of the four courses you have to study at the first year of your post-graduate course in English. This is an interesting course and we hope you enjoy the study of this subject. This is a new course that is meant to create an awareness of how and with what motives English was introduced in India, over the years, how it has evolved as the lingua-franca of the nation, and its role in the struggle for independence, the use of English for various purposes after - Independence, knowledge of English becoming an advantage for Indians in the globalization era.

Globalization has brought about immense potentialities for the English knowing Indians but at the same time the vast majority of the population are yet to get the benefits of English education and the English language. A knowledge of English has become a global necessity in the 'Info-Age', particularly, after the IT revolution but that is yet to be used for the *Common good of all*. This course will give you an outline of the growth and development of the English language and English education in the Indian subcontinent so that we can redefine the goals of teaching English in post-independence India.

This course on *English in India* consists of twenty units in five blocks; each block has four units. The first unit in each block gives you an overview of a particular period of which the details are given in the next three units of the block. The historical information is given as part of the introduction to each block, since historical forces play an important role in the shaping of a language in a particular setting. You may have to understand the history of India, particularly the history of the British rule in India and the history of the freedom movement; the study of any standard book on the history of India will be useful in understanding the history of English in India.

We do hope to rekindle your nationalist feelings through this course so that you can think of using English for the benefit of the Indian society as a whole. *Happy reading !*

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BLOCK I - THE TRANSPORTATION PHASE

Introduction

The first block of four units on this course is on the transportation of English to the Indian Sub-continent. The block outlines how after the power struggle among the European powers—the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English—in their race towards the supremacy over the 'gorgeous East', the British established their trade and military power in India and how they introduced the English language and English education in India. From the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 to the 'Great Mutiny' in 1857, the period marks the introduction of English in India. The year of the 'Sepoy Mutiny' is also the year in which the first universities were established in India. The story of English in India begins during this period; it is lively and fascinating but disturbing. You may read some books on Indian history to understand the historical forces that form the background to the unfolding drama of English in India.

Events contingent to the history of English in India

1498	The discovery of the sea-route to India by Vasco-da-Gama.
1600	The East India Company was formed— The Charter
1639	The EIC acquired Madras on lease from the native Indian ruler
1651	The EIC was persisted by the Mughal rulers, to trade as Hoogli in Bengal
1668	The EIC acquired Bombay from Portugal and Bombay became the centre of trade in the West coast of the Indian sub-continent
1688	In England, Parliament became supreme
1698	Charter Act ;Renewal that allowed missionaries to come to India; till then the EIC had prevented missionaries from coming to India.

1600-1700	The EIC was trying to get a foothold in the Indian subcontinent and faced rivals in England, the European rivals in India, and the Indian rulers. Missionaries were allowed to come to India only for the benefit of Englishmen stationed in India. The EIC remained subservient to the Indian rulers and were mostly 'Petitioners' to the Indian feudal lords
1691-1740	The EIC acquired the Zamindari of three villages and built fort William around its factory; the three villages came to be known as Calcutta.
1757	The English victory at the Battle of Plassey and the Mughal rule became subservient to the EIC.
1765	The EIC secured Diwani (right to collect revenue) of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa from the Mughal Emperor.
1780-95	Some English newspapers were started: India Gazette, Calcutta Gazette, Bengal Journal, Calcutta Chronicle; Madras Courier, Madras Gazette, Indian Herald (from Madras); Bombay Herald, courier, Bombay Gazette.
1781	Calcutta Madrassah, an educational Institution for higher learning was established by Warner Hastings
1791	Banares Sanskrit College was established
1794	William Carey, an English missionary started his first school in Bengal with Bengali as the medium of instruction.
1797	Charles Grant began to persuade the EIC and the Parliament to impart English education to Indians
1799	Tipu dies in Battle. Mysore was conquered by the EIC.
1813	Charter Act Renewal; education was made the responsibility of the EIC and the EIC brought under the control of the British Parliament by the Pitts India Act of 1784.
1815	The Bombay Native Education Society was set up under Elphinstone's Patronge
1821	Sanskrit college, Poona was established
1829	College at Delhi was established for oriental learning.
1833	English was introduced as a subject in Agra College and Calcutta Madrassah due to the demand of some Indians. District English Schools were set up in Delhi and Banares.
1835	Macaulay's Minute on Education that became the blueprint for English education in India.

UNIT 1 - 1600-1857: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The pre-transportation stage: 1600-1813
 - 1.2.1 1600: The Charter for the East India Company (EIC)
 - 1.2.2 1813: The Charter Renewal
- 1.3 1835: Macaulay's minute
- 1.4 1857: The establishment of universities in India and the Great Mutiny
- 1.5 Let's sum up
- 1.6 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- understand the historical forces that brought the English language and English education to the Indian subcontinent.
- describe how, during the pre-transportation and the transportation stage, English was introduced in India.
- understand the education system in the Indian subcontinent before the British came to India.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Aryans came to India and they settled down in the Indian sub-continent. They are the 'settlers' and not 'colonisers'. With the Aryans came one of the 'Indo-European' languages, Sanskrit, and Sanskrit became the most important language of ancient India.

The Muslims came from outside and they too partly settled down in the sub-continent and over the years the Moghul empire was established. Persian became the court language and the by-product of the interaction between Persian and Sanskrit based languages like, Punjabi and Hindi was Urdu, a language that is used only in the sub-continent. Urdu is the by-product of the interaction between two languages and cultures.

1.2 THE PRE-TRANSPORTATION STAGE: 1600-1813

The great discovery of a new sea route to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498 initiated the advent of Europeans. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English came to India and for more than a century held 'the gorgeous East in fee'. They established colonies but they never settled down in the sub-continent. They were only colonisers and traders to begin with and they never tried to import their languages.

1.2.1 The charter for the East India Company (EIC)

Queen Elizabeth signed a Charter on the last day of 1600 establishing the East India Company (EIC) and granting it a monopoly of all English commerce in the Indian and Pacific ocean except the territories occupied by the Portuguese and the Spaniards. The EIC did not take any interest in transporting English. Almost till the end of the eighteenth century, the British did not show any interest in the field of education.

1.2.2 The charter Renewal

Only in 1813 when the Renewed Charter Act forced the EIC to show some interest in the education of Indians.

1.3 MACAULAY'S MINUTE

The Christian missionaries were active in the eighteenth century and their main aim was conversion; they used education as a means to that end. They started some educational institutions in India but the medium of instruction was not English. The British became more powerful and consequently, English became the language of the British bureaucracy.

Macaulay's Minute of 1835 became the blue-print for English education in India. Mr. Macaulay was a member of the council of India and the President of Indian committee of Public Instruction. His plan of dissemination of European knowledge and sciences through the medium of English among one section of the people of India was readily accepted by the government of William Bentinck. The oft-quoted lines from Macaulay's Minute are:

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect; to that class we may leave it to redefine the vernacular dialects to the country to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

1.4 1857: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITIES

At a stroke, English became the language of government, education and advancement, at the same time a 'symbol of colonial rule'. As a result of the policy, English-teaching universities were established in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857, the year of the 'Mutiny'. By the end of the nineteenth century, with many more colleges and universities set up, English became the prestige language of the Indian sub-continent, completely replacing Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, and other languages of India.

1.5 LET'S SUM UP

- i. The Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent and they settled down; their language and literature may be called the settlers language/literature.
- ii. The Muslims came to India and partly settled down; Persian did not become an Indian language and the result of the interaction between Persian and Sanskrit based languages is Urdu, a language used only in the sub continent.
- iii. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English came to India basically as traders and established colonies in the Indian sub-continent. The Portuguese had a base in Goa, the Dutch in Masulipatnam

and Pulicat, the French in Pondicherry, and the English in Bengal and Chennai.

- iv. The East India Company was established in 1600 and that marks the beginning of the pre-transportation stage of English in India. The EIC did not show any interest in education.

In 1813, the EIC was brought under the control of the British Parliament and the EIC started showing interest in education. The Charter Reviews of 1853, established an open competition system of public examinations.

In 1835, Mr. Macaulay wrote the Minute and at the stroke English became the language of government. In 1857, three universities were established and English became the medium of education at the higher levels. 1857 is also the year of the 'Great Mutiny'.

1.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

- a) What is the difference between 'settlers' and 'colonisers'? Give examples from the Indian sub-continent's history. Those who came and settled down—those who left (See 1.1 and 1.2).
- b) Explain in a sentence or two, the importance of the following years in the history of the Indian sub-continent (See 1.2 to 1.4).
1) 1600 2) 1813 3) 1835 4) 1857
- c) Where is the Urdu language spoken? Why is it not used outside the Indian sub-continent? Sub-continent—interaction between languages and cultures (See 1.1).
- d) What is the main objective of Macaulay's educational plan? Give the exact words. "We must at present ... (See 1.3).

If you are not able to answer the questions given above, again read and reread 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5.

UNIT 2 - 1600–1813: THE PRE-TRANSPORTATION PHASE

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction—a survey of the ancient past
- 2.3 The Advent of Europeans
- 2.4 1600–1813: The Charter Act and the Power Struggle
- 2.5 Up to 1813: The Charter Renewal
- 2.6 The use of English during this period.
 - 2.6.1 The Data
 - 2.6.2 What the data shows
- 2.7 Let's sum up
- 2.8 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- understand the historical forces and the power-struggle that prevailed during the pre-transportation phase (i.e., before 1600).
- read and understand the history of India with particular reference to the introduction of English in India.
- comprehend the multi-lingual and multi-cultural contexts in the Indian sub-continent, and the result of various invasions.

2.2 INTRODUCTION—A SURVEY OF THE ANCIENT PAST

The Indian sub-continent (comprising of what are now called India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) has absorbed several invasions in the past. That resulted in several layers of language and culture in the sub-continent and English is one of these layers.

The Aryans came and they settled down in India. They were 'settlers' and not just conquerors and colonisers. Their language, Sanskrit or Samskr̥t̥ (which meant 'carefully made' or 'perfected') was a literary language and the high-speech. This influx of the first tribes speaking Aryan languages probably took place in the second half of the second millennium BC. Later the Prakrits (i.e., the vernaculars or the dialects) developed and the most important dialect, Pali, became the language of Buddhist and Jain thought and literature. Sanskrit became a representation of the Brahmin civilization which the Prakrits developed into several languages of the common people—like Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, etc.—languages written in the Sanskrit characters called Devanagari.

The early Aryans who had settled in the Indus Valley, soon grew in numbers and spread towards the East and the South. This long process of Aryanization of the Indian sub-continent pictured in the Vedic and Epic literature. The Punjab receded in importance and 'Madhyadesa' became the holy land of the Hindus. The culture of the Aryans is strong, rich in potentiality and typically Indian.

The Sanskrit literature contains words dealing with drama, history, philosophy, grammar, astronomy, algebra, medicine and jurisprudence. Some of the most important names are Kalidasa (Sakuntala, Meghaduta, etc.), Subandhu (Vasavadatta), Valmiki (The Ramayana), Vyasa (The Mahabharata), Panini, and Aryabhata.

Harsha was the last great Hindu emperor of Northern India; he died in 647 AD. After his death, the grand empire he had built collapsed and was split into a number of small kingdoms. Then followed a period of nearly two centuries of confusion. For four centuries from 800–1200 AD nearly all the kingdoms were governed by Rajput families; they were torn by mutual jealousy and bitterness and were seldom at peace; their perpetual feuds prevented their union and destroyed all chances of offering any united resistance to the Muslims when they invaded the Indian sub-continent.

The reports of some Arab merchants about the fabulous wealth and luxuries of India excited the greed of the Arab and repeated conquests were attempted upon the coast of India. Their aim was plunder and not settlement. The lure of plunder brought in many waves in the name of holy war and the raids were repeated.

In 1001 AD, Sultan Muhammad, crossed over to India and in 1017 AD he started with a huge force and appeared before Mathura. The great shrines were looted and razed to the ground; he ransacked Somanath too. He returned to Ghazni with rich spoils. His successors did more or less the same. Only by 1200 AD, the Delhi Sultanate was established. The history of Muslim progress in the Indian sub-continent can be divided into two periods

- (a) the period of conquest and administrative experiment, and
- (b) the period of imperial glory and the achievements of the grand Mughals

from Babar (who ruled from 1526 to 1530) to Aurangzeb (who ruled from 1658 to 1700), the Mughal dynasty ruled from Delhi. The Mughal Empire, alien in its nature and organization, was regarded by the vast majority of the subjects as essentially a foreign empire, and hence, in spite of its Indian setting, could not aspire to such feelings of intense loyalty and patriotism which roused the Rajputs and the Marathas.

As a result, the Muslim rulers remained invaders and later became part-settlers. Persian remained the court language and the language of literature, Arabic remained the language of their religion, Islam. At the same time, as a result of the interaction in the Indian sub-continent, a new linguistic phenomenon, called Urdu, was born.

The word Urdu is Turkish and means 'army' or 'camp'; the name of the language came into vogue only in the late 18th century. The language began in Lahore when the troops of Mahmud of Ghazni 'settled' down there in 1027 and, to begin with it was old Punjabi with a mixture of Persian; then it spread to Delhi and intermixed with Hindi. The Urdu language represents a linguistic process by which the invaders gave up their own language in favour of the local speech and mixed the two languages. Urdu was the 'language of the camp' and spread to most parts of the sub-continent. The ornate part of the language came from Persio-Arabic words and the daily idiom from the Hindi intercourse. The Urdu language, which is now the official language of Pakistan, is used only in the Indian Sub-continent. Urdu uses the Persio-Arabic script and Hindi the Nagari script. The basic vocabulary and the rules of grammar for Urdu and Hindi are the same.

2.3 THE ADVENT OF EUROPEANS

Vasco-da-Gama discovered a new trade route to India in 1498. The immediate effect was the diversion of the European trade with India from the central states of Europe to the maritime states of Western Europe like Portugal, Spain and other countries.

First among the European nations to intrude into the new field was Portugal. The Portuguese established a number of settlements near the sea along the Bombay coast. The Malabar coast was the scene of their early activities since it was a half-way house between the rich spice-producing regions of Ceylon, Malacca and the Spice islands on the one hand, and the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and East Africa on the other.

Gradually by the end of the 16th century, the Portuguese began to lose their commercial supremacy due to a number of factors external as well as internal. Amongst the rivals of the Portuguese who snatched from them the commercial supremacy of the East were the Dutch who rose to prominence by the end of the 16th century. They established their 'toehold' in Masulipatnam in 1605 and built a fort at Pulicat in 1609; they established factories along the Coromandel Coast, Gujarat and Bengal; they captured Nagapatnam from the Portuguese. But the Dutch power in India was largely jeopardized on European battlefields; they lost their ground to the French and the English and, consequently, their foothold in India.

The other two powers which competed for a share in the rich commerce of the Eastern seas were the English and the French.

2.4 THE CHARTER ACT AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

Queen Elizabeth signed a Charter on the last day of 1600 granting the East India Company (EIC) a monopoly of all English commerce in the Indian and Pacific Oceans except the territories occupied by the Portuguese and the Spaniards. From this small beginning the company passed through many years of prosperity and adversity and, finally, by the middle of the 18th century was strong enough to challenge the attempts of the French for domination in the Indian Sub-continent. The British had established powerful factories and trading centers in important places all along the coast and these were organized under three presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal.

The French who were the most serious rivals of the British appeared long after the British. They too floated a French East India Company and established factories in Surat. Pondichery was founded in 1674 and became the capital of the French settlements in India. They had factories in Mahe, Karaikal, and other places. But the French could not achieve appreciable success in India because of the superior British enterprise and influence in India and outside.

Check Your Progress

- i. First the Aryans came to the Indian Sub-continent and settled down there. Their language Sanskrit, a literary language, became the language of religion too. But Prakrits were used by the common people.
- ii. The Muslims came as invaders, particularly during the early period. Later, they established kingdoms in the Indian Sub-continent. They are the part-settlers and their languages, Persian and Arabic, did not take deep roots in India. Instead, Urdu, a new language was born in the Indian Sub-continent.
- iii. After the discovery of the sea route to India, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French

and the British came to India only as traders. There was an intense power struggle among them to establish factories and expand their establishments in India.

- iv. The East India Company (EIC) was formed on the last day of 1600 and the British became more and more well established in India because of their superior trade policies and naval power in different parts of the world.

2.5 UP TO 1813: THE CHARTER RENEWAL

The Pre-transportation stage (1600–1813) was the period of power struggle to secure for 'Christendom the supremacy of the 'Gorgeous East'. The European powers—the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the English in their race towards domination did not take any active interest in transporting or teaching their languages. Even the East India Company imparted English education only to the children of Anglo-Indians and the children of the European employees of the company. The other European powers did not attempt even that.

Indians were following their own pattern of education in the Patashalas, the Madrassahs, the Persian schools called 'Maktabs' and other schools teaching through modern Indian languages; education in the temples, and domestic education too in the Gurukul formed the basis of what the British termed as indigenous education almost till the end of the 18th century. Only when the company became a political power, as part of its 'tendency towards endearing Her Majesty's Government to the natives, some centres of learning were started and Christian missionaries were allowed to undertake educational activities to spread Western light and knowledge and 'to instruct the Gentoos that shall be servants or slaves of the same Company or of their agents, in the Protestant religion.'

The EIC had the status of 'jagheerdars' under the Mughal sovereigns till 1757. The victory at the Battle of Plassey gave them political strength, and with the Diwani Act of 1765 the British became the virtual rulers of Bengal. Subsequently, they fought many battles but rarely won any till 1798; they had to sign peace treaties but by converting these into 'Subsidiary Alliance' they were able to weaken the Indian rulers and make them dependent on the British for defence, political support and internal security. It was only by the end of the eighteenth century that the British were able to bring the Indian subcontinent (except the Punjab and Sindh) under their control.

The missionaries became active in the eighteenth century. Their main aim was proselytization and the means to this end were the Indian languages, not English. For example, William Cary, an English missionary, brought out a book on Sanskrit grammar, and an English translation of the Ramayana and started a newspaper in Bengali in 1818. Sporadic emergence of educational institutions, mostly managed by the missionaries, marked the latter half of the eighteenth century but the medium of instruction was not English. There is no evidence of English being taught as a subject before 1800, and there was no clear policy on education until the EIC was forced to do so by the Charter Act of 1813.

2.6 THE USE OF ENGLISH DURING THIS PERIOD

The British government of the day submitted a series of resolutions in the house of commons providing for the renewal of the company's charter for another twenty-year period. In one resolution the cabinet advanced the idea that education of the natives of India was incumbent upon the British government, and further more that such measures ought to be introduced as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement. It also laid down that missionaries should be legally entitled to enter the country

in order to carry on their activities there; this reversed the former harsh restrictive policy practised against the missionaries by officials of the East India Company in India. It was also argued that only the missionaries can work against the reign of Hindu 'Superstition' and cruelty in India; only European enlightenment and the diffusion of Christianity in India can save the native of India—This was a grave departure from the religious neutrality of the Company.

Hitherto whatever had been done in the name of the Company for the education of the natives (and it was very little) had been left solely to the discretion of the governor-general at Calcutta; the introduction of education was an obligation derived from the duty of great Britain 'to promote the interests and happiness of the native inhabitants'. It authorised the governor-general to spend a lac of rupees (£ 10,000) annually on the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India. In short, the renewal Act of 1813 provided statutory sanction of regular, yearly educational expenditure, at the same time it removed the restrictions against missionary enterprise.

It was one thing to formulate a policy in London and it was another to put the policy into effect thousands of miles away in India. Warren Hastings, while he was the governor-general (1772–1785), had courted popularity among the natives by patronizing Hindu and Muslim learning in Bengal. He did little towards introducing into India the learning of the West. The officialdom too showed little interest to encourage introduction of English education at the expense of the older policy of Warren Hastings. Mass education in English was considered impracticable; however liberal education for the upper and 'middle' classes in the larger cities won favour with the court of directors because it promised a supply of cheap native labour for government employment and would probably indoctrinate the minds of those whose influence on the rest of the community was extensive. So it was accepted as a policy.

In the first phase of the history of English in India, the interaction in English was between two disparate systems. On the one hand were the Indian rulers with their politicking, intrigues and internal feuds for maintaining territorial control, and on the other, the British merchants who were trying to become rulers. The interlocutors were mainly the feudal chiefs, their courtiers, the higher rung of the feudal court hierarchy, and the East India Company; the locale was the urban and the feudal power centres. The interaction mainly related to political usurpation of the Indian States which gave the EIC the territorial control necessary for trading. The political usurpation led to the emergence of the British bureaucracy which induced the use of English for certain restricted written functions. The written functions (writing petitions, commercial dealings, advertisements by Indian merchants, etc.) were earlier performed in Persian. Wherever the British gained control, some of these functions had to be performed in English. Since there was no formal education in English available during the first phase, the inadequate knowledge of English, the use of Persian for royal, administrative, and legal purposes with its royal ostentatious formality, and the deeply entrenched feudal mentality in the Indian subcontinent must have resulted in the 'affective vocabulary' which is found in the petitions written during this phase. The ornate style used in the earlier forms of English must have also contributed to this register. It should be noted here that the ostentatious formality in written correspondence, especially in official correspondence, is found even today in the Indians' use of English. The following are examples of ostentatious formality and ornate style.

2.6.1 The data

Domains: political and its extensions—bureaucratic and commercial

Specimen I: Political (diplomacy)

An extract from Raja Manikchand's letter to Colonel Clive
(Source: Indian Records Series. Bengal in 1756-57)

23 December 1756

I have had the pleasure to receive your most friendly letter. To hear you are in good health gives me the sincerest pleasure. Your sending a copy of your address to the Nobob enclosed in your letter to me for my perusal I esteem as an instance of your friendship. Finding in it many improper expressions and concluding that by sending me the copy you desired to know my sentiments upon it, I have, therefore, made some alterations in it and return it entrusted to Radakissen Mullick, who will deliver it to you. You will write your letter after that form and dispatch it again to me, and I will forward it to the Nabob. You write that you are desirous of peaceable measures. I likewise am as desirous, as nothing is better than peace. To take away every cause of ill-will or contention this is the part of a good man. For the rest you will be informed from Radakissen of my further sentiments. you write that you send three (letters) for the Nobob, one from yourself, one from Asephad Doula, one from Anarvedi Cawn. Two of these I have received, but that from Anarvedi Cawn is missing. Perhaps by some mistake it may not have been sent. This I have thought proper to acquaint you with. I hope you will continue to inform me of your health, and look upon me as your Well-wisher.

Specimen II Political—Bureaucracy (petitions)

Kissenbuxey's Petition
(Source: Home Dept., Public Proceedings Volumes, 1757)

Year: 1757

**The Humble Petition of Kissenbuxey,
Inhabitant of Calcutta**

To

The Hon'ble Roger Drake Esqr.
President & Governor & c. Council

Mostly Humbly Sheweth;

That your Petitioner being an old Resident of Calcutta whose dwelling House is situated in Govindpore which House has cost your petitioner a large sum of money and as your Honour & C as: Orders for pulling down the same, will be soon put in Execution. Therefore most humbly Request your Honour & C as Orders may be permitted to those Gentlemen who have been Estimators for the Houses already pull'd down, or any others to view that Building & Set a just Value upon the same & your petitioner further prays your Honr. & c. will take this case in consideration as your Petitioner is Reduced to great Necessitys by the Capture of this place & without this humble supplication be granted by your Honr & c. your petitioner must be entirely Ruined & Reduced in utmost misery And so forth.

Specimen III: Political (conspiracy)

Two letters by 'natives' enclosed in
Colonel Sir John Cumming's letter
(Source: Poona Residency Correspondence, Volume 1)

No. 1. (From Goordat Singh and Man Singh to Colonel Cumming.)

14th May 1785

Pateel makes this negotiation and engagement with us that being united together we should attach the country of the English gentlemen and of the Nawab Vizier, and that before upon the same advice we had plundered Chandausi & c. As the Nawab Vizier is our neighbour and you gentlemen are men of truth and are steadfast to your engagements and this stranger having become strong in this country will injure the whole world, if you gentlemen should be desirous of friendship, the Chiefs of the Khalsa are not separated from you, they wish for mutual connection. We also are ready from our hearts and souls; we will settle all their engagements conformably to your advice, and 30,000 horses belonging to us have crossed from Manha—Know them also to be united with you—In the end he will be alarmed. Whatever may be your opinion write it thro' Shewa Sing, who is going to your presence: from his discourse you will learn all particular and reply on their truth.

No. 2. (From Banga Singh Bahadur, Goordat Sing,
Baksh Sing Bahadur and Joda Sing to Colonel Cumming.)

At this time between us and Pateel Saheb a negotiation of friendship is in hand. He is desirous that uniting us to himself he should raise commotions on the other side of the Ganges. We before also entirely from his advice marched to that quarter and destroyed Chandausi. We from this idea that perhaps he was trying to unite us for the attack of Alygarh and that when he should have done his own business he would deceive us, answered him that it should not happen that after the business of Alygarh he should deceive us. Pateel Saheb positively asserts that his friendship is not for the business of Alygarh, that the removal of the gentlemen is the most important object of his mind, because the gentlemen are both his and our enemies and will one day make war; that the remedying of that beforehand is advisable. We therefore write from our friendship that if the gentlemen's pleasure should be inclined to this point, we are ready from our hearts and souls. We have no connection with these strangers. By the blessing of God great advantages are obtained by mutual union. This stranger will be soon expelled. You have the option from our friendship. We have given this information.

Specimen IV Political-Commercial (an advertisement)

(Source: The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce,
Saturday, March 14, 1840)

Year: 1810

An advertisement

Sacram Bapooje, the Mail Contractor, begs leave to apprise the Public, that he has been obliged to make an addition of two Rupees to his rates of Traveling, in consequences of the Toll levied

by Government on the Bore Ghaut on each trip of a Palanquin furnished by him for the accommodation of Passengers ascending and descending that road.

No. 1. Mail Buggy between Panwell and Poona, and General Post Office and Mazagaum, and Mail Boat between Mazagaum and Panwell.

1st—The Buggy by which the Post Office Mails are conveyed, leaves Panwell every night for Poona upon the arrival of the Bombay Mail, and can accommodate one Passenger with 10 lbs. of Baggage. Any Gentlemen to avail himself of this conveyance, must be at the Panwell Post Office at 10 P.M., which could at all times be done, were Gentlemen leaving Bombay to take a seat in the Mail boat. The Mail buggy leaves Poona at 5 P.M. and Bombay at half past 6 P.M.; fifteen minutes are allowed for refreshment at Panwell Khandalla, that being the time required by the Government clerks for arranging the Mail cannot on any account be delayed without subjecting the contractor to the penalty fixed by Government in such cases.

Sacram Bapoojee
Mail Coach Proprietor

Bombay Mail Contractor's Office,
9th March, 1810

2.6.2 What the data shows: Some observations

The marked features of English during this phase, particularly in the political domain are, an ostentatious formality—the use of 'Lordship Register' with its 'friendship and humbleness' vocabulary. This variety is meant to meet the diplomatic needs; it also marks political motives. The following examples illustrate the 'Lordship Register':

- i. I hope you will continue to inform me of your health, and look upon me as your well-wisher (Sp. 1)
- ii. Your most friendly letter (Sp. 1).
- iii. Your Lordship's friendly letter and overjoyed at hearing of your health
- iv. Your Lordship has written...
- v. All these troops that are (mine are) are also your Lordship's
- vi. Your Lordship without scruple will inform me
- vii. Your Lordship will always write me friendly letters
- viii. That friendship which is of old firm between us
- ix. I have had the happiness to receive your Lordship's friendly letter and overjoyed at hearing of your health. (All from Appendix, Phase I, Sp. II.)

The lack of clarity at the discourse level and the unstable English reveal the ambivalent stance of Indians towards the British—a vague desire for some sort of political alliance with the British merchants, and a partial acceptance of the British rule. The British were perceived as potentially powerful by the Indian chieftains and their courtiers who were willing to conspire against other feudal chiefs to get more political importance because 'India' was not perceived as one unit. Bureaucracy was institutionalized by the British and certain written functions like the 'petition' 13

register' were within the purview of the British bureaucracy.

The examples given below illustrate this attitude:

- x. Finding in it many improper expressions and concluding that by sending me the copy you desired to know my sentiments upon it,...
- xi. you will write your letter after that form and dispatch it again to me, ...
- xii. To take away every cause of ill-will or contention this is the part of a good man. (All from Sp. 1)
- xiii. Most Humbly Sheweth,
- xiv. Therefore most humbly Request your Honour & C. as Orders ...
- xv. ... your Honr. & C. will take this case in consideration as your Petitioner is Reduced to great Necessity's by the Capture of this place without this humble supplication be granted by your Honour & c...(All from Sp. II)
- xvi. Know them also to be united with you, ...
- xvii. From this discourse you will learn all particular and reply on this truth.
- xviii. He is desirous that uniting us to himself...
- xix. By the blessing of God great advantages are obtained by mutual union. (All from Sp. III)
- xx. From unavoidable losses together with the Badness of the Times...
- xxi. ...your Honors will be pleased to take their hard & Lamentable cases into your serious & charitable considerations & thereby...(from Appendix, Phase 1, Sp. 1)

The use of English in advertisements (Sp. IV) was an extension of the bureaucratic domain and Indian merchants used it for advertising in the newspapers published from Calcutta and Bombay. The advertisements resembled bureaucratic notices. The English language was constitutive of the print-media which made its beginning during this phase, and gradually got entrenched into the use of English in India. The EIC encouraged a small section of Indian entrepreneurs to undertake commercial ventures catering to the needs of the EIC; not only newspapers but also the related systems of government control came into being, and the expression 'Government of India' occurred in official documentation of information. The print-media linked the important cities of the British colony.

The English language did not make any significant impact on the lives of the people in the subcontinent till 1813. In short, political/official/bureaucratic use of English was the prominent feature of the first phase of the history of English in India.

2.7 LET'S SUM UP

- i. The Aryans came and settled down in the Indian subcontinent; their language is Sanskrit, a basically literary and high language. The common people used Prakrit (i.e., dialects) from which we get all modern languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, etc.
- ii. Then the Muslims came and some of them settled down in the sub-continent and established an empire. Their languages Persian and Arabic did not take root in India but, as a result of the interaction, a new language called Urdu came into use.

- iii. The European powers—The Portuguese, the Dutch, The French and the British—came to the 'sub-continent' by the 16th century; after an intense power struggle only the British were able to establish a strong hold in India.
- iv. In 1600 the East India Company was formed but up to 1813 the EIC did not take any interest in the field of education. The EIC had only the status of 'Jageerdars' under the Mughal kings till 1757.
- v. Only in 1813 the charter Act that established the EIC was renewed and the EIC was made responsible for education. There is no evidence of English being taught as a subject till 1800 and there was no policy on education.
- vi. Because of the trade contracts into the British, some Indians 'picked up' English as part of the social interaction. The specimens show that their competence in English was quite acceptable.

2.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

- a) Name the European powers that came to India for trade and give an account of the power struggle amongst them. Portuguese - Dutch - French - English established factories - trade expansion of European battle (See Section 2.3 and 2.4)
- b) Give an account of the inception and activities of the East India Company. 1600—EIC has the status of 'Jageerdars—Battle of Plassey Indian rulers, weak - dependent on British support-missionaries (See 2.5)
- c) Give an account of the various group of invaders who came to the Indian sub-continent and assess their contributions of the linguistic growth of the subcontinent. (See 2.2 and 2.3)
- d) List some of the features found in the written English during the initial stages of English India. (see 2.6)
- e) What did the 1813 Act do to the education of the natives in India? (Made education responsibility of the EIC—allowed Christian Missionaries in India—implementation—only in select areas—the officials not enthusiastic, and education except for the few to provide cheap labour was ignored. (See also 2.5 last two paragraphs)

UNIT 3 - MACAULAY'S MINUTE

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Macaulay's Minute—Introduction
- 3.2 The Orientalist—Anglicist controversy
- 3.3 The Christian missionaries in India
- 3.4 The Stated Objectives in Macaulay's Minute
- 3.5 Some Indians asked for it
- 3.6 The curriculum and materials.
- 3.7 The hidden agenda
- 3.8 Let's sum up
- 3.9 Self-assessment questions and (SAQs) answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able

- read and understand some portions of Macaulay's Minute.
- understand the stated and hidden aims in Macaulay's Minute.
- discuss the foundations of English education in India, the basis for which is Macaulay's Minute

3.1 MACAULAY'S MINUTE—INTRODUCTION

It can certainly be said that in retrospect, the colonial government appears to have been clearer in its aims and objectives and more realistic in the implementation of its programmes since it knew what it wanted to establish.

The West wanted 'to secure the supremacy over the Gorgeous East' and spread Western knowledge and light in order 'to instruct the Gentoos that shall be servants or slaves of the East India Company (EIC) or of their agents'. The EIC and its agents were only 'birds of prey and passage', as Burke described them; gold was their watchword and their 'prey' was lodged in England. In England they were known as 'Indian Nabobs'. The EIC remained only 'Jagheerdars' under the Mughul Sovereigns till 1757; the conquest at the battle of Plassey gave them the political strength and with the Diwani Act of 1765 the British became the virtual rulers of Bengal. Before 1800, the EIC imparted English education only to the children of the European employees of the company and of Anglo-Indians. During the early years, the company paid very little attention to education. The Patshalas, the Madrassas, the Persian schools called Maktabas, other institutions teaching through Sanskrit and other Indian languages, schools in almost every village, and 'domestic instruction' formed the basis of what the British termed as 'indigenous education through the vernaculars'. Only by the end of the 18th century the British were able to bring the Indian subcontinent (except the Punjab and Sindh) under their control. Missionaries became active in the 18th century but their aim was proselytization and the means to that end were the

Indian languages and not English. For example, William Cary, an English missionary who was a cobbler in an insignificant village in England, brought out a Sanskrit Grammar and an English translation of the Ramayana, and started a newspaper in Bengali in 1818. This was only a strategy and the ulterior aim was to create among Indians a feeling of regard and respect for the Europeans, as this was essential to the permanent interests of the British Empire in India and the spread of Christianity in this country. That was why English was referred to as the 'Christian tongue' in the early stages. As Reena Chatterji (1983) says,

The early converts to Christianity came mostly from the lowest stratum of the Hindu society. They were generally illiterate and as reading the Bible was held to be essential for salvation, the Missionaries were required to establish schools in order to teach the new converts to read and write. For the same reason, they had to start the printing press and to print the Bible in Indian languages. They had to start the vocational schools in order to provide them a source of livelihood and also due status in society...

The missionaries found some support in Charles Grant, an employee of the company, who is sometimes described as the 'father of modern education' in India. He suggested the following remedy in 1792.

The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindus err, because they are ignorant, and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them, would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us'.

He also suggested that emphasis be laid on the teaching of *natural sciences* in order to remove the superstitious beliefs prevalent among the heathens of India. Grant, described as the Christian Director of the EIC, also suggested that the most important subject should be the Christian religion and kept his eye fixed on his mission—the Evangelisation of India.

He wrote:

By planting our language, our knowledge, our opinions, and our religion, in our Asiatic territories, we shall put a great work beyond the reach of contingencies; we shall probably have *wedded the inhabitants of those territories to this country*. (emphasis added).

Macaulay wrote to his father in 1836: 'The effect of this education on the Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, but many profess themselves pure Deists and some embrace Christianity. *It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence*' (The Indian Daily News for March, 30, 1909).

One can very well read the deliberate intentions of the rulers to undermine the religious

and social life of the subcontinent, though they are hidden in their public statements. Neither Charles Grant nor Macaulay was interested in the spiritual welfare of either the non-Christians or the missionaries; they were only interested in the worldly wealth and commerce that these missionaries brought to them!

'The missionary is everywhere and always the pioneer of trade', wrote Lala Lajpat Rai in 1908. Though the rulers made education a mask to hide their intentions, they raised certain issues, which are relevant even today, but 'discussed' only on paper:

1. Elementary education for the masses or higher education for the upper classes—which one should be given priority?
2. Indian or Western knowledge and learning—which is to be emphasised?
3. English or Indian language—which is to be the medium of instruction?
4. State or private agencies—who is to be given the responsibility for education?

Grant recommended the dissemination of knowledge through the medium of English of European literature and sciences among the people of India; he felt that in view of its simplicity and utility the English language was bound to spread far and wide. Moreover, printing would make it much more popular than Persian within a short time. Consequently, the Hindus would see the great use that the English made on all subjects and in all affairs. Grant had correctly visualised the eagerness of the Indian people to learn the English language and predicted that a large number of young people would flock to the English schools that Indians themselves would, in course of time, be teachers of English.

The decision of the rulers to replace Persian by English initially as the medium of administrative and legal procedures altered the course of our history in decisive ways.

In a Despatch of 1824, the Court of Directors of the company observed: "In...teaching mere Hindoo or mere Mohomadan literature, you bound yourselves to teach a great deal of what was frivolous..."

His suggestion for the adoption of the English language as the medium of instruction as early as 1792 was accepted 43 years later by the government of William Bentinck, whose mouth piece was Mr. Macaulay. In a way, Grant paved the way for the Charter Act of 1813 that made education the responsibility of the EIC. Though in 1823 the General Committee of Public Instruction opined against English as well as education through English, some missionary schools and district English schools by EIC were set up to provide English education at the school level.

3.2 THE ORIENTALIST-ANGLICIST CONTROVERSY

The Committee of Public Instruction, particularly in Bengal, had pursued a policy of compromises, on the one hand patronizing Oriental learning according to the tradition established by Warren Hastings (1772–1785), while simultaneously fostering the extension of English education. This policy of half-measures became increasingly distasteful because of the administrative expenses.

William Bentinck's (1828–1835) accession to the Governor-Generalship in 1828 foreshadowed the half-measures initiated earlier. With Bentinck a new epoch began, that of subordination of Oriental to European ideas and of intensive reform of Indian practices in education. Bentinck wrote a Minute on May 30, 1829 which showed where his heart lay in educational matters. He took pride in the spread of European enlightenment. His views

were shared by Charles Trevelyan, the brother-in-law of Macaulay. Trevelyan was Bentinck's favourite political officer.

These leanings in circles close to the Governor-General were reflected in the composition of the Committee of Public Instruction; the Anglicist faction (those who supported European ideas and the spread of European knowledge, literature, and education) had been built up through 'the appointment of men like Trevelyan and others—those who opposed the practice of patronising Oriental learning. This faction sought to reduce the stipends paid to students of Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian, and expenditure on publishing works in these languages. The Orientalists group in the Committee tried to fight against this proposition and cited the language of the clause in the Charter Act of 1813, which stipulated that funds should be spent for the 'revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives'. They argued that the expression 'learned natives' could mean only persons cultivating Oriental literature—that is the literature in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian; they argued that Lord Minto, the Governor General in 1813, had been a liberal patron of Oriental literature.

Both parties agreed that the ultimate medium of instruction for the natives of India must be the vernaculars; but Travelyan argued; 'What language was to be the classical language in the mean time and from what source the vernacular languages of India were to be enriched and improved?' To both the questions, the Anglicists replied by recommending English, whereas the orientalist proposed the classical and literary languages of India. By 1835 the quarrel had produced an impasse within the ranks of the Committee whose ten members were evenly divided between the two contending factions. The Committee failed to agree on a plan of instruction requested by the Government for a college at Agra.

The Government solved the problem in a peculiar way! Macaulay, Law Member of the Supreme Council, was appointed President of the Committee of Public Instruction by Bentinck. To break the impasse between the two factions on the Committee, Bentinck turned to Macaulay for a ruling on the debated sections in the Act of 1813. Such was the occasion that gave rise to the celebrated educational minute of February 2, 1835. The Minute decided the case against the Orientalists. In passing, more over, he revealed his contempt for the traditional learning of India.

3.3 THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

Although by 1835 the Anglicists scored their most important victory, the Christian lobby was as much dissatisfied as the Orientalists, as the Government still preferred a scrupulous religious neutrality. The Christian missionaries were of various shades of opinion. They felt that a thousand agencies are to be at work to undermine Hinduism and a thoroughly equipped and efficiently conducted educational institution is the most powerful instrument to throw the Divine light on every subject in India.

The chief architect of a thoroughly equipped and efficiently conducted educational institution was Alexander Duff, an Evangelist who came to India in 1830. He founded the General Assemblies of Institutions in Calcutta; he was one of the most pre-eminent among those who attached to education the key role of conversion of Indians to Christianity. He felt that education in the medium of English was the right instrument for preparing the educated persons in India to the right type of Christianity. Duff's programme was to spread the message through a select group receiving Christian education from cities to the villages. He envisaged the forging of an intellectual class to comprehend and propagate the principles of Christianity. It is for this reason that Duff and his followers laid the main emphasis on

Anglicist education, rather than direct efforts at conversion. They felt that European education given through the medium of English would communicate the spiritual essence of Christianity.

The missionaries thought that Macaulay curriculum was secular and that it should be accompanied by religious instruction. They argued as follows:

"The natives themselves also have always been accustomed to give a very high religious tone to secular education. In fact, among the natives themselves religion is completely identified with education; they go so far as to represent even the very alphabet as having been communicated to men by the Gods; and all the knowledge which the natives possess relative to history, geography, astronomy or any other kind of secular instruction, is given to them under a religious sanction."

(John Clarke Marshman of the Serampore mission, 1852-53)

If the destruction of the fabric of Hinduism was the primary aim in the Christianisation of India, then the government programme will not work because it was too secular. The missionaries advocated Christian humanism.

So, Christian missionaries included the Bible, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Plato's *Dialogues*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* in their scheme of education but excluded Johnson, Addison and Pope to make English more of a 'Christian tongue.'

3.4 THE STATED OBJECTIVES IN MACAULAY'S MINUTE

It was the famous (or infamous!) Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835) that laid the foundation for English education in India; it became the blueprint for 'education in India' and the goals were clearly stated by Macaulay.

Macaulay's Minute on Education, which he wrote as a member of the Council of India, is very clear and unambiguous regarding the goals of English education in India.

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect; to that class we may leave it to redefine the vernacular dialects, to the country to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

The first part of the mission was accomplished and we have the English-knowing urban and the semi-urban 'baboo's, the teachers of English, the Western educated learners, bureaucrats, the 'brown Sahibs', and all the colonized mind and thinking that go with it, resulting in a degenerated social order. As Mahatma Gandhi stated in October 1931, 'India today is much more illiterate than it was before a fifty or a hundred years ago'. "The British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root like that, and the *beautiful tree* perished. The village schools were not good enough for the British administrator, and so he came out with his programme" (cited in Dharampal, 1983).

The second part, sometimes referred to as the 'filtration theory' (i.e. 'educating' a few and

allowing them to 'educate' others), was also part of the imperial design, designed to carefully destroy the 'indigenous' languages and the educational systems at the grass root level by leaving the process of destruction to the 'educated' class of Indians who would be English in taste, in opinions and in intellect'. The 'filtration theory' had its desired slow and poisonous-effect and it has destroyed not only our languages and the educational systems but also our values, character and confidence. The languages of India are still struggling to find a proper footing in the field of higher education, particularly in science and technology, and we are yet to find the will to do it. Such is the effect of the 'filtration' process that, in the long run, enabled a few thousand English-educated *babus* exploit the masses by neglecting primary education and the indigenous systems of learning. Macaulay further says,

All parties seem to be agreed on one point that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover so poor and rude that until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them...

What then shall the language be? One half of the committee maintains that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommends the Arabic and Sanskrit. The whole question seems to me to be which language is the best worth knowing?...

I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated of Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues...I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western Literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education.

According to Macaulay all the perfumes of Arabia cannot 'sweeten' the Oriental literature, the Oriental material and modes of learning! He further adds,

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.... The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West— whoever knows that language has really access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations the

question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subjects which deserve to be compared to our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems ...medical doctrines, which would, disgrace an English furrier, astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history—abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand year long—and geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter...

Macaulay abused and insulted Indians; he humiliated them and did all that lay in his power to suppress their thought and energy by making them learn everything through the medium of English.

It is said that Sanskrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred million people are written and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly, it is the duty of the British government in India to be not only tolerant, but also neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature includes the most serious errors, on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason... We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the State to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat, to expiate the crime of killing a goat?

Regarding the printing of books in Sanskrit and Arabic he was against wasting public money on printing books which *are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was, while it was blank* or giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics and absurd theology (emphasis added).

So he concluded: **"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect"** (emphasis added).

Macaulay's Minute gladdened Lord Bentinck's heart to the utmost and the result was the following promulgation.

The promulgation of the Supreme Government of India (7th March, 1835) clearly stated:

His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone... His Lordship in Council

directs that all the funds which these reforms will leave at the disposal of the Committee be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science, through the medium of the English language.

Lord Macaulay returned to England 'in the full vigour of life with a fortune' that he made in India, according to his own confession in his letter to his sister, learning India poor, in every respect.

Given below are the main arguments of Macaulay's Minute.

1. The Charter Act of 1813 should be interpreted to mean that the literature and science of Europe should be taught to natives of India; encouraging Indians to study their ancient literature will tantamount to 'encouraging the Egyptians to study their hieroglyphics and obelisks in preference to modern learning.' There is no reason to think that the government is pledged to promote the study of 'Indian lore.'
2. Sanskrit and Arabic literature put together are not worth a single shelf of a good European library; the same is true of all the other branches of knowledge in India and Arabia.
3. European history shows that a great intellectual revival took place under the influence of Latin and Greek in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In more modern times Russia which was far behind Europe in knowledge has pressed close to France, Germany, and Britain under the influence of European knowledge.
4. Indian learners have to be paid to study their own language and culture which proves that they have no respect and appeal for them; they themselves, on the contrary, pay to learn English.
5. Indian students take longer to pass in Sanskrit than in English—less than half the time; it takes less time to enable a Hindoo youth to read Shakespeare and Milton than it takes an English youth to read Greek authors like Herodotus or Sophocles.
6. No stipends are to be given to the scholars studying Sanskrit so that 'the people shall be left to make their own choice between rival systems of education without being bribed! The funds that would be thus saved 'would enable us to give larger encouragement' to the study of English and to establish in principal cities throughout the Presidencies, in which the English language might be well and thoroughly taught!
7. The anti-English lobby has indeed been strengthened by British Orientalists. All the murmurings are coming from them but 'from the native society left to itself we have no difficulties to apprehend'. Indians have accepted English avidly and they are asking for it. But Macaulay's rhetoric overshadowed the painstaking work of British Orientalists who were as concerned with the dissemination of Western learning in the East as the Anglicists.

But Macaulay's militant Anglicism, his remarks about Indian literature and culture, his ignorance of the riches of Oriental literature and his superficial knowledge of India his Utopianism won and English education and the English language got entrenched in the Indian subcontinent.

Macaulay's mission was accomplished; he has very successfully created a class of 'trishankos', who are rootless, cultureless and valueless; their minds are colonized and they still continue to privilege the Western tradition and Western literature as though our literatures 'are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was, while it was blank!' Charles Trevelyan, the brother-in-law of Macaulay, did not approve of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* as text for study in Indian schools and colleges since 'the more popular forms of oriental literature are marked with greatest immorality and impurity' (Parliamentary Papers, 1952-53:198 quoted in *Masks of Conquest*); even today the departments of English in Indian universities think that *Hamlet* and *Othello* are greater than our classics, because they do not know the Indian tradition or literature. The teacher of English in India may successfully reproduce what Aristotle said about the tragic hero and the tragic element, and about Elizabethan tragedies and modern tragedies in British and American literature; certainly they cannot look for a tragic hero in the *Ramayana* (like Ravana), in the *Mahabharata* (like Karna or any other character in the epic), in *Silappadigaram* (like Kannaki), a Tamil classic, and study our concept of tragedy. Those who know English are ignorant of 'vernacular' literatures and those who are 'Pundits' (a term with a contemptuous connotation) in the native literature (be it Sanskrit or Tamil) cannot express their ideas in English. The 'great divide' or 'communication gap' created during the colonial period is yet to be bridged and the dialogue has not yet started; the 'colonial divide' has a greater and deeper impact than the partition of the sub-continent.

Check your progress

1. Persian was replaced by English as the language of administration and legal procedures.
2. Charles Grant recommended the dissemination of knowledge through European literature and Sciences.
3. William Bentinck and Mr. Macaulay laid the foundation for English education in India.
4. Mr. Macaulay had utter contempt of all that is Oriental and he always debunked anything Indian in literature or sciences.

3.5 SOME INDIANS ASKED FOR IT

One can say that English education was not just imposed by the rulers. Sir Edward Hyde, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Calcutta, found himself in an ironical situation when a group of Calcutta citizens deplored the national deficiency in morals and asked for a college offering European education and imparting an English system of morals; Hyde reports that they insisted on receiving a classical knowledge of the English language and literature (Gowri Viswanathan, 1989:43).

In a way even scholars like Raja Rammohan Roy played into the hands of the British: the demand for Western knowledge was conveniently turned into the demand for English as the medium of instruction, the dissemination of Western morals and cultural values, and a pretext for withdrawing funds from supporting the Indian system in favour of English. Rammohan Roy in his famous letter (1823) to Lord Amherst on Western education did not approve of a Sanskrit school. He said,

The establishment of a new Sanskrit school in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of the Government to improve the Natives of India by Education, a blessing for which they must ever be

grateful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels...

We now find that the government are establishing Sanskrit school under Hindu Pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India... Again no essential benefit can be derived by the student of Meemamsa from knowing what is it that makes the killer of a goat sinless on pronouncing certain passages of the Vedas...

As Reena Chatterji (1983) rightly points out, Rammohan wanted a more liberal and enlightened system of education, inducing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences to raise the position of India as it was done in Europe; he wanted translations; he did not favour the introduction of English as the medium of instruction on a permanent basis. In his zeal to support the case of utilitarian education, Rammohan was a little too harsh in criticizing the Sanskrit system of education and his criticism was directed against the orthodox Hindu Pundits and their conservatism and not against the treasure of the Sanskrit language. Mayhew, in *The Education of India* (1927), shifted the responsibility of the mischief done by Macaulay onto the shoulders of Rammohan Roy and projected Rammohan as an earlier edition of Macaulay (Chatterji 1983:36-68). Anyway, Rammohan, a scholar well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, was used by the rulers in Anglicizing urban India as part of the colonial politics.

3.6 THE CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

The standard fare in the 'secular' Government curriculum of mid nineteenth century in India was something like this:

Poetical selections (Goldsmith, Gray, Addison and Shakespeare), Milton's *Paradise Lost*, (the first four books), Pope's *Illiad* by Homer, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*, Addison's *Essays*, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Goldsmith's *History of England*, Bacon's *Essays*, and prose readers prepared by Macaulay when he was the President of the Council of Education in India.

Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary, who ran the General Assembly Institution in Calcutta (from 1830 to 1843), and other missionaries criticized the 'godless' colleges of the government for imparting secular education in English. Duff argued: "The ample teaching of our improved European literature, philosophy and science, we know, would shatter the huge fabric of popular Hinduism, and crumble it into fragments". (Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53, 32:57)

Duff's curriculum included the Bible, Paley's *Natural Theology*, Plato's *Dialogues*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* etc., but excluded Johnson, Addison and Pope.

It must be pointed out here that only the classics (ancient Greek and Latin literature), theology and mathematics were taught as subjects at Oxford and Cambridge, the two renowned universities in England. Oxford and Cambridge did not allow the subject of English '(mere chatter about Shelley)' to be taught till the end of the 19th century. In India, the universities were started first and later English education filtered down to the secondary level and no attention was paid to primary education, the foundation! That is why English education is rootless in our country and, even after independence, we are continuing with the same design and trying to repair a huge monument that is crumbling down.

One can readily find most of these titles given by Lord Macaulay or Duff in the syllabuses of our universities even today, more than fifty years after political independence. We have not done anything to decolonise the educational system and the teaching of English, because the colonial legacy is deep-rooted in the minds of the Western-educated men and women. We must realize that English education was made central to the cultural enterprise of the Empire, as the monarchy was to its political formation. One hundred years of Western education, conditioning and intellectual slavery and the resultant ignorance of our own literature and traditions are reflected in the syllabus of even newly formed universities and autonomous colleges.

3.7 THE HIDDEN AGENDA

The 'aims and objectives' of English education in Macaulay's Minute, in Alexander Duff's writings, and in the writings of Indians who advocated the gradual diffusion of European knowledge to meet the requirements of a developing society were clear enough for anyone to understand. But the hidden goals of English education were more clearly and unambiguously stated by Horace Wilson, an arch foe of Macaulay and a noted nineteenth century Sanskrit scholar (who called Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, the jewel of Indian literature):

By annihilating native literature, by sweeping away all sources of pride and pleasure in their own mental efforts, by rendering a whole people dependent upon a remote and unknown country for all their ideas and for the very words in which to clothe them, we should degrade their character, depress their energies and render them incapable of aspiring to any intellectual distinction.

Horace Wilson, 'Education for the Natives of India', *Asiatic Journal*, 1836, 29:14.

There cannot be a more forceful statement of the real objectives of the colonial rule and its plan of education that will demoralize the local population than what has been stated above. *The present educational system in India is a standing monument of the 'mission' accomplished.* The English educated people who 'rule' the country now depend upon other 'remote and unknown countries for all their ideas and for the very words to clothe them'. The British took away not only the cotton or the Kohinoor diamond from India but our confidence too.

3.8 LET'S SUM UP

1. Charles Grant, described as the father of modern education, suggested the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in India. He paved the way for the Charter Act of 1813.
2. Mr Macaulay too agreed with the government and felt that English should be taught to provide a class of administrators to help the colonial rule.
3. English was considered a 'Christian tongue'.
4. Macaulay's Minute was written in 1835 and he very clearly recommended the introduction of English in India.
5. In Macaulay's Minute there are stated aims and hidden colonial aims which are to be understood clearly.

3.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

- i. In what ways Charles Grant and William Bentinck were responsible for the introduction of English education in India? (Grant father of modern education—enlighten the natives through English and Christianity—William Bentinck through Macaulay acted on that—Orientalist/Anglicist Controversy—Anglicist won—English introduced. See 3.1 and 3.2)
- ii. What are the salient features of Macaulay's Minute and what are its stated aims? (See 3.2)
- iii. Write a note on the Anglicist–Orientalist controversy. (See 3.2)
- iv. What was the curriculum for teaching English in colonial India? (See 3.6)
- v. Do you think that some Indians asked for Western Education? What did they ask for? (See 3.4)
- vi. What is the hidden agenda in Macaulay's Minute? (See 3.7)
- vii. Give a critical assessment of Macaulay's Minute and its impact on Indian education? (See 3.1 to 3.7)
- viii. Write a note on the Christian missionaries in India. (See 3.3)

REQUIRED READING: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

MACAULAY'S MINUTE ON EDUCATION

As it seems to be the opinion of some of the gentlemen who compose the Committee of Public Instruction, that the course which they have hitherto pursued was strictly prescribed by the British Parliament in 1813, and as, if that opinion be correct, a legislative act will be necessary to warrant a change, I have thought it right to refrain from taking any part in the preparation of the adverse statements which are now before us, and to reserve what I had to say on the subject till it should come before me as a member of the Council of India.

It does not appear to me that the Act of Parliament can, by any art of construction, be made to bear the meaning which has been assigned to it. It contains nothing about the particular

languages or sciences which are to be studied. A sum is set apart "for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories." It is argued, or rather taken for granted, that by literature, the Parliament can have meant only Arabic and Sanskrit literature, that they never would have given the honourable appellation of 'a learned native' to a native who was familiar with the poetry of Milton, the Metaphysics of Locke, and the Physics of Newton; but that meant to designate by that name only such persons as might have studied in the sacred books of the Hindoos all the uses of cusa-grass, and all the mysteries of absorption into the Deity. This does not appear to be a very satisfactory interpretation. To take a parallel case; suppose that the Pacha of Egypt, a country once superior in knowledge to the nations of Europe, but now sunk far below them, were to appropriate a sum for the purpose of 'reviving and promoting literature, and encouraging learned natives of Egypt,' would anybody infer that he meant the youth of his pachalic to give years to the study of hieroglyphics, to search into all the doctrines disguised under the fable of Osiris, and to ascertain with all possible accuracy the ritual with which cats and onions were anciently adored? Would he be justly charged with inconsistency, if, instead of employing his young subjects in deciphering obelisks, he were to order them to be instructed in the English and French languages, and in all the sciences to which those languages are the chief keys.

The words on which the supporters of the old system rely do not bear them out, and other words follow which seem to be quite decisive on the other side. This Lac of rupees is set apart, not only for 'reviving literature in India,' the phrase on which their whole interpretation is founded, but also for 'the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories,'—words which are alone sufficient to authorise all the changes for which I contend.

If the Council agree in my construction, no Legislative Act will be necessary. If they differ from me, I will prepare a short Act rescinding that clause of the Charter of 1813, from which the difficulty arises.

The argument which I have been considering, affects only the form of proceeding. But the admirers of the oriental system of education, have used another argument, which, if we admit it to be valid, is decisive against all change. They conceive that the public faith is pledged to the present system, and that to alter the appropriation of any of the funds which have hitherto been spent in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanscrit, would be downright spoliation. It is not easy to understand by what process of reasoning they can have arrived at this conclusion. The grants which are made from the public purse for the encouragement of literature differed in no respect from the grants which are made from the same purse for other objects of real or supposed utility. We found a sanatorium on a spot which we suppose to be healthy. Do we thereby pledge ourselves to keep a sanatorium there, if the result should not answer our expectation? We commence the erection of a pier. Is it a violation of the public faith to stop the works, if we afterwards see reason to believe that the building will be useless? The rights of property are undoubtedly sacred. But nothing endangers those rights so much as the practice, now unhappily too common, of attributing them to things to which they do not belong. Those who would impart to abuses the sanctity of property are in truth imparting to the institution of property the unpopularity and the fragility of abuses. If the Government, has given to any person a formal assurance; may, if the Government has excited in any person's mind a reasonable expectation that he shall receive a certain income as a teacher or a learner of Sanscrit or Arabic, I would respect that person's pecuniary interests—I would rather err on the side of

liberality to individuals than suffer the public faith to be called in question. But to talk of a Government pledging itself to teach certain languages and certain sciences, though those languages may become useless, though those sciences may be exploded, seems to me quite unmeaning. There is not a single word in any public instructions, from which it can be inferred that the Indian Government ever intended to give any pledge on this subject, or ever considered the destination of these funds as unalterably fixed. But had it been otherwise, I should have denied the competence of our predecessors to bind us by any pledge on such a subject. Suppose that a Government had in the last century enacted in the most solemn manner that all its subjects should, to the end of time, be inoculated for the small-pox: would that Government be bound to persist in the practice after Jenner's discovery? These promises, of which nobody claims the performance, and from which nobody can grant a release; these vested rights, which vest in nobody; this property without proprietors; this robbery, which makes nobody poorer, may be comprehended by persons of higher faculties than mine. I consider this plea merely as a set form of words, regularly used both in England and in India, in defence of every abuse for which no other plea can be set up.

I hold this Lac of rupees to be quite at the disposal of the Governor-General in Council, for the purpose of promoting learning in India, in any way which may be thought most advisable. I hold his Lordship to be quite as free to direct that it shall no longer be employed in encouraging Arabic and Sanscrit as he is to direct that the reward for killing tigers in Mysore shall be diminished, or that no more public money shall be expended on the chanting at the cathedral.

We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One-half of the Committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing? I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education.

It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts

are recorded, and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or Moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence, with historical compositions, which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other in Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more important, and more closely connected with our Indian empire. Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy,—which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history—abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns, thirty thousand years long—and geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.

We are not without experience to guide us. History furnishes several analogous cases, and they all teach the same lesson. There are in modern times, to go no further, two memorable instances of a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society, of prejudices overthrown—of knowledge diffused—of taste purified—of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous.

The first instance to which I refer, is the great revival of letters among the western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and
30 Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted;

had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but chronicles, in Anglo-Saxon, and romances in Norman-French, would England have been what she now is? What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit literature will be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors. In some departments—in history, for example, I am certain that it is much less so.

Another instance may be said to be still before our eyes. Within the last hundred and twenty years, a nation which had previously been in a state as barbarous as that in which our ancestors were before the crusades, has gradually emerged from the ignorance in which it was sunk, and has taken its place among civilised communities. I speak of Russia. There is now in that country a large educated class, abounding with persons fit to serve the State in the highest functions, and in no ways inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the best circles of Paris and London. There is reason to hope that this vast empire, which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab, may, in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close on France and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? Not by flattering national prejudices; not by feeding the mind of the young, Muscovite with the old woman's stories which his rude fathers had believed: not by filling his head with lying legends about St. Nicholas: not by encouraging him to study the great question, whether the world was or was not created on the 13th of September: not by calling him 'a learned native,' when he has mastered all these points of knowledge: but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach. The languages of Western Europe civilised Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar.

And what are the arguments against that course which seems to be alike recommended by theory and by experience? It is said that we ought to secure the co-operation of the native public, and that we can do this only by teaching Sanscrit and Arabic. I can by no means admit that when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers. It is not necessary, however, to say anything on this subject. For it is proved by unanswerable evidence that we are not at present securing the co-operation of the natives. It would be bad enough to consult their intellectual taste at the expense of their intellectual health. But we are consulting neither, we are withholding from them the learning for which they are craving, we are forcing on them the mock-learning which they nauseate.

This is proved by the fact that we are forced to pay our Arabic and Sanscrit students, while those who learn English are willing to pay us. All the declamations in the world about the love and reverence of the natives for their sacred dialects will never, in the mind of any impartial person, outweigh the undisputed fact, that we cannot find, in all our vast empire, a single student who will let us teach him those dialects unless we will pay him.

I have now before me the accounts of the Madrasa for one month, the month of December 1833. The Arabic students appear to have been seventy-seven in number. All receive stipends from the public. The whole amount paid to them is above 500 rupees a month. On the other side of the account stands the following item: Deduct amount realised from the out-students of English for the months of May, June and July last, 103 rupees.

I have been told that it is merely from want of local experience that I am surprised at these phenomena, and that it is not the fashion for students in India to study at their own charges. This only confirms me in my opinion. Nothing is more certain than that it never can in any part of the world be necessary to pay men for doing what they think pleasant and profitable. India is no exception to this rule. The people of India do not require to be paid for eating rice when they are hungry, or for wearing woollen cloth in the cold season. To come nearer to the case before us, the children who learn their letters and a little elementary Arithmetic from the village school master are not paid by him, He is paid for teaching them. Why then is it necessary to pay people to learn Sanscrit and Arabic? Evidently because it is universally felt that the Sanscrit and Arabic are languages, the knowledge of which does not compensate for the trouble of acquiring them. On all such subjects the state of the market is the decisive test.

Other evidence is not wanting, if other evidence were required. A petition was presented last year to the Committee by several ex-students of the Sanscrit College. The petitioners stated that they had studied in the college ten or twelve years; that they had made themselves acquainted with Hindoo literature and science; that they had received certificates of proficiency; and what is the fruit of all this! "Notwithstanding such testimonials," they say, "we have but little prospects of bettering our condition without the kind assistance of your Honorable Committee, the indifference with which we are generally looked upon by our countrymen leaving no hope of encouragement and assistance from them". They therefore beg that they may be recommended to the Governor-General for places under the Government, not places of high dignity or emolument, but such as may just enable them to exist.

"We want means," they say, "for a decent living, and for our progressive improvement, which, however, we cannot obtain without the assistance of Government, by whom we have been educated and maintained from childhood." They conclude by representing, very pathetically, that they are sure that it was never the intention of Government, after behaving so liberally to them during their education, to abandon them to destitution and neglect.

I have been used to see petitions to Government for compensation. All these petitions, even the most unreasonable of them, proceeded on the supposition that some loss had been sustained—that some wrong had been inflicted. These are surely the first petitioners who ever demanded compensation for having been educated gratis—for having been supported by the public during twelve years, and then sent forth into the world well furnished with literature and science. They represent their education as an injury which gives them a claim on the Government for redress, as an injury for which the stipends paid to them during the infliction were a very inadequate compensation. And I doubt not that they are in the right. They have wasted the best years of life in learning what procures for them neither bread nor respect. Surely we might, with advantage, have saved the cost of making these persons useless and miserable; surely, men may be brought up to be burdens to the public and objects of contempt to their neighbours at a somewhat smaller charge to the State. But such is our policy. We do not even stand neuter in the contest between truth and falsehood. We are not content to leave the natives to the influence of their own hereditary prejudices. To the natural difficulties which obstruct the progress of sound science in the East, we add fresh difficulties of our own making. Bounties and premiums, such as ought not to be given for the propagation of truth, we lavish on the false taste and false philosophy.

By acting thus we create the very evil which we fear. We are making that opposition which we do not find. What we spend on the Arabic and Sanscrit colleges is not merely a

goes to form a nest, not merely of helpless place-hunters, but of bigots prompted alike by passion and by interest to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education. If there should be any opposition among the natives to the change which I recommended, that opposition will be the effect of our own system. It will be headed by persons supported by our stipends and trained in our colleges. The longer we persevere in our present course, the more formidable will that opposition be. It will be every year reinforced by recruits whom we are paying. From the native society left to itself, we have no difficulties to apprehend; all the murmuring will come from that oriental interest which we have, by artificial means, called into being, and nursed into strength.

There is yet another fact, which is alone sufficient to prove that the feeling of the native public, when left to itself, is not such as the supporters of the old system represent it to be. The Committee have thought fit to lay out above a Lac of rupees in printing Arabic and Sanscrit books. Those books find no purchasers. It is very rarely that a single copy is disposed of. Twenty three-thousand volumes, most of them folios and quartos, fill the libraries, or rather the lumber-rooms, of this body. The Committee contrive to get rid of some portion of their vast stock of oriental literature by giving books away. But they cannot give so fast as they print. About twenty thousand rupees a year are spent in adding fresh masses of waste paper to a hoard which, I should think, is already sufficiently ample. During the last three years, about sixty thousand rupees have been expended in this manner. The sale of Arabic and Sanscrit books, during those three years, has not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the meantime the School-Book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes every year, and not only pays the expenses of printing, but realises a profit of 20 per cent, on its outlay.

The fact that the Hindoo law is to be learned chiefly from Sanscrit books, and the Mahomedan law from Arabic books, has been much insisted on, but seems not to bear at all on the question. We are commanded by Parliament to ascertain and digest the laws of India. The assistance of a Law Commission has been given to us for that purpose. As soon as the code is promulgated, the Shasters and the Hedaya will be useless to a Moonsiff or Sudder Ameen. I hope and trust that before the boys who are now entering at the Madrassa and the Sanscrit College have completed their studies, this great work will be finished. It would be manifestly absurd to educate the rising generation with a view to a state of things which we mean to alter before they reach manhood.

But there is yet another argument which seems even more untenable. It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues or the State to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?

It is taken for granted by the advocates of oriental learning, that no native of this country can possibly attain more than a mere smattering of English. They do not attempt to prove this; but they perpetually insinuate it. They designate the education which their opponents recommend as a mere spelling book education. They assume it as undeniable, that the question is between a profound knowledge of Hindoo and Arabian literature and science on the one side, and a superficial knowledge of the rudiments of English on the other. This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience. We know that foreigners of all nations do learn our language sufficiently to have access to all the most abstruse knowledge which it contains, sufficiently to relish even the more delicate graces of our most idiomatic writers. There are in this very town natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the Committee of Public Instruction. Indeed it is unusual to find, even in the literary circles of the continent, any foreigner who can express himself, in English with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindoos. Nobody, I suppose, will content, that English is so difficult to a Hindoo as Greek to an Englishman. Yet an intelligent English youth, in a much smaller number of years than our unfortunate pupils pass at the Sanscrit College, becomes able to read, to enjoy, and even to imitate, not unhappily, the compositions of the best Greek authors. Less than half the time which enables an English youth to read Herodotus and Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton.

To sum what I have said, I think it clear that we are not fettered by the Act of Parliament of 1813; that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose; that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing; that English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic; that the natives are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion, have the Sanscrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our engagement; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.

In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects to the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

I would strictly respect all existing interest. I would deal even generously with all individuals who have had fair reason to expect a pecuniary provision. But I would strike at the root of the bad system which has hitherto been fostered by us. I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanscrit books, I would abolish the Madrassa and the Sanscrit College at Calcutta. Benares is the great seat of Brahmanical learning; Delhi, of Arabic learning. if we retain the Sanscrit College at Benares and the Mahomedan College at Delhi, we do enough, and much more than enough in my opinion, for the eastern languages. if the Benares and Delhi Colleges should be retained, I would at least recommend that no stipends shall be given to any students who may hereafter repair thither, but that the people shall be left

us to learn what they have no desire to know. The funds which would thus be placed at our disposal would enable us to give larger encouragement to the Hindoo College at Calcutta, and to establish in the principal cities throughout the Presidencies of Fort William and Agra schools in which the English language might be well and thoroughly taught.

If the decision of his Lordship in Council should be such as I anticipate, I shall enter on the performance of my duties with the greatest zeal and alacrity. If, on the other hand, it be the opinion of Government that the present system ought to remain unchanged, I beg that I may be permitted to retire from the chair of the Committee. I feel that I could not be of the smallest use there—I feel, also, that I should be lending my countenance to what I firmly believe to be a mere delusion. I believe that the present system tends, not to accelerate the progress of truth, but to delay the natural death of expiring errors. I conceive that we have at present no right to the respectable name of a Board of Public Instruction. We are a Board for wasting public money, for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was while it was blank; for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology; for raising up a breed of scholars who find their scholarship an encumbrance and a blemish, who live on the public while they are receiving their education, and whose education is so utterly useless to them that when they have received it they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives. Entertaining these opinions, I am naturally desirous to decline all share in the responsibility of a body, which, unless it alters its whole mode of proceeding, I must consider not merely as useless, but as positively noxious.

BRAOU

UNIT 4 - TRANSPORTING ENGLISH

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 The transportation phase or the period of expansion and consolidation
- 4.2 English only at higher levels without a proper foundation—India a trial ground
- 4.3 The Data : Specimens of English Written by Indians.
- 4.4 Let's sum up
- 4.5 Self-assessment Questions (SAQs) and answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the developments in the field of English education in India during the transportation phase—(i.e.,) when English was transported to India during 1835–1857.
- make you aware of the developments like the Charter Renewal of 1853, when open competition for examination was introduced and the starting of three universities in 1857.
- make you understand the bureaucratic style of writing in English.

4.1 THE TRANSPORTATION PHASE

As pointed out in the previous unit (3.2), the pre-transportation phase was marked by power struggle among the European powers and no interest was shown in the field of education or no attempt was made to introduce their languages.

The East India Company was started in 1600 but the Company did not show any interest in education; only when the Charter Act was renewed in 1813, making the EIC do something in the field of education. This is the first phase.

The second phase, which may be called the transportation phase, was a period of clear cut policies, expansion in the field of education the phase of implementation of Macaulay's Minute and consolidation. The EIC was fairly well-established and they have evolved clear administrative policies. For example, the recruitment for civil services was made systematic as it was also done for the higher officials of the EIC. The Charter was again renewed in 1853 and the open competition system for public examinations was established.

Secondly, oriental education was given encouragement as part of the attempt to get friendly with the local people. A clear education policy was formed later in 1854, as part of the political policy in general. Charles Wood, later known as Halifax, was the President of the Board of Control. With the renewal of the EIC in 1853, the need for defining the educational policy of the company was felt. Wood's Despatch of 1854, sometimes called the 'Magna Charter of English education in India', imposed upon the government the task of creating a proper educational system from the primary to the higher levels. The Despatch was published in 1854

Mr Wood felt that the material interests of England would be affected if there was no advance of European knowledge in India; he felt that such a knowledge would reach the natives of India the marvellous result of the employment of labour and capital, rouse them to emulate the English in the development of the vast resources of their country, guide them in their efforts and confer upon them all the advantages that accompany the increase of wealth and commerce.

The preamble of the Despatch gives reasons for developing education in India. The ruling power had a sacred obligation to confer upon the natives the blessings, both moral and material which would flow from the general diffusion of 'useful knowledge'. Further more, education promised to supply the government with natives of great intellectual fitness and moral integrity in Civil Service positions. And, finally, it would help to promote England's material interests in India, since European knowledge would show the natives the marvellous results of employing capital and labour, stir them to emulate the English in developing the vast resources of their country, guide them in their efforts, and ultimately confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the growth of wealth and commerce. As a result England would be assured of a large supply of articles necessary for the manufactures and consuming public, besides gaining an almost inexhaustible demand for the output of British labour.

The Despatch most emphatically declares that education desired in India is that which has for its object the diffusion of improved arts, science, philosophy, and literature of Europe; in short, of European knowledge. It also States that eastern science and philosophy abounded in errors and Eastern literature was deficient in regard to all modern discovery and improvement.

The diffusion of European knowledge was stated as the primary object of all educational policy. At the same time, the Despatch insisted that future efforts must seek to extend much more widely general European knowledge of a lower and more practical order and that European knowledge should not be confined to a small number of natives. The Despatch also said that high order of education requires a knowledge of the English language. However, the only medium through which European knowledge could be communicated to the masses was evidently one or another of the vernacular language of India.

What the Wood's Despatch says:

Medium of Instruction: English and Vernacular Languages

In any general system of education, the English language should be taught where there is a demand for it; but such instruction should always be combined with a careful attention to the study of the vernacular language of the district, and with such general instruction as can be conveyed through that language; and while the English language continues to be made use of as by far the most perfect medium for the education of those persons who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of it to receive general instruction through it, the vernacular languages must be employed to teach the far larger classes who are ignorant of, or imperfectly acquainted with English. This can only be done effectually through the instrumentality of masters and professors, who may, by themselves, knowing English and thus having full access to the latest improvements in knowledge of every kind, impart to their countrymen, through the medium of their mother-tongue, the information which they have thus obtained.

At the same time, and as the importance of the vernacular languages becomes more appreciated, the vernacular literature of India will be gradually enriched by translations of European books or by the original compositions of men whose minds have been imbued with the spirit of European advancement so that European knowledge may gradually be placed in this manner within the reach of all classes of the people. We look, therefore, to the English language and to the vernacular languages of India together as the media for the diffusion of European knowledge, and it is our desire to see them cultivated together in all schools in India of a sufficiently high class to maintain a schoolmaster possessing the requisite qualifications.

Grant-in-aid: Gradual Transfer of Government Institutions to the Management of Local Bodies

The consideration of the impossibility of Government alone doing all that must be done in order to provide adequate means for the education of the natives of India, and of the ready assistance which may be derived from efforts which have hitherto received but little encouragement from the State, has led us to the natural conclusion that the most effectual method of providing for the wants of India in this respect will be to combine with the agency of the Government the aid which may be derived from the exertions and the liberality of the educated and wealthy natives of India, and of other benevolent person.

We have, therefore, resolved to adopt in India the system of grants-in-aid which has been carried out in this country with very great success; and we confidently anticipate by thus drawing support from local resources, in addition to contributions from the State, a far more rapid progress of education than would follow a mere increase of expenditure by Government; while it possesses the additional advantage of fostering a spirit of reliance upon local exertions and combination for local purposes, which in itself is of no mean importance to the well-being of a nation.

We look forward to the time when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, with the gradual advance of the system of grant-in-aid, and when many of the existing Government institutions, especially those of the higher order, may be safely closed or transferred to the management of local bodies under the control of, and aided by, the State.

Voluntary Religious Education in Government Institutions

Considerable misapprehension appears to exist as to our views with respect to religious instruction in the Government institutions. Those institutions were founded for the benefit of the whole population of India; and in order to effect their object it was, and is, indispensable that the education conveyed in them should be exclusively secular. The Bible is, we understand, placed in the libraries of the colleges and schools and the pupils are able freely to consult it. This is as it should be; and, moreover, we have no desire to prevent, or discourage,

any explanations which the pupils may, of their own free will, ask from the masters upon the subject of the Christian religion provided that such information be given out of school hours. Such instruction being entirely voluntary on both sides, it is necessary, in order to prevent the slightest suspicion of an intention on our part to make use of the influence of Government for the purpose of proselytism, that no notice shall be taken of it by the inspectors in their periodical visits.

Training of Teachers

We cannot do better than refer you to the plan which has been adopted in Great Britain for this subject, and which appears to us to be capable of easy adaptation to India. It mainly consists in the selection and stipend of pupil teachers (awarding a small payment to the masters of the schools in which they are employed for the instruction out of school hours); their ultimate removal, if they prove worthy, to normal schools; the issue to them of certificates on the completion of their training in those normal schools; and in securing to them a sufficient salary when they are afterwards employed as school masters. This system should be carried out in India, both in the Government colleges and schools, and, by means of grants-in-aid, in all institutions which are brought under Government inspection.

Our wish is that the profession of school master may, for the future, afford inducements to the natives of India such as are held out in other branches of the public service.

Education of Women

The importance of female education in India cannot be over-rated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which grants-in-aid may be given; and we cannot refrain from expressing our cordial sympathy with the efforts which are being made in this direction. Our Governor General-in-Council has declared, in a communication to the Government of Bengal, that the Government ought to give to the native female education in India its frank and cordial support; and in this we heartily concur and we especially approve of the bestowal of marks of honour upon such native gentlemen as Rao Bahadur Magahunbhai Karamchand who donated Rs. 20,000 to the foundation of two native female schools in Ahmedabad, as by such means our desire for the extension of female education becomes generally known.

Establishment of Universities

The rapid spread of a liberal education among the natives of India since that time, the high attainments shown by the native candidates

for Government scholarships and by native students in private institutions in the success of the Medical Colleges, and the requirement of an increasing European and Anglo-Indian population, have led us to the conclusion that the time has now arrived for the establishment of universities in India.

Expansion of Mass Education

Our attention should now be directed to a consideration, if possible, still more important, and one which has been hitherto, we are bound to admit, too much neglected, namely, how useful and practical knowledge, suited to every station of life, may be best conveyed to the great mass of the people, who are utterly incapable of obtaining any education worthy of the name by their own unaided efforts, and we desire to see the active measures of Government more especially directed, for the future, to this object, for the attainment of which we are ready to sanction a considerable increase of expenditure.

By the time the policy was formulated in 1854, missionary schools, private schools, district English schools by the East India Company had begun to provide English education at the school level. The result of this growth was that education policy of the British became a "top down policy". Colleges, universities and a few English medium high schools started imparting English education; as a result the primary education was totally neglected. There was a wide gap between English entrenched higher education and the inadequate or the lack of English at lower levels. This wide gap continued or even now continues to persist in contemporary India.

The link between English education and British bureaucracy was firmly established during this period. But these developments took place at three presidency cities—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; the locale was typically urban. The link with the British also created print media and creative writing in English. They started earlier than formal English education in India. The intellectual and creative writing which was a common link between urban centres and among the urban elite, English education, Bureaucracy and print media came to be firmly established during this period. The result can be seen even today. The urban minority use of English in India was fully entrenched in the use of English in India right from the beginning.

During this transportation period the use of English as a language between the Indian rulers and the British or the company officials weakened because the Indian rulers became politically weak. Instead more communication took place inside the domain of Bureaucracy because British Bureaucracy became strong and more communication took place among them. The use of Persian and the influence of Persian on conventions in writing, which was found during the first phase also diminished during this phase. British Bureaucracy completely took over the powers of the Indian rulers; consequently English became the language of British Bureaucracy in the sub-continent. During this phase the availability of English education and changes in the policies of the company and the opening of the job market increased the quality of English education and English in India. Indians employed for those jobs were English educated. British Bureaucracy was confined to intellectuals like Ram Mohan Roy or the Merchants. The elite had better access to English education and for the people, writing petitions in English had become a necessary skill. Thus English education and Bureaucracy emerged almost simultaneously. The only way of putting English education in use was to get a job in the government and write Bureaucratic documents. The use of English in Bureaucratic domain was the beginning of English in India. Thus Bureaucratic writing dominates all writing in English in most domains in the use of English in India.

English education also opened up the print media communication and creative writing in English. The print media was used for publishing school magazines, annual reports of colleges, and write-ups that dealt with topics like English education, proposals for publishing translations reviews of Shakespeare's plays etc. All these topics connected with English and English education are induced by the use of English in India.

Thus on the one hand the British Bureaucracy induced administrative needs which were to be met through English; on the other hand, besides feeding into the Bureaucratic domain, it also induced communication needs in the print media and creative writing. In this way English education and the use of English expanded and got institutionalized.

Check your progress

1. The Charter Renewal of 1813 made the EIC responsible for education and the EIC was also brought under the control of the British Parliament.
2. This policy starts the second phase in the field of English education in India; this phase can be called the transportation phase.
3. The introduction of systematic solution for government jobs increased the domain for English.
4. More and more of officialese and bureaucratic writing increased.
5. Oriental learning though encouraged rapidly declined.
6. Three universities were started—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in the year of the Great Mutiny called the Sepoy Mutiny by the British.
7. English literature was introduced in Indian universities as a subject of study almost 50 years before it was introduced in Oxford and Cambridge.

4.2 ENGLISH ONLY AT HIGHER LEVELS WITHOUT A PROPER FOUNDATION—INDIA A TRIAL GROUND

It is interesting to note at this stage that only in 1828 English was first offered as a subject of study in England—even then it was not offered at the two prestigious universities, Oxford and Cambridge, but at the newly started University College in London that was founded in 1826; the course offered was not on English literature but on language. Only three years later in 1831 English literature was first offered as a subject of study at King's College London. (another college that later became London university) Before 1828 only classics in Greek and Latin, theology and Mathematics were taught as subjects at Oxford and Cambridge the two renowned universities. Oxford and Cambridge did not allow the new subject of English to be taught till the end of the 19th century; literature meant only the study of the great books in classical languages like Greek and Latin and not mere "chatter about Shelly". Oxford allowed English as a subject of study only in 1894 and Cambridge in 1911 but three universities were started in India in 1857. Macaulay's Minute of 1835 laid the foundation of English education and the study of English literature in India even before the study of English literature was introduced at Oxford or Cambridge. Three universities—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras—were started in 1857, interestingly the year of the great Indian Mutiny also called Sepoy Mutiny. The establishment and the protest start together. This shows that Macaulay used India as a trial ground for introducing English literature in the regular curriculum; literature meant only English literature and not any other literature in Indian languages.

4.3 THE DATA: SPECIMENS OF ENGLISH WRITTEN BY INDIANS

The following data shows how the use of English got expanded and institutionalised in bureaucracy, education, print media, communication and literary writing.

Specimen I: Education

A faculty member of the Madras University writes a report on students' performance.
(Source: *The Eighth Annual Report from The Governors of the Madras University 1848-49*)

To the Head Master

Dear Sir,

My opinion having been desired of the respective merits of the youths study in the highest class under your care, as to their proficiency in the science of Astronomy in which I had the pleasure of examining them. I beg leave to assure you that they have not in any way fallen short of my expectations, and that they have gained a familiar acquaintance with the most interesting portions of Astronomy, must be manifest to every one from the readiness and facility with which they answered when interrogated in the viva voce examination. In their written replies to the questions I set them, they discover a pretty intimate knowledge of some of those processes in which the application of Mathematics is necessary for the development of the application of the most important Astronomical phenomena. They understand the details of many calculations, only the principles of which are sketched out in the work of Herschel, which form their class book. Some of their written replies are not of course altogether free from errors and inelegancies, many of which, I have no doubt would not have occurred had more time been allowed for the collection and arrangement of their ideas. The relative merits of the youths may be easily ascertained by a reference to the marks I have given to their written replies. No lad has, I think discovered such a decided superiority over the rest, as to merit an individual mention.

I remain,

Dear sir,

Your's very sincerely,

T. Madava Row

Specimen II: Bureaucracy—(a formal letter)

Letter from Baboo Taruk Chunder Lohory, Sub-Assistant Surgeon to the Secretary,
Government of Madras, dated Moorsheedabad, 31st March, 1857
(Source: Madras Record Office, Government of Madras, Public

Department)

Year: 1857

Sir,

I beg to despatch by book-post to-day a copy of my work on the principles and practice of surgery in Urdu, with a hope of getting some assistance from the Government of Madras. The Government of the NWP has taken 100, copies the Chief Commissioner of Scindh 25, and the Chief Commissioner of Oude 20 copies. The price of each copy is five Rupees (5 Rs) the English preface of the work will point out the nature and utility of the book.

(Signed) Taruk Chunder Lahory,

Sub-Assistant Surgeon

Specimen III: Print-media communication

A review of a play

(Source: *Selections from English Period of 19th Century Bengal, Volume IV: 1857*)

Year 1857

The Hindoo Theatre

It is not long since Calcutta was regaled with histrionic exhibitions under the auspices of native amateurs when some of the best plays of Shakespeare were acted upon the stage by young Hindoos who appeared to enter into the spirit of the characters they personated. Although the full measure of success which was anticipated could not be realized, yet the public, and specially the native community, showed a taste for such performances which promised the best results, if the managers of the Theatre had only the tact to profit by the happy opportunity. Instead, however of fostering by repeated and well got up performances the taste thus created, they permitted minor jealousies and a spirit of contention to demolish the good they had achieved; and the curtain fell upon their stage to be lifted up no more. Years rolled away. We had well nigh forgotten that we ever had such a thing as a theatre, when an invitation card surprised us with the fact that another Bengallee stage had risen like a phoenix upon the ashes of its predecessor. The announcement had the further attraction that the play announced was a genuine Bengallee one, being a translation of the well-known dramatic execution of Kally Dass—the Sacoontollah. We were still more delighted to learn that the theatre had been got up by the grandsons of the late Baboo Asutosh Dey, the stage having been erected at the family residence of the deceased millionaire, and the partaking of the character of a private theatrical. It is not every day that native gentlemen of wealth and position are observed to spend money on amusements of a rational kind. It is altogether a relief to contemplate our youthful aristocracy apart from

the low and grovelling pursuits which too unfortunately constitute the normal condition of many of that body. The drama has in all ages and with all nations formed one of the principal sources of a pure amusement. In India, it had at one time attained the highest state of perfection. But a combination of disastrous circumstances tended to annihilate the freedom of our race, and simultaneously with loss of liberty we lost every blessing which chastened manners and embellished life. Foreigners contemplate with ecstasy the genius of our poets. The universities of Europe are not tired of pouring over the musty tomes of ancient Sanskrit literature. The Sacoontollah of Kallidas has undergone the most finished translations in Germany and in England. But amongst the people for whose forefathers the immortal bard taxed the genius, his admirable work is a sealed book almost. A few only have read it in the original, and a very few contemptible number in the diluted form even of a translation. The play is admirable fitted for the stage. We had abundant evidence of the fact from the performance which came off the night of the 30th instant. The young gentleman who personated Sacoontollah looked really grand and queenly in his gestures and address, and did great justice to the part he was enacting. The other amateurs also succeeded in creating an effect. We are told that the performers have not had the benefit of any lessons from practised actors, and this circumstance enables us to accord great credit to exertions polishing the corps dramatique will be able to make brilliant debut.

From: Hindoo Patriot, 5 February 1857

Specimen IV: Literary Writing

Year 1828-57

To the Pupils of the Hindu College

Expanding like the petals of young flowers
 I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
 And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
 Your intellectual energies and powers
 That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)
 Their wings to try their strength. O how the winds
 Of Circumstances and freshening April showers
 Of early knowledge and unnumbered kinds
 Of new perceptions shed their influence,
 And how you worship truth's omnipotence!
 What joyance rains upon me when I see
 Fame in the mirror of futurity,
 Waking the chaplets you have yet to gain,
 Ah then I feel I have not lived in vain.

Henly L. Derozio

The use of English and its officialese and the formulaic use of English got very well entrenched in the use of the English of Indians.

4.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. After Macaulay laid the foundation in 1835 there was rapid expansion of English education in the Indian sub-continent. There were several factors responsible for this. The Charter Renewal of 1853 opened the gates for government jobs and an open competition system was established. The Wood's Despatch of 1854 formulated the education policy and a coordinated system of education. The establishment of a department of education and the setting up of universities in Presidency towns were recommended. As a result universities were established in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857.
2. In terms of the use of English, the British bureaucracy and the officialese got well established in India. The British became very powerful and their empire was well established; the subjects of the empire in order to curry favour learnt English willingly. This resulted in the rapid expansion of English education and English became an established language in the subcontinent.

4.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Explain the circumstances that led to the establishment of universities in India. (Woods' Despatch of 1854—Policy formulations—Systematic education—establishment of universities. See also 4.1 and 4.2)
2. When was English literature as a subject study introduced in England in India? (India a trial ground—English was not a respectable language in England—Oxford and Cambridge—when introduced—Indian Universities. See also 4.2)
3. Outline the main recommendations of the Wood's Despatch. (Diffusion of European knowledge—medium of instruction—grant-in-aid—training of teachers—mass education—English at higher levels. See also 4.1)

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

BLOCK II: THE EXPANSION PHASE

Introduction

The second block of four units on this course is on the expansion of English in the Indian subcontinent. The block outlines how after the Crown (i.e., the British Government) took over from the East India Company the governing of India, English became a prestigious language in India. English became the language of the government and the Indian subjects accepted the governing authority and the language of the colonial masters. The rulers controlled the finances and the grant-in-aid system was introduced between 1883 and 1885. The Indian National Congress was also founded in 1885 and along with the tightening of the British rule in India the protest movement was also started. In 1904 the Indian Universities Act was passed giving the government tighter control over colleges and universities. During this period higher education spread like wild fire. The following chart shows the nature of expansion.

1901-1902

Types of Institutions	No. of Institutions	No. of Students
Arts Colleges		
English	140	17,048
Oriental	5	503
Professional Colleges		
Law	30	2,767
Medicine	4	1,466
Engineering	5	190
Teaching	4	865
Agriculture	3	70
Total	191	23,009

The expansion is the highest in the Arts colleges which offered subjects like English Literature, History, etc.; professional education forms a negligible part of the educational system.

Events contingent to the history of English in India

1857	Three Indian universities were started in the year of the Great Mutiny.
1858	The Crown takes over (transfer of power from the EIC to the Crown)
1859	Official education policy was formulated. The Wood's Despatch was confirmed. Charles Wood, Lord Halifax, President of the Board of Control (of the EIC) recommended a policy or coordinated system of education and the Wood's Despatch became the official policy.
1882 & 1887	Universities of Punjab and Allahabad were established.
1882	Indian Education Commission (called Hunter committee) to review the progress of education. Its report (1884) recommended improving primary education (which was ignored by the government) and confirmed the policy of university education.
1883-5	Grants-in-aid was developed.
1885	Indian National Congress was founded
1892	Indian representation in the legislature; Dadabai Naoraji was elected to the British parliament as India's representative.
1902	Indian Universities Commission (called Ralieggh Commission) for set up, leading to
1904	India Universities Act tightened control over educational administration and provided funds along the lines of 'Grants-in-aid'. Indians were taking over educational administration under the control of the rulers.

UNIT 5 - 1857-1904: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD

Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 1857 to 1904—The spread of English education

5.2 The Indian Education Commission and Indian Universities Commission leading to Indian Universities Act

5.3 Let's sum up—

5.4 Self-assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the post 1857 phase, which may be called the dissemination phase.
 - make you critically look at the spread of English education in the Indian sub continent.
 - show them the link between British bureaucracy and the use of English in India.
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5.1 PHASE III: 1857-1904 - THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

The Crown took over from the East India Company and the British Government with its departments and bureaucracy gradually got established in the subcontinent, resulting in the expansion of the use of English and its 'show-off' value in the society. English became the language of the government and Indians as 'subjects' accepted the governing authority and the language of the rulers.

The result was further stabilization and expansion during the third phase of the history of English in India. All the major domains and features observed in the second phase (1813-57) became stable during the third phase. In other words, the restricted nature of the domains of the use of English got stabilized and a new domain was added. The other domains and the induced use of English were the same as in the earlier phase but there was expansion and stabilization within the domains. There were more Indians using English within the domains. A certain amount of diversification was also seen within the domains; for example there were more compartments within the bureaucracy. More departments were formed and Indians took over the bureaucratic network at various levels. This led to an increase in the number of Indian bureaucrats. The content of education was European and the British controlled the system through the written word, though the management and teaching was done by Indians under the British rule. There was rapid expansion in higher education resulting in an increase in the number of Arts colleges. The inter-dependence between education and bureaucracy got consolidated during this phase. English education generated its own socio-intellectual activities in the urban areas which could be seen in the literary activity (the emerging Indo-Anglian writing), debating societies and associations formed by English-educated Indians in cities, particularly in Calcutta. For example, 'the Academic Association' was founded by the young Indian graduates of Calcutta.

These associations and societies catered to the induced needs for using English (for activities induced by higher education). Indigenous education was completely obliterated and primary education was totally neglected.

English does not seem to involve the entire Indian subcontinent into its self-created domains; nor does it interact with the native civilization of the subcontinent. There is no indication of the finer areas of life like religion, arts, social customs, etc., interacting with English. We can only say that the restrictedness of the use of English in India got consolidated during this phase of history. The induced use of English by Indians becomes established with a higher degree of comprehensibility during the third phase and at the same time, with the increase in numbers a cline of comprehensibility in the use of English is noticeable.

Indians do not vacillate between acceptance and rejection of English; they perceive certain advantages in the use of English but they want to reap the advantages without being excommunicated from their own socio-cultural milieu. The problem for the English-using Indians seems to be how to accommodate English with its socio-economic advantages within the native cultural pattern. Apparently, the use of English in the bureaucratic domain is treated as a convenient way of using English for formal impersonal communication in English induced areas. The bureaucratic use of English thus becomes an impersonal module of communication, and this modular function of English is an important pointer to the developments in the later years wherein English comes to be treated like a module in the outer areas of life according to the needs of Indians.

But English began to serve another purpose during this phase. The Indian National Congress was founded during this period (1885), and there were some militant associations like the Indian Association, which was formed by an expelled ICS officer, Surendranath Banerjee, in 1876; Indians began reacting to the British government using the language of the rulers.

Check your progress

1. The Indian subjects accepted the governing authority and the language of the rulers. So, there was a rapid expansion and stabilization of English and English education.
2. The number of colleges increased rapidly and education meant English education.
3. English became more and more of an urban bureaucratic phenomenon and did not interact with the native culture of the Indian subcontinent like religion, social customs, etc.
4. English gave some Indians the socio-economic advantage. English became another vehicle for expressing some aspects of Indian thought.

5.2 THE INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

Based on Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended a system of education and not unplanned expansion. As a result of the Despatch a commission was set up to review the progress of education in the Indian subcontinent. This commission is known as the Indian Education Commission or the Hunter committee. The commission submitted its report in 1884.

It recommended improving primary and elementary education but the government ignored this recommendation. The Commission recommended and confirmed the university policy of

education, which was accepted by the government; the gap between higher education and elementary education widened; the vast majority of people became more and more illiterate. Only the urban elite and the middle class got English education.

5.3 LET'S SUM UP

1. As a result of Macaulay's Minute of 1835 and Wood's Despatch of 1854 three universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras were established and later in 1882 and 1887 the universities of Punjab and Allahabad were also established.
2. The Indian Education Commission also confirmed the policy of higher education. Though it recommended improving primary education the government ignored it and as a result primary education was neglected.
3. By 1902 there were about two hundred Arts and professional colleges and about 195 of them were teaching English and through English.
4. By 1902 the Indian Universities Commission was set up and in 1904 the Indian Universities Act came into force. This act tightened government control over university and college administration and provided funds for setting up more facilities in colleges and universities.

5.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Why was the Hunter Committee set up? (Review progress of education and recommend future policies. See 5.1)
2. Give a profile of the expansion of English education from 1857 to 1904. (The spread of education—Wood's Despatch—its effect—Indian Education Commission. See also 5.1 and 5.2)

UNIT 6 - INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
 - 6.1 The effect of Woods' Despatch
 - 6.2 Recommendations of the Indian Education Commission
 - 6.3 Grant-in-aid
 - 6.4 Failure of vernacular education
 - 6.5 Let's sum up
 - 6.6 Self-assessment questions (SAQs) and answers
-

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the first Indian Education Commission that was set up in 1882.
 - make you aware of the result of Woods' Despatch of 1854.
 - make you aware of development called grant-in-aid that has become part of our educational system.
 - make you critically evaluate the grant-in-aid system.
 - enable you to trace the history of the grant-in-aid system and government control.
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6.1 THE EFFECT OF WOOD'S DESPATCH

Sir Charles Wood was one of the very first British administrators to examine the state of Indian education under the Company's government. Reemphasizing the need for making Indians fit for officers of trust, Woods' Despatch stressed the importance and the attention to be paid to the local Indian languages, which were called vernaculars. Mr. Wood said "it is indispensable that in any general system of education, the study of the vernaculars should be assiduously attended to and any acquaintance with improved European knowledge which is to be communicated to the great mass of the people—whose circumstances prevent them from acquiring a higher order of education and who cannot be expected to overcome the difficulties of a foreign language—can only be conveyed to them through one or other of these vernacular languages." No sensible person could have disagreed with the opinion expressed in Wood's Despatch but unfortunately it remained only on paper, invoked, in vain, from time to time to draw attention to the evils of elitism. English became the language of government and commerce but the vernacular languages ceased to have any economic motivation at all. The fact is by 1854 English education became the sole content of medium of higher education. The Presidency universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were founded in 1857 and Lahore university was established in 1869. College education in India became "government education" while the masses plunged deeper into the darkness of illiteracy. The 1854 Despatch was meant to promote the general education of the people of India and to leave the higher and richer section of the population to provide for their own education.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

For British India as a whole the establishment of the university system paved the way for a remarkable growth of English education. In addition the promised grants-in-aid to be contributed by the Government served as a stimulus to the founding of new and the improvement of existing institutions. The missionaries welcomed the 'pecuniary' assistance though they disliked to have their institutions subjected to official inspection and regulation. The growing demand for educated natives on the part of the Civil Service also acted as an incentive to draw men to the schools and colleges. The increase of colleges and professional institutions representing higher learning, was matched by the growth of secondary schools of every category, whether government, missionary or private, aided or unaided. Growth-rates, far from being uniform, varied widely from province to province. As a general rule, however, it was the older provinces where education had been deployed during the early half of the nineteenth century that exhibited the most impressive growth of higher education.

The system had its failings and the individual product of the system fell short of expectations; recipients of collegiate education were not the 'crown and flower' of Indian community. Many of them suffered from superficial learning and pretentious self-assertion. The University system did not appear to be of the same quality offered by similar institutions in England. The training was inferior to that obtainable in the best English institutions. The students attended the university merely to pass the examinations and get employment. So, a commission was appointed to review the situation.

In 1882 an Education Commission was appointed. The grant-in-aid principle in Woods' Despatch was not implemented by the government. Educational institutions did not get any help from the government as suggested by the Wood's Despatch. The Christian missionaries were managing a number of schools and colleges and they were hit hard by the lack of any financial support from the government. First the missionaries tried their best to get financial support from the company's government but it did not bear any fruit; so they started an organization in London which was known as the General Council of Education in India (1878) and approached the government for financial support. As a result Lord Rippon appointed the first Indian Education Commission on Feb 3rd 1882 with Sir William Hunter, member of Viceroy's Executive council as the chairman. This commission is also known as the Hunter commission. This commission submitted its report in 1883; it also recalled the original idea found in Macaulay's minute that the English educated elite should take upon themselves the role of diffusing the benefits of European education to the masses below. This social Evangelism without any form or specific course of action was hardly a solution; the government was not prepared to take any viable educational programme to make the educated take on themselves the duty of educating the people at large. Even the missionaries who were willing to devote themselves to such philanthropic vocations needed financial support. So, the Education Commission confirmed the policy of grant-in-aid. Even the education commission did not have any clear cut ideas or programme on education. The Indian elite were getting English education and government jobs and the number of the unemployed and unsuitably employed educated people went on increasing.

The following are some of the important recommendations of the first Indian Education Commission (1882-84)

Important recommendations

Encouragement to indigenous education: Admitting, however, the comparative inferiority of indigenous institutions, we consider that efforts should now be made to encourage them. They have survived a severe competition, and have thus proved that they possess both vitality and popularity.

Primary education: That while every branch of education can justly claim the fostering care of the State, it is desirable, in the present circumstances of the country, to declare the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension and improvement to be that part of the educational system to which the strenuous efforts of the State should now be directed in a still larger measure than heretofore.

That primary education be declared to be that part of the whole system of public instruction, which possesses an almost exclusive claim on local funds set apart for education, and a large claim on provincial revenues.

We recommend that supply of normal schools, whether Government or aided, be so localized as to provide for the local requirements of all primary schools, whether Government or aided, within the division under each Inspector... We recommend that the First charge on provincial funds assigned for primary education be the cost of its direction and inspection, and the provision of an adequate supply of normal schools.

The results of its labours have been to place public instruction on a broader and more popular basis, to encourage private enterprise in teaching, to give a more adequate recognition to the indigenous schools, to provide that the education of the people shall advance at a more equal pace along with the instruction of the higher classes.

Secondary education and grant-in-aid: At least one model high school maybe established in such districts, where they may be required in the interests of the people, and where the people themselves may not be advanced or wealthy enough to establish such schools for themselves with a grant-in-aid.

Bifurcation of the secondary education: In the upper classes of high schools there should be two divisions; one leading to the entrance examination of the universities, the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits.

Higher education : The rate of aid to each college be determined by the strength of the staff, the expenditure on its maintenance, the efficiency of the institution and the wants of the locality.

Women's education: It will have been seen that female education is still in an extremely backward condition, and that it needs to be fostered in every legitimate way... Hence we think it expedient to recommend, "that public funds of all kinds—local, municipal and provincial—should be chargeable in an equitable proportion for the support of girls' schools as well as for boys' schools."

Role of the Government and the missionary enterprise in Indian education : The question how far the withdrawal of the State from the direct provision of means of higher education would throw such education into the hands of missionary bodies, held the foremost place in all the evidence bearing on the topic of withdrawal. Prominent officers of the department and many native gentlemen argued strongly against any withdrawal, on the ground that it must practically hand over higher education to missionaries. As a rule the missionary witnesses themselves, while generally advocating the policy of withdrawal, expressed quite the contrary opinion, stating that they neither expected nor desired that any power over education given up by the department should pass into their hands. In a country with such varied needs as India, we should deprecate any measure which would throw excessive influence over higher education into the hands of any single agency; and particularly into the hands of an agency which, however benevolent and earnest, cannot on all points be in sympathy with the mass of the community... At the same time we think it well to put on record our unanimous opinion that withdrawal of direct departmental agency should not take place in favour of missionary bodies and that departmental institutions of the higher order should not be transferred to missionary management. In the point of view in which we are at present considering the question, missionary institutions hold an intermediate position between those managed by the department and those managed by the people for themselves. On the one hand, they are the outcome of private effort, but on the other they are not strictly local; nor will encouragement to them directly foster those habits of self-reliance and combination for purposes of public utility which is one of the objects of the grant-in-aid system to develop. Missionary institutions may serve the great purpose of showing what private effort can accomplish, and thus including other agencies to come forward. They should be allowed to follow their own independent course under the general supervision of the State; and so long as there are room and need for every variety of agency in the field of education, they should receive all the encouragement and aid that private effort can legitimately claim.

Religious education: The declared neutrality of the State forbids it in connecting institutions directly maintained by it with any form of faith.

6.3 GRANT-IN-AID

Woods' Despatch that laid down the policy for English education in India actually pointed out the impossibility of the government alone providing adequate means for the education of Indians. So he pointed out the need for combining the governmental efforts with the help that can be derived from the liberality of the educated and the wealthy Indians and other benevolent Indians. He proposed the system of grants-in-aid which has been carried out in this country with great success. Even today education in India draws support from local resources in addition to contribution from the governments—the State and the Centre. Mr. Charles Wood also envisaged a system of education that will be totally independent of government support and the

gradual withdrawal, resulting in self financing institutions.

The Hunter Commission also recommended the same system of grant-in-aid. Its recommendations are given below:

Grant-in-aid

- (a) institutions under private managers cannot be successful unless they are frankly accepted as an essential part of the general scheme of education; with a view to securing the cooperation of government and non-government institutions, the managers of the latter be consulted on matters of general educational interest, and that their students be admitted on equal terms to competition for certificates, scholarships and other public distinctions.*
- (b) In the conduct of all departmental examinations managers or teachers of non-governmental schools should be associated as far as possible with the officers of the department.
- (c) All scholarships and rewards that government confers should be given to pupils from all schools and not restricted to those in government institutions only.
- (d) The proximity of a government school should be regarded as of itself a sufficient reason for refusing aid to non government school.
- (e) With the object of rendering assistance to schools in the form best suited to the circumstances of each province and thus to call forth the largest amount of local cooperation the grant-in-aid rules should be revised by the governments in consultation with the managers of schools. The revised rules should define without ambiguity the amount and duration of the aid to which an institution may be entitled and the conditions of grants for buildings apparatus and furniture.
- (f) Every application for a grant-in-aid should receive an official reply and in case of refusal the reasons for such refusal should always be given.
- (g) It should be a general principle that the grant-in-aid should depend (i) on locality, i.e., larger proportionate grants be given to schools in backward districts; and (ii) on the class of institution, i.e., greater proportionate and be given to those in which a large amount of self-support cannot be expected e.g., girls' schools and schools for lower castes and backward communities.
- (h) Grants be paid without delay when they become due according to the rules.
- (i) The revised rules for grant-in-aid and any subsequent alterations made in them should not be merely published in the official gazettes, but translated into the Indian languages, and communicated to the press, to the managers aided and private institutions and to all who are likely to help in any way in the spread of education.
- (j) A periodically increasing provision should be made in the educational budget of each province for the expansion of aided institutions.
- (k) Variety in the course of instruction in aided schools should be encouraged by grants for special subjects.
- (l) Greater latitude should be given to the managers of aided schools in fixing the course of instruction and the medium through which it is conveyed.
- (m) Care should be taken lest public examinations should become the means of practically imposing the same textbooks or curriculum on all schools.

- (n) It should be distinctly laid down that Indians having the necessary qualifications should be employed as inspectors of schools more commonly than in the past.

During this period 1882–83 the grants-in-aid was developed. The present day aided schools and colleges follow the same pattern; this tightened the control of the government over educational institutions in India and that was the aim of the British government. The present day University Grants Commission is based on the same principle of giving aid with a view to controlling the institutions.

Check your progress

1. The Woods' Despatch of 1884 actually recommended the teaching of English as well as education through Indian languages.
2. It also recommended a grant-in-aid system to support the local efforts in education.
3. The government, by and large, ignored these recommendations and the Christian missionaries formed a council in London and agitated. As a result the Indian Education Commission was set up in 1882.
4. The Indian Education Commission approved of the grant-in-aid system and the recommendations of Wood's Despatch.

6.5 FAILURE OF VERNACULAR EDUCATION

It was in this context that Lord Curzon called a conference in 1901. In that conference convened by Lord Curzon in Simla, he spoke on the evils of an English education breeding only the native elite. No Indian was invited to this conference. The English educated elite fought under the banner of Macaulay. The English educated elite in a way also fanned the flames of nationalism with all western ideas.

In all fairness it must be said the government established a number of government schools to teach the vernacular but did not meet with any success. In Bengal hundred and one native language schools were established but proved to be a failure because local inhabitants were unwilling to support a traditional school. All these experiments to impart education in vernacular languages failed because of the rising tide in favour of English coming in great force from Bengal, Bombay and Madras.

Extracts from the resolution on educational policy passed by the Simla Conference.

Primary Education. The active expansion of primary education is one of the most active duties of the State.

Secondary Education. Whether these schools are managed by public authority or by private persons, and whether they receive aid from public funds or not, the Government is bound in the interests of the community to see that the education provided in them is sound. It must, for example, satisfy itself in each case that a secondary school is actually wanted, that its financial stability is assured, that its managing body where there is one, is properly constituted; that it teaches the proper subject up to a proper standard; that due provision has been made for the instruction, health, recreation, and discipline of the pupils; that the teachers are suitable as regards character, number and qualifications; and that the fees to be paid will not involve such competition with any existing schools as will be unfair and injurious to the interests of education. Such are the conditions upon which alone schools should be eligible to receive grants-in-aid or to send up pupils to compete for, or receive pupils in enjoyment of Government scholarships; and schools complying with them will be ranked as 'recognized schools'.

Religious education. In Government institutions the instruction is, and must continue to be, exclusively secular.

6.5 LET'S SUM UP

1. The Wood's Despatch of 1854 actually recommended the strengthening of vernacular education and the grant-in-aid system to support the vernacular education but the government ignored the recommendation. The Christian missionaries were badly affected, agitated in London and got the first Indian Education Commission appointed.
 2. The Commission came out with a number of useful recommendations and also formed guidelines for the grant-in-aid system. Somehow the government was not serious about educating the masses and the English educated elite also collaborated with the government in keeping the masses illiterate. The gap widened and is still widening.
 3. The Wood's Despatch of 1884 proposed the system of giving grants to educational institutions.
 4. The grants-in-aid system is meant to supplement governmental effort in the field of education.
 5. The Indian Education Commission approved of this grant-in-aid system and worked out guidelines for the implementation of the system.
 6. This resulted in qualified Indians getting employment as inspectors of schools and a common curriculum for schools and colleges.
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6.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. What is the result of the Wood's Despatch? (See 6.2)
2. Describe the circumstances under which the first Indian Education Commission was appointed (See 6.3).
3. What are the important recommendations of the commission? (See 6.4)
4. What are the resolutions passed in the conference convened by Lord Curzon in Simla? (See 6.5)
5. Who initiated the grant-in-aid system? (See 6.2)
6. Describe the guidelines given by the Indian Education Commission for implementing the grant-in-aid system. (See 6.3)
7. What is the impact of the grant-in-aid system? (See 6.4)

UNIT 7 - INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ACT OF 1904

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
 - 7.1 Indian Universities Commission of 1902
 - 7.2 The Indian Universities Act of 1904
 - 7.3 Let's sum up
 - 7.4 Self-assessment questions (SAQs) and answers
-

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the universities established in British India.
 - inform you of the Indian Universities Act of 1904.
 - make you aware of the efforts made by the British government to raise the standards of English in India.
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7.1 INDIAN UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION OF 1902

The Indian Education Commission appointed in 1882 did not take up the matter of university education and left it untouched. After the universities were established in 1857 there were a number of problems concerning university education in India and number of defects were noticed in the system. Moreover the London university which served as a model to Indian universities was recognized in 1898 in England. So it became necessary for the Viceroy Lord Curzon to review the university educational system in India with a view to tightening up government control over universities and colleges and providing funds. The Indian Universities Commission was appointed in 1902 and as a result the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904.

Lord Curzon views on education are as strong as that of Macaulay. Addressing the Educational Conference of 1901 at Simla, Lord Curzon said: 'We started by a too slavish imitation of English models, and to this day we have never purged ourselves of the taint'. He added: 'English is the vehicle of learning and of advancement to the small minority; but for the vast bulk, it is a foreign tongue which they do not speak and rarely hear. If the vernaculars contained no literary models no classics, I might not be willing to recommend them. But we all know that in them are enshrined famous treasures of literature.'

Becoming more specific about Macaulay, Lord Curzon said: 'Ever since the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric passed over the field of the Indian languages and Indian text books, the elementary education of the people in their own tongues has shrivelled and pined.' Curzon's championship of vernacular education was prompted by his concern that English-educated people were fighting the British governing class with Western ideas of political freedom! So, he felt that English education itself was elitist! He advocated the cause of Indian languages for wrong reasons and he took a prominent part even in drafting the resolutions of the Government of India's Resolution of Educational Policy.

The Commission was basically appointed to give proposals for improving the conditions and working of universities in India and to recommend such measures to raise the standard of university education. Unfortunately, the commission's recommendations merely rehabilitated

and strengthened only the existing system.

The major recommendations of the Commission are given below:

1. Instead of recognizing the universities, the senate should be recognized, the members of the senate should be reduced and their terms should be five years. The number of members of the syndicate should be between nine and fifteen.
2. After amending the constitutions of the universities, certain facilities for teaching should be given to them.
3. There should be a proper representation of the teachers and the scholars of the affiliated colleges in the universities' senate.
4. There should be proper arrangement for teaching in the colleges affiliated to the universities, and the rules for recognition should be strictly observed and enforced.
5. Affiliated colleges should be strictly supervised by the universities.
6. Universities should appoint teachers to impart higher education.
7. Certain proper amendments should be made in the curriculum and the examination system of the universities.
8. Hostels should be built for the students.
9. According to the position of the students, the arrangements for scholarships should take place.
10. The standard of the Metric examination should be high and while abolishing the inter examination, the curriculum of B.A. should be of three years.
11. A Managing Committee should be there for every college which, besides managing the college concerned, should also appoint competent teachers and pay attention towards the discipline of the students and the construction of buildings and hostels, etc.

Check your progress

Lord Curzon who felt that British government must do something to improve the quality of the primary as well as higher education introduced a number of reforms. School education was centralized under a Director General of Education. The Curzonian scheme was limited to the efficient provision of facilities without taking into account the ground realities in India.

At the level of higher education which Curzon thought had become mechanical, lifeless and perverted, appointed the university commission to report on the working and structure of university education. The result was the Indian Universities Act of 1904.

7.2 THE INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ACT OF 1904

The Act, by and large embodied the main recommendations of the Commission. It also included the main features of the Government of India Resolution on the Educational Policy of 1904.

Main features of the Indian Universities act 1904.

1. Universities were given the right of teaching along with the right of conducting examinations. In short, their scope was enlarged. Universities had the right to appoint teachers to conduct teaching and they inspired them to carry on research, to manage libraries and laboratories and to make out plans to bring about discipline among the students.

2. Up to the moment the number of seats in the Senate of the universities were not fixed and the Government used to make lifelong nominations. According to this Act, the number was fixed. The minimum number was fifty and the maximum number was hundred. Their term was determined for five years.
3. According to the Indian Universities Act, the members of the Senate got the right to elect members. Such elected members were not to be more than twenty for the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and fifteen for other universities.
4. Legal status was given to the syndicates of the universities and in these syndicates proper representation of professors was made compulsory.
5. The Government secured the right to make amendments and reforms and give approval to the rules framed by the Senates of the university. The Government also had the right to make laws in this regard by themselves.
6. Rules in regard to granting of recognition were made strict. In order to raise the standards of education, the syndicate could cause the inspection of the colleges imparting higher education.
7. To this day, the territorial jurisdiction of universities was not fixed, With the result that in some places some colleges had secured recognition from two universities. But now, in the 27th Article of this Act, it was made clear that the Governor-General shall by his ordinary or extraordinary orders, fix the territorial jurisdiction of the universities and according to this provision the relations between the university and the colleges shall be established and maintained.

Lord Curzon committed the blunder of not giving representation to the Indian opinion; he packed the Commission with officials. On the recommendations of the Commission he increased the official control, reduced number of members of the senate of the universities, reformed the structure of the syndicate and other executive bodies, and gave the government of India a final say in affiliating or disaffiliating colleges. No doubt, he created an efficient structure but its reforms produced unfortunate results. The reforms made university education develop slavish mentality because there was too much of official control and contempt for Indian opinion. So these reforms actually stifled university education.

7.3 LET'S SUM UP

1. Lord Curzon's educational reforms exposed his strength and weaknesses. He had utter contempt for Indians and Indian opinion and he did not give any representation to Indians in policy making. He was highly bureaucratic but very enthusiastic about educational reforms. He wanted to reform school education as well as university education. The full support of government was given and grants were given to schools. Unfortunately schools grew and disappeared like mushrooms. Literacy among the masses did not improve because there was no emotional or patriotic appeal behind Curzonian reforms.
2. He appointed the University Education Commission which resulted in the University Act of 1904. In 1904 he also passed the Resolution of the Government of India on Educational Policy.

7.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. When was the Indian Universities Commission appointed and what are its major recommendations? (See 7.2)
2. Write a short note on Lord Curzon's educational reforms. (Criticized Macaulay—advocated the cause of Indian language—reason? See 7.2)
3. Write a note on the Indian Universities Act of 1904. (Recommendations—no representation to Indians—mostly administrative reforms. See 7.4)

BRAOU

UNIT 8 - GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND UNIFORMITY

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Uniformity in the university system
- 8.2 Growth of Secondary Education
- 8.3 Limited size of the educated class
- 8.4 Preference for government employment
- 8.5 English as a unifying agency
- 8.6 Let's sum up
- 8.7 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers.

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- understand how the British brought about uniformity and control in English education.
- understand how the Empire crippled all creativity and individuality in education
- understand how the British imposed their rule by inculcating obedience through education

8.1 UNIFORMITY IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

An important feature of the British educational system imposed on India was its uniformity, allowing for only minor provincial differences that too at the level of secondary education. The scheme of English education which was carefully brought about by the British in India was meant to kill all creativity and creative thinking in the minds of its subjects.

The principle of uniformity conditioned the scope and character of collegiate education throughout the subcontinent. Oriental colleges which were too few in number couldn't alter the general educational picture. Even the Indian education commission noted the educational uniformity which was a characteristic of the University system in India. Everywhere European literature and science, as Macaulay and his successors envisaged, formed the core of the college and school curriculum. English was a compulsory subject in all the courses; English was the medium through which all the examinations were conducted. The instruction in English literature and European science got the main attention.

Generally, the high school curriculum comprised Mathematics, a vernacular language, a classic language, history, geography, English grammar and literature, together with optional instruction in drawing, chemistry, Botany and agriculture.

The chief instrument in the attainment of this uniform cultural discipline was the mechanism of the newly started university. The universities exercised a decisive authority over the teaching in the colleges and schools that lay within their limits. They tested their work, directed their curricula and virtually dictated the tone and character of the instruction in the institutions; college standards were guided by the universities and the high schools necessarily had to follow suit in order to prepare students for colleges.

The universities virtually determined the content of both secondary and collegiate instruction. This control was exercised through the entrance examinations, the one through which all prospective university students had to pass before commencing their college studies. At that time they were examined in English, a classical or a vernacular language, history, geography, mathematics and in some areas physical science. In the opinion of the Hunter Commission, the knowledge required to pass the entrance examination was roughly equivalent to that which, at the age of sixteen, a boy of average intelligence possessed. In an examination system so heavily weighted with European learning each individual native candidate underwent the same cultural immersion as any other person; he had to receive same stock of ideas and information as any other student. By subjecting all students to the same testing standards, the university system tended to produce a body of natives who had received the same kind of European intellectual discipline. Thus the entire system became a huge machine for manufacturing degree holders and clerks in which no attention was paid to moral training, creativity, culture or general education of the students. That is why even to day our educational system continues to be a graduate-producing machine.

Even the ablest judges of English education admitted that the system had its failings and that the individual product of the system frequently fell short of expectations. In the opinion of the Hunter commission the recipients of collegiate instruction were not the "Crown and flower" of Indian humanity. Many of them suffered from defects of character, superficial learning, and pretentious self-assertion, even though for much of these they were hardly to blame. It must also be said that English education did exercise some moral effect upon the native students; the university degree served as a passport to the civil service and the possession of a degree afforded a guarantee of hard work, self denial and discipline maintained through several years of study.

It must also be said that Indians themselves did not show any sustained disposition to change the content of collegiate or secondary education, despite occasional attacks by individual pressure groups and associations. Even the Hindu cultural nationalism that found fault with the system never numbered more than a few editors and their followers; no one attempted any sweeping departures from the Macaulayan pattern of English education. Every group wanted more opportunities to enjoy the advantages of an English education. There was practically no organized opposition to the disciplining system; native opinion only dealt upon the benefits of the system.

The following resolution adopted in Calcutta very clearly shows the crippling nature of the system:

"That in the deliberate judgement of this meeting the people of India have derived the greatest benefits—social, moral and intellectual from the system of education through the medium of English language inaugurated by the late Lord William Bentinck, and encouraged and supported by successive governors—general; and this meeting would regard as a national calamity the withdrawal or diminution of the assistance now afforded by the state to English schools and colleges.

(Resolution passed on 2nd July 1870, at the Town Hall of Calcutta.)

Similar resolutions adopted by public meetings in different localities tell something of the wide spread support English education enjoyed among the urban population. All Indians wanted uniformity and financial support in the form of grant-in-aid. With all its short-comings the English educational system symbolised the high promise of Western civilization to the decadent, impoverished, caste ridden people of India; the confidence in the potency of English education is still largely unshaken. The university system had taken deep roots among the people of India, and moulded their minds and thoughts to an extent greater than what Macaulay anticipated.

Check your progress

1. The British imposed uniformity in English education throughout the subcontinent in the form of the curriculum and administrative procedures.
2. The entrance examinations to the university system controlled the secondary school education
3. The universities controlled all educational institutions and virtually dictated the curriculum.
4. The government exercised control over all educational institutions through the grant-in-aid system.

8.2 GROWTH OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

The impressive advance of higher education should not overshadow the related growth that went on simultaneously at the secondary level in English education. Obviously, the maintenance and extension of an efficient system of secondary education was essential if the university system was to function effectively. Arts colleges and professional institutions depended on the high schools to supply the stream of candidates for the university entrance examinations. So collegiate education could expand only in so far as a corresponding growth of secondary education to increase the reservoir of potential students. Hence in a sense secondary schools constituted the basics of the English educational pyramid which was crowned by the universities; the secondary schools form the core of the scheme of enlightenment from the time of Macaulay. No one concerned with the penetration of European ideas and western influence in India can ignore the growth of secondary education.

The standards of secondary schools were higher than those of primary schools but there was no clear cut standard or definition that could cover secondary education in all the provinces. Again the standard was defined by the matriculation standards of the universities, since those were regarded as a pre-requisite to a course of college study; but the lower limit was not determined. The Hunter Commission thought that it found a clear line of distinction between secondary and primary education in that the content of secondary education had exclusive references to the requirements of college admission and secondary education was definitely associated with "liberal education"; primary education had no such content or character. The Hartog Committee found that there were almost a hundred arts and professional colleges in which nine thousand students were enrolled; according to official returns, four hundred and eighty six secondary institutions, including a number of middle schools had an enrolment of more than 60,000 native youths. According to the census of 1881, British India contained about 198.5 million inhabitants. This means that the proportion of children attending secondary schools was 1:3,300, while the proportion registered in arts and professional colleges was only 1:22,000 of the population. Thus 70 or 80 years after the first steps to introduce English education and European learning, it was monopolized by a tiny fraction of the Indian people. It is true that this fraction had grown considerably from what it had been in the pre-Mutiny days; but it was still an insignificant proportion of the vast population of the British empire in India.

8.3 LIMITED SIZE OF THE EDUCATED CLASS

The actual size of the educated class, those who had been instructed in the literature, science and history of Europe, is some what difficult to determine. Accurate statistics of the output of the higher educational system were not recorded until after the opening of the three universities. So, the size of the educated class can only be guessed.

The religious and racial composition of the educated class was heavily weighted in favour of the Hindus, and the Muslims formed but a small and disproportionate minority. In an appendix to the report of the education commission, Syed-Abu-Fazl says:

I think it is the neglect of English education, and this neglect is the consequence of their prejudices...they used to show hatred towards the English education, they did not make themselves qualified, and they ever supposed that the English education would greatly demoralize their character. This false notion, although greatly removed either by the pressure of time or change of their opinions, is still hovering over the minds of some country Mohammedans ...the Mohammedans of India have lifted their hands against themselves, and they have become the cause of jeopardizing their own interest, neglecting at the beginning the study of the English language."

—On the Mohammedans of India (Calcutta 1872)

The Mohammedans looked upon English education with aversion, and even those who managed to get into English education found themselves left behind by the Hindus. While the Hindu was content with learning his vernaculars and English, adding Sanskrit when required to do so, Muslims could not get on without the languages handed down by his race. Persian was to him what Latin had once been in Europe, and Arabic took the place of Greek. So they were at a disadvantage in their habits, mental structure and linguistic heritage.

8.4 PREFERENCE FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

The generality of Indian students and the type of training imparted under the university system tended to restrict the alternatives either to government service or something similar. Higher education devoted undue and disproportionate attention to literature and philosophy; consequently the legal, judicial, and administrative professions had become over-crowded, while the scientific and practical professions related to Chemistry Botany and agriculture were started and neglected. The stress placed upon general and literary studies at the expense of technical and industrial training had ruined vocational education; skilled artisans of the country became clerks.

The short-comings of scholastic training were not alone to blame for the vocational difficulties of the educated Indians. Indians also suffered from the fact that the professions of their fathers had ceased to be remunerative as a consequence of foreign rule. Neither a career in politics nor in the military service was open to them, and for all practical purposes the civil service was also closed to them. Agriculture offered little temptation, while manufacturing and commerce was almost impossible for lack of skill, dearth of capital and the inequality of terms on which it had to compete with European industry. What else can be done except to qualify oneself for a clerical position in a government office. Only the Act of 1833 opened the doors of Civil Service to Indians and the demand for subordinate posts in the Civil Service increased; educated Indians searching for a solution to their predicament began to aspire for posts in the upper brackets of the Service. Government service in India was desirable because of the high scale of salaries. This in turn controlled higher education.

Foreign acculturation was implicit in the whole educational system. The mounting number of students received an education consisting wholly of European knowledge and English literature. The formation of the universities brought order and uniformity and the grant-in-aid system and government service control. Higher education became stereo-typed through the imposition of a

common set of standards and a common cultural discipline. The effect was to strengthen the influence of European, particularly English upon the native mind. The ideas of Hindu philosophy and the subtleties of Muslim Law gradually disappeared.

Educated Indians continued to exhibit surprising progress in mastering English literature. Sir Charles Travelyan observed: "a young Hindoo who has made the most of his time at college will write by the hour a some what florid and stilted English with perfect ease and accuracy; and will read, enjoy, and criticize any of our authors, from Chaucer down to Robert Browning and Carlyle." Most of the students had read Gibbon, Shakespeare and Milton, knew Shelley almost by heart and had a good knowledge of Keats, Byron, Dr. Johnson, Longfellow and the Late poets then so popular. They had read all of Scots' novels, Dickens, Thackeray, and possessed a fair group of the history of European civilization. A Bengali gentleman wrote, "if you happen to be travelling in a railway carriage in India; you will find scores of Bengali gentlemen reading English books as a matter of recreation, some pursuing *The Times* newspaper, others *good words* and other waverly novels".

The employment of the English language by the educated class was not confined to one province or region. Indian gentlemen in Bombay and Madras as well as in Bengal were accustomed to carry on conversation in English. They felt at home in English and did it as a matter of pleasure and choice; they preferred English to their own vernaculars. Even English men were amazed to discover the extent to which English was becoming a kind of lingua-franca through out the subcontinent. They had no difficulty in communicating with the ladies and gentlemen of India. Some English men found "cultivated" natives even in the principal towns who spoke English with an elegance and eloquence the few could surpass.

8.5 ENGLISH AS A UNIFYING AGENCY

English brought about uniformity; hand in hand, the English language also promoted unity within the ranks of the educated class. When Indians were dependent upon the vernaculars of their particular region, there was little interchange of ideas among educated groups from different sections of the country. A Marathi or a Gujarathi graduate of the university of Bombay, for example as soon as he stepped beyond his region found himself a perfect stranger, unable to speak or understand the language of those around him. But the English language produced the binding value of a common medium of intercourse. The growth of the English press also assisted the growth of unity of thought among the members of the widely scattered educated class; English had a universal reach. "Union is strength." The English language had become the lingua-franca of India and the educated class appreciated the unifying value of the English language.

The employment of English also brought the educated class into closer contact with the main currents of contemporary English and European civilization. News papers, Magazines, books and other publications from England found increasing favour with the Indian public; Indians took a lively interest in everything relating to England. From the time of Ram Mohan Roy natives visited the far off British Isles for purposes of education, business or simply out of curiosity. Many young graduates, having received degrees in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, came to England in order to complete their education with several years of study at one of the English universities or at the Inns of court in London. Indians aspiring for berths in the Indian Civil Service also came to England in order to prepare themselves for the examinations.

At the same time English education had a destructive force, undermining old, established beliefs and challenging traditional values. The Hindu intellect was inclined to support the religious fabric created over the centuries; but English education brought the native youth in contact with

a body of thought which openly questioned many of the traditional assumptions and values. English education brought about a critical temper. This change tended to demoralise the individual and to disorganise the community. This conflict created social tensions and some felt that English education was the source of all our woes while some others thought it was the fountain of all the countries happiness. Such conflicts had the effect of producing nationality sentiment among educated natives; the outgrowth of English education and of resentment born of economic and social discontent was national sentiment. In the schools and colleges of British India students read and absorbed the principles of freedom and liberty which run through every line of English literature. Surendranath Banerjee said in 1878:

"English education has uplifted all who have come under its influence to a common platform of thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. Educated Indians whether of Bengal, Madras, Bombay or the North Western Provinces are brought up under the same intellectual, moral and political influences. Kindred hopes, feelings, and ideas are thus generated. The educated class of India are thus brought nearer together."

Educated natives took no part in the Sepoy Mutiny and remained "faithful and loyal" to the British rulers; but as they became aware of the destruction of their own country, they began to think and agitate for political union. "All differences of race and religion, and rivalry are gradually sinking before this common cause..." wrote Dadabhai Naoroji in 1882, "Hindus, Mohammedans, and Parsees are alike asking whether the English rule is to be a blessing or a curse." And he added, "this is no longer a secret, or a state of things not quite open to those of our rulers who would see". The use of common language permitted the native intelligentsia to exchange ideas with comparative ease and reinforce the forging of unity within their ranks. Even what a common religion had failed to do was, in a way, accomplished through English education, the English language, the railways, the English press and a material civilization which the government introduced to enlighten the natives.

8.6 LET'S SUM UP

1. British education brought about uniformity, particularly in higher education. The Universities controlled the system of education and through the university system the high school system was controlled.
2. The grant-in-aid system also brought about government control in the field of education.
3. In spite of the control and uniformity English education spread at the expense of vernacular education. More and more Indians got exposed to Western ideas; they went to England for higher studies.
4. English education brought about a conflict between traditional values and Western ideas. Some realized the destruction of India and very soon the educated class came together to project Indian nationalism. The English language became the lingua-franca and helped unity.

8.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. How did the University system bring about uniformity?

Hints: English education through out the subcontinent same—Macaulay's pattern followed—curriculum—administrative procedures—examination system uniform—result cultural discipline—entrance examination decided school education—killed creativity—crippled education. (See also 8.2)

2. Describe the growth of secondary education during the close of the 19th century.

Hints: University education grew—corresponding growth in schools—more enrolment in school—admission tests—standard set by matriculation examination—still only a limited size of educated class. (See 8.3 and 8.4)

3. How did government employment control education?

Hints: All aspired for government jobs—traditional professions destroyed—liberal education and not vocational training—even agricultural neglected—education became stereotyped (See 8.5)

4. Write a note on English as a unifying agency.

Hints: Control and uniformity—by product unity—different regions came together—exposure to Western ideas—produced conflict—exposure to ideas in England and Western newspapers—English education and English language triggered nationalist sentiments (See 8.6)

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BLOCK III: INSTITUTIONALIZATION PHASE

Introduction

The third block of four units on this course is on the institutionalization of English in India during the first half of the twentieth century. The first half of the twentieth century is marked by two World Wars—World War I (1914–18), World War II (1939–45)—on the global scene and India's struggle for freedom in the country. The two World Wars brought about the internationalization of English and English language spread to the different parts of the globe as a result of the two wars. The freedom struggle in India brought about a change in the status of English in India, the English language became a second language and a vehicle for India's thirst for freedom; it ceased to be a foreign language and English as the second language got institutionalized in India. These important developments make the first half of the twentieth century an eventful period.

Remember the following dates events contingent to the history of English in India.

Education

1913	Resolution of Educational Policy; recommends need for establishing new universities and six more were established during 1913–20.
1915	The Bill seeking to encourage Indian languages as media of instruction was turned down.
1917	University Commission (Sadler Commission); universities were made teaching institutions (earlier they were only examining bodies).
1919	Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms; recommends far-reaching constitutional changes; education comes under the respective ministries for promoting education in the provinces.

1921	Department of Education transferred to the control of Indian ministers.
1925	Inter-university Board established.
1936-7	Education Department (including the bureaucratic network that controlled education taken over by Indians).
1944	The Central Advisory Board of Education submitted its plan for education; recommended that English be made a second language, and that the mother tongue be the medium of instruction up to the high school level.
1946-7	Expansion of education.

	Type of institution	1946-7 figures
	Primary schools	93,604 (in 1901-2) 134,866
	Degree colleges	231 (in 1921) 385 (in 1939)
	Universities	5 (in 1916) 19

Print-Media

1937-47	Rapid increase in newspapers and periodicals.		
	<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of English Dailies</i>	<i>No. of English Weeklies</i>
	1937	32	32
	1947	51	258
1908	K.C. Roy, an Indian established India's first news agency: the Associated Press of India (API); it was taken over by the Government of India in 1947.		
1919	Reuters (an international agency) formed the Eastern News Agency with K.C. Roy as the Director.		
1927	S. Sadanand established a news agency called the Free Press of India (But it ceased to be in 1933); the first teleprinter link connecting the Provincial towns was set up by the API; the India Broadcasting Company, a commercial undertaking, started functioning from Bombay and Calcutta, but by 1930 it went into liquidation.		
1936	The Government of India took over broadcasting—separate office set up and funds allocated; one more radio station set up in Delhi; the nomenclature 'All India Radio' (AIR) was given on 8 th June 1936; the first Controller of Broadcasting appointed was Lionel Fielding.		
1937	Provincial important centres (urban and semi-urban areas) were linked by teleprinter system of the API; this was India's first teleprinter link.		

Literature and intellectual writing

Political prose: Gandhi and his associates; M.N. Roy, Lohia, Ambedkar, Tilak and others

Philosophical prose: Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, Tagore, Vivekananda, and others

Intellectual prose: Ansari, Rajni Patel, Gokhale, Sapru, Frank Moraes, and others

Literary writing: Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan

BRAOU

UNIT 9 - 1905-1947: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
 - 9.1 Introduction
 - 9.2 More committees and reports
 - 9.3 Let's sum up
 - 9.4 Self-assessment questions (SAQs) and answers
-

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- give you a clear idea about the under-currents in the field of English education in India.
 - tell you that the British Empire was not only a territorial empire; it was to have domination on the minds of Indians as well.
 - make you aware of the fact that the freedom struggle in India brought about the institutionalization of English.
-

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Europeans in the eighteenth century viewed India and its civilization, with care and reverence. But after the industrial revolution Europe developed an imperialistic vision; Europe during the nineteenth century was proud of its material civilization, its science and scientific attitude, its political philosophy of liberty and equality. This attitude led the British and Europeans to establish their empire in Asia and Africa and led them to believe that the European nations were world leaders. In the nineteenth century Europe found itself with the power to impose itself and in consequence what followed was the path of struggle and conflict rather than that of tolerance. The two World Wars reflect this state of affairs.

The two World Wars, English going international, the intense political activities during this period and the Swadeshi movement changed the role of English in India. After 1900 the English language got gradually detached from the British rule and more and more Indians started using it as the medium of communication in the areas in which it got stabilized during the dissemination phase. As pointed out in the earlier units during the early days of the East India Company, English was used in the areas of political activity among the rulers and that too under the influence of Persian usage with its ostentatious expressions and idioms; it was called "the Lordship register" because it was used in the style of the court language Persian. Later when British bureaucracy got well established in India, English usage followed the bureaucratic register with its officialese and "yours obediently" idioms. But during the first half of the twentieth century English gradually became a second language in the subcontinent. English was accommodated with the indigenous orthodox socio-cultural framework and got detached from the culture of the English language. During the freedom struggle Indians made it obvious that they will use English for certain purposes but their identity remained rooted in their cultural heritage.

at various levels of bureaucracy, legislature, judiciary and various government departments. The management of railways, press and mass communication also spread to more cities, towns and districts; the two World Wars and the Indian freedom movement accelerated this process. Though the highest functionaries were British, many "British trained" Indians entered the various levels of administration. Indian Civil Service (ICS) attracted many Indians who became the servants of the government; only those whose proficiency in English was high could get into the civil service.

Indigenous education went into oblivion and primary education was totally neglected. The number of students in the English education system increased. Even the semi-urban population situated near the urban areas came under the influence of English education. The teaching and administration in educational institutions were done mostly by Indians except in some missionary institutions but the system was controlled and supervised by the British government.

More and more Indian entrepreneurs entered business; more Indians started writing in English and there were more readers of English; the number of English newspapers increased; with increasing circulation and sale of English newspapers, the advertisements in the papers also increased. The use of English in the commercial domain and print media brought in many more Indian users of English—editors, journalists, reporters, correspondents, printers, publishers, writers and readers. The freedom movement also brought in a number of national leaders and members of political parties and political awareness made print media more powerful.

Indian writing in English—prose, fiction, poetry and non literary intellectual and academic writing got well-established; publishing centres and companies were started in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

In the social domain, more and more Indians used English for communication among themselves; formal and informal correspondence took place in English. Members of the Indian National Congress, lawyers, political activists, and other prominent Indians started using English in their social communication.

However, the number of English men as interlocutors in the domains mentioned got reduced (even in the bureaucratic and educational domains) on account of the quantitative expansion in the use of English, and the social domain which emerged within the elitist section of urban Indians became more exclusively Indian. Print-media and literary activity gained more prominence. In all the domains the attitude to English is the same, it is the 'detachability' which anticipated the fate of English in India after 1947 when Indians put into operation the 'nation' module along with the English language.

Check your progress

1. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of turmoil. The two World Wars and India's freedom movement in many ways affected the place of English in India and its history.
2. The World Wars attempted to produce many quick ways of learning languages and learning only the functional aspects of a language became one of the aims in learning languages including English.
3. In India, the struggle for freedom changed radically the status of English in India. From a foreign language, English became a second language—another vehicle for expressing Indian sensibilities, though in a limited way. The freedom movement accelerated the growth of the print-media and the number of English medium institutions; English medium institutions grew in number and this in turn affected the growth of Indian languages and institutions teaching Indian languages.

4. The British government paid or least pretended to pay, more attention to the education of Indians. English became the language of the government.

9.2 MORE COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

The Resolution on educational policy of 1913, which was a result of Gopala Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), who was a patriot and a great advocate of compulsory primary education in India, recommended the starting of more universities in the country. The outbreak of the first World War in 1914 delayed all actions in the field of education.

But in 1917, the Calcutta University Commission popularly known as the Sadler Commission (after its chairman's name, Dr M.E. Sadler) was appointed; it submitted its report in 1919. It recommended a number of important recommendations on university education and on the teaching of modern Indian languages. Some of the important ones are: a) the establishment of intermediate colleges separate from universities and a three-year degree course and (b) the promotion of the serious study of modern Indian languages.

Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene and he launched the non-cooperation movement, Mrs Annie Besant was there to fan the National Education Movement. The result of emerging nationalism and the flame of national feeling resulted in the starting of national schools and colleges to take children away from government and government aided educational institutions. The National Muslim University in Aligarh, the Gujrat Vidyapith in Ahmadeabad, Bihar Vidyapith, The Kashi Vidyapith, The Bengal National University, The Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith, Quami Vidyapith in Lahore and a large number of schools were established during 1920–22.

The National Education Movement too used English as a language of transaction because by then English has become a national necessity and people did not see any conflict between nationalism and English as a second language; English became the common language among the national leaders from various regions of India.

In 1928, the Hartog Committee was appointed with Sir Phillip Hartog as its chairman and the committee submitted its report in 1929. The committee recommended consolidation and improvement in quality and not mere expansions. Like all other committees the Hartog Committee emphasized the importance to be given to primary education and suggested a well-directed policy. The Committee generally commented the improvement in education since 1904 but suggested that a good deal was to be done.

The government of India Act of 1935 made education partly Central and partly State or Provincial except education in the Centrally administrated areas.

Another committee called the Abbot Wood Committee was appointed to advise the government on certain problems of educational reorganization and particularly on problems of vocational education. The Abbot-Wood Report of 1937 pointed out that technical education was as important as general education and it recommended that technical education be related to industry and agriculture. As a result, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) was constituted in 1946.

In 1938, the Zakir Hussain Committee was appointed by the Conference of National workers under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi; that resulted in the Wardha Scheme of Education and Socially Useful Production Work. Mother tongue education was emphasized in the Wardha scheme and basic crafts like spinning and weaving, carpentry, agriculture, leather work, and other crafts were given importance. Drawing and music found a place in the curriculum of basic education.

The second world war (1939–45) and the intense freedom movement overshadowed all these developments and reports. In 1944 the Central Advisory Board of Education in India (CABE) published a report on Post-War Educational Development in India. It is a very comprehensive report that covers all aspects of education like basic education, pre-primary, high school education, university education, technical commercial and art education, adult education, training of teachers, education of the handicapped, etc. and the financial estimates for each category.

This report again was overshadowed by the political developments and India became Independent but two nations emerged in the subcontinent—India and Pakistan.

9.3 LET'S SUM UP

1. The two World Wars made English international. After the First World War the United States of America emerged as one of the major powers in the international scene and American English, as a result emerged as one of the major varieties of English almost on par with British English.
2. English becoming international resulted in a number of other varieties of English like South Asian English, the English of Indians, Africans, etc.
3. India's freedom movement "detached" English from British English and Indians started using English as a second language and not as a foreign language.
4. The English of Indians became the language of interaction among India's national leaders from various linguistic regions and became a vehicle for Indian sensibilities though in a limited way.
5. A number of committees both by the government and by Indian Nationalist leaders were appointed and several useful reports on quality improvement in education, basic education, vocational education, etc. were written. In addition a number of National Universities and Vidyapiths were established and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the need for mother tongue education. But all these reports were overshadowed by the political activities and the Indian subcontinent became two nations getting independence in 1947.

9.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. What was the general situation during the first half of the twentieth century?
Age of turmoil—two World Wars—India's freedom movement—Europeans becoming more imperialistic—colonies and conflicts—European attitude change—Asians inferior—resentment in the colonies—restlessness and cry for freedom.
2. What were the changes that took place in the status of English on the International scene and in India?
English became international—it spread from China to Peru—the result more varieties—American English—European English—African English—Asian English, etc.—English no longer the language of British alone.
In India English got detached from parent language—Leaders used English—media expansion—more jobs—more Indians used English—English became government language—creative writing in English emerged.

UNIT 10 - THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
 - 10.1 Phase I: English during the company days
 - 10.2 Phase II: The transportation phase
 - 10.3 Phase III: First half of the twentieth century
 - 10.4 Let's sum up
 - 10.5 Self-assessment questions (SAQs) and answers
-

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- get a clear about the evolution of English in India, in content as well as in style.
 - link the growth and development of English style to the history of English in India.
 - read some specimens of English written by Indians and experience the change in content and in style.
-

10.1 PHASE I: ENGLISH DURING THE COMPANY DAYS

The introduction of English in our educational institutions is a historic event in the history of modern India. It can indeed be called a historical phenomenon. Ananda K. Coomarswamy, the well known art critic says, "one of the most remarkable features of the British rule in India has been the fact that the greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings. Of this, education is a striking example."

One can add along with education in any other things like the English language, railways, printing press, the telegraph, etc. The nineteenth century witnessed an alien tongue—English became the language of the Indian government and the far reaching consequence, this tongue made higher learning impossible in modern Indian languages. Even Indian nationalism which used English effectively to get rid of colonialism and colonial masters, never rejected English. English has become so inseparable from our intellectual make up and it has become the unifying common language in India.

This language is tied up in content and style with the history of English for the past three centuries or more. During the early days of the Company, what was referred to as the pre-transportation phase in Block I English was mostly used in the political domain and that too with an ostentatious formality. The style was marked in this "Lordship Register" with its friendship and humbleness vocabulary. This variety was highly influenced by Persian conventions and it was highly decorative. In terms of its contents the English used was fairly unstable and devoid of clarity. A vague desire for some sort of political alliance with the British merchants and a partial acceptance of the British rule, which marked the ambivalent attitude of Indians towards the British was reflected in the content and style of their English. The British were perceived as potentially powerful by the Indian feudal lords and each one was willing to conspire against others to get more political importance. At that time India was not perceived as one unit and there were no unifying factors or

network or power to bring about unity.

In addition to the political domain the 'petition register' was also emerging in certain written functions since the British bureaucracy insisted on petition. The third domain was the use of English in advertisements. Indian merchants used it for advertising in the newspapers published from Calcutta and Bombay. The advertisements resembled bureaucratic notices. The company encouraged a small section of Indian entrepreneurs to undertake commercial ventures catering to the needs of the company (EIC); not only newspapers but also the related systems of government control came into being, and the expression "Government of India" occurred in official documents.

In addition to the specimens given in Unit I students are advised to study the following petition and note the conventions used in the letters given below.

Data: Specimens of English written by Indians

Specimen I: Political—Bureaucracy (petitions)

(Source: *Home Dept., Public Proceedings,*
Volumes 10th January, 1771, No. 14)

To

The Hon'ble John Carter Esq.

President & Governor & at Council of Fort Williams

The Humble Petition of some of the Principle

Merchants of Calcutta now in Confinement in the Jail of Calcutta

Most Humbly Sheweth

That your Petitioners several of whom from unavoidable losses together with the Badness of the Times have been obliged to remain in Confinement some nearly Two years some a year & some several Months are thereby deprived of every means whatever of satisfying their creditors. Their Houses, goods, Effects & Merchandises having been sold by the shraff for a quarter part or less of their value so that they are at present destitute of wherewithal to support themselves, their wives & children who are as now in the greatest distress & almost starving & must inevitably be ruined for ever unless your Honars will be pleased to take their hard & Lamentable cases into your serious & charitable considerations & thereby Prevail on the different creditors of your Humbly Petitioners to show their **** towards them & grant them letters of science according to the sums they are indebted, that your Petitioners may thereby be enabled to discharge the Debts due to their several creditors which by their being confined in prison it is impossible for them to do & their families and themselves thereby utterly reduced to perish for want

And your Petitioners as in Duty
bound shall Ever Pray

Calcutta

10 January, 1771

Specimen II: Political (conspiracy)

Gulam Qadir Khan's letter to the Governor General
(Source: Poona Residency Correspondence, Volume 1)

Year 1788

I have had the happiness to receive your Lordship's friendly letter and overjoyed at hearing of your health. There is no necessity for writing what your Lordship has expressed respecting friendship; that friendship which is of old firm between us will daily increase and there can be no distinction in it. Your Lordship has written for my information that you had stationed troops towards the westward. This is highly proper and advisable. As our affairs are in every respect the same, all these troops that are (mine are) are also your Lordship's. Whatever business for them there may be depending on this quarter, your Lordship without scruple will inform me of it, that it may be accomplished according to your wish. Your Lordship should even write to the officers of these districts, to inform me of whatever may be necessary. Whatever demand they may make of troops they shall be sent from hence. Your Lordship will always write me friendly letters.

10.2 PHASE II: THE TRANSPORTATION PHASE

What was referred to earlier as the transportation phase marks a deviation from the earlier one in content and in style. The political domain weakened during the second phase of this history and communication between Indian rulers and the British also diminished but more communication took place within bureaucracy and between Indian and British bureaucracy. This style of communication does not show the influence of Persian conventions of writing as it did during the first phase. The British bureaucracy actually took over the powers of the native rulers and consequently the English language became the language of the British bureaucracy. The noticeable feature in the English of Indians is the higher degree of clarity and comprehensibility in their bureaucratic writing. That may be due to the fact that English education was available to at least some Indians as a result of the changes in the policy of the East India Company. More bureaucratic jobs were available to Indians and the Indians employed for these jobs were the recipients of English education. A few intellectuals and merchants who were also English educated used English effectively. Data: Specimens of English written by Indians

The following letter written by Raja Rammohan Roy to Lord Amherst is a good example and is worth studying.

Specimen I: Bureaucracy (a formal letter)

Raja Rammohan Roy's letter to Lord Amherst on Western education
(Source: *India-English Prose: An anthology*, Edited by D. Ramakrishna)

Year: 1823

To

His Excellency the Right Hon'ble William Pitt, Lord Amherst

My Lord,

Humbly reluctant as the natives of India are to obtrude upon the notice of the government the sentiments they entertain on any public measure, there are circumstances when silence would be carrying this respectful feeling to culpable excess. The present Rulers of India, coming from a distance of many thousand miles to govern a people whose language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas are almost entirely new and strange to them, cannot easily become so intimately acquainted with their real circumstance, as the natives of the country are themselves. We should therefore be guilty of a gross dereliction of duty to ourselves, and afford our Rulers just ground of complaint at our apathy, did we omit on occasions of importance like the present to supply them with such accurate information as might enable them to devise and adopt measures calculated to be beneficial to the country, and thus second by our knowledge and experience their declared benevolent intentions for its improvement.

The establishment of a new Sangscrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of government to improve the Natives of India by Education—a blessing for which they must ever be grateful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels.

We now find that the government are establishing a Sangcrit school under Hindoo pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the masses or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with the addition of a vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India.

In representing the subject to your Lordship I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen and also to that enlightened Sovereign and Legislature which have extended their benevolent cares to this distant and land actuated by a desire to improve its inhabitants and I therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship.

I have etc.,
RAMMOHAN ROY

Calcutta,
The 11th December 1823

Specimen II: Print-media communication

An Editorial

(Source: *Selections from English Periodicals of 19th Century Bengal, Volume I: 1815–33*)

Year: 1833

SALAM SABB!

... In the ceremony of Natives Salaming (saluting) the Europeans and East Indians there appears to be a good deal of aristocratically prejudice. We have known Natives insulted for making salam to a European on the plea that there being no acquaintance between the

parties the salam was a mark of impudence. On the other hand, strange to say we have also known Europeans offended if a Native, being a perfect stranger, did not salam: the latter being considered proudly and haughty... Those who think proper to be a little more reasonable towards the Natives and seem willing to accept the ceremony of salutation, accept it as a matter of fact that the Natives should first make a salam, their business being only the acceptance of it by a return of the compliment and this without reference to the rank or circumstances of the parties.

Many other instances of this kind could be mentioned, all of which would tend to prove, that if the Natives have from religious motives kept at a distance from the Christians, the latter have from much worse motives discarded them from their society. At present there are many Natives who have so far abandoned the prejudices of caste as to have no objection to associate with Christians: but we regret to perceive that even these are shunned...

The East Indians must look upon the Natives as their country-men; for circumstances show that ultimately there will be less distinction between than what now exists...

(From: *The Reformer*, 2 June 1833)

Specimen III: Education

Examples of students' writing

(Source: *The Eighth Annual Report* from the Governor of the Madras University, 1848-9 and the *Ninth Annual Report* from the Governor of the Madras University, 1849-50)

Year: 1848-50

Given below are answers/essays written by students Fourth Class in the final examination answer papers. These specimens are taken from the Annual Report of the Madras University. The report cites answers written by top-rankers (with details of their marks) and a few essays written by top-rankers for competitions which won prizes; and few answers written by other students are also cited along with clarifications that these students are not 'achievers'. One example of each is given below:

A

Question I: What is the Object of the Poet in this play?

Answer: The leading object which the poet has in view through the play of Hamlet is to teach us the moral necessity of keeping a due balance between our powers of reflection and those of action. This he effects by means of Hamlet, whom he represents by falling a sacrifice to his too philosophic character. There is also another great moral lesson taught us by the poet which may however be considered as subordinate to the first. By what happens to Claudious, we learn 'that honesty is the best policy': that the objects we gain by deviating from the paths of virtue, will eventually be taken away from us, and our guilt with all our secrecy being discovered, we shall be visited with retributive justice; or as the poet himself expresses:

Four deeds will rise,
Though all the earth overwhelm them.

C. Rungacharry (IVth class; 1st Rank)

B

(An extract from the essay that won the 'Elphinstone Prize')

Topic: How does an intimate communication between nations, or even a mixture of their races, affect their progress?

Answer: ...Also the arts and sciences have their rise, growth and development in certain countries in preference to others — not that they cannot be introduced and cultivated in these latter, but that they cannot be introduced and cultivated in these latter, but that they do not there come and suggest themselves naturally to man, and do not in fact own the countries as their own. In Egypt, India, and China where nature bestows her blessings in spontaneous profusion, the human intellect was first called into play, and employed its power in the invention of arts; while in countries more to the north there being nothing to attract the curiosity and attention of man, he was sunk in a state of lethargic slumber. In the former countries the arts and sciences, after having been carried to a certain degree of perfection, were incapable of further development, the soil which nourished them was exhausted, and it was necessary that they should be transplanted into countries more propitious to their growth. Accordingly they passed away into Greece and Italy, where men were fresh from the hands of nature, and after attaining as before a further degree of growth, they declined, and were transplanted into the more northern countries of England and France...

C. Rungacharry (IVth class; 1st Rank)

C

Paper: Russel's Modern Europe

Question 12: State the origin and describe the nature of the Institution of Chivalry.

Answer: The origin of Chivalry is generally traced to the disorders and anarchy of the feudal system which about the 11th century, almost degenerated into a system of oppression. The helpless and the weak were put to great distress, and women were degraded in the scale of humanity. In order to remove this state of oppression, the strong and the powerful joined together, and combined their efforts. Thus Chivalry had its origin. It produced consequences, some beneficial and others pernicious to society. It raised on the one hand the female to suitable rank among men, and characterized a gentleman by honour, courtesy and other amiable virtues. On the other hand it armed half of the species against the other, and precipitated the Europeans upon Asia.

Check your progress

1. During the first phase, the early days of the East India Company, the English of Indians was confined basically to the political domain. In terms of style mostly Persian convention in writing were used in the Lordship Register. Some form of writing marked by lack of clarity and ambivalence was also available in bureaucratic writing and the advertisements of Indian merchants.
2. During the second phase i.e.—the transportation phase the English of Indians diminished in the political domain. The bureaucratic domain became stronger and a 'petition register' emerged. More jobs were available to Indians and more Indians were English educated. As a result the quality of their English improved.

10.3 PHASE III: FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the third phase the use of English in India took a different turn. Even though internationally and nationally there were wars and turmoil in the political areas the use of English in India brought in a different kind of atmosphere in the minds of Indians. The British empire was fully established during this period. It was not only a territorial empire, its language English got well entrenched in the minds of men and women. More than the British empire the empire of the English language got well established in India. The rulers might not have envisaged such a situation.

In fact there was a lurking fear back in England that the spread of education and the English language among the subject Indians would make them challenge the alien rule. In England many believed that the American colonies would not have been independent of the British Crown had they not been led by the educated class. Edmund Burk once pointed out the high level of education among the Americans was the cause of their love of liberty and independence. Many thought that they had just lost America because of their folly in allowing the establishment of schools and colleges and that they should not repeat the same act of folly in India. But the inevitable happened.

Warren Hastings himself founded a college at Calcutta in 1780 to promote Oriental scholarship. In 1781 he founded the Calcutta Madrassah based on the Mohammedan system of teaching Arabic and Persian. A number of missionaries also established educational institutions. Though not against English education they were dedicated to their aim of preaching Christianity in the language of the people and in that process some of them became the pioneers of vernacular education and even language pundits. Some of them wrote the first grammar and literary textbook in major Indian languages.

But Charles Grant, William Bentley, T.B. Macaulay and others who preferred English education were more in favour of enlightening Indians. They wanted qualified clerks and administrators to run the administration. They advocated a policy of working through the educated native elite. Macaulay's Minute gave "Filtration Theory" and it became the government's policy. The result was more and more Babus were produced. A Babu is a native clerk who writes English, says the Oxford Dictionary. This phrase Babu belongs to the twentieth century though it was used in the earlier century too. Babus and Babu mentality became part of the Indian urban culture as envisaged by Macaulay.

But leaders like Mahatma Gandhi transformed or converted the Babus into "full fledged" agitators and the Bengali Babus were leading India's freedom struggle. The English-educated Babu got enlightened and used English for a different purpose during the country's freedom struggle. In the schools and colleges of British India the Babus read and absorbed

the principles of freedom and liberty. Nurtured by the power of higher education, political consciousness grew steadily. English became the common language of the native intelligentsia, those scattered over widely separated parts of the subcontinent, to exchange ideas with comparative ease. The growth of the educated class was also closely associated with the development of the Indian press as an offspring of English education. The native press developed into an educational and political agency.

Thus English education and Indian nationalism grew hand in hand. English education played an integrating function and a major role in the genesis of the nationalist movement. Schooled in the foreign culture speaking a foreign tongue when occasion demanded, indoctrinated with foreign political, social, and economic concepts the native intelligentsia developed aspirations very different from those anticipated by the rulers. Instead of being the interpreters and ally of the administration as Grant and Macaulay expected, educated Indians became vigorous competitors of the bureaucracy. Instead of serving British imperialism they turned into its bitterest critics and raised the cry of "India for Indians".

All these factors resulted in turning English into one more medium for Indians' sentiments. English which was a foreign language in the earlier phases became a second language during the third phase. English never entered into the intimate areas of the Indian psyche. It did not become their home language; it remained a language outside home but a very smart street language. The idiom too changed. The print media and political activities increased the number of English educated Indians. A large number of urban population including people in the semi-urban areas came under the fold of English education. From the language of bureaucracy it became language of media and creative writing. Given below are specimens of English written by Indians. One can see how it is used in print media communication and intellectual and literary writing.

Data: Specimen of English written by Indians

Specimen I: Print-media communication

An extract from an article in an English journal
(Source: *The Hindustan Review*, vol. XLV, no. 272, May 1922—
English monthly published from Allahabad)

Year: 1922

HINDU NATIONAL EDUCATION

It is needless to say that the present system of education in India has been condemned by a general consensus of opinions as inadequate, halting, imperfect, unsatisfactory and barren of high results. It is neither national making for the physical, intellectual, moral and religious advancement of the people nor practical and useful in the worldly sense, calculated to develop their material and economic prosperity. It tends more towards materialism than towards the material success and prosperity of the people. It was born at a time when our foreign rulers just arrived in the country and unable to 'learn the language of the people and unacquainted with their manners and customs, wanted numbers of English-knowing clerks to carry on the every day work of government in their (ruler's) own tongue. The later generations of British Officers, following the example of their predecessors, continued to administer the affairs of the country through the medium of their own tongue and did not care to learn the language of the people and thus to make the administration popular

and less costly. The ugly system of education devised in haste by the first comers has thus been perpetuated and contingents after contingents of English-knowing Babus fit only for serving their foreign masters have been turned out - the supply far exceeds the demand

No education which is based on foreign ideals and imparted through a foreign medium can be satisfactory. A country, that forgets its past glorious achievements, -its lofty national ideals, its noble traditions and well-tried customs, cannot fulfill its destiny. None can deny that India has a lofty Mission to carry out, a high destiny to achieve, but these can hardly be accomplished so long as it remains a slave to the present system of education, so long as it does not, introduce its own national system of education. A nation that does not feel pride in its glorious past and holds light its national ideals, cannot make its future bright, nor can it aspire to occupy a high place in the hierarchy of civilized nations. It is my intention to give in this short paper, an outline of the programmed of national education according to my own light. I do not claim for it any perfection or even all-India suitability but if it could be of any use in evolving a better -scheme, it will not have been written in vain.

Kanoomal

Specimen II: Social

About a local festival of Eastern Bengal

(Source: Man in India, A quarterly record of Anthropological Science with special reference to India. Ranchi, vol. in, nos 3 & 4, September & December, 1923)

Year: 1923

Notes on Kali-Nautch in the District of Dacca in Eastern Bengal

by

Dhirendra Nath Mazundar, B.A.

and

Sarat Chandra Mitra, M.A.

The Hook-swinging festival has been popular in the district of Dacca in Eastern Bengal from time immemorial. Although it has now disappeared on account of legislation, its place has been taken by 'mother festival' which is differently designated in different parts of the district. The names commonly applied to this festival are Nila Puja and Pata-Puja. It is celebrated on the last day of the Bengali month of Chaitra which corresponds to the English months March-April.

The customs associated with this Puja or worship-festival are varied and numerous. I shall describe one of these customs, namely, a nautch or dance which is performed by the rustic people of the district, on the same tithi or lunar date as the day fixed for the holding of the hook-swinging festival.

Just a fortnight previous to the aforementioned tithi or lunar date, the people come out in bands and armed with sticks, and, with drums beating, parade the whole neighbourhood and collect rice and other contributions towards the expenses of the nautch or dance. This dance is somewhat similar to that performed in connection with the Muharram Festival. The people, particularly the boys, arming themselves with sticks or kanchis of different shapes and devices, dance up and down the streets, and are welcomed by all the people of the locality through which the party parades. The dance is held in honour of the goddess Kali who is the presiding deity of this festival. I have learnt from the devotees - the celebrants of this worship festival - that, when they fall ill, they usually pray to the goddess

Kali, vowing that, in case they will recover from their illness, they will actually take part in the nautch to be performed in honour of her deityship. It, therefore goes without saying that this nautch or dance is the outcome of sincere faith and of devotion; and the devotees indulge in it whole-heartedly.

Specimen III: Print-media communication

(Source: *The Times of India*)

Year: 1924

**READER'S VIEWS
THE BOLI CHUMUZ**

To

The Editor
The Times of India

Sir, - I recently paid a visit to Bijapur in company of a few friends who were desirous to see the famous building of the town. We went to see the Boli Ghumuz or the Whispering Gallery which is reputed to be one of the most wonderful works of art in India. I need not add that tourists from Europe and America go down to Bijapur specially to see this Whispering Gallery and that it justly enjoys reputation which is only next to that of the Taj Mahal of Agra. This was not my first visit to Bijapur. I have seen it twice or thrice before. This time, however, I was painfully surprised to find that repairs on an extensive scale were going on at the Boli Ghumuz. Something is wrong with this great building and when I discussed the matter with some friends I came to know that the close proximity of the railway station to the Ghumuz was the cause of the repairs. The constant shock that the building receives owing to the railway traffic are too much for it and it appears to be the opinion of men who understand the subject that unless the railway line is removed at a safe distance the Boli Ghumuz will come to permanent harm before long. I am a layman and I cannot say anything authoritatively on the subject, but I venture to bring the matter to the notice of the government so that necessary steps might be at once taken to preserve this admirable monument of Mahomedan art. I remember that when, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, some cracks were observed in the Taj Mahal at Agra, that eminent lover of arts and ancient monuments lost no time in setting things right. In fact, Lord Curzon's services in the matter of preserving the ancient monuments have been unique and I hope the spirit that prompted Lord Curzon still prevails in the Government. The Boli Ghumuz is one of the greatest show places of our country and it will be disgraceful if any harm comes to it. If the proximity of the railway line is the cause of the mischief, then the line ought to be removed at a safe distance. The Government will, I hope, attach greater weight to the need of preserving this ancient monument intact.

M.D. Altekari,
French Bridge, Bombay,
January 21, 1924

Specimen IV : Literary Writing (Prose)

S. Srinivasa Iyengar's 'Foreword' to a book by K. Iswara Dutt

(Source: Dutt, K. Iswara (1929), *Sparks and Fumes*.
Pen-Pictures of Andhra Leaders, Madras: Current Thought Press)

Year: 1929

FOREWORD

It is a difficult and risky thing to attempt the piquant portrait of contemporary men of note about whom there must always be some controversy. It is more difficult in India than elsewhere where the skin is still sensitive to criticism but gluttonous to flattery. In his pen-pictures of Andhra Worthies, Mr Iswara Dutt of Swarajya has set himself a task which is by no means easy and requires considerable judgement and skill. His phrasing is crisp and convincing, his style has both vigour and freshness, and his delineation is characterised by shrewdness and, subtlety. I have spent an enjoyable hour and I should like others to have the same pleasure.

S. Srinivasa Iyengar Amzad Bagh,
Mylapore
April 12, 1929

Specimen V: Bureaucracy

A handwritten application for the post of a teacher
(Source: B.S. Moonje Papers, Sub file: Bhosla Military School—
Applications for various posts in the Bhosla Military School)

Year: 1936

To

Dr B.S. Moonje,
General Secretary,
Central Hindu Military Education Society, Nagpur
Sir,

I beg to offer my services as a teacher in the proposed Bhonsla Military School, to be started next July.

I am a B.A. of the University of Bombay. I passed the said examination in 1927 from the then New Poona College (Now Sir Parashurambhau College), with English and Marathi as my voluntary Subjects. Since then I have been working as a teacher and thus acquired vast experience in teaching. At present, I am working in the Parle Tilak Vidyalaya, Vileparle, where I am in charge of English of the Matriculate class and Sanskrit & Marathi of Std. VI. The testimonials attached hereto will speak regarding my experience and ability in teaching.

It will not be out of place, I believe, if I say a word about my aim in life. I have willfully taken this line when immediately after my graduation I had ample chances of getting a job either in the Revenue or Postal Departments.

Believe me, Sir, if I say that nothing would please me than serving a public educational institution like the one you are going to start next July.

I may add that it has been my honest endeavour to find a suitable field wherein to use my talents and ability to the best, and I will be highly obliged to you if you will kindly give

me scope by taking me up.

I may assure you that if taken up, your choice in my case will be amply rewarded.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I beg to remain,
Sir,
Your most obdt. sevt.

(D.N. Bhagwat)
Dt. 12th January 1936

Specimen VI: Bureaucracy

An extract from a bureaucrat's report of an accident
(Source: *Railway Accidents:
Reports and Inquiries for the half-year ending 31st March 1937*)
Year: 1937
Eastern Bengal Railway

No. 94 Down Passenger train running into a sand humped isolation dead-end at Dum Dum Junction on the 3rd December 1936

From Mr R.B. SETH, GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR OF RAILWAYS, CIRCLE No. 2,
CALCUTTA, LETTER No. 48/1010/ 83, DATED THE 18TH JANUARY 1937

(6849-T.)

Description of the Accident.—While approaching Dum Dum Junction Khulna Branch Train No. 94 Down, Dattapukur Local, ex-Dattapukur to Calcutta, entered sand humped isolation dead-end provided at the North end of the station to isolate the Khulna Branch from the Main Lines. The engine and the vehicle next to it, a bogie Third and Brake Van No. 1788, went through the sand hump down a 20 feet high bank. The engine capsized completely and lay with chimney down and wheels up. The body of the bogie Third and Brake Van was wrenched off the under-frame, thrown lower down the embankment (near a tank of water) and was smashed, the underframe was on the slope of the bank and was twisted and bent. The remainder of the train was on the rails and suffered no damage except the head stock and buffers of the second vehicle from the engine.

The train consisted of 6 bogie passenger vehicles with a four-wheeled coaching goods wagon in the rear drawn by a 2-6-4 Type Tank Engine (B.T.C. Class No. 647) running chimney first. The weight of the engine and train was about 300 tons and the overall length about 494 feet. The vacuum brake was in operation on all wheels of the vehicles and on the coupled wheels of the engine, brake power being about 83.3 per cent.

The train was well filled with passengers, the vehicle next to the engine was crowded chiefly with vendors. I regret to report that one passenger received fatal injuries, 19 passengers were admitted as 'In-door' patients in Hospitals at Calcutta and 7 received treatment as 'Out-door' patients. Of the Railway employees, the driver, both firemen and a Khalasee of Engineering Department received minor injuries.

The amount of damage to, rolling stock is estimated at about Rs. 25,000. There was no damage to the Permanent-way.

The injured received early medical attendance. First Aid was given by the Guard of the train and a local medical practitioner. The Chief and District Medical Officers of the Railway reached the scene of the accident within an hour of the occurrence.

The relief Train arrived at the site of the accident at about 8-02 hours and line was cleared for through working at about 8-52 hours.

The weather was fine and clear and the rails dry.

Specimen VII: Social

A handwritten letter received by
Shanta Bhalerao, Asst. Secy., A.I.T.U.C.
(Source: All India Trade Union Congress Papers. Sub-file: Letters
received by Shanta Bhalerao)

Dalai Bhawan,
Nadiad,
8th April 1943

Dear Miss Bhalerao,

Do you remember me? Well, we met at Broach and once again in Bombay. Though rather belatedly, I would like to congratulate you for the fine impression you created on everyone at Broach. I wish the A.I.T.U.C. could circulate you more. Can't you possibly train up few more whole timers like yourself?

This is to thank you for having given your co-operation to Dr Trivedi and Mr Shah. They have just written to me praising to the skies. Of course, I can assure you that I shall take this with a pinch of salt because I want you to be even more helpful to them. I asked them to keep in touch with you and to work in consultation with you. I do hope you will get Mr Joshi to get a close interest in the matter.

Isn't it fine that the Broach teachers have won? Now we should do something to organise teachers all over Gujarat and thus capitalise the victory of the teachers of Broach. I am seeing teachers here and asking them to wake up. Have you any suggestions to make?

With best wishes,
Yours Sincerely,
(Sd/ Rajani Patel)

Specimen VIII: Bureaucracy

A letter of complaint
(Source: Hyderabad Residency Correspondence. File No. 371, 1946)

Bownpally, Secunderabad Dn.
Dated 6th Feb. 1946

To

The District Supdt. of Police,
SECUNDERABAD DECCAN.
Respected Sir,

I beg to bring a few following lines under your kind consideration.

I am a pensioner of 81st Pioneer, Madras, in which I was a Havildar and also I am a retired Head Constable of S.D.P. I am residing now in Pedda Thokatta, Cormsary Bownmpally. The place where I am residing, there is a undesirable party, who call themselves as Arya Somagists as they do not act according to the rules and regulations of the Samaj, but they used to hit poor people and do bad things in village and they want other people of the village to be always under their control. Like this they were pressing my son A. Ramuloo from one & half year to join their party and many a times Deshmukh B. Pratapa Reddy of this village also pressed my son, but being myself a pensioner and my son a government employee, I made my son not to join the Samaj of the party. He listened to me and refused to join the party or Samaj.

Having not listened to them and not joined in the party they determined to kill my son, on Sunday the 3rd instant at 10.00 o'clock in the morning at my premises in my presence in my house, my son was standing in my house at that moment the Deshmukh of the village gathered all the party and asked them to rush on us. With his instructions they came with lotties and Swords and rushed into my house and hit me and my son, in the meantime my son escaped from them and ran straight to the Police Station of that village and reported this matter. This was happening until and after the police to this place. They called me and my son to Deshmukh's house and taken down the statement of me and my son and went away saying that they will call the party and us to the police station the next day, but till now they have not yet taken any action for the above matter.

Now what the party and Deshmukh of the village determined is that they are going to kill me or my son on the way of going for duty in the day or night time, and another thing what the Deshmukh is doing is, he is forcing the person called Marri Ramaswarny who sold the house to me on 22-7-1938 for Rs 425/H.S. in which I am staying now to stand as witness for Deshmukh, that he has not sold the house to me but has given to me for rent. Like this the Deshmukh want to go myself from the village leaving the house to them.

So as my life is in danger, and they are behaving with me like this, I can't bear. I hope your honour would take necessary steps into the matter as my life is in danger.

Thanking your goodself for the same.

I beg to remain,

Respected Sir,
Your most obedient Servant,
(Sd/-)
(Sd) Madurappa Thevar
Ex-head Constable & Ex-Havildar,
Pensioner, 81st Pioneer Madras.

Address:-
Madurappa
127, Pedda Thokatta,
Kamsary Bazaar, BOWNPALLY
SECUNDERABAD DECCAN

Enclo: 2

Copy to: 1 . The Hon'ble Resident at Hyderabad, Residency Court, Hyderabad Dn.

2. The Welfare Officer, HQ 172 (Sec'bad) Sub Area, Bolarum

Through : The Soldier's & Sailer's Board, HQ 172 (Sec'bad) Sub Area, Bolarum

Specimen IX: Print-media communication

(Source: *The Star*. An English journal published from Bombay)

Year: 1946

A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The Editor,
The 'Star'
Bombay

Dear Sir,

Healthy criticism adds to progress. And every one who aims at progress invites criticism. I trust you will not think otherwise when I write you the following, which is only a suggestion or rather a poser.

I am keenly following the progress and greatly interested in the healthy growth to fame of our little baby 'Star' and always pray for its success. From its first publication I am reading 'The thought for the day' just over the Editorial. Each time I found that quotations are taken from some other source and not from the Holy Qoran. Qoran is the only Sacred Book on the earth which contains and covers all the subjects. Plenty of quotations, thoughts and instructions to suit any day and any occasion. I am not in any way against your publishing quotations from anybody. What I want to convey to you in this letter is that we are Muslims first and everything next. Our Qoran first and others next. Your paper is read mostly by Muslims and Muslims always like and respect quotations from the Holy Qoran. Not only that even others who belong to other religions will have the chance of knowing what is in Holy Qoran. Why not we concentrate on what is best and what is our own?

I will wait for the next issue of the 'Star' with a brighter twinkle and with a 'Qoran touch'.

Yours truly,
Mohamed Ashraf Rangoonwalla
Bombay, 4th March, 1946

Specimen X: Education

An official letter written by an Indian Vice-Chancellor to a British bureaucrat
(Source: *Hyderabad Residency Correspondence*. File No. 371, 1946).

Vice-Chancellor
Osmania University, Hyderabad Deccan.

April 15, 1946

My Dear Dr Sargent,

In pursuance of the suggestion made by you in successive communications the Osmania University has decided to have a Student's Advisory Bureau for the objects which you have indicated from time to time. Before the fact is notified for the benefit of the public, it is essential that the Bureau should be so equipped with up-to-date information with regard to studies abroad as to be able to effectively fulfil the object of advice or information. So far, no information appears to have been placed at our disposal and you would be assisting us considerably by sending us copies, whether in book form or in the form of Circulars, of all such up-to-date information with regard to admission, academic and other facilities, names of particular Universities and institutions for particular subjects etc., as may be in the possession of the Government of India. Such information will be carefully docketed and used by our own Advisory Bureau and we would, therefore, welcome receiving it as early as possible, as we are anxious to provide the machinery immediately for advising non-sponsored students in the state.

I would much appreciate your throwing light also on another matter, viz., whether you would suggest including in the scope of the Student's Advisory Bureau, the giving of information or advice with regard to train of technical personnel in factories and works - a subject with regard to which the different Universities and Governments have been approached by the Department of Labour of the Government of India. If that subject is also included it would prevent duplication which would otherwise result through establishment of another Bureau of some sort for advising technical personnel on the question of receiving training abroad in factories and works. I would much like to know your reactions in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,
Sd/ - Ali Yavar Jung

Dr John Phillip Sargent, C.I.E.,
Educational Advisor to the Government of India,
New Delhi

Apart from the domain of bureaucracy English came to be used in areas like education, judiciary, journalism, legislature, etc. Many used it effectively with a high degree of competence. In creative writing there was a lot of creative bending of English and Indian writing in English ultimately found an international market.

10.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. During the first phase English was used mostly in the domains of politics and bureaucracy. The ambivalent attitude of Indians towards the British was also reflected in their use of English. There was not much of clarity in their English and there was a lot of influence of Persian conventions in their writing.
2. During the second phase—the transportation phase—the British became very powerful and British bureaucracy was very strong. Some English educated Indians also became part of bureaucracy and Indian's use of English was highly bureaucratic. It became the 'Petition register'. Some Indian merchants used even commercial advertisements in the same bureaucratic style.

3. During the third phase—the first half of the twentieth century English became international. The European powers became imperialistic and fought among themselves to establish colonies all over the world. A number of varieties of English developed. In India too English got detached from British English due to several reasons (a) the growth of English education on a mass scale (b) the freedom movement and the growth of Indian intelligentsia (c) the growth of the print media, particularly in urban areas (d) the growth of creative writing in English that tried to bend English the Indian way. All these resulted in a distinct variety of English.

0.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Trace the development of English in India in terms of its content and style during the early days of East India Company. (see 10.2)
2. Trace the development of the use of English in India during the second phase (between 1813–1904) (see 10.3)
3. Trace the development of the use of English in India during the first half of the twentieth century (see 10.4).

BRAOU

UNIT 11 - DURING THE WORLD WARS

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Two World Wars
- 11.2 Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1913)
- 11.3 Calcutta University Commission (1917–1919)
- 11.4 National Educational Movement (1920–22)
- 11.5 Hartog Report (1928–29)
- 11.6 The Government of India Act of 1935
- 11.7 Abbot-Wood Report (1936–37)
- 11.8 Zakir Hussain Committee 1938
- 11.9 Post-War educational development
- 11.10 Let's sum up
- 11.11 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

11.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- outline the development in the field of English education and English in India during the two World Wars.
- inform you about how international developments influenced the course of English in India.
- make you aware of the various reports that were written during this period both by the government and by the nationalist leaders.

11.1 TWO WORLD WARS

At the beginning of twentieth century England and the countries of Western Europe had reached a high degree of material progress and prosperity. Scientific inventions have revolutionised industrial processes and brought great wealth to the countries. There has been a great improvement in the conditions of most people and they started parading their life style. At the same time of the parading of luxury by the rich had sown the seeds of resentment which was shown in industrial unrest and political action by the workers.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the balance of power in Europe was no longer stable. Since 1870 Germany had rapidly grown in military and industrial importance and her imperial ambitions were regarded as menacing by other imperialist powers. The Germans wanted to build their empire and they wanted to establish colonies all over the world. This resulted in the two World Wars—the first World War 1914–18 and the second World War 1939–45.

The global war had its own effects not only on the global economy but on the linguistic scene. The English language became global and it turned international. The English speaking soldiers were all over the world and, as a result of the global interaction, number of new varieties of

English was born. American English was heard in different parts of the world and it competed with the British variety for recognition. In India for example a number of varieties like Cantonment English and butler English were heard in Cantonments and military occupied areas.

Along with these developments India's freedom struggle gave another impetus to the growth of English in India. Nationalism advocated the growth of Indian languages but necessity imposed English on the subcontinent. Leaders from different linguistic regions and English educated leaders came together for the national cause and English became the common link language. Even patriotism and the national spirits were expressed in English. The growth of more job opportunities in the government, the expansion of the print media and the growth of the administrative machinery created a market for English in India. All these contributed to the expansion of English education and the use of English in India.

At the same time the nationalistic stream also contributed a lot to the growth of education in India; for instance, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was a professor and principal of Puna Fergusson College and President of Indian National Congress (1905) founded the Servants of India society. He made heroic efforts to make the government accept the principle of compulsory education. He introduced a bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911; the bill was rejected but Gokhale's ideas and his English are to be taken seriously. Gokhale argued as follows:

The object of this Bill is to provide for the gradual introduction of the principle of compulsion into the elementary education system of the country. The experience of other countries has established beyond dispute the fact that the only effective way to ensure a wide diffusion of elementary education among the mass of the people is by a resort to compulsion in some form or the other. And the time has come when a beginning at least should be made in this direction in India. The Bill is of a purely permissive character and its provisions will apply to areas notified by municipalities or district boards which will be necessitated, as may be laid down by the Government of India, by rules. Moreover, no area can be notified without the previous sanction of the Provincial Government and further it must fulfil the test which the Government of India may, by rules, lay down as regards the percentage of children already at school within its limits. Finally, the provisions are intended to apply in the first instance only to boys, though later on a local body may extend them to girls; and age limits proposed are only six and ten years. It is hoped that these are sufficient safeguards against any rash or injudicious action on the part of local bodies. This measure is essentially a cautious one, indeed to some it may appear to err too much on the side of caution.

My Lord, I know that my Bill will be thrown out before the day closes, I make no complaint. I shall not even feel depressed. I know too well the story of the preliminary efforts that were required even in England, before the Act of 1870 was passed. Moreover, I have always felt and have often said that we, of the present generation in India, can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march. The Bill thrown out today, will come back again and again, till on the stepping-stones of its dead selves, a measure ultimately rises which will spread the light of knowledge through out the land. It may be that this anticipation will not come true. It may be that our efforts may not conduce even indirectly to the promotion of the great cause which we all have at heart and that they may turn out after all to be nothing better than the mere ploughing of the sands of the sea shore. But, my Lord, whatever fate awaits our labours, one thing is clear. We shall be entitled to feel that we have done our duty, and, where the call of duty is clear, it is better even to labour and fail than not to labour at all.

11.2 GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (1913)

Gokhale's bill was rejected but the government could not ignore the popular demand for mass education. The seeds sown by Gokhale came up for harvest and the result was the Government of India Resolution on Educational Policy. Through this resolution primary education got due importance and the government promised to make funds available for primary education. It also recommended the starting of primary schools at the proper places. It also recommended teacher training programmes during vacations for teachers of primary education. A number of recommendations regarding the improvement of curriculum and the mode of examination at all levels. The resolution also provided for the expansion of university education.

Major Provisions of the Resolution

- (i) There should be sufficient expansion of lower primary schools, where along with instruction in the three R's children should be taught drawing, knowledge of the village map, nature study and physical exercise.
- (ii) Simultaneously upper primary schools should be opened at the proper places and if need be, the lower primary schools should be raised to the status of upper primary schools.
- (iii) Local Boards' schools should be established in place of private aided schools.
- (iv) Maktabas and Pathshalas should be adequately subsidized.
- (v) The inspection and management of private schools should be made more efficient.
- (vi) In most of the parts of India, it may not be practicable to prescribe a separate curricula for rural and urban, but in the urban schools there is sufficient scope for teaching Geography and organizing school excursions etc.
- (vii) The teachers should have passed vernacular middle examination and received one year's training.
- (viii) Provision be made for refresher courses for the teachers of primary education during vacations.
- (ix) A trained teacher should get a salary not less than Rs 12 p.m. Again there should be provision for his increment in salary, pension and provident fund.
- (x) The number of students under one teacher should generally range between 30 and 40.
- (xi) Improvement should be made in the condition of middle and secondary vernacular schools and their number should be increased.
- (xii) Schools should be housed in sanitary, spacious but inexpensive buildings.
- (xiii) Emphasis was laid on the education of women too. Suggestions were put forth concerning special curriculum of practical utility for girls. It was clearly stated in the Resolution that too much importance should not be attached to examination in the education of girls.
- (xiv) Number of women teachers and inspectors should also be increased.
- (xv) The State should not completely withdraw from the sphere of secondary education.
- (xvi) Further establishment of State institutions was proposed to be stopped.

- (xvii) Existing institutions should continue to serve as models and proper grants-in-aid should be sanctioned to private institutions.
- (xviii) And improvement in the mode of education and curriculum was also recommended.
- (xix) The Resolution provided for the expansion in university education. The existence of 5 universities and 185 colleges was considered to be insufficient in view of the vast needs and demands of the country.
- (xx) The Resolution suggested that universities and high schools should be assigned distinct spheres of activities.
- (xxi) The universities should be relieved of the responsibility of granting recognition to high schools and they should be kept under Provincial Governments.
- (xxii) The establishment of teaching universities was suggested by emphasizing the separation of the two functions of the universities—teaching and examining.
- (xxiii) Recommendations were made concerning the inclusion of subjects of industrial importance in the curriculum and provision of facilities to the students desirous of prosecuting research work.
- (xxiv) The Resolution put forth certain valuable suggestions pertaining to the character formation of students and hostel life.

Source: Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, (1984: 37–38)

11.3 CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY COMMISSION (1917–1919)

As recommended by the Educational Policy of 1913 the Sadler Commission was appointed to study the problems of Indian universities. The Sadler Commission dealt with mostly the problems of Calcutta University but the problems it studied were more or less common to all Indian Universities.

Important Recommendations on University Education

- (i) Intermediate classes should be separated from universities and a curriculum spreading over three years should be prescribed for the degree of B.A. The stage of admission to the university was to be intermediate and not matriculation examination.
- (ii) Intermediate colleges should be established for the sake of completing the first stage. These colleges should conduct teaching in arts, science, medicine, engineering, education, agriculture and commerce.
- (iii) A separate High School and intermediate Board should be formed in every province, consisting of representatives of the Government, universities, high schools and intermediate colleges, for the sake of managing secondary education.

Recommendations were made to free the Board from the control of the Department of Education.

The Commission further recommended the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction in intermediate colleges.

11.4 NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT (1920–22)

The nationalistic upheaval also influenced the educational pattern in the country. Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement. The national Congress in 1920 passed a resolution urging the gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or

controlled by government and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of national schools in various provinces. In the course of less than four months the National Muslim University, Aligarh, the Gujrat Vidya Pith, Bihar Vidya Pith, The Kashi Vidya Pith, The Bengal National University, The Tilak Maharashtra Vidya Pith, Quami Vidya Pith at Lahore and large number of national schools were started all over the country. The national education movement emphasised three points.

1. Indian control of education
2. The teaching of the love of motherland, and
3. No Western influence

A number of leaders like Dr. Annie Besant were deeply involved in this movement. A number of subjects like Indian literature, Indian history, Indian achievements in science, in art, in medicine, in commerce, etc., were taught.

11.5 HARTOG REPORT (1928-29)

Another committee under the chairmanship of Sir Phillip Hartog, who was a member of the Calcutta University Commission was appointed to review the progress of education in India. It reviewed all aspects of education—primary, secondary, university, etc. The Hartog report condemned a policy of hasty expansion and recommended consolidation and quality improvement. The report emphasised the need for a well-directed policy and planning in the field of education.

Extracts from the Report

General observations: Our views of the growth of education reveals many points of fundamental interest for the political future of India. The largely increased enrolment in primary schools indicates that the old time apathy of the masses is breaking down. There has been a social and political awakening of the women of India and an expressed demand on their behalf for education and social reform. There has been rapid progress in the numbers of Mohammedans receiving instruction. Efforts have been made to improve the condition of the depressed classes and those classes are beginning to respond to that effort and to assert their right to education. On all sides there has been a desire on the part of leaders of public opinion to understand and to grapple with the complex and difficult problems of education; and large additional expenditure has been proposed by Education Ministers, and willingly voted by the legislative councils. That is one side of the picture, but there is another.

Primary education: Throughout the whole educational system there is waste and ineffectiveness. In the primary system which from our point of view should be designed to produce literacy and the capacity to exercise an intelligent vote, the waste is appalling. So far as we can judge, the vast increase in numbers in primary schools produces no commensurate increase in literacy, for only a small proportion of those who are at the primary stage reach Class IV, in which the attainment of literacy may be expected. The wastage in the case of girls is even more serious than in the case of boys....

Secondary education: In the sphere of secondary education there has been an advance in some respects, notably the average capacity of the body of teachers, in their improved conditions of service and training, and in the attempt to widen the general activities of school life. But here again there are grave defects of organization. The whole system of secondary education is still dominated by the ideal that every boy who enters a secondary school should prepare himself for the university examinations indicates a great waste of effort. Such attempts as have been made to provide vocational and industrial training have little contact with the educational system and are, therefore, largely in fructuous.

University education: Many of the universities and colleges show marked improvement in their methods of teaching and in the amount of original work which they have produced; and in some of them there is undoubtedly a better training for corporate life than formerly. But the theory that a university exists mainly, if not solely, to pass students through examinations still finds too large acceptance in India; and we wish that there were more signs that the universities regarded the training of broad-minded, tolerant and self-reliant citizens as one of their primary functions. They have been hampered in their work by being over-crowded with students who are not fitted by capacity for university education and of whom many would be far more likely to succeed in other careers.

Need for a well-directed policy: We have no doubt that more and more money will be gladly voted for education by the legislatures of India but, as we have shown, the improvement and expansion of education do not depend merely on money. Money is no doubt essential, but even more essential is a well-directed policy carried out by effective and competent agencies, determined to eliminate waste of all kinds. We were asked to report on the organization of education. At almost every point that organization needs reconsideration and strengthening; and the relations of the bodies responsible for the organization of education need readjustment.

Provincial governments and local bodies in education: We have not suggested, nor do we suggest, that the responsibilities of Ministers in the provinces should be reduced. On the contrary, we are of opinion that they have been reduced too much already by a devolution on local bodies which has taken the control of primary education to a large extent out of their hands with unfortunate results. The relations between Provincial Governments and local bodies demand further consideration and adjustment. Under recent legislation, powers have been devolved on local bodies in such a way that the Ministers responsible to the legislature, have no effective control of the expenditure of money voted for mass education; and in some cases, owing to inadequate inspection, they have little information as to the results of that expenditure. It is clear that the new factor of ministerial responsibility has not been taken sufficiently into account.

Main Recommendations of Hartog Committee on Primary Education

- (i) A policy of consolidation should be adopted in preference to one of diffusion.
- (ii) The minimum duration of the primary course should be of four years.
- (iii) The standard of the general education of primary teachers should be raised; the training course should be sufficiently long; the training institutions for primary teachers should be adequately staffed and made more efficient; refresher courses and conferences of primary teachers must be frequently arranged; and the remuneration and conditions of primary teachers should be such as will enable the profession to attract and retain men of good quality.
- (iv) The curriculum of primary schools should be liberalized.
- (v) School hours and school holidays should be adjusted to seasonal and local requirements.
- (vi) Special attention should be given to the lowest class in primary schools and determined efforts should be made to reduce the large extent of stagnation and wastage that prevail therein.
- (vii) Rural uplift work should be undertaken and centred in the school.
- (viii) The devolution of authority in primary education to local bodies has been excessive. Primary education is a subject of national importance and hence it is the duty of the Government to assume necessary powers of control and improve the efficiency of administration.
- (ix) The inspecting staff of Government should be considerably strengthened.
- (x) No hasty attempts should be made to introduce compulsion but attention should be directed to a careful preparation of the ground.

Main Recommendations on Secondary Education

- (a) Diverting pupils to non-literary pursuits. With a view to reducing the domination of the matriculation, the Committee recommended:
 - (i) The retention in the middle vernacular schools of more of the boys intended for rural pursuits, accompanied by the introduction of a more diversified curriculum in those schools.
 - (ii) The diversion of more boys to industrial and commercial careers at the end of the middle stage, for which provision should be made by alternative courses in that stage, preparatory to special instruction in technical and industrial schools.
- (b) Improvement in the training and service conditions of secondary teachers. While appreciating the improvement that had been brought about in the training and service conditions of secondary teachers since 1904, the Committee felt that a good deal of further action was still necessary.

Source: Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, (1984: 45-47)

Check your progress

1. Gokhale's bill on compulsory primary education was defeated but the government resolution on educational policy (1913) emphasised compulsory primary education.
2. The Calcutta University Commission was appointed and it recommended the separation of intermediate classes from universities. It also recommended the use of

the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Intermediate colleges.

3. The National Education Movement was started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and a number of Vidya Piths and universities were started outside the Government control.
4. In 1928 the Hartog committee was appointed to review the progress of education in India and it recommended consolidation and quality improvement.

11.6 THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT OF 1935

The government act of 1919 had made education a subject which was partly all India, partly reserved, partly transferred with limitations and partly transferred without limitation. The government act of 1935 removed this anomaly by dividing all educational activities into two categories—Central and State. A list was prepared to show the central subjects and another list showing state subjects.

11.7 ABBOT-WOOD REPORT (1936–37)

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was revived in 1935. Two experts Mr Abbot and Mr Wood were invited to advise the government on matters of educational reorganization and particularly on problems of vocational education. The Abbot-Wood Report affirmed that technical education was in no way inferior to general education.

It recommended a hierarchy of technical institutions parallel to those of general education. It led to the establishment of polytechnics. The All India Council of Technical Education AICTE was established in 1946. The report recommended that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the High School stage but English should be a compulsory language for all pupils. It also pointed out that English teaching should be much more realistic.

Important Recommendations Outlined in the First Part

1. Infant classes should, as far as possible, be entrusted to trained teachers; and for this and other reasons the development of educational provision of girls and women is of paramount importance.
2. The education of children in the primary school should be based more upon the natural interests and activities of young children and less upon book-learning. Concentration on narrow learning is unsound.
3. The curriculum of the rural middle school should be closely related to children's environment; and if English is taught to any children of 'middle school' age it should not be allowed to result in an excessive amount of linguistic load.
4. The mother-tongue should, as far as possible, be the medium of instruction throughout the high school stage, but English should be a compulsory language for all pupils at this stage. But the teaching of English should be made more realistic.
5. More systematic attention should be paid to the teaching of fine arts, and steps should be taken to secure for high schools a supply of qualified teachers of fine arts.
6. The pre-service education course of teachers of primary and middle schools should be a three-year course following without any gap in the completion of middle school course.

Main Recommendations Outlined in the Second Part

1. The expansion of vocational education should not greatly outstrip the development of industry.
2. General and vocational education are not to be regarded as essentially -different branches, but the earlier and later phases of a continuous process. Each subject in the vocational school has its origin in the non-vocational school.
3. Vocational education must be based on an adequate general education. The entrance standard should not, as a rule, be below that reached at the end of the middle school (Class VIII). Pupils from this stage can be admitted to junior vocational schools. Pupils who have successfully completed the higher secondary school course can be admitted to senior vocational schools.
4. The junior vocational school, receiving its pupils at the end of Class VIII and providing a three year course, would be parallel to the higher secondary- school. The senior vocational school, receiving its pupils at the end of Class XI and providing a two-year course, would be parallel to the higher secondary school.
5. Part-time schools should be provided for the further education of young men already in employment
6. A limited number of higher secondary schools *should* have, an agricultural bias.
7. The Government should establish a vocational training college, working in close association with an ordinary training college.

Source: Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, (1984, 51)

11.8 ZAKIR HUSSAIN COMMITTEE 1938

In July 1937 a conference of national workers was called at Wardha under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi and passed the following resolutions.

1. That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale;
2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue;
3. That the Conference endorses the proposal, made by Mahatma Gandhi, that the process of education throughout this period should centre round some productive form of manual work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child;
4. That the Conference expects that the system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

The conference appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr Zakir Hussain to prepare a detail syllabus for an Indian style of education. A scheme was prepared and the congress accepted the scheme and passed the following three resolutions.

1. Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
2. The medium of instruction must be the mother tongue.
3. Throughout this period education should centre round some form of manual and

productive work and all other activities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft with due regard to the environment of the child.

An All India Board was formed to workout in a consolidated manner a programme of Basic National Education. This programme has been adopted as our national system of education at it is called Basic education.

The seven year course of Basic Education includes the basic crafts like spinning and weaving, carpentry, agriculture, fruit and vegetable gardening, leather work and any other craft which may be locally useful. The Basic Education plan emphasises the importance of the mother tongue, mathematics, social, studies, general science, drawing, music and Hindustani.

Wardha Scheme of Education

Craft work in schools: Modern educational thought is practically unanimous in commending the idea of educating children through some suitable form of productive work. This method is considered to be the most effective approach to the problem of providing an integral all-sided education.

Psychologically, it is desirable, because, it relieves the child from the tyranny of a purely academic and theoretical instruction against which its active nature is always making a healthy protest. It balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience, and may be made an instrument of educating the body and the mind in coordination. The child acquires not the superficial literacy which implies, often without warrant, a capacity to read the printed page, but the far more important capacity of using hand and intelligence for some constructive purpose. This, if we may be permitted to use the expression, is the literacy of the whole personality.

Socially considered, the introduction of such practical productive work in education, to be participated in by all the children of the nation, will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers, harmful alike for both. It will also cultivate in the only possible way a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity—an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance.

Economically considered, carried out intelligently and efficiently, the scheme will increase the productive capacity of our workers and will also enable them to utilize their leisure advantageously.

From the strictly educational point of view greater concreteness and reality can be given to the knowledge acquired by children by making some significant craft the basis of education. Knowledge will thus become related to life, and its various aspects will be correlated with one another.

Curriculum. In order to work out an effective and natural coordination of the various subjects and to make the syllabus a means of adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environment, we have chosen three centres, intrinsically inter-connected, as the foci for the curriculum i.e., the Physical Environment, the Social Environment, and Craft Work, which is their natural meeting point since it utilizes the resources of the former for the purposes of the latter.

It is essential for all teachers and educational workers to note that we have really attempted to draft an 'activity curriculum', which implies that our schools must be places of work, experimentation and discovery, not of passive absorption of information imparted at second hand. So far as the curriculum is concerned, we have stressed this principle by advocating that

all teaching should be carried on through concrete life situations relating to craft or to social and physical environment, so that whatever he learns becomes assimilated into his growing activity.

It should be noted in this connection that in the preparation of this syllabus, we have attempted to organize the subject matter into significant and comprehensive units of experience which will, when mastered, enable the child to understand his environment better and react to it more intelligently because they throw helpful light on the problems and conditions of life around him. We are conscious of the fact that there is much scope for improvement in the actual units selected, but we are confident that that is the right approach to the syllabus, rather than the current practice of making it a collection of unrelated and miscellaneous facts having no direct bearing on children's experiences or, on social life. The syllabus in social studies and general science will illustrate this principle. When, for instance, work in social or general science is related, to drawing, and the knowledge of history and geography enriches the child's understanding and appreciation of his craft, when gardening and agriculture are an integral part of his education, the school should become an active centre of experience and of abundant life.

But the working of this curriculum is in itself a problem of great importance, and demands intelligent alertness and responsiveness on the part of the teachers, for even the best of curricula can be made a mere dead letter, if the method of teaching and discipline adopted are not inspired by the spirit of activity. In order to indicate, therefore, how the full possibilities of this curriculum can be exploited, it seems necessary to point out by way of illustration, the method to be adopted in the approach to some of the subjects included in the curriculum. For if subjects such as social studies and general science are presented by the teachers as catalogues of facts to be passively accepted and learnt up by the children, the whole object of the syllabus will be defeated, and they will entirely fail to appreciate the real nature of the correlation amongst the various subjects. This can only be realized when they are acquired through real learning situations involving self-activity on the children's part.

The teaching of these subjects should not only be closely co-ordinated, but it should spring from actual social situations—the child's home his village, its occupations and crafts—and then be extended and enriched by stories of primitive life and ancient civilizations, and by showing how different ways, of life and work have developed under different social and geographical conditions. The teaching of geography and nature study, in the lower classes should, for example, be gathered round the different seasons which provide a starting point for observing natural phenomena; and the intelligent teacher will take care that the children make their early acquaintance with all these phenomena through active personal observations, excursions, gardening tending of pets and survey of the locality. But it is necessary, throughout the course, to ensure that the child acquires his knowledge actively and utilizes it for the understanding and better control of his social environment, Hence the need for correlating the school with the activities of the environing community life which we have duly stressed in the Report.

Main Outlines of the Seven Years' Course of Basic Education

1. **The basic craft:** Such reasonable skill should be attained in the handicrafts chosen, as would enable the pupil to pursue it as an occupation after finishing his full course.

The following may be chosen as basic crafts in various schools:

- (a) Spinning and weaving.
- (b) Carpentry.

- (c) Agriculture.
- (d) Fruit and vegetable gardening.
- (e) Leather work.
- (f) Any other craft for *which local* and geographical conditions are favourable and which satisfies the conditions mentioned above

Even where an industry other than spinning and weaving or agriculture is the basic craft, the pupils will be expected to attain a minimum knowledge of cardinge and spinning with the takli,, and a practical acquaintance of elementary agricultural work in the local area.

2. **Mother Tongue:** The proper teaching of the mother tongue is the foundation of all education. Without the capacity to speak effectively and to read and write correctly and lucidly, no one can develop precision of thought or clarity of ideas. Moreover, it is a means of introducing the child to the rich heritage of his people's ideas, emotions and aspirations, and can therefore be made, a valuable means of social education whilst also instilling right ethical and moral values. Also, it- is a natural outlet for the expression of the child's aesthetic sense and appreciation, and if the proper approach is adopted, the study of literature becomes a source of joy and creative appreciation.
3. **Mathematics:** The objective is to develop in the pupil the capacity to solve speedily the ordinary numerical and geometrical problems arising in connection with his craft and with his home and community life. Pupils should also gain a knowledge of business practice and book keeping.
4. **Social studies.** The objectives are:
 - i. To develop a broad human interest in the progress of mankind in general and, of India in particular.
 - ii. To develop in the pupil a proper understanding of his social and geographical environment, and to awaken the urge to improve it.
 - iii. To inculcate the love of the motherland, reverence for its past, and a belief in its future destiny as the home, of a united cooperative society based on love, truth and justice.
 - iv. To develop a sense of the rights, and responsibilities of citizenship.
 - v. To develop the individual and social virtues which make a man -a reliable associate and trusted neighbour.
 - vi. To develop mutual respect for the world religions.

A course in history, in geography, in civics and in current events, combined with a reverential study of the different religions of the world showing how in essentials they meet in perfect harmony, will help to achieve these objectives. The study should begin with the child's own environment and its problems. His interest should be awakened in the manifold ways in which men supply their different wants. This should be made a starting point to arouse their curiosity about the life and work of men and women.

5. **General Science.** The objectives are:
 - i. To give pupils an intelligent and appreciative outlook on nature.
 - ii. To form in the pupils habits of accurate observation and of testing experience by experiment.

iii. To enable them to understand the important scientific principles exemplified in:
(a) The natural phenomena around, and (b) The application of science to the service of man.

iv. To introduce them to the more important incidents in the lives of the great scientists whose sacrifices in the cause of truth make a powerful appeal to the growing mind.

6. **Drawing:** The objectives are:

- i. To train the eye in the observation and discrimination of forms and colours.
- ii. To develop the memory for forms.
- iii. To cultivate a knowledge of and appreciation for the beautiful things in nature and in art.
- iv. To draw out the capacity for tasteful design and decoration.
- v. To develop the capacity to make working drawings of objects to be constructed.

These objectives can be obtained by: (a) Drawings made by children to illustrate read or observed material. (b) Object and memory drawings, e.g., drawings of plants and of animal and human form (correlated with work in general science, handicraft, etc)

- vi. Designing.
- vii. Scale drawing, graphs and pictorial graphs.

The work in drawing during the first four years should be correlated chiefly with work in reading and pictorial representation in nature study and the craft. During the last three years emphasis may be laid on design and decoration and mechanical drawing, so as to enable pupils to make correct working drawings.

7. **Music:** The objective is to teach the pupils a number of beautiful songs and to cultivate in them a love for beautiful music. The child's natural sense for rhythm should be developed by teaching him to keep his own time by beating with the hand. Walking in time to a fixed rhythm can be a great aid in achieving this. Care should be taken to select only the best and most inspiring songs, the artistic interpretation of some healthy and elevating theme. Special emphasis should be placed on group or choral singing.

8. **Hindustani:** The object of including Hindustani as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum is to ensure that all the children educated in these national schools may have a reasonable acquaintance with a common *lingua franca*. As adult citizens they should be able to cooperate with their fellow-countrymen belonging to any part of the country. In teaching the language the teacher should in various ways quicken in the students the realization that this language is the most important product of the cultural contact of the Hindus and Muslims in India. It is the repository—in its more advanced forms—of their best thoughts and aspirations. They should learn to take pride in its richness and vitality and should feel the desire to serve it devotedly.

In Hindustani speaking areas this language will be the mother tongue, but the students as well as the teachers will be required to learn both the scripts, so that they may read books written in Urdu as well as in Hindi. In non-Hindustani speaking areas, where the provincial language will be the mother tongue, the study of Hindustani will be compulsory during the 5th and 6th years of school life, but the children will have the choice of learning either one or the other script. However, in the case of teachers who have to deal with children of both kinds, knowledge of both the scripts is desirable.

At any rate, every public school must make adequate provision for the teaching of both scripts.

In general outlines, the syllabus of studies will be the same for boys and girls up to the 5th grade of the school. In grades 4 and 5 the syllabus in general science should be so modified as to include domestic science for girls. In grades 6 and 7, the girls will be allowed to take an advanced course in domestic science in place of the basic craft.

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK IN THE CURRICULUM

The basic craft	3 hours 20 minutes
Music, drawing and arithmetic	40 minutes
The mother tongue	40 minutes
Social studies and general science	30 minutes
Physical training	10 minutes
Recess	10 minutes
	5 hours 30 minutes

In making this estimate, we have kept spinning and weaving as the basic craft. The distribution might vary from craft to craft, but in no case should the time allotted to the basic craft exceed the above estimate.

The school is expected to work for 288 days in a year, average of 24 days in a month.

In view of the diversity of pupils interests we recommend that as far as possible a variety of crafts should be provided for at least -during the last two years of the school course.

We are of the opinion that every school should have attached to it a plot of land big enough for a school garden and a playground.

Source: Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, (1984: 55-60)

11.9 POST WAR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Central Advisory Board of Education in India published a report on the post war educational development of the country—a plan of action. It outlined the type of education desired for India. John Sargent, the then educational advisor to the government of India prepared this report. This report is known as the Sargent Report.

The report restated the importance of Basic education; it also said that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue. It said that basic education should comprise a course of eight years consisting of two stages five and three.

Recommendations of the Sargent Report

1. **Basic education:** (a) A system of universal, compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen should be introduced as speedily as possible, though in view of the practical difficulty of recruiting the requisite supply of trained teachers it may not be possible to complete it in less than forty years.
- (b) The character of the instruction to be provided should follow the general lines laid down in the reports of the Central Advisory Boards.
- (c) The Senior Basic (middle) School, being the finishing school for the great majority of future citizens, is of fundamental importance and should be generously staffed and equipped.
- (d) All education depends on the teacher. The present status and remuneration of teachers,

and especially those in primary schools, are deplorable. The Standards in regard to the training, recruitment and conditions of service of teachers prescribed in the report of the Committee approved by the Central Advisory Board in 1943 represent the minimum compatibility with the success of a national system. These should be adopted and enforced everywhere.

- (e) A vast increase in the number of trained women teachers will be required.
- (f) The total estimated annual cost of the proposals contained in this chapter when in full operation is Rs. 200 crores approximately.

The Sargent Report endorsed the recommendations of the two committees appointed by the Central Advisory on basic education.

(A) Recommendations of the first committee

- (a) The scheme of 'basic' education should first be introduced in rural areas.
- (b) The age range for compulsion should be six to fourteen years, but children can be admitted to the 'basic' school at the age of five.
- (c) Diversion of students from the 'basic' school to other kinds of schools should be allowed after the 5th class or about the age of eleven plus.
- (d) The medium of instruction should be the mother tongue of the pupils.
- (e) A common language for India is desirable. This should be Hindustani with both the Urdu and Hindi scripts. Option should be given to children to choose the script, and provision should be made for teaching them in that script. Every teacher should know both scripts, viz., Urdu and Hindi.
- (f) Certain elements of cultural subjects, which cannot be correlated with the basic craft, must be taught independently.
- (g) The training of teachers should be recognized and their status raised.
- (h) No teacher should receive less than Rs. 20 per mensem.
- (i) Efforts should be made to recruit more women teachers and to persuade girls of good education to take up teaching.
- (j) Basic schools should be started only when suitable trained teachers are available.
- (k) The curriculum will never be revised in the light of experience.
- (l) English not be introduced as an optional subject in basic schools.
- (m) The State should provide facilities as at present for every community to give religious teaching, when so desired but not at the cost of the state.
- (n) No external examinations need be held. At the end of the basic school course a leaving certificate based on an internal examination should be given.
- (o) Pupils wishing to join other schools at the end of the 5th class (age eleven plus) should also be granted a leaving certificate.
- (p) Promotion from class to class will be determined by the school, though the results of the internal examinations should be subject to the supervisor's inspection.

(B) Recommendation of the second committee

- (a) While the provision of 'pre-basic' education in nursery and infants schools and classes is highly desirable, it is not practicable at this stage, in view of the lack of money and of trained women teachers, to advocate its introduction on a compulsory basis. Provincial Governments should aim in the first place (a) at providing model infants

and nursery schools in suitable centres, (b) at increasing the supply of properly trained infant teachers, who should be women, (c) at encouraging the enrolment in 'basic' schools of children below the minimum age for compulsory attendance, and (d) at stimulating the provision by voluntary agencies of efficient 'pre-basic schools'.

- (b) 'Basic' education should comprise a course of eight years from the age of six to fourteen years and that this course while preserving its essential unity should consist of two stages—the first stage, the 'junior' stage, covering a period of five years and the second stage, the 'senior' three years.
- (c) The transfer of children from the 'basic' school to other forms of post-primary education should be allowed after the 5th grade, i.e., at the conclusion of the 'junior basic' stage.
- (d) The various types of post-primary school (other than the 'senior basic' school) to which suitable children may be transferred at the end of the 'junior basic' stage should provide a variety of courses extending over a period of at least five years after the age of eleven. These courses, while preserving an essentially cultural character, should be designed to prepare pupils for entry to industrial and commercial occupations as well as to universities.
- (e) Special arrangements should be made in these schools for assimilating pupils who decide to continue their education after completing the full course in the 'basic' school i.e., after reaching the 8th class.
- (f) Suitable courses should be framed for girls attending 'senior basic' schools which should include such subjects as cookery, laundry work, needle work, home crafts, the care of children and first aid, the remainder of the instruction to be correlated with this course of domestic science in accordance with the general principles of the 'basic education' of the scheme.
- (g) A standing committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education should be appointed to watch new educational experiments carried on in the provinces as well as the progress of educational developments generally, with special reference to 'basic' education' and to make recommendations to the Board for necessary action. There should be a representative of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh on this Committee.
- (h) Subjects to such conditions as are set out in the report the Central Government should contribute not less than half the amount of the approved net recurring expenditure on 'basic' education in each province, the balance to be found by the Provincial Government and the local bodies entrusted by it with the administration of compulsory education. For capital expenditure on buildings, equipment, etc., a loan system should be adopted.
- (i) A central agency should be established in each province for the disposal of marketable articles produced in schools.

2. Pre-primary school

- (a) An adequate provision of pre-primary instruction in the form of nursery schools or classes is an essential adjunct to any national system of education. The provision in this respect at present is negligible.
- (b) In urban areas, where sufficient children are available within a reasonable radius, separate nursery schools or departments may be provided; elsewhere nursery classes should be attached to junior basic (primary) schools.
- (c) Nursery schools and classes should, invariably be staffed with women teachers who have received special training for this work.

- (d) Pre-primary education should in all cases be free. While it may not be feasible to make attendance compulsory, no efforts should be spread to persuade parents to send their children to school voluntarily, particularly in areas where housing conditions are unsatisfactory and/ or mothers are accustomed to go out to work.
- (e) The main object of education at this stage is to give young children social experience rather than formal instruction.
- (f) On the basis of a normal age-range of three to six years provision has been made for 10,00,000 places in nursery schools and classes.
- (g) The total estimated net cost of the proposals set out in this chapter when in full operation is Rs. 3,18,40,000.

3. High school education.

- (a) The high school course should cover six years and the normal age of admission should be about eleven.
- (b) Entry to high schools should be on a selective basis; only those pupils should be admitted who show promise of taking full advantage of the education provided. Additional places may be provided for those not selected provided that no cost falls on public funds.
- (c) In accordance with the general principle set out in (b) above places in high schools should be provided for at least one child in every five of the appropriate age-group.
- (d) In order to secure the right children, the methods of selection to be employed will require the most careful consideration. Special arrangements will have to be made for the transfer from senior basic (middle) schools to high schools of suitable children and particularly of those who show signs of late development.
- (e) High schools should be of two main types (i) Academic, (ii) Technical. The objective of both should be to provide a good all-round education combined with some preparation in the later stages for the careers which pupils will enter on leaving school.
- (f) The curriculum in all cases should be as varied as circumstances permit and should not be unduly restricted by the requirements of universities or examining bodies.
- (g) In order that no poor child of ability may be excluded, liberal assistance in the form of free places, scholarships and stipends should be available throughout the course.
- (h) In order to secure teachers of the right type, the salaries paid in all recognized schools, whether maintained by the state or by private bodies, should not be less than those prescribed by the Central Advisory Board of Education.
- (i) The estimated minimum net annual cost of the high school system outlined in this chapter when in full operation is Rs. 50 crores.

On university education the report recommended the following.

- (a) Indian universities, as they exist today, despite many admirable features do not fully satisfy the requirements of a national system of education.
- (b) In order to raise standards all round, the conditions for admission must be revised with the object of ensuring that all students are capable of taking full advantage of a university course. The proposed reorganization of the high school system will facilitate this. Adequate financial assistance must be provided for poor students.
- (c) The present intermediate course should be abolished. Ultimately the whole of this course should be covered in the high school but as an immediate step the first year of

the course should be transferred to high schools and the second to universities.

- (d) The minimum length of a university degree course should be three years.
- (e) The tutorial system should be widely extended and closer personal contacts established between teachers and students.
- (f) The importance of establishing a high standard in postgraduate studies and particularly in pure and applied research should be emphasized.
- (g) Steps should be taken to improve the conditions of service, including remuneration of university and college teachers where those now in operation are not attracting men and women of the requisite calibre.
- (h) An Indian University Grants Committee should be constituted for the purposes and with the terms of reference set out in this chapter.
- (i) To provide for the increased number of able and well-prepared students which a national system of high schools may be expected to produce, approximately 2,40,000 places, or double the existing number should be available in universities.
- (j) The estimated total net annual cost of the scheme for university education set out in this chapter when in full operation is Rs 6.72 Lakhs.

Source: Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, (1984: 63–68)

11.10 LET'S SUM UP

1. Gokhale's bill emphasised the importance of primary education. Though it was rejected the government of India resolution on educational policy accepted the spirit of it.
2. A number of committees were appointed
 - (a) Calcutta University Commission 1917–1919
 - (b) Hartog Committee (1928–29)
 - (c) Abbot Wood Committee (1936–37)
 - (d) Zakir Hussain Committee 1938
 - (e) Sargent Committee 1944

All these committees emphasised the importance of the mother tongue and recommended the effective teaching of English.

11.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Outline the forces that were responsible for the two World Wars and the impact of the Wars on English. (See 11.2)
2. What did the government resolution of 1913 on Education Policy say? (See 11.3)
3. Outline the impact of the National Education Movement of 1920–22. (See 11.5)
4. What are the recommendations of the Zakir Hussain Committee? (See 11.9)
5. What are the recommendations of the Sargent Report? (See 11.10)

UNIT 12 - DURING THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction: The changing role of English
- 12.2 During the struggle for independence
- 12.3 Reverence and abhorrence
- 12.4 The development of Nationalist Doctrines in India
- 12.5 India's Economic Nationalism
- 12.6 India's Political Nationalism
- 12.7 The Role of the Educated Class
- 12.8 Let's sum up
- 12.9 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

12.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- inform you of the development in the field of English education during the struggle for India's independence.
- make you think about the role of English during India's struggle for freedom.
- give an outline of the development of nationalist doctrines in India.
- make you understand how English education and the use of the English language, in a way, triggered the unity of India and brought about a nation called India.
- tell you how the freedom movement brought different regions together and enabled the national leaders to talk to the British in a language known to them.

12.1 INTRODUCTION: THE CHANGING ROLE OF ENGLISH

It is true that the British brought their language and literature as an important tool in their colonial project. Any country that invades another country brings in its own language and literature to be imposed on its subjects. The Aryans did it and brought in the Sanskrit language and literature. The Moghuls did it and brought in Persian and Arabic. The British too did the same.

Macaulay and others brought in English and English education to train a class of interpreters and administrators to help the rulers in their empire building. That was their stated objective but the hidden objective was to demoralise Indian subjects and debunk their language and literature. As pointed out in Unit 9 the language and literature they brought produced some unexpected results.

In Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Caliban, a West Indian, who is seen as a creature outside civilisation, 'on whose nature/nurture can never stick', and whose status is denied by European perceptions, is like the natives of India! Prospero's claim that in exchange he has given Caliban the gift of

language is the prototype of the European civilisation that wants to enlighten the natives. Caliban's response is very significant: 'you taught me language and my profit on't is I know how to curse; the red plague rid you, for learning me your language' is to be read in the context of India's English education. It is to be read as an example of a culture that imposed the language and knowledge on another culture with a view to enlightening the natives! We, Indians, learnt the English language and learned to curse the British in their own tongue! We got so enlightened that we asked for the very freedom that their European knowledge gave us! The Prospero-type is a figure that places himself over the nature of natives and seeks to subdue it by a massive exercise of his will.

The fact that India today is a nation at all happened partly through the British administration and mostly in the course of the anti-colonial movement, which was internally far more democratic than the oppressions of the imperialistic rule. But these happened because of the enlightenment sought by the kind of European knowledge that was imparted through English and English education. Indian nationalism, which ironically owed as much to contact with European knowledge as to the inner urge of the nation to mould its destiny, did not show any real interest to reject English and English education either during the struggle for freedom or even decades after independence.

It can be reasonably said that Indian nationalism did not germinate of its own accord in the soil of the country; it was an exotic growth of the interplay between the seeds sown by European knowledge and the nurture found in the Indian soil. Without the existence of the British regime and the element of foreign imperialism and oppression implicit in that system, the beginnings of Indian nationalism would be difficult to imagine. Before the British came India was ruled by hundreds of feudal lords who had their own territories and fought with each other so frequently to prove their valour and might that India was never a state even during the Moghul period. One can only speculate that had the Moghul empire of the seventeenth century remained intact, the national feeling might have arisen as a result the trade and commercial contacts with the rest of the world; but it is idle to speculate upon what might have happened. The fact was that the British, by a combination of power and administrative ability, did gain control of the subcontinent during the eighteenth and nineteenth century and as it happens in any country subjected to foreign rule, the atmosphere in India was favourable to the growth of national sentiments and English education and European knowledge created a native intelligentsia in whose ranks such ideas found a ready welcome.

12.2 DURING THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

The roots of English education did produce some unexpected reversals as anticipated by some among the rulers. Bentinck, for example, saw danger in the spread of knowledge in India. 'He was desirous of anglicizing them or rather preventing them from forming a homogenous nation, (Basu, 1989, p.65). Sir John Malcolm the biographer of Clive, told the Lord's Committee that 'our Indian subjects might desire from the general diffusion and the eventual abolition of castes, a consciousness of which would naturally incline them to throw off the yoke of a foreign power. He argued:

Our power rests upon the general division of the great communities under the government... while they continue

divided in this manner, no insurrection is likely to shake the stability of our power.

(Parliamentary papers, Vol. 1, 1832)

They perceived the extension of knowledge to be a new source of danger but, at the same time, they wanted to produce cheap clerks and useful subordinates to run the State. It was from considerations of 'enlightened selfishness' the British imparted some sort of education to the 'swarthy' heathens of India. It was unavoidable but the inevitable happened. The tools of enlightenment that were put into the hands of the 'slaves' by the 'benevolent masters' were effectively used by the natives for other purposes—other than those for which it was intended. Certeau in the *Practice Everyday Life* (1984) explains the reversal tactics:

Thus the spectacular conquest of Spanish colonization over the indigenous Indian cultures was diverted from its intended aims by the use made of it; even when they were subjected, indeed when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within—not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in the service of rulers, customs of convictions foreign to the colonization which they could not escape. They metaphorized the dominant order, they made it function in another register.

What Certeau says of 'indigenous Indian Cultures' in America is true of the cultures of the Indian sub-continent. The 'discovery of India' is partly colonial and mostly anti-colonial; the hostility against colonialism brought together regions, religions, linguistic and ethnic groups, which the colonial machine assembled into a State called India—an administrative unit for purposes of ruling convenience; an emotional India that emerged as a 'nation' was brought about by anti-colonialism. The Indian state is certainly a 'legacy of imperialism'.

Starting with Swami Vivekananda who presented India and its spiritualism to the world outside, most of the leaders projected India, its culture and values, its sensibilities and its identity in English. Sir Aurobindo projected Indian spirituality in English; Radhakrishnan presented Indian philosophy in English; Mahatma Gandhi explained his philosophy of non-violence in English. Nehru discovered India in English so that the outside world too can discover it; Tilak, Gokhale, Subash Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Sitaramaiah, Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, and a host of others projected our identity and our quest for freedom in English. Rajaji presented the Indian epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, in English. Creative writers like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali and many others expressed their literary creativity in English. Henry Kissinger, in an interview (*India Today*, Feb. 28, 1985), rightly pointed out: 'India, precisely because it speaks English, is a democracy and all of us know Indians.' We may not agree with the statement that India is a democracy because it speaks English, but, certainly, the world outside knows us because we speak English. India, its heritage, its aspirations, and dreams, and its strengths were effectively presented in English to the outside world by our leaders during the struggle for political freedom. But, *this happened only outside the*

educational system; the educational system continued, to be colonial in character. The educational system failed to cash in on what the independence struggle did with English education and English; the educational system was not decolonized.

It was during India's freedom struggle, English became a second language and not a foreign language. Indians and Indian leaders did not use the English language to learn or express British culture; actually, we used the language to abhor their culture and debunk it. We used the English language to express our own sensibilities and aspiration. The English language became one more tongue to express India's culture and heritage.

12.3 REVERENCE AND ABHORRENCE

Once the late C. Rajagopalachari remarked that the English language was goddess Saraswathi's gift to India, a blessing which Indians were somehow privileged to receive. There are others who think that Indian nationalism is a product of English education; Indians got all their ideas of freedom and democracy from the west through English education. There are still others who think that the British masters somehow gave us a tongue to curse them effectively. All these may be extreme points of view but one can reasonably say that the English education and the English language helped the freedom struggle of India to a large extent; the leaders from various linguistic regions were able to talk to each other and exchange their ideas in English. Our leaders were able to tell the British about our aspirations and about our desire for freedom. We were able to establish proper relations with them.

In other words the colonial rule gave Indians a language with which to talk to one another, and to others in the world. It must be accepted that Indian nationalism and the Renaissance of Arts and Sciences in India are the unexpected reversals of the aims of British education or, at the most, the by-product of English education that provided the roots for questioning colonial authority; Indians subverted the empire through their own language though that was not the intention of the rulers. Obviously it cannot be stated that the tools of enlightenment were put in the hands of the subjects by the masters at the risk of endangering their own position. There is always a difference between the message that is intended and how it is received and used; the gap quite often helps subversion. This was what happened to English and English education during the British period and during the freedom struggle.

12.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALIST DOCTRINES IN INDIA

Early Nationalistic Thought in India

It may be difficult to swallow the fact that it is the foreign hand that prepared the country for the reception of the nationalist dogma; but the truth is it is the foreign education that moulded the content of early nationalist thought.

Look at what some of our own thinkers say:

"One of the most remarkable features of the British rule in India has been the fact that greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings. Of this education is a striking example."

—Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

"Were not the great leaders of the French Revolution, Voltaire and Rousseau, Diderot and Helvetius men more or less imbued with English ideas and sentiments? England has introduced

a revolutionary agent of mighty potency into this country. That revolutionary agent is English education."

—Surendra Nath Banerjea

"The first effect of this unity of a new and quite opposite civilisation was the destruction of much that had no longer the power to live, the deliquescence of much else, a tendency to the devitalisation of the rest. A new activity came in...It gave three needed impulses; it rehabilitated life and awakened the desire of a new creation; it put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideals and urgent necessity of understanding, assimilating and conquering them. The national mind turned a new age on its past culture, re-awoke to its sense and import but also at the same time saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas.

—Sri Aurobindo in *The Renaissance in India*, 1920

Foreign learning and influences actually contributed to the genesis of nationalist doctrines. Hindu cultural nationalism was an outgrowth of the cultural conflict precipitated by the spread of English education among a people whose institutions, customs and traditions differed considerably from those of Europe.

Back in England, there was a lurking fear that spread of education, especially of the European type, among the Indians, would make them challenge the alien rule. Many thought that even the American colonies would not have been so disloyal to the crown had they not been led by an educated class. Edmund Burke had pointed out that the high level of education among the Americans as the cause of their fierce love of freedom. So, the opinion was that 'we had just lost America from our own folly and that it would not do for us to repeat, the same act of folly in regard to India'.

Through out the imperialistic period, the advocate of western education and the teaching of English, drew on the parallels of acculturation from European history: how Greek antiquity was passed on to Rome and Rome civilising the nations of Europe; 16th century Europe regaining its lost classical heritage during the period of the Renaissance, and the European idea of progress developing through the synthesis of Christian ethics and classical humanism. The advocates of Western knowledge were confident of inducing an epicycle of European history in India and the Indian elite shared that belief. The importance attached to English education in midwifing an acculturated elite sprang from a long range imperialistic concern. Charles Travelyan said: "the Indians will, I hope, soon stand in the same position towards us in which we once stood towards the Romans." Macaulay, Trevelyn, Duff and others attached a messianic role to English. The English language itself, the linguistic and literary core of English education, contained the message; the medium was the message.

Thus the content of early Indian political and economical thought was basically derived from English education. The study of English history and political theory indoctrinated a native intelligentsia with ideals and aspirations incompatible with the existing political order in India. Such nations previously had no currency at all in a land of kings, feudal lords, shrines and temples. Quite a few leaders were educated in England itself and foreign learning also contributed to the genesis of non-political nationalist doctrines. The spread of English education among a people whose institutions, customs and traditions differed profoundly from those of Western Europe precipitated a cultural conflict. The study of Sanskrit by Sir William Jones, Max Muller and other European scholars, in a way, showed how Europeans and Hindus were really distant cousins, since both peoples were descendants of the same tribes that once grazed their flocks on the grasslands near the Caspian sea. Their researches revealed the greatness of the Aryan

civilisation that had flourished in upper India; this also appealed to the Hindus, particularly of the educated class and they started dreaming about the superiority of their own Aryan ancestors. Their writings showed a reverence to their ancient racial past and they wanted regeneration of India: They felt that this could be brought about only through the revival of ancient Hindu values and ideals, and not by the adoption of those of the materialistic industrialised Europe. Underneath there was also a sublime disregard for the Mohammedans' influence!

Thus these distinct strands appear in the fabric of early Indian nationalistic thought. One school of thought was deeply influenced by English political and economic doctrines and drew their inspiration from contemporary European nationalism; they were the ones who were under the influence of European education. The anti-school, alarmed by the steady penetration of foreign civilisation throughout the subcontinent, advocated a revival of ancient Hindu culture in order to check the Europeanization of India; they were also English educated. Quite often both these doctrines were expounded by the same group of persons. This apparent paradox reflected the inner conflict which every English educated native experienced during the colonial rule. Most of them vacillated between the two poles of nationalistic thought and this conflict continues even today in Indian life. Even native interpretations of the origin of Indian nationalism mirrors this dualism. Even dissensions in the Congress party are traceable to the difference in the two opposing theories.

The great variety of races, languages and various conflicting interests in the Indian subcontinent were a sufficient safeguard against any attempted unity in the country; but, the tendency of the times is towards increased solidarity. Contemporary India was not what the country had been once, but rather a dismembered and divided branch of a great nation of the past. It is claimed that a word corresponding to the English word patriotism existed in pre-English periods in our languages, but it is doubtful whether it existed in the same sense which European languages attach to it. Bipin Chandra Pal, a Bengali patriot, says

'Our language has, in fact, no word corresponding to the English word 'nation'...And the reason is that our social synthesis practically stopped with the race-idea...We never had, therefore, this nationalist aspiration before'

—Bipin Chandra Pal, *Nationality and empire* (Calcutta, 1916)

Far from being the supreme loyalty, love of the country held a place below the love of religion in the heart of a Hindu. Differences of race and language, of caste, custom, of religion and tradition conspired to keep the various sections of population poles apart. The Bengali, the Malayalee, the Punjabi, the Maratha, and the Tamilians are as much people of different 'countries' or 'nations' as the English, the French, the German or the Italians.

At the same time, one cannot deny the 'sense' of unity and oneness; one encountered a sameness everywhere from Kanya Kumari to Himalayas, with slight differences arising from the fact that people of different tracts followed different codes. But the same classics, the same philosophical writings, the same traditions, and the same Puranas predominated from, one end to the other of the 'Hindu India'; everywhere one found the same substantive civilization. Such sameness proved that the subcontinent was designed by nature to form a grand 'national' unity. The following passage depicts the fundamental unity of the country in terms of its geography:

Nature never destined India to be other than the abode of one nation. The Himalayas, the Indus, the Brahmaputra and the sea clearly demarcate one vast Empire, the continuity of which is scarcely broken up even by the great chain of mountains which run through it. The principal group which inhabit it are the Hindus and Mussulmans, who have promiscuously settled all over the vast country. Disunion was the potent cause which affected the downfall of their supremacy...

One can safely say that Indian patriotism had never been marked by that narrow, fierce political sense characteristic of the European nations. Indian nationalism during the pre-British period expressed itself more in the form an interest in the affairs of the village or a sentimental attachment to the ancestral religion and custom.

Paradoxically enough, English education, the English language and literature, and foreign influences contributed greatly to the genesis of India's cultural nationalism. English education was essentially for foreign instrument and the whole educational system imposed by the British was foreign; the language used as the medium of instruction was foreign; the entire system was meant to introduce the values of a foreign culture to the people of India. Foreign too was Christianity.

This kind of cultural penetration provoked the expected reaction—the revival of cultural nationalism. The impact of European thought upon the collective mind of the educated class and the masses reawakened the spirit of ancient India; it put breath into the bones of Indians and they stood up upon this feet. Western culture and Western thought was blind to the claims of everything else but itself and this made India reassert its vitality through the development of a pan Indian culture.

The study of the English language was attacked on the ground that it had alienated the educated men and women from their own glorious past and had led to the imitation of foreign manners and habits based upon foreign ideas; they had become 'English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect' as envisaged by Macaulay! English education had driven the young people from the arena of their 'national values' and 'national institutions' and they had begun to look upon them as relics of a barbarous people! Indians had been dazzled by the outward show of a materialistic civilization. Some realized that English education only trained people for government service and the country was degenerating; most educated people thought that social gains secured under the British rule had been counteracted by intellectual losses.

Another postulate of India's cultural nationalism was the emphasis upon historic superiority of the Aryan culture. Though this later created some reaction in some parts of the country like Tamil Nadu that glorifies its Dravidian culture, during the freedom struggle, Indian cultural nationalism glorified the Golden Age of the Vedic period. It was argued that research had proved that there was a close link between the Greeks, Romans and the Indo-Aryan people; ancient India was a great, civilized nation and she was the mother of philosophy, science and art; it was a land of heroes and heroism, a land of saints who spent their lives in devotion. The recollections of the past offered immense consolation to patriotic minds and hearts and served as a morale booster. The new cultural nationalism emphasised the importance of the cultural rather than the material and the material poverty was attributed to the long subjection to foreign rule; the degeneration of spiritual and cultural aspects was emphasised. So, they emphasised the restoration of the ancient culture, including the revival of the Sanskrit language and literature. The new nationalism wanted the restoration of the old values and the revival of the traditional morality and religious principles. Instead of seeking alien sources, the nationalists argued that we should fall back upon the precepts of our culture that are worthy of our grand old history. The conception of India as the 'Mother land' represented an effort to develop a religious basis for nationalism, on the assumption that religious sentiments of Indians, particularly the Hindus, was far more easy to arouse than the abstract national feeling.

Check your progress

1. Indian nationalist doctrines are the by product of English education and the reaction to it.
2. India, though was never united as a nation, had cultural similarities among the various regions.

3. English education and the English language and literature brought in a number of new Western ideas and the educated class learnt all these ideas as part of their education. Most of them, though initially, imitated Englishmen, ultimately realised the consequences of the Western system and returned to the idea of reviving of old Hindu values.
4. India's cultural nationalism is based on an attempt to revive the old values rejecting Western values and culture!
5. English became a catalytic agent during the freedom struggle. (All read 11.5 and 11.9 again).
6. It is generally said that Indian nationalism and the notion of a nation are the products of Western knowledge and English education. Before the British rule India was divided into different kingdoms that were ruled by various kings and feudal lords who were always fighting among themselves. Even during the Moghul period India was not a unified nation.
7. The British administrators for the sake of their administrative convenience and to establish their empire unified India. The British rule and the anti colonial movement brought about the Indian nation. English education and the medium through which it was spread, the English language, brought in western knowledge and the educated Indians used their knowledge to subvert the empire.
8. In addition the discovery of Sanskrit and the glory of the ancient Aryan civilization also brought about the Indian nationalistic movement. These western notions of Renaissance and the glory of the Aryan civilisation appeared to be contradictory, they worked hand in hand to bring about Indian nationalism.

12.5 INDIA'S ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

Indian economic nationalism is the result of the realisation that India was not really prosperous under the British rule owing to the ruin of her manufactures, and the passing of economic and financial control into the hands of the British capitalists. In addition to the *political* slavery, the country is in *economic and industrial slavery* was the theme of the nationalists. The drain of Indian wealth into England without any measures to counter act that loss was the real cause of India's poverty; the country was dependent on foreign imports for every article of luxury and comfort. Even the industries and manufacturers for which raw materials existed were monopolised by British Capitalists. The case of cotton production in India which was adding to English wealth without improving the condition of the people is just an example. The measure of a country's wealth, argued the nationalists, lay in its capacity to produce the necessities of life and to export articles of commerce.

The nationalists held that India had once been economically a very prosperous country and possessed great stores of wealth. The Indians were a maritime and commercial nation; they had ploughed the seas that extended from Egypt to China, and from the Mozambique to the Indian Ocean. They were the first to develop the great spice trade, and they had carried the valuable cargos which the Egyptians employed in preserving their mummies and the Romans in burning their dead; they had trade links with Burmese and Malays and had founded colonies in Java. India had been a great manufacturing nation. History demonstrated, in addition to being an agricultural country, Indians were at one time manufactures because they vowed and worked and manufactured for others.

The nationalists reached the conclusion that India's decline of economic life was due to foreign occupation. The Britishers were doing nothing to improve the economic condition of the people.

that the true wealth of India consisted of its arts, industries and agriculture. They advocated the growth of technical education and debunked the clerk producing liberal education.

12.6 INDIA'S POLITICAL NATIONALISM

India's political Nationalism proceeded upon the assumption that the races and people of India could unite upon the basis of common devotion to political ideologies, since the great common point for unification could not be language, since there was no common religion or social organization in a land of great diversity in social customs. The only unifying factor could be political ideology. Gandhiji's denunciation of the Empire as a Satonic creation was the starting point. It was felt that the solution was not in armed rebellion but in constitutional agitation for the rights of Indians. Indian Nationalists felt that Indian unity was not an impossible dream and proposed the concept of "a national brotherhood". Indians formed several associations throughout the country to bring about India's unification. They also argued that Indians should take advantage of the 'favourable circumstances' that the British rule had brought about to unite the Indian people—the impact of European education and the common language English. What was considered Utopian became a reality—thanks to the British rule and English education. In a way, the hand of the foreigner prepared the country for national unity and the reception of nationalist dogma.

The English educated class were in the forefront of the nationalist movement. Mutual dislike of the British bureaucracy brought about the much desired unity among them. Among educated Indians, as it is very evident, the notion of an Indian nationality covering the entire country crystallised and assumed the expression in the congress movement. A common language for a common cause was given partly by English education and partly by a reaction to it.

12.7 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATED CLASS IN THE INDIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Schooled in a foreign culture, speaking a foreign tongue when occasion demanded, indoctrinated with foreign political, social and economic concepts and inspired by the dream of the ancient glory of the Aryan civilization, the native intelligentsia developed individual and collective aspirations very different from those envisaged by Macaulay and company. Instead of being the Babus of the Anglo Indian administration as Grant, Macaulay and Trevelyan had prophesied, educated Indians became vigorous competitors of the British bureaucracy. Instead of serving as henchmen of British Imperialism they turned into their bitterest critics. Instead of begging for the benevolence of the rulers they found fault with those in authority and raised the cry of "India for the Indians", "Quit India", etc; they denounced the racial prejudices of the white Europeans and started building their own political organization. Political agitations began to bear fruit in the form of more and more native recruits, both non-violent and violent. All these culminated in the first Indian National Congress at Poona and became the voice of India.

The educated Indian class became considerable in number and emerged as a group in the late 19th century and 20th century. Many partly educated Indian natives had a miserable existence as quill drivers in the business houses and Government offices of the larger towns in India; lacking social positions or property unable to rise above the status of petty clerks. They formed a kind of rootless educated proletariat whose dissatisfaction with their lot was simmering; their intellectual superiors, the educated class, who had degrees from a British university or one of the Indian Universities had also nursed a grievance against haughty foreigners who monopolised all highly paid posts in the Government services. Mutual dislike of the Anglo Indian bureaucracy brought about the alliance; the oppressive measures of British imperialism cemented the various groups. Therefore it was not hard to appeal to the vast majority of Indians with the slogan

"India for the Indians". Political agitations began to bear fruit in the form of more and more native recruits. English or any Indian language or any combination of languages worked in the charged situation. Many English newspapers advocated Indian nationalism. Associations like Indian Association, The Madras Mahajana Sabha, The Bombay Presidency Association and such other associations sprang up all over the country. In English and vernacular press they articulated their ideas and the print media became an instrument of propaganda by means of which public opinion in India in accordance with the interests and views of the educated community. Participation in an organised movement was therefore the logical step for the educated community. The Congress Movement gathered headway all groups—Hindus, Muslims, Hindu rulers, petty traders, artisans and peasants—joined the bandwagon. For a long time the Congress party had its base mostly in the urban areas; like English education Indian nationalism was an urban phenomenon without much meaning to the peasantry and agriculturists in a land of villages and agriculture. The essential weakness of the nationalistic movement was its urban base and English education; when the movement became a mass movement, particularly after the World Wars, English played no part in its success. The Indian languages played a crucial role in the mass movement.

One can reasonably argue that other than the English language and English education no other agency could have performed this nationalistic function; certainly not religion, not indigenous learning, not the traditional forms of social organizations, nor all the three combined together could have done so. A common language for a common religion or anything approaching it did not exist in the Indian subcontinent; some common factor was necessary in order to bring together the people of different provinces speaking different languages, and lacking any strong tradition of group action for political ends. English education and the English language fulfilled such an integrating function not only in the initial stages but also in the later stages. Thus English has played a major role in the growth of Indian nationalism.

Even today English remains as the strongest communicative medium of our education; India is an agricultural country and English is not the language of agriculture but English is the medium of instruction in our agricultural universities. English is the language of our IIT's, engineering colleges, medical colleges and business schools though it is not the language of the people in their day to day transaction. English has forged India together and it is taking us into the new Information Age. If we cannot replace this communicative medium—evidently we cannot do so for a long time to come—we should stop its disintegration because without proper quality control, in a large country like India, it is bound to disintegrate and become a Pidgin or a Creole. If however we can develop the Indian languages and reduce the supremacy of English by the processes of translation, transformation and transfusion, then we may hope to see our dream come true.

12.8 LET'S SUM UP

1. The British rulers had their own plan intentions, aims and objectives in introducing English education and the English language and literature and also the lurking fear, that the natives might get enlightened and revolt against them. And that happened during the freedom struggle.
2. During the freedom struggle English education gave new ideas and the English language brought leaders from various regions together; the print media too helped India's freedom struggle.
3. India's cultural, economic and political nationalism is partly due to English

education and mostly due to the reaction against it. The English educated class built up the nationalist movement.

4. The English language played a crucial role in the unification of India which never had a common language before. Our leaders came together and told the British about our national aspirations in English, a language that they understood.
5. In the absence of any common language or religion or social traditions to imitate common political action in the Indian subcontinent, English played a major linking role in bringing various groups together. It served as the common language of the educated class.
6. The educated Indians were either educated in a foreign country or in an Indian university. They were frustrated with imperialistic attitude of the British bureaucrats. The semi-educated people were rotting as clerks in government offices and business houses mostly in the urban areas. Both these groups had only an urban base. They came together to forge an alliance against the British and the emotional appeal brought together many groups.
7. The English press in India also played a major role in building up the nationalistic movement. The English press too had its bases only in the urban areas. To a large extent the nationalistic movement because of its urban base was confined to the urban areas and only at a later stage it became a mass movement; when it became a mass movement English did not play any role in the freedom struggle.

12.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Write a note on English education and the growth of Indian nationalism. (Hints—English introduced to enlighten natives educated Indians—used their enlightenment for a different purpose—taught me how to curse. Caliban—India a feudal land—sub continent not unified—unifying factor English education. See 12.2 and 12.3)

2. 'Indians had both reverence and abhorrence for the English language and English education'—comment.

English is the gift—unifying factor—no common language—English education brought about Babu class—same time gave new perspectives—Colonial rule gave advantages and disadvantage—initial reaction—long term realisation—so both (See 12.4)

3. Trace the early nationalistic thought in India.

Hints—English education a blessing in disguise—it gave a new insight new perspective—modern knowledge, ideas—educated class—British feared—what Americans did Indians will do—comparison Rome and Europe—another school of thought—discovery of Sanskrit—glorification of Aryan civilization—both influenced by Western education. (See 12.5)

4. Trace the development of nationalist doctrines in India. India not unified—but nature meant it to be one country—no words for 'patriotism', 'nation'—diversity but unity.

British rule—of communicative systems and railways—English educated class
Growth of cultural nationalism—action and reaction—past glory of India—economic exploitation—political unity—how English created a common platform.

(See 12.5, 12.6, and 12.7).

5. What is the role of the educated class in the Indian Nationalist Movement?

Hints—Indian educated class educated in a foreign language—followed foreign ideas—brought up in received theories, knowledge—urban based—initial stages no mass movement—educated and semi-educated came together—emotional appeal—role of the press—Indian English press urban based—when became mass movement English played marginal role. (See 12.8)

6. Do you think that English functions as a unifying factor even in contemporary India?
7. Do you think that without the British rule, English education and the English language India would not have become a nation? Give reasons for your answer.

BRAOU

BLOCK IV: THE IDENTITY PHASE

Introduction

The fourth block of four units on this course is on the identity phase of English in India. This block outlines the position of English in India during the second half of the twentieth century. The four units outline how a full blown bureaucratic network and an institutionalised education within the framework of the Macaulay's system of education got well entrenched in India. After an initial resistance to English as the language of the ruler, English resisted all attempts to drive it out from India. A number of committees and commissions wrote all the reports in English; All of them recommended more or less something similar—the importance of mother tongue education and the importance of English. English got institutionalised in India during this period.

Dates to remember.

Education

1947	The Ministry of Education was constituted in Delhi.
1948	University Education Commission with Dr. Radhakrishnan as its Chairman (The Commission included three foreigners: Sir James Duff from Durham and Directors Morgan and Tigret from the USA); the Commission recommended (report submitted in 1951) that Hindi be made the medium of instruction; English to continue.
1950	Constitution grants English the status of associate official language (English to be used in this capacity till January 26, 1965); Article 351 of the Constitution enjoins the Indian Union to promote and spread Hindi.
1951	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, established.
1952–3	Secondary Education Commission (Chairman: Dr. Mudaliar); recommended that English and Hindi be introduced at the middle school level but not simultaneously. However, the medium of instruction be the regional language/mother tongue till secondary school level.
1953	University Grants Commission (UGC) formed; autonomous status granted by the Parliament in 1956.
1955	Indian Council for Secondary Education formed.
1956	Report of Official Language Commission; notes that literacy in English constitutes 6.41 per cent of total literacy, and 1.06 per cent of that of total population; recognizes the value of English as 'pipeline' within the country and 'window' to the rest of the world; recommends its continuation without any restrictions for all or any official purpose of the Union.

1957	Kunzru Committee Report; set up by the newly formed UGC; recommends the following: (i) the change from English to an Indian language as the medium of instruction at the university level should not be hastened; (ii) even when a change in the medium of instruction is made, English should continue to be studied by all university students; (iii) the teaching of English should be given special attention in the pre-university class (a three-year degree course was proposed in place of the four-year undergraduate course); (iv) the teachings of English literatures should be related to the study of Indian literatures in order to promote critical thinking and writing in Indian languages; and (v) English be retained as a properly studied second language at the university level.
1958	Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, established with the co-operation of the British Council and the Ford Foundation.
1960	Committee of Experts (Chairman: G.C. Banarjee) set up by UGC to examine issues involved in the teaching of English; a Central Hindi Directorate set up for evolving Hindi terminology, preparing dictionaries, etc.
1961	National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) formed; Report of Working Group set up by UGC regarding the switch-over from English to an Indian language as the medium of instruction; recommends that the switch-over should not be hastened and the English should be retained as the alternative medium; Conference of Chief Ministers recommended the three language formula at school level: (a) Regional language, or mother tongue if different from regional language; (b) Hindi, or any other Indian language in Hindi speaking areas; (c) English, or any other European language.
1961-2	Emotional Integration Committee (Chairman: Dr. Sampurnanand); recommended that 'the two link languages—English and Hindi—should be effectively taught at university level so that conditions of emotional and intellectual isolation are not created'.
1963	Official Language Act. English to continue as associate official language even after 1965 without any time limit.
1964-6	Indian Education Commission (Chairman: Dr. Kothari); confirms the three languages formula; a choice between Hindi and English allowed and whichever was not chosen had to be taken at the higher secondary level; recommends the use of regional languages as the media of instruction; use of English to continue as 'library language; recommends special units to be set up for teaching it as literature; English to be continued as the medium of instruction at university level'.
1967	Official Languages Amendment Bill gives statutory recognition to the continued use of English as long as the non-Hindi speaking people do not want a change; compulsory knowledge of Hindi not required for the selection of candidates for Union services and posts; non-Hindi speaking persons would be required to know English; English translations of all official communications in Hindi to be attached. Report on Study of English in India by the Study Group set up by the Ministry of Education (Chairman: V.K. Gokak); endorses three language formula; English to be studied at the college level.
1968	National Policy on Education; embodies recommendations of Kothari Commission Report; the study of regional languages to be encouraged and provision made for textbooks; the study of English to continue as alternative language and as the medium of instruction at higher levels.

1976	Constitutional amendment places education on Concurrent List.
1979	Draft National Policy on Education; the three language formula to be implemented at the secondary stage in the entire country; it includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably a South Indian language, in addition to Hindi in Hindi speaking States, and of Hindi in addition to the regional language and English in non-Hindi speaking States; the target set for implementing the new education policy envisaged in the 1979 draft was 1986-87.
1986	National Policy on Education and Plan of Action (NEP & POE); it reviewed the 1968 National Policy and recommended a 'dynamic' approach; recommended the following: consolidation and expansion of institutions; the development of autonomous colleges and departments; the redesigning of courses; the training of teachers through Academic Staff Colleges; delinking degree requirement for employment; development of English Language Training institutions; establishment of Navodaya Vidyalayas in rural areas for promoting excellence; no mention of medium of instruction in the chapter on higher education; suggests more co-ordination among agencies, mobility and vocationalization.
1989	According to the University Handbook of 1989, there were 120 universities, 23 Deemed universities and 26 agricultural universities; these 169 universities employed 234 thousand teachers for teaching and research; the enrolment of students for degrees and diplomas is 3.58 million.
1990	Acharya Ramamurti Commission Report; the Commission was set up to review NPE & POA; endorses the recommendations of 1986 report and the three language formula; recommends a further use of technology for language development; suggests the development of Hindi, Sanskrit, foreign languages, and English, and merging of institutions concerned with the planning and implementation of language teaching.

Print-Media, Radio and Television

Publication of newspapers at the end of 1988

	<i>Total output</i>	<i>Output in Hindi</i>	<i>Output in English</i>
Dailies	2,281	888	190
Tri/Bi Weeklies	134	39	17
Weeklies	7,813	3,756	509
Fortnightlies	3,485	1,451	407
Monthlies	8,369	1,773	1,832
Quarterlies	2,227	301	904
Annals	264	18	109
Others	963	96	409
Total	25,536	8,222	4,458

(Above one third of published books and one fifth of all periodicals are in English).

— Most of the English newspapers are published from urban centres and their sale is in urban centres and semi-urban places.

- According to 1981 Census the proportion of the urban population to the total is 23.31 per cent and the rural population constitutes 76.69 per cent of the total.

News Agencies

Press Trust of India (PTI)—established on August 27, 1947.

United News of India (UNI)—established on November 10, 1959; its Indian language news service was started in May 1982. Two other agencies are also mentioned in the records—Samachar Bharati and Hindustan Samachar; the focus of factual information is on PTI and UNI.

Radio: Started in 1927 and named AIR in 1936; called 'Akashvani' in 1957.

Television: Started from Delhi in 1959 and acquired the name 'Doordarshan'.

(The language of radio and TV is not predominantly English; Hindi and other Indian languages are more prominently used by the electronic media).

Literacy and proficiency in English: Some statistics

Overall literacy rate: 36.23 per cent of the population (1981 Census Report)

Literacy rate in English: 6.41 per cent

Literacy in English of total population: 1.06 per cent (Report of Official Language Commission 1956)

Student enrolment

Higher education: 3.1 million in 1987-8

Number of universities: 157; deemed 19

Number of colleges: 8856 in 1986-7

UNIT 13 - SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 English after independence
- 13.2 Committees and Commissions
- 13.3 Let's sum up
- 13.4 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

13.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the developments in English education in post-independence India.
- give you an idea of the growing importance of English during the second half of the 20th century.
- make you think about the fate of Indian languages in post-independence India.

13.1 ENGLISH AFTER INDEPENDENCE

India is a multi-lingual country; it has 18 officially recognized languages—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi (with various dialects), Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Nepali, Konkani, and Manipuri (the last three were added to the list in 1992).

India never had a common language since it was not a politically unified country (like it is today) before the British colonial rule. Sanskrit was a common language of the subcontinent but it was the language of the learned class and not of the common people. English today, like Sanskrit in the past, has become a *lingua franca* or a sort of **link language**, but again restricted to the English-educated urban class and not of the rural masses. Some people say that English is a link language but it does not link the rural people; at best it gives all language groups in India a common disadvantage! It has become the 'official, associate, additional' language. India has always had the problem of a common language.

Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1956, during the parliament discussion on the Report of the States Reorganization Commission:

‘I recognize that the language of the people is a vital matter for their development whether it is education, administration, or any other matter. But there is a distinction between developing the language to the fullest extent and their passion for building up a wall around a linguistic area and calling it a burden. I completely accept the statement that people cannot really grow except through their language, but it does not follow that in order to make their language grow, a barrier must be erected between them and others.’

Prime Minister Nehru ‘declared’ that it was government’s policy to make India free of English

within a generation; but he declared again:

...for an indefinite period—I do not know how long—I should have, I would have English as an associate, additional language which can be used, not because of facilities and all that, but because I do not wish the people of non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advance are closed to them because they are forced to correspond—the government, I mean—in the Hindi language. They can correspond in English. So, I would have it as an alternative language as long as people require it and the decision for that, I would leave not to Hindi-knowing people, but to non-Hindi knowing people.

(Speech delivered on August 7, 1959)

Not only English continues as the language of administration and judiciary but also the colonial pattern of education and English education; English continues to be the medium of instruction in our universities and colleges and the craze for learning English is growing day by day.

In post-independence India, there has been no clarity regarding the goals of education or educational planning, in general, and English education and English teaching, in particular. Education has been placed on the 'Concurrent List', making it the responsibility of both the Central and State governments. The educational system has been meddled with so many times that it is almost out of shape now. We are not clear about many of the basic issues in language education; the same old issues are talked about again and again.

- (a) What should be the medium of instruction at various stages—primary, secondary, tertiary, and higher levels?
- (b) When is English to be introduced? Should it be compulsory or optional?
- (c) What other languages are to be taught, for what purpose, for how long, and what is the level of achievement to be expected in each language?
- (d) What kind of teaching and testing materials are to be used and who will produce such materials?
- (e) Elementary education for the masses or higher education for the upper class—which one should be given priority?
- (f) What kind of infrastructure is to be built up for language education?
- (g) Indian or Western knowledge—which is to be emphasized?

Check Your Progress

1. English was recognized as the official associate language.
2. There was an initial resistance to the language of the rulers to be continued even after independence but English became necessary in view of the situation in the non-Hindi speaking areas.
3. English continued to grow as the language of administration, judiciary and education since Indian languages got crippled during the British rule.
4. A number of very important issues were taken up for clarification and the result was the appointment of more committees and commissions.

13.2 COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

Committees and Commissions have produced 'loud reports' with hardly any results! There are no clear-cut directions or coordination among the agencies that are to implement the policies—even the major recommendations of specialist bodies.

For example, the **University Education Commission** (1950) says that English has 'become so much a part of our national habit' but, in the same breath, points out that the use of English has 'divided the people into two nations, the few who govern and the many who are governed, the one unable to talk the language of the other, and mutually uncomprehending, which is a negation of democracy'. It is interesting to note that after political independence, the University Education Commission (popularly known as the Radhakrishnan Commission) was appointed first (towards the end of 1948), the Committee on Primary Education only in 1951, and the Secondary Education Commission in 1952!

It is interesting to note that most of the recommendations found in the Reports of the Committees written *after* 1947 are found in the Reports of the Committees written *before* 1947! The Indian Education Commission (1882–83), also called the Hunter Commission, made recommendations for the improvement of primary and secondary education; the Calcutta University Commission (1919) recommended that (a) Intermediate classes be separated from universities and a curriculum spreading over three years be prescribed for the degree of B.A. (i.e. the present day 2 + 3 formula!); (b) the mother tongue be used as the medium of instruction in Intermediate Colleges and systematic efforts be made to promote the serious study of vernaculars in secondary schools, intermediate colleges and in universities. The Abbot-Wood Report (1936–37) pleaded for a phase of consolidation rather than expansion and emphasized quality rather than numbers. It also recommended:

- (a) the education of children in primary schools be based more upon natural interests and activities and *less upon book learning*,
- (b) the curriculum of the *rural* middle school be closely related to the *environment of the children*,
- (c) the mother tongue, as far as possible, be *the medium of instruction through the high school stage*, but English be a compulsory language for all pupils at this stage,
- (d) *the teaching of English be made more realistic*.

The **Sargent Committee** (1944) recommended that a system of universal, compulsory, and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen be implemented, and that '*the medium of instruction be the mother tongue of the pupils*'. The committee also recommended the *need for training teachers* and recommended the starting of new training colleges; it also suggested *refresher* courses for all teachers, particularly for those in remote *rural areas*.

More or less the same or similar recommendations are found in the reports submitted by the committees and commissions in 'free' India.

The University Education Commission headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan conceived of the role of university education in broad, universalist terms (emphasizing goals like the awakening of the innate ability of men and women 'to live the life of the soul by developing wisdom', training for self-development and the development of values like 'fearlessness of mind, strength of conscience and integrity of purpose') rather than specifying the goals in relation to the immediate socio-political, economic and linguistic contexts in post-independence India. The Commission did not go into details, contenting itself with general, often vague, formulations.

For example, with regard to the medium of instruction, the Commission said

For the medium of instruction for higher education, English be replaced as early as practicable by an Indian language which cannot be Sanskrit on account of vital difficulties.

That this 'Indian language' should be Hindi was not made explicit though the Commission took it that Hindi would be the federal language of the union. The Commission, however, recommended that English should continue to be studied in high schools and universities in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of ever growing knowledge. Another example of the Commission's failure to go into details is that while recommending that pupils at the higher secondary and university stages be conversant with three languages—the regional language, the federal language, and English (the last one, in order to acquire the ability to read books)—it did not examine the question of different learning loads; the load, obviously, would be lighter in universities where the regional language was the same as the federal language. With regard to women's education, the Commission merely said, "Women students in general should be helped to see their normal place in a normal society, both as citizens and as women and to prepare for it. College programmes should be so designed that it will be possible for them to do so". How it has to be done is not specified!

The **Secondary Education Commission**, also known as the Mudaliar Commission, dealt with methods of teaching and with evaluation and the examination system. The Commission's recommendations, though they deal with the evaluation of all subjects, have particular relevance for the study of English too. This is what it says about methods:

Any method, good or bad, links up the teacher and his pupils into an organic relationship with constant mutual interaction. It reacts not only on the minds of students but on their entire personality, their standards of work and judgment, their intellectual and emotional equipment, their attitudes and values. Good methods which are psychologically and socially sound may raise the whole quality of their life, bad methods may debase it.

Every teacher and educationalist knows that even the best curriculum and the most perfect syllabus remain dead unless quickened with life by the right methods of teaching and the right kind of teachers.

The Commission made its views even more specific:

The emphasis in teaching should shift from verbalism and memorization to learning through purposeful, concrete and realistic situations, and for this purpose the principles of 'Activity Method' and 'Project Method' should be assimilated in school practice...

A well-thought out attempt should be made to adapt methods of instruction to the needs of individual students as much as possible so that dull, average and bright students may all have a chance to progress at their own pace.

The Commission also recommended the following:

The number of examinations should be reduced and the element of subjectivity in the essay-type tests should be minimized by introducing objective tests.

The number of boys to be admitted to any class should be 30 and the maximum should not in any case exceed 40; the optimum number in the whole school should be 500 while the maximum should not exceed 750.

(Ironically, both the number of examinations and the number of students in our schools and colleges have increased!)

On the matter of textbooks, the Commission pointed out:

Single textbooks should not be presented for every subject of study, but a reasonable number of books which satisfy the standards laid down should be recommended, leaving the choice to the schools concerned. In the case of languages, however, definite textbooks should be presented for each class to ensure proper gradation.

The **Kothari Commission** (the sixth commission to submit recommendation on education in free India) reiterated the three-language formula recommended by the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961. This meant:

- (a) the regional language, or the mother tongue where it is different from the regional language,
- (b) Hindi or any other Indian language in Hindi-speaking areas, and
- (c) English, or any other European language.

The main intention of the three-language formula was to make the load of language learning equal in all parts of the country and to achieve national integration. But it was, to say the least, an unrealistic formula from the educational point of view since it ignored both the lack of motivation among students in the Hindi-speaking North to learn any other Indian language and (perhaps, consequent on this) the continuing *political* opposition in Tamil Nadu to the introduction (or imposition as it is viewed) of Hindi. No wonder the three-language formula was not uniformly adopted, at any rate not in areas where it mattered most. In some states like Tamil Nadu it became a two-language formula and in some states in practice, it was a one-language formula!

The Kothari Commission said that English should continue as a library language and as a channel of international communication and that a reasonable degree of proficiency in English was to be stipulated as essential for the award of a degree. With regard to the study of English, the Commission made two important points: (a) English should be the medium of instruction in all major universities and (b) special units should be set up for teaching English as a language skill, as distinct from teaching it as literature. This evidently was in view of the emphasis on English as a library language and as a vehicle of international communication.

The Kothari Commission also specified how the three-language formula is to be implemented. Only the regional language is to be taught from Class I to IV; two languages are to be taught from Class V to VII (one of them being the regional language and the other language either English or Hindi); three languages are to be taught from Class VIII to X—the regional language, Hindi and English. Under this formula, a student, if he/she so chooses, can study English only for three years. The Commission also gave a plan for two levels of English teaching and learning:

- (a) English for those who opt for it from Class V (i.e. for six years),
- (b) English for those who opt for it from Class VIII (i.e. for three years).

In practice, however, different States in India start English in different classes in government schools. In some States it is introduced in Class III and in some in Class V or VI; in some States it is compulsory and examinable and in some it is optional. Education being on the 'Concurrent List', States have the freedom to take decisions which are based on political compulsions.

13.3 LET'S SUM UP

1. English became the official associate language after independence, it has come to stay.
2. Hindi was declared the link language but the non-Hindi speaking areas resisted this move. So, English was declared as an 'official, associate language' for an indefinite period.
3. At the ground level English education and English medium educational institutions multiplied many times and there was no way of stopping the spread of English.
4. Commissions recommended that medium of institution to be the mother tongue but the marked forces were in favour of English.
5. The colonial rule had crippled Indian languages and they were not equipped to take over from English.
6. The media and the global market helped the expansion of English.
7. English in India got a separate identity that favoured English and English got institutionalized.

13.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Why was English accepted as the official, associate language in free India? (see 13.2)
2. What were the issues that were always talked about in the field of education in India?
3. Name some of the important commissions and committees that were appointed to examine issues in the field of education.
4. 'Most of the recommendations made by committees appointed after independence were also found in the committee reports written before independence'—Comment.
5. Hunter Commission—Calcutta Commission the Abbot-Wood report—the Sargent committee—recommended the importance of the mother tongue—later committee say the same thing. Do you agree? (See 13.3)

UNIT 14 - COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS: I

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 University Education Commission (1948-49)
- 14.2 Committee on Primary Education(1951)
- 14.3 Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)
- 14.4 Let's sum up
- 14.5 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers.

14.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make the students read the major recommendations of some of the important committees appointed during the post independence period.
- make the students aware of the recommendations of three important committees (a) University Education Commission (1948-49) (b) Committee on Primary Education (1951), and (c) Secondary Education Commission (1952-53).

14.1 UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMISSION (1948-49)

After independence the Government of India appointed the University Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a distinguished scholar and philosopher, who later became the President of India. The commission was appointed to report on university education in India and suggest improvements to suit the conditions in free India. It submitted its report in August 1949.

Dr. Radhakrishnan being a great philosopher outlined the aims of university education in terms of idealistic terms. He recommended a radical change of spirits and visualized universities as the pioneers of civilization and sanctuaries of inner life. He wanted intellectual adventure, wisdom and knowledge, love for higher values of life and training for leadership so that universities can cultivate love for higher values of life and the cultural unity of India. He also recommended the cultivation of national sentiments and a critical study of the values imported by the West.

The major recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission are given below

Major Recommendations

- 1 **Aims of education.** (i) To teach that life has a meaning. (ii) To awaken the innate ability and to live the life of soul by developing wisdom. (iii) To acquaint with the social philosophy which should govern all our institutions, educational as well as economic and political. (iv) To train for democracy. (v) To train for self-development. (vi) To develop certain values like fearlessness of mind, strength of conscience and integrity of purpose (vii) To acquaint with cultural heritage for its regeneration. (viii) To enable to know that education is a life long process. (ix) To develop understanding of the present as well as of the past. (x) To impart vocational and professional training.

2. **Teaching staff.** There should be four classes of teachers long last Professors, Readers, Lecturers and Instructors. Promotion from one category to another to be solely on grounds of merit.
3. **Standard of teaching.** (a) The standard of admission to the university course should correspond to that of the Intermediate examination i.e. after, the completion of 12 years of study at a school and in the Intermediate college. (b) To avoid overcrowding at universities and colleges, the maximum number in the arts and science faculties of a teaching university be fixed at 3,000 and in affiliated college at 1,500. (c) The number of working days be substantially increased to ensure a minimum of 180 in the year, exclusive of examination days.
4. **Courses of study.** Without unnecessary delay the principles and practices of general education be introduced, so as to correct the extreme specialization which is now common in our Intermediate and degree programmes.
5. **Postgraduate training and research.** (a) A Ph. D. student should not become a narrow specialist, but his grasp of his subject should be characterized both by breadth and depth. (b) University teachers should give the community punctuality, efficiency and devotion to duty in relation to their teaching work, and new ideas and newer methods in relation to their research work.
6. **Professional education.** (a) *Agriculture.* The study of agriculture in primary, secondary and higher education be given high priority in national economic planning. So far as is feasible, agricultural education be given a rural setting. (b) *Commerce.* A commerce student should be given opportunities for practical work in three or four different kinds of firms. (c) *Education.* The course be remodelled and more time given to school practice and more weight given to practice in assessing the students' performances. (d) *Engineering and technology.* The number of engineering schools different grades be increased particularly for training of grades 4 5 (foremen, craftsmen, draftsmen, overseers, etc.)

In establishing new engineering colleges or institutes there should be fresh, critical inquiry as to the types of engineering service needed in India. Uncritical repetition and imitation of existing institutions here and abroad should be avoided. (e) *Law.* A three-year degree course be offered in special legal subjects. Students pursuing degree courses in law shall not be permitted to carry other degree courses simultaneously except in a few instances where advanced students have proved their interest and are studying related subjects in law and some other fields. (f) *Medicine.* The maximum number of admission to a medical college be 100, provided the staff and equipment for that number are available.

7. **Religious education.** (a) All educational institutions should start work with a few minutes for silent meditation. (b) In the first year lives of the great religious leaders like Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Jesus, Samkara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Mohammad, Kabir, Nanak, Gandhi be taught. (c) In the second year some selections of a universalist character from the scriptures of the world be studied. (d) In the third year, the central problems of the philosophy of religion be considered.
8. **Medium of instruction.** (a) The federal language be developed through the assimilation of words from various sources and the retention of words which have already entered Indian languages from different sources. (b) International technical and scientific terminology be adopted, the borrowed words be properly assimilated. (c) For the medium of instruction for higher education English be replaced

as early as practicable by an Indian language which cannot be Sanskrit on account of vital difficulties. (d) (i) Pupils at the higher secondary and university stages be made conversant with three languages—the regional language the federal language and English (the last one in order to acquire the ability to read books in English); and (ii) For the federal language one script, Devanagari, be employed and some of its defects be removed. (e) English be studied in high schools and in the universities in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of ever growing knowledge.

9. **Examinations.** (a) A university degree should not be required for Government administrative services. Special State examination for recruitment to the various services should be organized. (b) No credit is given, at present for class-work courses except sometimes in the case of practical work. Such credit should be given. (c) Three years will be involved for the first degree. (d) The standards for success at the examination should as far as possible, be uniform in the various universities and should be raised. We suggest that a candidate should get 70 per cent or more marks to secure a first class, 55 per cent to 69 per cent for a second and at least 40 per cent for a third.
10. **Students, their activities and, welfare.** (a) Two years of physical education be required for all students, men and women, except those who are physically unfit or who are in the National Cadet Corps. (b) Hostels be constructed in blocks of not more than fifty students per block, with common rooms and dining halls for four or five blocks. (c) University unions should be as free as possible from political activities. (d) An Advisory Board of Student Welfare be organized in universities which do not have such a body.
11. **Women's education** (a) Women students in general should be helped to see their normal place in a normal society, both as citizens and as women, and to prepare for it. College programmes should be so designed that it will be possible for them to do so. (b) Standards of courtesy and social responsibility should be emphasized on the part of men in mixed colleges.
12. **Constitution and control.** (a) University education be placed on the concurrent List. (b) The concern of the Central Government with the universities be with regard to finance, coordination of facilities in special subjects, adoption of national policies, ensuring minimum standards of efficient administration and liaison between universities and national research laboratories and scientific surveys, etc.
13. **Finance.** The University Grants Commission be set up for allocation of grants.
14. **Rural universities.** Special attention be paid to the development of higher education in rural areas.

14.2 COMMITTEE ON PRIMARY EDUCATION (1951)

It is interesting to note that following the British pattern, the committee on University Education was appointed first in free India and the committee on Primary Education was appointed only later in 1951. Earlier in 1944 the Sargent Committee Report had recommended that State governments take over all educational powers for efficient administration. This raised questions regarding State governments and local bodies in respect of administration of Elementary Education. So the government of India appointed a committee on Primary Education under the Chairmanship of Mr. B. G. Kher the then chief-minister of Bombay. The committee recommended mostly administrative measures and creation of educational bodies in small municipi-

palities and Panchayats. It recommended the division of authority on a functional basis-on the basis of the local bodies associated with education like city corporations, Municipalities etc. It recommended that local bodies associated with the administration of primary education should ordinarily be in charge of all Primary Schools in their area. It also recommended that private schools be governed by the rules and regulations of the State government. The committee did not go into the seriousness of Primary Education in the country.

Check your progress

1. After independence the first committee that was appointed was the University Education Commission popularly known as the Radhakrishnan Commission. The Commission mostly recommended lofty ideals in the area of higher education like the cultivation of higher values, need for women's education etc. It also recommended that the federal language and the Indian languages be developed at the earliest. It recommended that English be the medium of instruction at the higher levels and English be studied in schools and colleges so that we may keep in touch with the stream of ever growing knowledge.
2. The next commission appointed to study Primary Education recommended only administrative measures. It did not go into academic matters connected with Primary Education.

14.3 SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION (1952-53)

The Secondary Education Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. A Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar the then Vice-chancellor of Madras University. It submitted its report in 1953. This Commission is popularly known as the Mudaliar Commission. The Commission went into the details of the aims and objectives of Secondary Education, curriculum in secondary schools, methods of teaching, guidance and counseling in Secondary Schools, examination reforms and the problems of administration. The major recommendations of the Mudaliar Commission are given below.

Major Recommendations

1. **New organizational pattern.** (1) Under the new organizational structure, education should commence after a period of four or five years primary or junior basic education and should include (a) the middle or senior basic or junior secondary stage of 3 years, and (b) the higher secondary stage of 4 years. (2) The present intermediate stage should be replaced by the higher secondary stage which should be of four years' duration, one year of the present intermediate being included in it. As a consequence, the first degree course in the university should be of three years' duration. (3) Multi-purpose schools should be established wherever possible to provide varied courses of interest to students with diverse aims, aptitudes and abilities. (4) All States should provide special facilities for agricultural education in rural schools.
2. **Technical education.** (1) Technical schools should be started in large numbers either separately or as part of multi-purpose schools. (2) Apprenticeship training being an important part of the training needed, suitable legislation should be passed making it obligatory for the industry to afford facilities to students for particular training.
3. **Other types of schools.** (1) Public schools should continue to exist for the present and the pattern of education given in them should be brought into reasonable conformity with the general pattern of national education. (2) A number of residential

schools should be established, more particularly in certain rural areas. (3) A larger number of schools should be established to meet the needs of handicapped children.

4. **Co-education.** (1) While no distinction need be made between education imparted to boys and girls, special facilities for the study of home science should be made available in all girls' schools and coeducation or mixed schools. (2) Efforts should be made by State Governments to open separate schools for girls wherever there is demand for them.
5. **Study of languages.** (1) The mother-tongue or the regional language should generally be the medium of instruction throughout the secondary school stage, subject to the provision that for linguistic minorities special facilities should be made available on the lines suggested by the Central Advisory Board of Education. (2) During the middle school stage, every child should be taught at least two languages. English and Hindi should be introduced at the end of the junior basic stage, subject to the principle that no two languages should be introduced in the same year. At the high and higher secondary stage, at least two languages should be studied, one of which being the mother-tongue or the regional language.
6. **Curriculum.** (1) At the middle-school stage, the curriculum should include: (i) Languages, (ii) social studies, (iii) general science (iv) mathematics, (v) art and music, (vi) craft, and (vii) physical education. (2) At the high school or higher secondary stage, diversified courses of instruction should be provided for the pupils. Diversified courses of study should include the following seven groups: (i) Humanities, (ii) science, (iii) technical subjects, (iv) commercial subjects, (v) agricultural subjects, (vi) fine arts, and (vii) home science; as and when necessary additional diversified courses may be added. (3) A certain number of core subjects should be common to all students, whatever the diversified courses of study that they may take; these should consist of (i) Language, (ii) general science, (iii) social studies, and (iv) craft. (4) The diversified curriculum should begin in the second year of the high school or higher secondary school stage.
7. **Textbooks.** (1) With a view to improving the quality of textbooks prescribed a high power Textbooks Committee should be constituted. (2) The Textbooks Committee should lay down a clear criteria for the type of paper, illustration, printing and format of the book (3) Single textbooks should not be prescribed for every subject of study, but a reasonable number of books which satisfy the standards laid down should be recommended leaving the choice to the schools concerned. In the case of languages, however, definite textbooks should be prescribed for each class to ensure proper gradation. (4) No book prescribed as a textbook or as a book for general study should contain any passage or statement which might offend the religious or social susceptibilities of any section of the community or might indoctrinate the minds of the young students with particular political or religious ideologies. (5) Frequent changes in textbooks and books prescribed for study should be discouraged.
8. **Dynamic methods of teaching.** (1) The methods of teaching in schools should aim not merely at the imparting of knowledge in an efficient manner, but also at inculcating desirable values and proper attitudes and habits of work in the students. (2) The emphasis in teaching should shift from verbalism and memorization to learning through purposeful, concrete and realistic situation and for this purpose, the principles of 'Activity Method' 'Project Method', should be assimilated in school practice. (3) In the teaching of all subjects special stress should be placed on

clear thinking and clear expression both in speech and writing. (4) A well thought out attempt should be made to adopt methods, of instruction to the needs of individual students as much as possible so that dull, average and bright students may all have a chance to progress at their own pace. (5) Students should be given adequate opportunity to work in groups and to carry out group projects so as to develop in them the qualities necessary for group life and cooperative work. (6) Every secondary school, should have a well equipped school library; class libraries and subject libraries should also be utilized.

9. **Discipline.** (1) The education of character should be envisaged as the responsibility of all teachers and should be provided through every single aspect of school programme. (2) In order to promote discipline, personal contact between teacher and the pupils should be strengthened; self-government in the form of house system with prefects or monitors and student-councils, whose responsibility will be to draw up a code of conduct and enforce its observance, should be introduced in all schools.
10. **Religious and moral instruction.** Religious instruction may be given in schools only on a voluntary basis and outside the regular school hours, such instruction being confined to the children of the particular faith concerned and given with the consent of the parents and the managements.
11. **Extra-curricular activities.** Extra-curricular activities should form integral part of education imparted in the school and all teachers should devote a definite time to such activities.
12. **Guidance and counselling in secondary schools.** Educational guidance should receive much greater attention on the part of the educational authorities. The services of trained guidance officers and career masters should be gradually made available to all schools.
13. **Health education.** A properly organized school medical service should be built up in all States. A thorough medical examination of all pupils and necessary follow up treatment where necessary should be carried out in all schools.
14. **Physical education.** (1) All teachers below the age of 40 should, actively participate in many of the physical activities of students and thus make them a lively part of the school programme. (2) Full records of physical activities of the students must be maintained.
15. **A new approach to examination and evaluation.** The number of examinations should be reduced and the element of subjectivity in the essay type tests should be minimized by introducing objective tests. In the final assessment of the pupils due credit should be given to the internal tests and the school records of the pupils. The system of symbolic rather than numerical marking should be adopted. There should be only one public examination at the completion of the secondary school course.
16. **Improvement of the teaching personnel.** (1) The normal period of probation for a trained teacher should be one year. (2) The teachers possessing the qualifications and performing the same type of work, should be treated on a par in the matter of grades, of salary irrespective of the type of institution in which they are working. (3) The system of triple benefit scheme, pension-cum-provident fund cum-insurance, should be introduced in all States. (4) Arbitration Boards or Committees should be established to look into the appeals and grievances of teachers. (5) The age of retirement in the case of physically fit and competent teachers may be extended to 60 with the approval of the Director of Education. (6) The children of

teachers should be given free education throughout the school stage. (7) Through a system of cooperative house building societies, teachers should be provided with quarters so as to enable them to live near the school, (8) The practice of private tuitions by teachers should be abolished.

17. **Teacher training.** (1) There should be only two types of institutions for teacher-training: (i) For those who have taken the school leaving certificate or higher secondary school leaving certificate, for whom the period of training should be two years; and (ii) For graduates for whom the training may for the present, be of one academic year, but extended as a long-term programme, to two academic years. (2) During the period of training all the student-teachers should be given suitable stipends by the State. (3) All training colleges should provide adequate residential facilities.
18. **Organization and administration.** (1) There should be a Board of Secondary Education consisting of not more than 25 members with the Director of Education as its Chairman to deal with all matters of education at the secondary stage and to lay down general policies. A Sub-Committee of the Board should deal with the conduct of examinations. (2) State Advisory Boards should be constituted in each State to advise the Department of Education on all matters pertaining to education.
19. **Inspection of schools.** (1) The true role of an Inspector should be to study the problems of each school and view them comprehensively in the context of educational objectives, to formulate suggestions for improvement and help the teachers to carry out his advice and recommendations. (2) In addition to direct recruitment, Inspectors should also be drawn from (i) teachers of ten years' experience, (ii) headmasters of high schools, and (iii) duly qualified staff of training colleges who may be allowed to work as such for a period of three to five years.
20. **Managements of schools.** (1) The Managing Boards of all schools should be registered and should consist of a limited number of persons with the headmaster as an *ex-officio* member. (2) No member of the Managing Board should directly or indirectly or interfere with the internal administration of the school.
21. **School building and Equipment.** (1) The open spaces available in cities must be conserved to be utilized as a playground by groups of schools. (2) Normally, in designing buildings for schools, care should be taken to see that an area of not less than 10 sq ft is provided per student in the classroom. (3) The optimum number of boys to be admitted to any class should be 30 and the maximum should not in any case exceed 40; the optimum number in the whole school should be 500 while the maximum should not exceed 750.
22. **Hours of working and vacations.** (1) As a rule the total number of working days in a school should not be less than two hundred, the working hours per week should be at least thirty-five periods of about forty-five minutes each; the school should work regularly for six days in the week, one of the days being a half day when the teachers and students might meet informally and work together on various extra-curricular and social projects. (2) Normally during the year there should be a summer vacation of two months and two breaks of ten to fifteen days at suitable periods during the year.
23. **Finance.** (1) A Cess called the Industrial Education Cess be levied, the amount collected to be utilized for the furtherance of technical and vocational education at the secondary stage. (2) The Centre should assume a certain amount of direct responsibility for the contemplated reorganization of secondary education and give financial aid for the purpose

14.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. The Radhakrishnan Commission recommended the cultivation of Indian languages and the study of English at the school level. It recommended that the medium of instruction be English at the higher level. It also recommended that the study of at least three languages—the regional language the federal language and English, at least to read books in English, be taught in schools and colleges. It also recommended a three year first degree programme and the delinking of a university degree from government administrative service. The university Education Commission report is an important landmark in the history of higher education in India.
2. The second commission appointed was a committee on Primary Education. It recommended only administrative reforms without going into academic matters connected with Primary Education.
3. The third committee was a committee on Secondary Education. This committee suggested that the mother tongue or the regional language be generally the medium of instruction throughout the secondary school stage. It also recommended that English and Hindi be introduced at the end of the junior basic stage. It also recommended that at the high school or higher secondary stage the following seven groups be taught. (a) Humanities (b) Science (c) Technical subjects (d) Commercial subjects (e) Agricultural subjects (f) Fine Arts subjects (g) Home Science. The committee suggested a number of measures for examination reforms, teacher training, methods of teaching etc.
4. All these committees recommended number of improvements in the quality of education but the ground realities and the market forces took education mostly on commercial lines. Lack of political will, the Macaulayan system of education, and a bureaucratic hold did not allow any radical departure from the colonial pattern of education. As a result, in spite of all the recommendations and suggestions, the educational system continued to drift aimlessly even after independence. Only cosmetic changes are effected.

14.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. What are the major recommendations of the University Education Commission appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan? (See 14.2)
2. What are the major recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Mudaliar?. (See 14.4)

UNIT 15 - COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS II

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Education Commission (1964-66)
- 15.2 National Policy on Education (1968)
- 15.3 The Study Group Report on the Teaching of English (1969-70)
- 15.4 NEP 1986
- 15.5 The Acharya Ramamurthy Commission 1990
- 15.6 Curriculum Development Centre 1989
- 15.7 Other reports and developments
- 15.8 Let's sum up
- 15.9 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

15.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make the students aware of the recommendations of some other important committees like the Kothari Commission and The National Policy on Education etc.
- make the students critically examine the disparity between the recommendations of committees and the actual implementation.

15.1 EDUCATION COMMISSION (1964-66)

After the report of the Secondary Education Commission there has been a number of committees and commissions that examined the concept of basic education, Sanskrit education, women's education, religious and moral instructions, student indiscipline, emotional integration, child care and even on school buildings. But they all remained as reports.

The sixth important commission was appointed in 1964 on 2nd October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and it submitted its report in June 1966. The Commission covered every field and aspect of education in its voluminous report, appropriately entitled "Education and National Development". Prof. D. S. Kothari was its chairman; so it is popularly known as the Kothari Commission. The report examined several aspects of education like education and life, the needs and aspirations of people, education and productivity, vocationalization, education and national integration, education and modernization and education and secularism etc. Its major recommendations are worth a careful study.

Major Recommendations of the Kothari Commission:

1. **Education and national objectives.** The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals.

For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values.

2. **Stress on science education.** Education must become an integral part of school education and ultimately some study of science should become a part of all courses in the humanities and social sciences at the university stage.

We pay great emphasis on making science an important element in the school curriculum. We, therefore, recommend that science and mathematics should be taught on a compulsory basis to all pupils as a part of general education during the first ten years of schooling.

Every primary school should have a science corner or a room to keep specimens, models and charts with the necessary storage facilities. A minimum of one laboratory-cum-lecture room should be provided in every higher primary school.

3. **Work-experience.** Work-experience should be introduced as an integral part of all education-general or vocational.
4. **Vocationalization.** Another programme which can bring education into closer relationship with productivity is to give a strong vocational bias to secondary education and to increase the emphasis on agricultural and technological education at the university stage.
5. **Common school system.** A common school system of public education should be introduced.
6. **Social and national service.** Social and national service should be made an integral part of education at all stages.
7. **Ten years of schooling of general education.** The first ten years of schooling should cover a primary stage of seven or eight years and a lower secondary stage of three or two years providing a course of general education without any specialization.
8. **Specialization in classes XI and XII.** Classes XI and XII (and during the transitional period Class XI only) should provide for specialized studies in different subjects at the higher secondary stage.
9. **Two years duration of higher secondary stage.** The Higher Secondary stage should be extended to cover a period of two years and to be located exclusively in schools.

Steps should be taken to implement this reform through a phased programme spread over the next 10 years

10. **Instructional days in schools.** The number of instructional days in a year should be increased to about 234 (or 39 weeks) for schools and 216 (or 36 weeks) for colleges and pre-primary schools.
11. **Holidays to be minimized.** There is no need to close an educational institution on a religious holiday. Nor is it necessary for instance to close it on birthdays or death anniversaries of great Indians; the time could be better utilized in working hard for national development.
12. **Academic year to begin on the same day.** It is desirable to begin the academic year on the same day throughout India.

In an academic year, the hours of instruction at the secondary stages should not be less than 1000, and preferably raised to 1100 or even 1200 if conditions are favourable.

13. **Maximum utilization of school facilities.** The libraries, laboratories, workshops, craft sheds, etc., should be open all the year round and should be utilized for at least eight hours a day.
14. **College to be related to a number of schools.** Each college can be functionally related to a number of secondary schools in the neighbourhood and enabled to provide extension services and, guidance to them to improve their standards.
15. **Free textbooks at the primary stage.** At the primary stage a programme of providing free textbooks should be given high priority and introduced immediately.
16. **Book banks in schools.** A programme of book banks should be introduced in secondary schools and in institutions of higher education.
17. **Adequate no. of scholarships.** The top 10 percent of the students in educational institutions should be given small grants annually for the purchase of books which need not necessarily be textbooks.

Steps should be taken to ensure that at the end of the lower primary stage no promising child is prevented from continuing his studies further on account of non-availability of a school or of socio-economic difficulties and to this end scholarship of an adequate amount will have to be provided to every child that may need it.

The main object of the scholarship programmes to be developed at the secondary stage would be to ensure that under any circumstances the top 15 per cent of the children in the age-group do get transferred to secondary schools and that their further education is not prevented by poverty.

18. **Identification of gifted students.** Steps should be taken immediately to devise suitable techniques for identifying talent at this stage. Each state should organize a testing service at the end of the primary stage (Class VII or Class VIII) and also at the end of the lower secondary stage (Class X) and make the assistance available to all the schools.
19. **Residential facilities in schools.** One good secondary school (with adequate residential facilities) should be developed in each community development block and about 10 per cent of urban schools should also be similarly covered.
20. **Provision of day study centres.** For students who do not have adequate facilities for study at home, it is necessary to provide a large number of day-study centres at the secondary and university stage. Some institutions have tried to provide this facility by adopting an unorthodox approach, i.e., by using class-rooms for residential and, study purposes before and after school hours at night. Experiments of this type should be encouraged.
21. **Learning while earning.** Facilities for students to earn and pay a part of the expenses should be developed on as large a scale as possible as a supplement to the programme of scholarships.
22. **Education of the handicapped.** It should be possible to have at least one good institution for the education of handicapped children in each district.

The NCERT should have a cell for the study of the handicapped.

23. **Education of the backward classes.** The education of the backward classes in general and of the tribal people in particular is a major programme of equalization and of social and national integration. No expenditure is too great for the purpose.

24. **State-level centres for pre-primary education.** There should be a state-level centre for the development of pre-primary education located in the State Institutes of Education.
25. **Developmental plan for each district.** A development plan for secondary education should be prepared separately for each district after taking into consideration the existing and perspective needs of expansion.
26. **Enrolment between 360 and 450 in a secondary school.** In order to be well equipped and efficient a secondary school should have at least three divisions in each of the three classes of the secondary stage, i.e., a total of nine divisions and an enrolment between 360 and 450.
27. **Freedom to schools for experimental curricula.** Schools may be permitted to try out experimental curricula.
28. **Two sets of curricula.** The State Boards of school education should prepare two sets of curricula-advanced and ordinary.

Every school need not adopt the advanced curricula in all the subjects.

One being the common curricula for the pupils who are average, in ability and the other being an advanced curricula for the very bright pupils.

29. **Three or four textbooks for each subject.** No useful purpose is served by having only one textbook in a subject for a given class—this is almost invariably the position under the existing programme of nationalization. It should be an important Objective of Policy to have at least three or four books in each subject for each class and leave it open to the teacher to choose the book best suited to the school. This is necessary even if there were to be a common syllabus for all the schools.
30. **Moral and religious education.** Conscious and organized attempts be made for imparting education in social, moral and spiritual values with the help, wherever possible of the ethical teaching of great religions.
31. **Co-curriculum activities.** Every school should organize a variety such programmes so that every child in it may be able to take up something suited to his tastes and interests.
32. **Guidance and counselling.** Guidance and counselling should be regarded as an integral part of education, meant for all students and aimed at assisting the individual to make decisions and adjustments from time to time.
33. **Evaluation.** Evaluation is a continuous process, forms an integral part of the total system of education and is, intimately related, to educational objectives. It exercises a great influence on the pupil's study habits and the teacher's methods of instruction and thus helps not only to measure educational achievement but also to improve it.

The new approach to evaluation will attempt to improve the written examination so that it becomes a valid and reliable measure of educational achievement and to devise techniques for measuring those important aspects of the students growth that cannot be measured through written examinations.

34. **Establishment of school complexes.** The school complex should be established. Each higher primary school should be integrally related to ten lower primary schools that exist in its neighbourhood so that they form one complex of educational facilities. The head master of the higher primary school should provide an extension service to the lower primary schools in his charge and it will be his responsibility

to see that they function properly. The second tier would be a committee under the chairmanship of the headmaster of the secondary school (all headmasters of the higher and lower primary schools in the area being members) which will plan the work and give guidance to all the schools in the area.

36. **The neighbourhood school.** The present social segregation in schools should be eliminated by the adoption of the neighbourhood school concept at the lower primary stage under which all children in the neighbourhood will be required to attend the school in the locality. This plan should be implemented in a period of 20 years.
36. **State evaluation organization.** To assist the State Education Department in this programme of prescribing, maintaining and revising standards, a State Evaluation Organization should be set up in each State, as an independent institution, preferably autonomous, and its services should be available to all concerned.
37. **State and national boards of education.** In order to secure continuous improvement in standards, an adequate machinery should be set up at the State and national levels.
38. **Correspondence courses.** An immediate beginning should be made to develop a wide range of vocational and technical courses through correspondence. However, before this medium could be adopted extensively, very careful preparation and testing would be required.
39. **Minimum scales of pay for teachers.** At the school stage, the Government of India should lay down the minimum, scales of pay for school teachers. The States and Union Territories should then adopt equivalent or higher scales of pay to suit their local conditions.
40. **Same pay in different managements.** The scales of pay of school teachers belonging to the same category but working under different managements, such as Government, local bodies or private organizations should be the same.

The minimum salaries of primary, secondary and university teachers should be in the ratio of 1 : 2 : 3.
41. **Liberal assistance to states.** Liberal central assistance should be given to State Governments for improving the salaries of school teachers as recommended by us.
42. **Retirement age.** Normal retirement age for teachers be 60 years and there should be a provision for extension up to 65 years provided the person is physically fit and mentally alert to discharge his duties efficiently.
43. **The Indian education service.** The creation of the Indian education service is a step in the right direction and if organized on proper lines, such a service would help the progress of Education.
44. **Education Acts.** Education should be given a statutory basis everywhere and in all sectors and then an Education Act should be passed in all the States and Union Territories.
45. **Duration of degree courses.** The duration of the first degree course should not be less than three years.

Apart from this there should be no rigidity about the duration of courses in higher education.

These may vary from university to university and even in the same university from 147

subject to subject.

46. Graduate schools. In some universities strong graduate schools providing a three-year M.A./M.Sc./M.Com. degree course should be established in certain subjects.

A beginning should be made with the organization of four-year special courses for the first degree, in selected subjects.

- 47. Experimental schools and universities.** The universities can conduct experimental secondary or primary schools to evolve improved techniques of teaching and organization.
- 48. Talented students and colleges.** The universities and colleges should select talented students for the schools in different subjects at an appropriate stage, say in the age-group 13-15 and help them to develop their knowledge through individual guidance, provision of laboratory facilities, etc., over and above school work.
- 49. Vocational, technical and engineering education.** Our main recommendation is that by 1986, some 20 per cent of all enrolments at the lower secondary level and some 50 per cent beyond Class X should be in part time or full time vocational and professional courses. A strong effort, primarily by the Central Government is needed to encourage boys and girls particularly in the age group 14-18 to follow vocational and technical courses.
- 50. Role of the central and state governments.** We are convinced that the radical reconstruction of education which we have recommended in this Report will not be possible unless (1) The Government of India provides the needed initiative, leadership and financial support and (2) educational administration, both at the central and state levels is adequately strengthened.
- 51. Expenditure on education.** We should, however, broadly work towards, increasing the educational expenditure per capita, in a period of 20 years, to between 4 and 5 times the present level of Rs. 12 (at constant prices), and the proportion of national income devoted to educational expenditure varying from 4 per cent to 6 per cent.

Check your progress

1. Language planning in India can be said to have arrived at a crucial stage in the 1960's. The conference of chief ministers held in 1961 recommended the three language formula. This meant (a) The regional language, or the mother tongue when different from the regional language (b) Hindi or any other Indian language in Hindi speaking areas; and (c) English or any other European language.

The three language formula was also reiterated by the Kothari commission.

2. The commission said the English should continue as a library language and a channel of international communication. Two major recommendations with regard to the study of English were: (a) English should be the medium of instruction in all major universities and (b) special units should be setup for teaching English as a language skill, as distinct from teaching it as literature.

15.2 NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1968)

The Education Commission recommended that the government of India should issue a statement on the National Policy on Education which will provide guidance to the State governments and local authorities in preparing and implementing educational plans. Accordingly in

1967 the government of India constituted a committee to prepare a document on the National Policy on Education. This document was published in 1968. The principles of developments in education as given in the document are given below

Principles of Developments of Education

1. **Free and Compulsory Education.** (a) Strenuous efforts should be made for the early fulfilment of the Directive Principle under Article 45 of the Constitution seeking to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. (b) Suitable programmes should be developed to reduce the prevailing wastage and stagnation in schools and to ensure that every child who is enrolled in school successfully completes the prescribed course.
2. **Status, Emoluments and Education of Teachers.** Of all the factors which determine the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the teacher is undoubtedly the most important. It is on his personal qualities and character, his educational qualifications and professional competence that the success of all educational endeavour must ultimately depend. (i) Teachers be accorded an honoured place in society. (ii) Their emoluments and other service conditions should be adequate and satisfactory having regard to their qualifications and responsibilities. (iii) The academic freedom of teachers to pursue and publish independent studies and researches and to speak and write about significant national and international issues should be protected. (iv) Teacher education, particularly in-service education should receive due emphasis.
3. **Development of Languages.** (i) **Regional languages.** The energetic development of Indian languages and literature is *sine qua non* for educational and cultural development. Unless this is done, the creative energies of the people will not be released, standards of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people, and the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses will remain, if not widen further. The regional languages are already in use as media of education at the primary and secondary stages. Urgent steps should now be taken to adopt them as media of education at the university stage. (ii) **Three-language formula.** At the secondary stage, the State Governments should adopt, and vigorously implement the three language formula which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi-speaking States. Suitable courses in Hindi and/or English should also be available in universities and colleges with a view to improving the proficiency of students in these languages up to the prescribed university standards. (iii) **Hindi.** Every effort should be made to promote the development of Hindi as the link language, due care should be taken to ensure that it will serve as provided for in Article 351 of the Constitution, as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India. The establishment in non-Hindi States, of colleges and other institutions of higher education which use Hindi as the medium of education should be encouraged. (iv) **Sanskrit.** Considering the special importance of Sanskrit to the growth and development of Indian languages and its unique contribution to the cultural unity of the country, facilities for its teaching at the school and university stages should be offered on a more liberal scale. Development of new methods of teaching the language should be encouraged, and the possibility explored of including the study of Sanskrit in those courses (such as modern Indian languages, ancient Indian history, Indology and Indian Philosophy) at the first and second degree stages, where such knowledge is useful. (v) **International languages.** Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English and other international

languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace, especially in science and technology. India must not only keep up this growth but should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose, the study of English deserves to be specially strengthened.

4. **Equalization of Educational Opportunities.** (i) Strenuous efforts should be made to equalize educational opportunity. (ii) Regional imbalances in the provision of educational facilities should be corrected and good educational facilities should be provided in rural and other backward areas. (iii) To promote social cohesion and national integration the Common School System as recommended by the Education Commission should be adopted. (iv) Efforts should be made to improve the standard of education in general schools. (v) All special schools like public schools should be required to admit students on the basis of merit and also to provide a prescribed proportion of free studentship to prevent segregation of social classes, (vi) The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation. (vii) More intensive efforts are needed to develop education among the backward classes and especially among the tribal people. (viii) Educational facilities for the physically and mentally handicapped children should be expanded and attempts should be made to develop integrated programmes enabling the handicapped children to study in regular schools.
5. **Identification of Talent.** For the cultivation of excellence, it is necessary that talent in diverse fields should be identified at as early an age as possible, and every stimulus and opportunity given for its full development.
6. **Work-experience and National Service.** The school and the community should be brought closer through suitable programmes of mutual service and support. Work-experience and national service including participation in meaningful and challenging programmes of community service and national reconstruction should accordingly become an integral part of education. Emphasis in these programmes should be on self-help, character formation and on the developing sense of social commitment.
7. **Science Education and Research.** With a view to accelerating the growth of the national economy, science education and research should receive high priority. Science and mathematics should be an integral part of general education till the end of the school stage.
8. **Education for Agriculture and Industry.** (i) Special emphasis should be placed on the development of education for agriculture and industry. (ii) There should be at least one agricultural university in every State. These should, as far as possible, be single campus universities; but where necessary, they may have constituent colleges on different campuses. Other universities may also be assisted, where the necessary potential exists, to develop strong departments for the study of one or more aspects of agriculture.

In technical education, practical training in industry should form an integral part of such education. Technical education and research should be related closely to industry, encouraging the flow of personnel both ways and providing for continuous cooperation in the provision, design and periodical review of training programmes and facilities.

9. **Production of Books.** (i) The quality of books should be improved by attracting the best writing talent through a liberal policy of incentives and remuneration. (ii)

Frequent changes of textbooks should be avoided and their prices should be low enough for students of ordinary means to buy them. (iii) The possibility of establishing autonomous book corporations on commercial lines should be examined and efforts should be made to have a few basic textbooks common throughout the country. (iv) Special attention should be given to books for children and to university level books in regional languages.

10. **Examinations.** A major goal of examination reforms should be to improve the reliability and validity of examinations and to make evaluation a continuous process aimed at helping the student to improve his level of achievement rather than at 'certifying' the quality of his performance at a given moment of time.
11. **Secondary Education.** Educational opportunity at the secondary (and higher) level is a major instrument of social change and transformation. Facilities for secondary education should accordingly be extended expeditiously to areas and classes which have been denied these in the past.

There is need to increase facilities for technical and vocational education at this stage. Provision of facilities for secondary and vocational education should conform broadly to requirements of the developing economy and real employment opportunities. Such linkage is necessary to make technical and vocational education at the secondary stage effectively terminal. Facilities for technical and vocational education should be suitably diversified to cover a large number of fields, such as agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, medicine and public health, home management, arts and crafts, secretarial training, etc.

12. **University Education.** (i) The number of whole-time students to be admitted to a college or university department should be determined with reference to the laboratory, library and other facilities and to the strength of the staff. (ii) Considerable care is needed in establishing new universities. They should be started only after an adequate provision of funds has been made for the purpose and due care has been taken to ensure proper standards. (iii) Special attention should be given to the organization of postgraduate courses and to the improvement of standards of training and research at this level. (iv) Centres of advanced study should be strengthened and a small number of 'clusters of centres' aiming at the highest possible standards in research and training should be established. (v) There is need to give increased support to research in universities generally. The institutions for research should, as far as possible, function within the fold of universities or in intimate association with them.
13. **Part-time Education and Correspondence Courses.** Part-time education and correspondence courses should be developed on a large scale at the university stage. Such facilities should also be developed for secondary school students, for teachers and for agricultural, industrial and other workers. Education through part-time and correspondence courses should be given the same status as full-time education. Such facilities will smoothen transition from school to work, promote the cause of education and provide opportunities to the large number of people who have the desire to educate themselves further but cannot do so on a full-time basis.
14. **Spread of Literacy and Adult Education.** The liquidation of mass illiteracy is necessary not only for promoting participation in the working of democratic institutions and for accelerating programmes of production, especially in agriculture, but for quickening the tempo of national development in general. Employees in large commercial, industrial and other concerns should be made functionally literate as early as possible. A lead in this direction should come from the industrial

undertakings in the public sector. Teachers and students should be actively involved in organizing literacy campaigns, especially as part of the Social and National Service Programme.

Special emphasis should be given to the education of young practising farmers and to the training of youth for self-employment.

15. **Games and Sports.** Games and sports should be developed on a large scale with the object of improving the physical fitness and sportsmanship of the average student as well as of those who excel in this department. Where playing field and other facilities for developing a nation-wide programme of physical education do not exist, these should be provided on a priority basis.
16. **Education of Minorities.** Every effort should be made not only to protect the rights of minorities but to promote their educational interests as suggested in the statement issued by the Conference of the Chief Ministers of States and Central Ministers held in August 1961.
17. **The Educational Structure.** It will be advantageous to have a broadly uniform educational structure in all parts of the country. The ultimate objective should be to adopt the 10 plus 2 plus 3 pattern, the higher secondary stage of two years being located in schools, colleges or both according to local conditions.

The reconstruction of education on the lines indicated above will need additional outlay. The aim should be gradually to increase the investment in education so as to reach a level of expenditure of six per cent of the national income as early as possible.

The Government of India recognizes that reconstruction of education is no easy task. Not only are the resources scarce but the problems are exceedingly complex. Considering the key role which education, science and research play in developing the material and human resources of the country, the Government of India will, in addition to undertaking programmes in the Central sector, assist the State Governments for the development of programmes of national importance where coordinated action on the part of the States and the Centre is called for.

The Government of India will also review, every five years, the progress made and recommend guidelines for future development.

15.3 THE STUDY GROUP REPORT ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH (1969-71)

The Study Group on English was appointed by the Ministry of Education and Youth Services, Government of India, on March 1969 and it is popularly known as the Gokak Committee after its Chairman Prof. V. K. Gokak. The main aspects of the report are given below:

A General Survey of the Present Position

- 1 A number of Committees and Study Groups have in recent times given anxious thought to the place of English in our system of education. The teaching of this language at various stages, its role in school and at the university, *its share* in the *time tables*, and its contribution to the teaching of other subjects, form part of a problem which has become increasingly important as well as controversial *with the passage of time*.
- 2 Most aspects of the problem were reviewed by the Study Group appointed by the Ministry of Education in 1964. That Group examined the situation in the light of

the changed circumstances and the *changed position* of English both as a subject of study at school and as the medium of instruction at the university stage. (It made a number of recommendations on policies and programmes, syllabuses, methods and materials.¹)

- 3 Most of these recommendations have yet to be implemented by the authorities responsible for the making of policies and their implementation at various levels.
- 4 (During the last five years the situation has changed at a much greater speed than ever before.) In several States, especially in the *north*, the most conspicuous feature of the changing policies with regard to English is their speed. We have examples of more than one State where, only a few years ago, English was taught as a compulsory language and, however low the competence attained, pass marks had to be secured in the English paper in order to get through the High School examination. Today, largely because of the mounting concern caused by an *alarmingly high percentage of failures* in the subject at different end-of-the year and school-leaving examinations, (the Governments have decreed that success in English should no longer be considered essential for admission to the undergraduate courses at the university.)

Considerations such as these have resulted in several other changes, all of which tend to create the belief that there is no need for effective teaching of measurable competence in English. In a few States English has been made an *optional* subject, and in some it is an *additional paper* and the marks secured in it do not in any way affect the examination result. In at least one State, if a student chooses to take this paper, the fact is merely *recorded on* his result sheet.

The upshot of all these changes, and several others that are becoming known, with the passage of time, is that very soon, in certain parts of India, the college entrant will know no English, not even its alphabet.

- 5 The ('explosion of opportunity') which forms part of a modern democracy also aggravates the problems of English teaching and indeed raises many other important problems in our system of education. We have, of late, witnessed a tremendous expansion in primary and secondary education. Many more children now enter school and receive instruction at various levels and a large percentage of them come from uneducated families. (Their environment does not provide them with any opportunities, of using English outside the classroom.)

(Growth in numbers has necessitated the recruitment of many more teachers both in primary and in secondary schools. Our training programmes, have failed to keep pace with the mounting needs for teacher education and training. The teacher, especially at the primary and middle stages, is therefore, in many instances, not adequately qualified or trained for the specialist tasks of teaching a foreign language at the earlier stages. The result is that, even where English is taught in school, its teaching is not done by teachers who have an adequate knowledge of the language and of language-teaching methods.)

- 6 Cumulatively these changes have produced a situation which causes great concern and which, if left to itself, will result, a further lowering of the standards of English and of education a whole. (With the acquisition of bad English or no English at school, the teaching of English at the university presents an entirely new set of problems.) Much time has *to be devoted* to repairing the damage done or in building the foundations that are necessary for the Minimum essential use of this language at the under-graduate and post-graduate stages.

- 7 Two questions have to be answered as a preliminary to the formulation of new policies and programmes for the future teaching of English at various stages in the country. The first is: what are the reasons for the non-implementation of some of the major recommendations of the previous committees and specialist bodies? The second question is: What are the new needs for which the Group should work out new programmes and methods?
- 8 The Group suggests the following answers to the first question. The decisions have not been implemented, in the main, for the reasons set out below:
 - (a) There is a grave shortage of trained and fully qualified teachers of English at almost all stages of the educational system.
 - (b) There have been frequent *changes* in governmental policy towards the teaching and learning of English in several States.
 - (c) The State Education Departments have been slow in taking decisions, and, even where decisions have been taken, *enough resources* are not available to carry them out. Very often Departments have not been able to utilize fully the facilities available at various specialist centres and to organise their own courses for re-training or in-service training.
 - (d) In general, the facilities available for reform and reorganisation have been inadequate. The result is curricular changes have been very slow. In these circumstances, even trained teachers have been unable to make any great contribution to the improvement of the teaching of the subject.
 - (e) The supervision of English teaching in schools has continued to be neglected, with hardly any trained specialists engaged in this task.
 - (f) (In the majority of schools there is a *great gulf* between the avowed approach and the actual practice. The aural/oral approach, which ought not to be depended upon as the sole key to success, has not found its way into the ordinary classroom. (Most teachers make free and often unsystematic use of the pupils' mother tongue on the lines of the old grammar-translation method.) Neither guidance nor material is available to help teachers make a systematic and judicious use of a bilingual method wherever the situation so demands.
- 9 The success of our future efforts in the field will, in large measure, depend on the removal of the deficiencies, failures implicit, or explicit, set out in Para 8 (a)—(f) above. Every effort, both at the Centre and in States, should, therefore, be made to remove the inadequacies and remedy the defects in the existing structure.
- 10 The new needs are, in the main, related to the changed conditions referred to earlier in this chapter. But some of them have also come into existence because of the general recognition of fresh roles assigned to English in our educational system.

As a free nation we are committed to the enrichment of Indian languages so that they may serve all those purposes for which we now use English. To do so, however, we need to profit from the existing stock of knowledge in English. And with our long tradition in the use of English, we should be able to exploit the richness of this language to the advantage of major Indian languages.

For some time to come, we must depend on English to provide a 'window on the world', an access to the growing fund of knowledge in science, technology and humanities.
- 11 Three different but related demands have thus to be met in framing the programmes for the future of English teaching in this country. These are :

- (a) the changing conditions and the need to answer the problems created thereby;
- (b) the role of English as a 'source' language; and
- (c) the place of English as a 'link' with the outside world for the acquisition of new knowledge.

To meet the first demand the Group considers it essential design courses that can satisfy different kinds of 'consumers' at various levels of learning. (These courses should be varied enough to offer several alternatives—*general and specific*, long-term and short-term, elementary and advanced courses in speech and writing.)

- 12 To use English as a 'source' language with a view to enriching our own languages, (it will be necessary to produce competence at high academic levels in the skill of translation.) Translation as a specialist skill can be effectively taught only at the intermediate and advanced stages of language teaching, but even at these stages it must be taught systematically as well.

The teaching of translation should form part of all intermediate and advanced courses and translation of graded passages from English into the learner's language should be made compulsory in at least the advanced courses. Translation should also be given a place in post-graduate courses.

One immediate purpose in emphasising the importance of translation is to produce translated versions of the best books available in the English language to help those who are not able to profit from them because they lack the necessary competence in the language. (To help in this direction the Group considers it necessary to reiterate one of the recommendations made by the English Review Committee of the University Grants Commission (1965), that "there could be no objection to the award of a Ph.D. degree on the translation of well-known Indian classics with suitable editing and biographical details".)

- 13 For an effective use of English as a 'link' with the wider world of thought and discovery, our university student should be able to use it 'in the library'. He must learn how to read meaningfully all that appears in his *field of specialist* study, must become an effective *note-taker* and must master the art of successful silent reading with speed and comprehension. Training in the use of English as a ('library language' is therefore greatly desirable and should be given a place in all kinds of courses at both the school and the university stage.)

(At the university stage it will also be necessary to help the student to use English for subjects other than English 'in the library.' A suitable machinery will have to be provided to organise courses for them. The Group feels that such a machinery can be made out of close collaboration between the English department and selected members of the other departments.

- 14 New commitments and new courses are necessary to halt the *deterioration of standards* on the one hand and to effectively introduce much-needed improvements on the other. All require a Strong complex of '*feeler*' institutions. Basic even to minor improvements in a system are such requirements as pure and applied research, adequate teacher-training both short and long-term, good materials for teachers and learners, and classroom equipment. They can come only through the Cooperation of high-level institutions. The strengthening and, if necessary, creation of such 'courses of excellence' must be considered among the first priorities in any programme of reorganisation and reform in the teaching of English.

- 15 (The Group feels that three factors are mainly responsible for the success or failure of a teaching programme.) In their order of importance these three cardinal

factors are 'Men' 'Materials' and 'Methods.'

Each of these factors calls for thoughtful care and careful planning, and each in its present state in this country is in need of reform. We shall devote the next chapter to discussing and defining the nature and extent of such reform, keeping in view the needs of today and the hopes of tomorrow.

- 1 Having reviewed the problems and the urgencies in the teaching of English as a foreign language in this country to-day, the Group wishes to emphasise the need to design courses, that can satisfy different kinds of 'customers' at various levels of learning. These courses, as envisaged, will be taught under various curricular arrangements that exist at different places and may have to be modified to suit the needs of different States and different kinds of institutions. Uniformity of policy in regard to the introduction of these courses is, therefore, not a practical possibility.

Although the Group stands against any rigid, all India pattern, and favours the use of specially tailored programmes and materials for every major area of use, it also feels that a set of model syllabuses, one for each known need, will usefully serve the large number of bodies and institutions which may wish to adopt them or adapt them to their own particular requirements.

- 2 Syllabuses have been prepared for the various courses that the Group wishes to suggest and they form Part II of this Report. A brief Introduction to each course is given below, together with some notes on when to use it and for what purposes.

- (a) **English at the School Stage:** The teaching of English should not begin earlier than Class V, the first year of the middle or upper primary stage. It should be an examinable subject and those who choose to study it should be required to take an examination and pass it. The minimum level of attainment detailed in Appendix I should form the basis of the regular courses at the school stage. (For pupils whose performance or aptitude justifies it, there should also be a course available at advanced level).

States should be free to adopt this course or any other course involving a higher level of attainment in English according to their requirements. The expert services of the Central Institute of English should be available to all states, Universities and State Institutes of English for working out the details of their courses and the preparation of textbooks and other teaching and testing materials.

- (b) **English at the Transitional Stage:** It will be an advantage to have a transitional stage, preferably of two years, between the end of the school stage and the beginning of the first degree course. Such a stage already exists in some States. One of the major objectives of this stage should be to prepare students for advanced work at the university level by helping them acquire a reasonable command over English. The syllabuses prepared by the C.I.E. for Certificate and Diploma Courses (Appendix II) will be helpful in designing these courses for the transitional stage.

- (c) **English as a Library Language:** Students now come to the Intermediate and first year degree classes with varying degrees of attainment in English. The spectrum is disquietingly wide, from students educated at English medium schools at the one end to those who have not studied English at all at the other. Measures should, therefore, be taken to introduce courses to suit the needs of students at different levels of attainment and help them attain a command whereby they can use English as a 'library language'. Appendix III gives a

syllabus for a course in 'English as a 'library language', designed to enable students to read books and journals in English relevant to academic studies and/or professional work.

The best and most effective period for the introduction of this course is the period between the high school and the first degree stage. The students will, by that time, have chosen their course of study and can be helped to achieve competence in the areas of language relevant to their specialities. This will necessitate work in two related fields: (i) the description of the 'register' of each subject area especially the syntactic structures and the most favoured collocations, and (ii) the organisation of suitable courses for the successful implementation of the programmes. Institutions which run such courses will have to bring together specialists in various subjects of study. Wherever possible, at least in large institutions, there should be a member of the staff with training and qualifications in English language teaching, to coordinate the language work of different departments and to help evolve suitable courses. The possibility of attaching teachers of English as consultants to the various subject departments should also be explored.

- (d) **English as Medium of Instruction at the College Level:** There should be a course for students going to all-India institutions, colleges of technology and similar institutes, who will have to use English as a medium of instruction and examination. It should have as its target the standard of the Higher Secondary Course. As its starting point it will have to take various levels of achievement from no skill in English to skills at the high level. The objectives of the course should be to help students (i) follow lectures in English (ii) to read text books in English. (iii) speak to teachers in English. and (iv) make notes and write examination answers in English. Appendix IV gives detailed suggestions for such a course. Provision should be made for an intensive course during the first long vacation and, a thinly spread course during the first year.
- (e) **Course in English for Students who wish to be Teachers of English or Study English Literature.** There should be a course for students who want to take up English literature as their special field of study or become teachers of English. Students taking this course should be given a thorough grounding both in language and literature. The course should give students an adequate command over the use of English and introduce them to a critical appreciation of English literature. Students who undergo this course should be able to teach English at High/Higher Secondary Schools and Junior/Intermediate Colleges.
- (f) **English Language and Literature for Students of Literature in Indian Languages.** There should be an optional course in English language and literature for students studying the literature in Indian languages at the B.A. Honours or M.A. level. This introduction of English literature will sharpen their literary sensibilities and encourage comparative literary studies. The general objectives of this course should be (i) to help students acquire an adequate command over English in order to appreciate literature in English, (ii) to acquaint them with the significant aspects of English literature and literary criticism. including Indian writings in English, through the study of appropriate texts, and (iii) to stimulate comparative studies of English and Indian literatures. Translation should form part of this course, particularly translation from English into an Indian language.
- (g) **English at the B.A. Honours and M.A. Levels.** It is assumed that there will always be students specialising in English literature. The present types of courses

in English literature for such student need to be changed. At the post graduate level optional courses may be offered in Indo English, American and Commonwealth literatures. The study of Linguistics and Phonetics with special reference to English and methods of second language teaching should also be introduced in B. A. (Hons.) and M.A. Syllabuses.

- 3 The courses listed above should generally form part of the regular curricula in schools, colleges and other institutions of higher learning. At some establishments, however, because of present-day exigencies, special arrangements may have to be made outside the normal time tables and during the long vacations. The Group also sees the need for special courses to meet the growing demands for English teaching for specific purposes.

The syllabuses for these courses are also given in Part II. Some introductory notes are given here to explain the nature of relevance of each course in terms of its objectives. The syllabuses are divided into two categories (a) general courses and (b) special courses.

- 4 **General Courses: Certificate and Diploma Courses:** The elements of knowledge and skill presented in these two syllabuses are basic to a reasonably competent user of the English language. It is therefore recommended that as far as possible, these two courses should be taught as part of regular full-time courses. The two courses can also be organised as part-time courses outside the normal curriculum for undergraduate studies, or during the summer vacation preceding the post graduate, course.

The Certificate Course: This course should be open to two categories of students: (a) Those members of the general public who are above 15 and who have no knowledge of English but wish to acquire a certain proficiency in the language for which they may feel the need owing to vocational, professional or other reasons. (b) Students at the High School or the Junior/ Intermediate College stage who have had no instruction in English, but who need a knowledge of English, either as a 'library language' or as a requirement in their university courses.

The duration of this course should be one year. There should be 18 periods of work per week at the rate of three 40 minute periods a day. Where this course is not provided at the school level, it should be given at the university level. At the end of the Certificate Course a student should be able to (i) read simple passages of prose at a fair speed and with good understanding, (ii) understand a talk in straight forward English on subjects within his experience, and (iii) express himself with a reasonable degree of accuracy in speech and writing in English on subjects within his experience.

The Diploma Course: This course should be available to those who have successfully completed the Certificate Course. It should be at the level of the higher secondary course in English. At the end of this course a student should be able to (i) understand the main statements or ideas in a written passage and be able to reproduce them in English, free from gross errors, (ii) express himself in writing with relevance and a fair measure of accuracy on a topic within his experience and on a topic chosen from a curricular subject with its own special vocabulary, (iii) understand a talk (which may be a radio or tape recorded talk) or a subject of general interest within his experience, and (iv) carry on a conversation on a simple topic.

In addition to these two courses, there should also be a Diploma Course in

Advanced English including, in addition to, the contents of these two courses, an advanced study of modern English usage and advanced general comprehension. It may be a part time course and any university student may be permitted to take it up in addition to his regular studies.

- 5 **Special Courses:** Two categories of courses are included under 'Special Courses'. The first category is one of general command, either of spoken or written English. The second covers different professional needs, e.g., the needs of students of commerce or those of teachers of English.

- (a) *Course in Spoken English:* For students and other people who wish to improve their proficiency in spoken English for their professional needs and for effective oral communication, a part time course in Spoken English should be provided. It is assumed that people admitted to this course will have successfully completed the Higher Secondary Course in English or the proposed Diploma Course in English.

- (b) *Course for Teachers of Spoken English:* The teachers who give the specialised course in spoken English, should have received training in Phonetics and Spoken English as part of their M.A. course in English or have attended a one year course at the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad. The objectives of this course should be (i) to give teachers of English an introduction to General Phonetics, (ii) to acquaint them with the phonology of English, and (iii) to give them speech training in order to improve their own pronunciation and their competence as teachers of Spoken English.

- (c) *Course in Written English :* There should be a special course in written English. Its main objective should be to help students write an internationally acceptable kind of English on academic matters. This course will assume as behaviour a relatively good performance in respect of written English at the High School level.

- (d) *Course in Commercial English:* There should be a specialised course in commercial English designed to help students (i) understand commercial correspondence, commercial documents, and textbooks and reference books on commercial practices, (ii) write commercial correspondence and commercial documents in an English of international acceptability. (ii) carry on business affairs both in face-to-face conversation and on the telephone in an English of international acceptability. The entry requirement for this course is a good High School Certificate or success in the proposed Diploma Course in English.

- (e) *Teacher Training Courses:* Teacher training should have high priority in any programme of reform in English Language Teaching. There is urgent need for a review of the existing courses with a view to making them effective instruments of radical change and reform. The following courses are suggested as models:

- (i) *A course in English for Non-graduate Teachers:* For non graduate teachers it is desirable to have a course in both language and methods. It should be designed both to improve the pupil teachers' skill in English and to train him to become proficient as a teacher of English. The proposed syllabus consists of two parts. The first part which is a content course in English, is intended to improve the pupil teacher's use of English and is 'to be given during the first year; the second part, i.e., the Methods Course, should be given in the second year. Practice teaching, which is to be conducted in the second year should be organised in such a way that each pupil teacher teaches at least 25 lessons in

the course of the year (including a block of about 10 lessons taught in the same class during a period of two weeks.)

- (ii) *A Course in Methods of Teaching English for the B.Ed. examination:* There should be a much fuller course than exists at present in Methods of Teaching English for the B.Ed. degree examination. In order to make teachers competent in the use of English and to train them to teach it effectively, it is recommended that the time allotted to Methods of Teaching English should be raised to at least five periods per week. Similarly the status of this course in the scheme of examination should also be raised. The paper in Methods of Teaching English should carry hundred marks and be of three hours' duration. It is recommended that the B.Ed. curriculum should allow the trainees to specialise in one subject only, instead of requiring them to study the methods of teaching two school subjects.

15.5 NEP 1986

The next significant landmark in the survey should be the National Policy on Education and the programme of Action 1986. This document merely reiterates the 1968 National Policy and says:

"The Education Policy of 1968 had examined the question of the development of languages in great detail; its essential provisions can hardly be improved upon and are as relevant to day as before. The implementation of this part of 1968 policy has, however, been uneven. The policy should be implemented more energetically and purposefully".

One important step that the programme of Action (POA) recommended was the establishment of rural institutions, that is schools, colleges and universities in rural areas with the objective of idealising and promoting excellence. The establishment of these schools, however, met with mixed response. Thus the NPE and POA 1986 has seen one more report. (The National Policy on Education is also popularly known as NEP i.e. National Education Policy.)

15.6 ACHARYA RAMAMURTHY COMMISSION 1990

The Acharya Ramamurti Commission, appointed to review the 1986 NEP and POA, submitted its report in 1990. The report must be commended for making, perhaps for the first time, a frank analysis of the problems in the implementation of the three-language formula. It observed however, that whatever the difficulties or the unevenness in the implementation, the three-language formula had 'stood the test of time' and that it was not 'desirable or prudent to reopen it'. About the learning of Hindi and English, the Ramamurti Commission Report also made the pertinent observation reiterating a statement made by the Education Commission Report (1964-66), that the criteria should be, not years of study, but hours of study and, even more importantly, levels of attainment. The Ramamurti Commission made the suggestion that the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS), the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) and the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore (CIIL)—the three national level institutions charged respectively with the development of Hindi, English and modern Indian languages, should come together and, in consultation with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training and the State governments, 'spell out modalities of ensuring uniformity in the matter of acquisition of language competence by students in the school system'. The objectives of such a consultation, said the Report, may be

- (a) specification of the objectives of teaching different languages,
- (b) specification of levels of language proficiency to be reached in respect of each

language, and

- (c) specification of the class from which and the duration for which the three languages will be taught.

On the question of the language of instruction for higher education, again, the Report made specific recommendations about the steps to be taken to effect a smooth changeover from English to the regional languages:

- (a) production of university level books in Indian languages, and
- (b) options to be given to students for taking examinations at all levels in the regional language media.

The Ramamurti Commission also stated the need for a fresh linguistic survey of India.

15.7 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE 1989

One more report to be mentioned in our brief survey of policy statements with regard mainly to the place of English in education in India is the report of the **Curriculum Development Center CDC** which was set up by the University Grants Commission in 1987, and which submitted its recommendations in 1989. The CDCs that were set up in various subjects at different universities were given certain directions:

With increasing awareness of the importance of the learning process a more learner-oriented or enquiry-oriented teaching method should be introduced in the instructional system, which enables the learner to engage himself in creative and divergent thinking, problem solving, self-learning and to explore new avenues of communication, productive work as well as innovation through such methods as simulation, games, project work and the like. Accordingly, the main thrust of the proposed curriculum should aim at shifting emphasis from teaching to learning, which has to be an important element in the new approach to education. This will necessitate re-organizing the curriculum packages, possibly in a modular form. Greater emphasis should be placed on the student's motivation to learn than on the teacher's ability to lecture. Further, the curriculum should be so designed that it would make the education more meaningful to the needs and aspirations of its beneficiaries as well as to make it socially relevant.

Introduction to the Report of the CDC

in English, CIEFL, Hyderabad, Published by UGC, New Delhi, 1989

In 'A Note on the New Curriculum' the CDC Report on English says that the new undergraduate curriculum (i.e. for the degree classes like B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., etc.) comprises a General English Course and a Special English Course. It adds:

To cater to the heterogeneous tertiary level student population (the range of linguistic competence is extremely varied since students from both English-medium and regional-medium schools come together at this level), the General English Course is conceived of as comprising different units and modules suited to the different levels of learners. The patterning of the courses is such that students, depending on their linguistic competence at the time of admission, would not only begin their General English Programme at different levels but also reach different levels at the time of graduation.

It is strange that no committee or commission has so far asked the beneficiaries (i.e. the learners/students/consumers) what they expect from the courses meant for them, what materials they prefer, how they want to learn what they want to

learn, how they want to be tested, etc. We just talk about learner-centered teaching only on paper, but in practice, follow the same 'top-down' colonial practice. The CDC Report in English too, after talking about learner-centered teaching has suggested the *streaming* of only the *learners* on the basis of some test (not a 'standardized test') administered; it fails to note that *streaming* of teachers is equally important since not all teachers have the same competence to teach all the streams of learners; secondly, the concept of streaming the learners has been applied only to the teaching of English but not to other languages like Hindi, or other Indian languages or to the teaching of other subjects like mathematics, science, etc. where, as everyone knows, there is a 'heterogeneous tertiary-level student population'. In mathematics too there are gifted students, and average and below-average students. Moreover, the 1986 Report said that 'methodologies will be developed for evaluation of teacher performance through self-appraisal, through peer groups, and also by students'. This part has been completely and conveniently forgotten and no teacher evaluation has been mentioned in the CDC report.

It is encouraging to note that the CDC Report in English says the following:

'It was felt that we should introduce a multiplicity of M.A. courses in English such as M.A. in British Literature, M.A. in American Literature, M.A. in Comparative Literature, M.A. in Creative Writing in English, M.A. in Modern English Language, M.A. in English Language Teaching and so on, as several universities in Britain and America currently do. While there was a broad agreement on this view, it was felt nonetheless that the time was not yet ripe for such diversification—chiefly because we do not have the human resources necessary to implement it'.

Don't we have the human resources in a country that provides human resources to even developed countries like the USA? Or, is it that we do not have the will to do it?

Central Universities, Deemed Universities, the CIE(FI), RIEs, ELTIs, CIIL, KHS, CBSE, NCERT, Autonomous Colleges, Curriculum Development Centers, Academic Staff Colleges, Refresher Courses, Open Universities and Schools, DIETs, Operation Blackboard, Education for All, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Language Laboratories, National Testing Service, Action Plans, etc., a story of grand slogans on paper, of tall claims and petty achievement, of more promises than performance, of committees, commissions, reports and resolutions on revolutions.

15.7 OTHER REPORTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Along with these developments, the British Council in India was quite active in a different way. The 'structural syllabus', prepared by the London School was brought to India by the British Council in 1952. The Madras English Language Teaching (MELT) Campaign, adopting a 'snowball' scheme (i.e. train a small number of teachers who in turn will train others, producing 'multiplier effect'), planned by the government of Tamil Nadu in conjunction with the British Council, attempted to train 27,000 teachers of English at the primary level. As the term indicates, it was a 'snowball' brought from England (and not 'home-grown') and the MELT Campaign started in 1959 melted by 1964 in the tropical climate of Madras!

The first English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI) was established in Allahabad in 1954 with the collaboration of the British Council. The All India Seminar on the Teaching of English held at Nagpur in December 1957 took the first move to suggest the revision of the syllabus for teaching English at schools on a national level and the Structural Approach was accepted. The

British Council encouraged and supported such moves to strengthen the teaching of English in India. The Central Institute of English (now called the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages—CIEFL) was established in Hyderabad (A.P.) in 1958, again with the collaboration of the British Council as a result of the initiative taken by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; this was done to train teachers of English, to produce teaching materials, and, ultimately, to improve the standards of teaching English in the country as a whole; the Hyderabad Institute has two Regional Centers at Shillong and Lucknow to serve the needs of the Eastern and the Northern regions.

The MELT Campaign resulted in the establishment of the Regional Institute of English (RIE) in Bangalore in June 1963 with financial support from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. The RIE trains teachers and prepares teaching materials at the school level. One more RIE was set up in Chandigarh and a number of ELTIs—about twelve—were set up all over India, all with the collaboration of the British Council in India. They are all supposed to train teachers and prepare teaching materials for the schools in the state in which they are located; they are partly supported by grants from the government of India through the CIEFL, the monitoring body. In addition, there are also Special Officers and ELT Cells for teaching English, attached to the Directorates of Education in some states. There are also District Centers for training teachers at the school level in a few states. At the university level, there are ELT Cells in some universities and they were started in the 1980s.

15.9 LET'S SUM UP

1. The Kothari Commission endorsed the three language formula recommended by the conference of chief ministers held in 1961.
2. The Kothari Commission recommended that English be taught as a library language and as a language skill and not its literature. This was in line with the international thinking in the 50's and 60's when the structural syllabus was introduced in India.
3. The National Policy on Education (NEP) was published in 1968 and as a follow up the 1986 NEP and POA were also published.
4. The Acharya Ramamurthy Commission appointed to review the 1986 policy observed that specification of objectives must be very clearly stated for teaching different languages, the duration for which they are to be taught, and the proficiency expected in each language. This committee too recommended a changeover from English to the regional languages.
5. The Curriculum Development committee recommended that courses for teaching English, particularly M.A. level be diversified, to include M.A. in English language teaching, M.A. modern English language etc.
6. Several other attempts like autonomous colleges, open universities, teacher training programmes are also attempted in various parts of the country. But all these attempts have not produced any improvement in the quality of education. The global forces have started taking over English education in the country. There is a craze for English education, particularly in terms of communication skills but the universities and colleges have not changed their pattern of education. This has resulted in English teaching moving out of the universities and colleges.

More and more coaching centers, English teaching institutions and institutions teaching communication skills have mushroomed all over the country. The educational system as such is yet to respond for the changing market conditions.

15.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Outline the major recommendations of the Kothari Commission. (See 15.2)
2. What are the basic features of the National Policy on Education 1968 & NEP, POA 1986? (See. 15.3)
3. What are the major recommendations of the Acharya Ramamurthy commission 1990? (See 15.4)
4. What are the major recommendations of the Study Group Report on the Teaching of English? (See 15.4)
5. What is CDC and what are its major recommendations? (See 15.6)

BRAOU

UNIT 16 - THE ENGLISH BOOM IN INDIA

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 English in its identity phase—a profile
- 16.2 New roles assigned to English in Contemporary India
- 16.3 Let's sum up
- 16.4 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

16.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- outline the expanding network of English education and to show that in spite of the recommendations of the various committees, English has become the dominant language. English has spread to several domains like education, print media communication, bureaucracy, commercial and social lives.
- make the students critically examine the widening gap between the English knowing elite and the non English knowing people; in a way, English has uprooted India and Indians, but at the same time it has given Indians several advantages.

16.1 ENGLISH IN ITS IDENTITY PHASE—A PROFILE

- a) **The profile** The two important legacies of the British rule in India are (i) a full-blown bureaucratic network, and (ii) an institutionalized English education within the framework of the Macaulayan system of education; in both, English continues to be the dominant language. In the post-1947 India, the Indian elite who struggled to oust the British have established their power over the vast majority. According to the 1981 census only 23.31 per cent constitute the urban population and that percentage includes the migrant workers from rural areas, labourer and other poorer sections of the society who are either illiterate or barely educated (school dropouts). This section of the population does not come under the English-educated category. Thus, the urban population itself is a minority and the English-knowing section of the urban population is a minuscule minority. It is this section of the population that controls education and the bureaucratic network through their knowledge of English and the printed word. Education feeds into the domain of bureaucracy which in turn governs and regulates education. Academic, intellectual and literary activities are overlapping and interdependent domains in the unified communication space of the written word, and bureaucracy too intersects the field of the printed word in the form of government and control.

The full-blown bureaucratic network covers the socioeconomic areas of governance and planning in the form of advisory boards, committees and commissions, ministries and the various government departments, the legislature and the judiciary, government controlled non-governmental set-ups like the educational institutions, autonomous bodies, trusts, banks, registered companies, social organisations, and societies, etc. In all these areas, the 'Baboo culture' continues though the country is ruled by Indians for Indians; the 'ruling Indians' have only replaced the British rulers but the system has not changed. The

'ruling Indians' expect the same 'most humbly beg' variety from the ruled. However, attempts to accommodate Indian languages in education and administration have started creating a 'hybrid tradition' that is yet to get stabilized.

There has been a phenomenal expansion in areas like education and mass communication in the recent past. There is an international market for English and materials in English in print as well as electronic media; and newspapers, newsmagazines, advertising agencies have all the paraphernalia, 'producers' and —consumers'. Mass media, information technology and communication network have brought about radical changes in national and international contexts; access to the international market has brought in new pressures on post-1947 India. All these developments have reinforced English and English education and there is a great demand for English and Western technology which in turn re-introduces English as an international/second language. India is forced to catch up with the West and English in India has become more 'internationally oriented' than 'British oriented'.

The boom in literary areas like Indian Writing in English and in intellectual areas like Indian culture and philosophy, post-colonial studies, herbology and alternative medicines demonstrates that outside India, 'India' sells very well in English.

While all these 'explosions' are taking place in the English knowing world, the 76.69 per cent of the rural population combined with the illiterate section of the 23.31 per cent of the urban population is becoming more and more illiterate. These people, who were brought up in the oral traditions of the social milieu, became illiterate even in their mother tongue with the introduction of the printed word. They again became illiterate vis-à-vis English and English education; now they are becoming, 'incomputerate', an even worse disadvantage than illiteracy and English illiteracy; 'computeracy' is again pushing them to the margins.

The gap is widening; as in the socio-economic area, in the knowledge and use of English, there is an ever increasing (de)cline of intelligibility in each domain. There are levels of English-knowing bureaucrats, educationists, business persons, media persons, teachers and students, writers and readers; there is a continuum of English: from 'Bazaar-English', 'Butler-English', 'Baboo-English' to 'near native English'. Where there is quantitative increase, qualitative decline is unavoidable.

In the social domain, particularly in the recent past, English has induced what may be called the 'imitative function'—a tendency to imitate the successful English-educated elite. As a result, quite a few people have started using English even in areas where it is neither necessary nor appropriate. The 'imitative use' has an element of parody in the case of some but in most cases it shows the desire to be successful in life.

English and English education have been with a section of the urban population so long that it has uprooted quite a few, and the result is that they are neither here nor there; this section of the population has no mother tongue and no cultural roots in the conventional sense; they are comfortable only with English but that English is not 'native'. These displaced people—linguistically and otherwise—are in their 'camps' or 'settlements' in the urban areas and such settlements are on the increase. There is nothing derogatory about displacement or the hybrid culture that is being created; maybe, these are prod-

ucts of attempts to integrate cultures and languages; maybe, such people do not adopt the modular strategies of the common people.

- b) **The Data Domains:** Bureaucracy, education, print-media communication, and commercial, intellectual/literary writing, and social

Specimen I: Bureaucracy: Resolution passed by the Kandla

Port Advisory Committee on 8th June, 1950

(Source: *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50, Volume 10*)

Year: 1950

III. Town Planning

1. The Committee resolved that:

- (a) pending finalisation of arrangements mentioned in sub-paras below planning should continue under present arrangements;
- (b) to avoid costly mistakes, it is necessary to utilise the best available talent and to the fullest extent, even though that might involve extra expenditure of a few lakhs of rupees;
- (c) the services of a firm of unquestioned repute should be utilised for the preparation of all plans of the entire area, on a well co-ordinated and well-planned basis,
- (d) Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Chairman of the Committee, be entrusted to settle terms with M/s. International Basic Economic Corporation. This firm, in the opinion of the Committee, are not merely a firm of town planning consultants, but have on their staff well-known experts on water supply, drainage, power supply, road building, etc. and are therefore in a position to evolve a well balanced Master Plan on a sound basis of overall economy.

2. The Committee further resolved that a substantial portion of the cost of town planning should be borne by the Government of India, a moiety being borne by the Sindhu Resettlement Corporation

Specimen II: Print-media communication

(Source: *The Times of India* —

Special supplement of some news items from 1921 to 1960)

Year: 1956

A film review

ON THE INDIAN SCREEN

SHANTARAM'S 'JHANAK JHANAK'

DELIGHTS PACKED HOUSES

By Our Film Critic

February 1, 1956

Mr Shantaram's new picture, 'Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje,' produced and di-

rected by him, was premiered with considerable eclat at the Metro and the Royal Opera House in Bombay on Friday.

The picture stars Sandhya with Gopi Krishna in the romantic leads and a brilliant supporting caste including the famous character actor Keshavarao Date.

The story is a saga of the Indian dance. Supported by sumptuous sets of massive grandeur displaying a refined artistry of the highest order in colour as well as design.

A feast of Kathak at its best, displayed in a series of sparkling vignettes and gorgeous ensembles with delightful glimpses of occasional folk-dances. A truly brilliant movie. Entirely rewarding.

Specimen III: Literary-writing (Prose)

An ex-army General's foreword to a book about Indian Army

(Source: Dharam Pal (1961), *Traditions of the Indian Army*,

New Delhi: National Book Trust)

Year: 1961

Foreword

When respect for 'Traditions' and the observance of certain unwritten rules of Society seem to be on the wane, the publication of a book like this, the *Traditions of the Indian Army*, is indeed very timely. Respect for and the application of, 'Traditions', in the things we say and do in life in the service of our Motherland do help build esprit de corps and this is helpful in stimulating the spirit of loyalty and team work thus producing efficiency all round. Mere 'talking' and 'reading' of traditions alone will not help in any way. We must be their practical respecters and not just theoretical devotees.

This is the very first book of its kind I have seen so far. The Officers in our army today, old and young — Indeed our youth as a whole, owe a deep debt of gratitude to the author, Dr Dharam Pal, for this yeoman service he has done them and to those millions to come after. For the publication of this book the author certainly has done a great research and wide study. Its pages are a crowded gallery of the accounts of heroic deeds of our grand soldiers, past and present, on and off the battlefields all the world over, with a clear evaluation of the characteristics of the various classes of our people who are members of this glorious Team — Our Army.

I do hope this book will be read very widely by our people everywhere, for they should know what stuff our gallant Officers and Men are made of and what they should do to see that standards are kept higher than before. I do hope too that a copy of *Traditions of the Indian Army* will have a place in every library in our Country.

I earnestly hope that our youth of today will, by reading this book, be inspired to emulate the spirit of devotion to duty, selflessness in their service to the country and preparedness to make every kind of sacrifice for the cause of the country, so inherent in every Officer and Man, in all that they will do as architects of the India to be - a Land of plenty and peace for all.

K.M. CARIAPPA,

Roshanara

Mercara

May 24, 1961

Specimen IV :Print-media communication

A letter published in a newspaper

(Source: *The Times of India* 13 January, 1961)

Year: 1961

TO

The Editor

The Times of India

Sir,-The Five-Year Plans of our nation are at present being launched on April Fool's day, which surely is not a very auspicious beginning for them. Would it not be a better idea to launch them at the time of Diwali-Laxmi pooja, when the Goddess of Prosperity is worshipped and propitiated?

13 January, 1961

G.B. Singh

Specimen V: Commercial (An advertisement)

(Source: *The Eastern Economist*. An English Journal

published from New Delhi, vol. 55, no. 17, Oct. 23, 1970)

Year: 1970

YOUR CARGO

in our Safe deposit vault! Air transportation is not just for small goods. We're anxious to tell you that we carry heavy and bulky cargoes across oceans and continents with skill, care and speed.

We uplift heavy and massive items of machinery, ships spares and generators, computers and other delicate equipment, requiring very special handling

On our palletised flights we carry seven thousand kilos on three pallets, all cabin loaded. In addition, we carry four thousand kilos in our holds.

If you're fighting for time, contact us. We'll fly your consignment on our palletised service swiftly, safely, sufficiently. Use Air-India and profit!

Cargo by

AIR-INDIA

Specimen VI: Bureaucracy

An official notice

CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
HYDERABAD 500007

29 December 1988

NOTICE

The physical stock verification of furniture in each room in the Hostels will be taken up on Saturday 31st December 1988. Participants occupying those rooms where the physical stock verification is not taken so far, are requested to be available to the persons doing the stock verification that day between 10.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.

(Signed)

REGISTRAR

Notice Boards (Hostels)

Specimen VII: Education

An undergraduate student's answer

(Source: Answer-sheets from the second year B.Sc. pre-final examination in English of a degree college in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh)

Year: 1988

Raju was the hero of R.K. Narayan's 'The Guide'. He was born in Malgudi. He studied in a Pyol School but he stopped in middle. He studied the book of life. His mother was his natural teacher. She told him many moral stories. He acquired knowledge from books & newspapers.

Raju was very intelligent. He used to know the interest of the tourists and lie also showed interest in those things. He used to know the tourists Economic status by seeing them once.

Raju was a passive hero. Things were happening in his life. He did not plan out anything in his life. They were just happened like that. He didn't want to become a tourist guide lie didn't want to become a Saint but when lie was sitting in his railway shop people used to ask him about the tourist places and their importance. Like that gradually he became a guide and he showed interest in the Tourists interest. He became very famous as Tourist Guide.

As a guide he met Rosie & Marco. He liked Rosie very much. She is not beautiful but she is pleasant. Marco was not bothered about Rosie. Raju showed interest in Rosie. He showed her the Cobra dance and he appreciated her art. So Rosie became closer to Raju. But lie did not have any interest in her art. He loved her sincerely.

Raju after some time became an Economist and wanted to make money of Rosie's art. He acted like a manager. He showed interest in her money than her (lance. He spent all money for graudier. He was imprisoned for forgering Rosie's signature.

After coming from the prison lie was sitting on the bank of Sarayu. People thought lie was a saint and gave him much importance as a saint. So he became a saint without his opinion. But after becoming a saint lie wanted to be

a saint. He wanted to lead a simple life. He started a school for the children of the village in temple. When rains were not true the Shopkeepers of the village increased the prices of everything and villagers thought that a saint like Raju observes fast then the rains will come. Villagers went ask Raju. Although lie was not a saint lie observed fast for the rain to conic :

Raju was intelligent, lover, economist. Relationship between Raju & Rosie was money. Like this the Tourist Guide Raju became a Saint without his knowledge.

Specimen VIII: Social

A personal letter by an educated Indian (B.A.L.L.B.)
to a friend, another Indian

(Source: Personal correspondence)

Year: 1990

B — —

30th Jan

Dear A — —

How have you done your Exams? Its long time since I have received a letter from you. Are you still busy? Did you go home?

I have got the interview later. The interview is on 12th Feb. I will come there in 12th morning at around 9.30 or 10 AM. If I am not troubling you I will come and keep my things in your room and have a wash. I am planning to go back the same day. If it is not possible I may have to stay for a day. I have written a letter to R — — to inform P — — to let me stay for a day. Happy that I will be meeting you all.

How are you. How are you progressing your Ph.D. I am sure you will be at least 50 per cent released after M.A. exams, When will you get the results. I pray God that you get a I Class. What news from your side. Hope to get a letter before I come there. Meet you on 12th, Convey my regards to A — —

Specimen IX: Print-media communication

An extract from an editorial

(Source: *The Statesman*, Friday, May 10, 1991, p. 8)

Year: 1991

Reprieve in Bihar

The Centre's decision not to take any action in Patna at this stage must be accorded a welcome, for any move to dismiss Mr Lallu Prasad Yadav or to postpone the elections would only have created misgivings about New Delhi's motives besides making martyrs of criminals. This is not, of course, to deny that Bihar has become notorious for its lawlessness and that the situation on the eve of the general election inspires little faith in the custodians of the democratic process. Pre-poll violence picked up alarmingly with the killing

of Nagina Rai and the murderous attack on Mr. L.K. Advani, with a belligerent Chief Minister not helping to mend matters with the inflammatory statements that pay scant heed to the code of conduct, and with his deployment of a massive number of home guards personnel whose credentials are suspect. But though this reckless attitude first drew the Election Commission's attention, the Centre's earlier reported plan either to dismiss the Janata Dal Ministry or to postpone the polls was not prompted by any altruism either. In fact, the efforts by the Union Minister of state for Home Affairs, Mr Subodh Kant Sahay, to take drastic steps may have been prompted by his inability to enthruse voters in his home Constituency of Ranchi, while Mr. Chandra Shekhar's critic claims that he hoped to prolong the political instability by delaying the election of the 54 members that Bihar sends to the Lok Sabha.

(c) *What the data shows: Some observations:* Most of the features noticed during the earlier phase (1904-47) are also found during this phase. In addition, the expansion within some domains and the absence of the British as interlocutors, show other significant features.

Bureaucratic correspondence continues to manifest the remnants of the British era though there are attempts 'to waive the formality' and to do away with the 'humbleness vocabulary'; but the absence of alternative conventions cause inconsistency. Sometimes 'Esquire' and sometimes the name with 'ji' are used. Specimen I (Appendix, Ph. V) is an example of two interlocutors who share Hindi as a common language trying to evolve new conventions; it also shows that English has a status value for politicians and others involved in any work channelized through the government. The resolution passed by the Kandla Port Advisory Committee (Sp. I) is another example of the bureaucratic style; it consists of long sentences with passive constructions: should be utilised; should be borne; a French word 'moiety' that belongs to the legal register is used.

An official notification issued by the CIEFL (Sp. VI) is also full of passive constructions. Cliched expressions and odd usages peculiar to the bureaucratic domain since its inception in India are found in the notice: physical stock verification of furniture; are requested to be available; is not taken so far; those rooms where; doing the stock verification.

The specimens given in the domain of education clearly illustrate the (de)cline of intelligibility; the low point is seen in Specimen VII:

They were just happened like that

when rains were not true ...

villagers went ask Raju

He studied the book of life.

Raju was a passive hero.

Raju was intelligent, lover, economist.

Relationship between Raju and Rosie was money.

He used to know the tourists Economic status by seeing them once.

It is full of u-comprehended concepts and mistakes in the use of words and sentences.

Specimen VIII and Specimen II (Appendix, Ph. V) are examples of informal letters that are low on the cline:

Its long time since I have ...

If I am not troubling you I will come...

How are you progressing your Ph. D.

...the places where the schools are there...

I pray God that you get 1 class.

The invites aren't ready but am wtg ...the worse part of it

My parents 'approve but don't really approve' so you see its quite difficult!

Love lots,

The AIR INDIA advertisement (Sp. V) illustrates the use of English for commercial purposes at the international level; it is high on the scale and shows sophisticated salesmanship.

The other ones are not very sophisticated; maybe they are meant for the local market.

The specimen from the print-media communication shows that Indian users of English are able to adapt the language to the needs of the situation and evolve a suitable style. Specimen II, a review of an Indian film, shows 'verbosity' and 'pomposity'—qualities found in the English of the subjects of the ex-colonies of England: with éclat; a saga of the Indian dance; sumptuous sets of massive grandeur; sparkling vignettes and gorgeous ensembles.

On the other hand, Specimen IV, is more balanced; there are no oddities though the sentiment expressed is Indian; so is Specimen IX.

Specimen III clearly shows the Indian identity of the writer since nationalistic pride is expressed in relation to the Indian army; otherwise, there is nothing particularly Indian as far as the language is concerned.

Enough has been written about the intellectual/literary writing that has been subjected to 'creative bending' in order to create an Indian milieu; often a blending of Indian words, symbols and images with the English linguistic system is used. This represents the creative use of English. An expanding international market for Indian writing in English has generated more creativity in this domain; even here, linguistic features—especially at the level of grammar—are less significant than the subject matter expressed. In creative and intellectual writing comprehensibility depends on the writer's ability to adapt English to suit the subject matter and the inability to do so results in ineffective texts.

Check your progress

1. During the East India Company days English was restricted only to the political domain, that too influenced by Persian conventions of writing. Then, during the later days of the company, it entered the bureaucratic domain and the petition register.
2. After independence in spite of the 'Angrezi Hatao' movements in the north, English education and the English language have spread like wild fire, spreading even in the semi-urban areas.
3. During the close of the century, English medium schools are found in every street corner and the job market depends on one's communication skills in English. So education has become totally market driven and mostly career oriented courses are in demand.
4. The study of English literature is restricted only to certain courses at the de-

gree and post graduate level courses. The opening up of the economy, and the advent of multi-national companies have changed the national and global scenario.

5. The English language was an instrument for the setting up of a State called India by the British but the very plurality i.e. India, necessitates the use of English in the Indian sub-continent. The constitution of India is written in English; all the reports of the commissions are written in English. English functions as the base for bureaucracy, judiciary, academic work science and technology, intellectual and management activities, and as the medium even in agricultural university.

16.2 NEW ROLES ASSIGNED TO ENGLISH IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Reformulation of the roles assigned to English in contemporary India

Why do Indians need English in independent India? What are Indian learners going to do with English and English education in post-independence India? Are there new needs related to the changing conditions in the present-day world?

- (a) **Market-driven utilitarian function:** Learners of English in India know that English is *not* the only language for shaping one's character, for developing aesthetic sense, for cultivating creative and critical thinking, or for getting 'civilized'! All these functions were/have been/can be more effectively performed by our own languages used in India. Indian languages and their literature have a very much humanizing tradition. We do not need English for these purposes.

English is necessary for *mobility, social and economic purposes, for job opportunities*; English is the language that *opens the doors of a global market*. As an international language, English has a lot of 'surrender value' throughout the world and learners of English can cash in on that. That is why there is a great demand for courses in *Spoken English, Effective Writing, Business English, Management English, English for Information Technology, Technical Writing, Medical Transcription*, etc. The market for literary English and English literature based on humanistic ideology and liberal education is fast dwindling, making such efforts meaningless!

- (b) **Welfare-driven social function:** Learners of English in India have realized that English is a 'window on the world'—an access to the growing fund of knowledge in science and technology. As the Study Group Report says, '... with our long tradition in the use of English, we should be able to exploit the richness of this language to the advantage of major Indian languages'. The English language has all the necessary information in any branch of knowledge—agriculture, economics, commerce, business, stock markets, consumer products, history, space-technology, bio-technology, etc.—which is readily available (quite often at the click of the mouse on the internet). English is an 'exploding language', in a world of 'information explosion'. We need to profit from the stock of knowledge and information available in English.

Indian languages are rich in certain areas like philosophy, religion, literature, etc., and English is *not* going to replace Indian languages in the areas of inti-

macy. English can never be the language of intimacy or *home-language* in areas such as religious discourses or prayer; we cannot cry or laugh in English! English is the *market-language* or *street-language*—the language of transaction, of modernization and *not* westernization.

We need English to make agriculture in India more technologically modern. That is why we have retained English as the language of instruction in our agricultural universities though English is not the language of agriculture in India. In management and technology, we need English and that is why we have retained English as the medium of instruction in our management and engineering courses in the universities and colleges, IIMs, IITs and IIITs.

We need to use the resources of English to enrich the major Indian languages; we need to activate the 'process of percolation' from 'lab to the land' by using English as a source language. English should play a *catalytic role* or a *social-welfare* as well as a *social-transformation* role in contemporary India and not a literary role as in the days of the British Raj. An 'interface' between Indian languages and English can be to the advantage of the vast majority of non-English knowing people in India, who, at present, are exploited by the English-knowing minority in urban areas. Rural India should get the technological advantage which is now only with 'English India'; this alone can empower the masses.

The teaching and learning of English in India should become an agent of social change and produce a class of Indians not only *in blood and color but in tastes, in opinions, in attitudes and in intellect—a class of Indians who will be socially responsible, productive, and committed to the cause of nation-building.*

As the Study Group Report points out, "to use English as a 'source' language with a view to enriching our languages, it will be necessary to produce competence at high academic levels in the style of translation". We need to produce not only translated versions of the best books available in English to help those who are not able to profit from the books in English but also create original texts in Indian languages, particularly in science, technology and commerce

- (c) **Ideology-driven identity-projection function:** Learners of English in India have realized that English is necessary to talk about their own identity, their languages and literatures, their cultures and values and their land and contributions so that the world outside (not only outside India but also outside their own state or linguistic community) may know who these are. This 'projection of one's identity' can be effectively done only in an international language like English.

This 'identity-projection' function, as was done during the struggle for independence, becomes one of the important objectives of teaching and learning English in India. This actually reverses one of the roles that English has played so far, being a 'window on the world': we must use English to create a 'window on India' so that the world can see India in a proper perspective. India is not just a land of Maharajas, godmen, and snake charmers! It is the land of Panini, Bharthari, Nagarjuna, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Tolkappiyar, Āryabhatta, Bhaskara, Jayadeva, and a host of others—all intellectual giants—who can engage the best in Western thought. But the image of India has not been properly projected.

This involves an in-depth understanding of our own country, its culture, heritage and values, and a massive translation project—translating from Indian languages to English—a project that has to be incorporated in our educational system. This 'translation project' is not confined to translating from one language to another. It is a project meant to interpret India to the world outside; it is meant to *translate India to the West*. It is also for translating and interpreting one's own State or community to others even within the country so that a proper understanding and interaction may take place within the country. Only Indians who are competent in English can do it effectively. There is also a very big market for this—like the one for Indian writing in English.

These three important aspects must be the guiding principles in formulating the programmes for teaching English in India. They are (to restate them):

- (a) *The market-driven utilitarian function* (i.e. taking into account the global market English must be taught and learnt for mobility and utilizing opportunities),
- (b) *The welfare-driven social function* (i.e. using English as a 'source' for enriching India and Indian languages, and the lives of the people) and,
- (c) *The 'ideology-driven identity projection' function* (i.e. translating and interpreting India, within and outside the country).

To meet these demands, it is essential to design various courses that can satisfy different kinds of 'consumers' at various levels of learning. A sincere attempt must be made to find alternative methods and evaluation systems which will promote the 'alternative ideology' that has been outlined above. This will be like a 'Second Freedom Movement' involving a large number of men and women—professionally committed and competent teachers, materials producers who can write effective programmes for teaching and testing—and finding methodologies that are appropriate to our own conditions. In short, English teaching must result in social transformation.

For this, we should evolve a model that will capture the *synergic* processes of language learning. Based on the Indian ways of language learning—appropriate and correct speaking on the basis of oral/aural practice, memorization and recitation that is not just mechanical but based on the principles of re-citing and de-scribing of texts, thinking, enquiring, and 'contemplative communication'.

16.3 LET'S SUM UP

1. After independence English and English education have become well entrenched in the lives of urban and semi-urban Indians. There is a great demand for English medium institutions and communication skills in English. The growth in quality has resulted in the diffusion of English and there are varieties and varieties of English in India.
2. The study of English literature has declined but the Mecaulyan system of education continues. The colleges and universities have not changed their system of education formulated during the colonial period but the market forces outside are driving English education. People want more career oriented communication based courses because of the market demand.
3. English has become the base language for a number of domains like education, bureaucracy, communication in private companies, print media and elec-

tronic media.

4. In spite of all these developments for the vast majority of Indians English continues to be a 'drawing room' language and not an intimate language. Indians do not cry or pray in English but in the areas outside their homes English is the dominant language.
5. Creative writing in English flourished in India; it got international recognition. Writers like R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Kushwant Singh became internationally recognized and the market for Indian writing in English expanded.

16.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Outline the domains and the features in the use of English in India particularly after independence. (See 16.2)
2. What are the roles assigned to English in contemporary India? (See 16.3)

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BLOCK V: THE GLOBALIZATION PHASE

Introduction

The last block of four units on this course is on globalization of English. This block outlines how after the IT revolution English has become an international commodity like oil and the micro chip. It also outlines the effects of globalization on English and the impact of globalization on India. The British empire has disappeared but the empire of the English language has been established from Australia to South America, from China to Peru and it is estimated about two billion users of English are found all over the world. This has resulted in English becoming big business, with more employment opportunities in different parts of the world. It also shows how India with its colonial legacy has acquired the English language and now Indians have an advantage over most other countries in the world. Information technology, the internet, multinational companies and English language have become part of contemporary life. As a result even Indian writing in English is flourishing with a worldwide market for it. It also outlines how the English language itself has become more like a sea that receives tributaries from every region in the world; the result is there are several varieties of English in the world; they are called "New Englishes" and the English that Indians speak and write has also become a distinct variety not only in terms of its accent but also in vocabulary and in style.

UNIT 17 OVERVIEW: THE CURRENT SCENE

Structure

- 17.0 Objective
 - 17.1 From Industrial Revolution to IT Revolution
 - 17.2 English and Information Technology
 - 17.3 English and Culture
 - 17.4 Let's sum up
 - 17.5 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers
-

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- explain that English has become an international language and a global commodity.
 - describe the fact that communication skills in English are very important for mobility and career prospects.
 - discuss how the world has become a global village as a result of the IT revolution and that English has become the language of IT revolution.
-

17.1 FROM INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TO IT REVOLUTION

There was a time when life was more village—centered, family—centered and community—centered; in simple settlements family units interacted with each other to meet the needs within the community and skills were handed down from generation to generation. Life was rural and more settled; feudalism was an accepted way of life with 'leaders' of families, communities and regions becoming more important with assumed roles of protecting these units. Imagination and perception was based on local experience with a desire for universalizing the local perceptions.

The Industrial Revolution brought with it the resultant *Urbanization*, *Consumerism* and *Capitalism*. Life became urban and migrative; it got more repetitive and mechanical with the assembly-line culture where individuals were trained in repetitive jobs in factories and workshops; the institution called 'office' or 'workshop' came into existence with men going to work in offices and factories. Men and materials constituted the capital. All this resulted in more routinization and structuring. The result was an increase in the pressures of urban living as depicted in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* where the individual becomes a machine. Perceptions based on regional experience were universalised and the groups that wielded power imposed their ideas on others in the name of universalisation. That was how *Eurocentric* concepts became universal in the rest of the world and the industrial revolution itself became a universal concept even in areas where there was no industrial revolution!

Technology has shifted repetitive tasks to machineries like robots, computers etc and humans are left with more time for self articulation, critical and creative thinking; concepts became the capital and the home became the office because of the Internet. Men and women get equal opportunities in the post modern world where they are free from the pressures of the modernist era. Life and perceptions became more global. The Internet is projected as the solution to all problems, particularly by the West. It is estimated that 80 per cent of all websites use English when less than ten per cent of the world's population speaks the language and that the USA has far more computers than the rest of the world.

of the world combined! (Source: UNDP's 1999 Human Development Report). That is how the IT revolution is made global and universal.

The English language has become a part of the IT revolution. The globalization of English is an extraordinary tale of a language that came from nowhere to conquer the world. Two Thousand years ago, English was confined to a handful of savages and now forgotten tribes on the shores of N.W. Europe. There was no English in England. Today it is spoken or written, in some form or another, by perhaps three billion people around the world; of the English users, three hundred and fifty million—nearly one tenth of the world's population—use it as mother tongue, and the rest as a foreign language or as a second language. It is the only language widely spoken and written and widely scattered than any other language in the world. Actually English has become a global commodity and as essential as petrol (gas) and micro chip. The English language is also the language of the internet.

17.2 ENGLISH IN THE INFO-AGE

The information explosion in the world has happened in the English language. Even earlier English was the language of science and technology though other languages like German and Russian competed with it. But now the IT revolution has made English a global phenomenon. The bulk of the software is in English and all the IT giants like IBM, Microsoft, etc are based in English speaking countries. Other languages find it difficult to compete with English in this new phase of IT revolution. Even countries like China and Japan—those who are strong in technology and computer hardware—are forced to learn English because English contains all information regarding almost all disciplines in the world; so it becomes easier for anyone to learn one language in order to get a good job and be mobile.

Since the world has become very dependent on computers and the English language has become the language of the internet, it has become very essential for anyone to be in touch with the contemporary world. Computer literacy and English literacy have become inseparable and interdependent.

Check your Progress

1. English has become a global phenomenon. The world has moved from agrarian revolution to the industrial revolution and from that stage to the stage of IT revolution.
2. IT revolution is based on computers and the English language has become the language of computers. Computer literacy and English literacy have become inseparable. Like petrol or gas and the micro chip the world is now totally dependent on English language. About three billion people use English in some form or the other; it is not only widely used but also scattered all over the world.
3. So it has become essential for anyone to learn English, particularly communication skills in English, to get better job opportunities and be mobile, both nationally and internationally.

17.3 ENGLISH AND CULTURE

According to some estimates there are about seventy million users of English in India, more than the number of speakers of English in Britain. Their English ranges from *pukka* Oxbridge accent to bazaar English, butler English and obscure pidgins of the street. India has remade English with many varieties and voices. Like what Indians did with Persian when it came into contact with Indian languages, they have done something similar to British English. With the increasing number of English medium schools, colleges and universities the number of Indians using English also increased enormously; politicians, bureaucrats, academicians, lawyers, me-

dia people, businessmen and many others started using English and there was no contact with the native variety; this has resulted in the remaking of English in different ways. Since English has become the defacto language of official and academic life in every sphere of activity, the speakers of English outnumber the speakers of even some Indian languages like Assamese or Punjabi.

Normally a language goes with its culture but English is a unique case. Since it has become international, it is not attached to any particular culture. Americans for example detached it from British culture and made it their own but for most Americans it is their first language; the same thing is true of Australia. But a number of African and Asian countries have made English a vehicle of their own culture. A number of words of Indian origin have found their way into English since the colonial days; words like *Brahmins*, *curry*, *raja*, *coolie*, *bungalow*, *pundit*, *toddy*, and many other words like *shanti*, *guru*, *memsahib* are found in English. Indian writing in English is full of idiomatic translations like—you donkey's husband, flower-bed, etc. Many other expressions like *ace-defector*, *playback-singer*, *newspaper walah*, and many more like *pin drop silence*, *welcome address*, *do the needful* etc. are found in common usage. Oxford English Dictionary lists about nine hundred such words. Hobson—Jobson: a glossary of Anglo Indian words is a classic summary of the mingling of the two cultures during the colonial period. It records thousands of such usages.

In turn English has influenced almost all the Indian languages. Thousands of English words have been used in Indian languages as though they are words found in Indian languages—words like *bulb*, *switch*, *motor*, *court*, *bus*, *auto*, *train*, *lorry*, *pump*, etc. have become a part of the basic vocabulary in all Indian languages. English has also affected many literary forms in Indian languages. English is responsible for creating forms like short story, novel etc in Indian language. It has become a two way process—the Indianization of English and the Englishization of Indian languages; it is a continuous process which goes on and with the onset of globalization these processes have become all the more vigorous. Indians going abroad and the non-resident Indians coming to India have not only narrowed down the space between places but also the space between English and Indian languages. Presently even rural areas, under the influence of films and the electronic media have also come under this process. Thus, English has become one more tongue through which India expresses its multi varied culture.

17.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. From the Industrial Revolution to the IT Revolution it has been a very rapid change in succession affecting the lives of people and their languages. The IT revolution has made the world shrink and the world has become a global village.
2. Oil or gas, the micro chip and the English language have become international commodities; English has become big business.
3. Anyone who is an active participant in the IT revolution must have a knowledge of English because English has become the language of computers. All information is stored in English. It is the language of the internet. So people throughout the world, from China to Peru, have started learning English.
4. This enormous growth in numbers has resulted in de-linking English from its original English culture. Many countries have remade English and made it their own.
5. Indians too have made English their own and the English of Indians has got many varieties and varieties within varieties. In terms of accent and vocabulary one can hear from almost a native to a bazaar and butler variety. Each linguistic region in India shows a marked regional colouring in its English.
6. A number of Indian words have been borrowed into English and thousands of

English words have been Indianised and used in Indian languages as part of the basic vocabulary.

7. Indians migrating abroad and non-resident Indians coming to India have reduced not only the global space but also the space between English and Indian languages. Most Indians are using a mixed style—a kind of fusion and this is found even in the print media.

17.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Outline the transition from the Industrial Revolution to the IT Revolution and show their impact on the lives and languages of people (See 17.2.)
2. What is the connection between English and information technology? (See 17.3)
3. A language is not separated from its culture; this is not true in the case of English. Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons. (See 17.4)

BRAOU

UNIT 18 – GLOBALISATION AND ENGLISH

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Globalisation and its impact on communication
- 18.2 Globalisation and its impact on the English language.
- 18.3 Communication skills in English and its market value.
- 18.4 Let's sum up
- 18.5 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

18.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the globalisation of the world and its impact on communication and communication in the English used in India.
- inform you of the immense potentialities in the market that a good competence in English can bring.
- make you aware of the importance of communication skills in English.

18.2 GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION

It is said that the world has become a global village; this means that the information revolution has brought people closer and has reduced the space between continents and countries. It is possible for one to have breakfast in Delhi, lunch in Hong Kong and dinner in San Francisco. The jet age combined with the internet has revolutionised communication. The TV box brings the whole world into your home and the telephone along with the cell phone has made communication simple and mobile. The internet can be connected with the help of your desktop, laptop or palmtop. One can do it at home, in the office or at the beach, even on a moving train or bus. There is software available that can read out your daily mail to you as you drive to your office and one need not depend on snail mail for communication. There are indeed very few places on earth where you cannot connect should you have the need to.

One need not go to the library to search for books and articles; you can borrow books from any library through the internet, using the interlibrary loan system. One need not go to a mall or a food store to do the daily shopping; you can do it on the internet on the virtual malls and shopping centres. The order that you place is promptly executed and the goods are delivered at your door step. One need not even go to a temple to worship since softwares like e-seva and e-puja are available; just one click will bring the lord on the screen and another click does the puja. You can listen to music while driving, talk on the phone while ironing and, if you have the concentration, you can do several things simultaneously. The digital world is really amazing.

This kind of technology—enabled communication gives you more mobility, more ability, and more time to do several things in a day. It is possible to try and accomplish more than one task at a time. This potentiality increases one's capacity to make more money; as a result of the mobility, the economic prosperity increases manifold, depending on one's willingness to put in more effort.

18.2 GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language is meant for communication and for a greater understanding among people. The new information age, driven by the internet and other mechanical gadgets, has, in many ways, made English a preferred global language. Even countries that had a deep-rooted aversion for English are now opting for English. There is reportedly a rule in France that prohibits news papers and periodicals from using English words. In India there have been attempts to discard English in a strange sort of way but now even in the erstwhile British colonies, which replaced English with the native language as a medium of instruction in schools the cry seems to be "Bring back English". Some of the developed Asian economies are realising the importance of English. In China, in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, efforts are on to catch up with English. These countries are justifiably afraid that unless they master English, they will not be able to keep pace with the rest of the world, given the new global order of communication and information.

The Chinese government understands the potential demand from global out-sourcing of business processes through call centres is so large that it could literally wipe out the old disease of educated unemployment. Hence, it has adopted a national policy to make every student literate in English by the year 2008. Other nations have also figured this out and teaching English as a second language is a huge, multi million dollar industry across the globe. Outsourcing, call centres, medical transcription, legal transcription, multinational companies, and such emerging phenomena have increased the demand for communication skills in English.

Our success in the global economy depends on a good knowledge of English; fortunately Indians have natural and historical advantage with English. Linguistic experts confirm that Indians find it easier to learn English than the Chinese because most Indian languages are part of Indo-European family and share a number of features. This gives us natural ease with English and our competitive advantage. Thanks to the interactive English teaching either on the internet or through CD Roms. One can learn to speak English in three months. Many call centres and English teaching institutions in private sectors are employing these very tools for teaching English. A child even in a small town with internet access can now learn English from the best English teachers in the world; suddenly the field begins to look more level between a child in a small town and a child in a metro's elite public school.

India's information technology men and women have proved time and again the past ten years or so that a command over English is essential if one is to move ahead in this global village. Even in a nation like Japan—where the general belief is that English does not really enhance career prospects—Indians have not only excelled themselves, but have shown that language is an important tool. Whatever prejudices we had against English the fact is that English is on its way to being a language that most people will understand. Address a letter in English, and the chances are that it will find its destination; address it in Hindi or Arabic, the postal department may be foxed. English has become an international commodity like oil and the microchip. Even those who are very enthusiastic about selling India to the outside world, using commodities like the *Ayurveda* or *yoga* will have to do it only in English. Thus English has become synonymous with information technology and the internet.

The English language has a remarkable ability to absorb new words and coin new words. About two and a half centuries after Samuel Johnson wrote his English Dictionary, the language has "befriended" words from so many other languages. The latest revised edition of the concise

Oxford Dictionary of English includes hundreds of Indian words like "Hindustva", "Dada" (i.e., one's older brother), "Panchayat", "chai", "pani", "puri", and "dosa". Indian words form twenty percent of the borrowed words, as the third largest component after American and Australian English segments. Lord Macaulay introduced English in India about a hundred and eighty years ago to create 'Babus' for the British bureaucracy; now about seventy million Indians use the language, a number higher than in the UK. Strangely, even absolutely illiterate people use about four hundred borrowed words from English as part of their mother tongue, words like bulb, switch, court, motor, bus, fan etc. It only makes sense to capitalise on this strength of ours and pave the way for a rapid progress in this era of the internet.

The new information age has brought in a large number of new words that reflect the changing linguistic map. Words like *netizen*, *computeracy*, *computer literacy*, *surfing* and *browsing*, *data mining*, *search engine*, *down loading*, *trashing*, *inputting*, *technoscape*, *image making*, *cybercafe*, *cybercity*, *cyber feminism*, *virtual reality*, *televisuality*, *globality*, *dot com*, *technophobia*, etc have become part of the computer lexicon and are easily understood by people in the field.

Check your progress

1. The world has become a global village. The information revolution has changed the face and the fate of the world. People have become more mobile geographically and socially. As a result there is all round economic progress.
2. The English language has become the language of the internet and the language of the new information age. It has become a global language and it enhances one's career prospects. So everybody wants to learn English. People are prepared to spend money for learning English.
3. Indians have historical advantage in learning English because it has been there in the subcontinent for more than hundred and fifty years. They have a natural advantage because most indo-European family of languages have a number of common features with English. Languages like the Chinese or the Japanese are tone language and they find it difficult to learn English grammar and pronunciation. So India has to capitalise on this natural resource and go for English learning in a big way. More and more State Government's are introducing English from standard one but we need to build up a proper infrastructure for teaching and learning English.
4. Globalisation and information explosion has resulted in a number of new words that are being added to the English lexicon everyday. English borrows freely from many languages throughout the world. A number of Indian words are found in English.

18.3 COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH AND IT'S MARKET VALUE

English is used at least by seven hundred and fifty million people, and about half of them speak it as mother tongue. Some estimates have put that figure closer to one billion. Whatever the total, English is more widely scattered, more widely spoken and written, than any other language has ever been. It has become *the* language of the planet, the first truly global language. It is rightly said that the sun never sets on the English language.

Three quarters of the world's mail and its telexes and cables are in English; 85% of the internet transactions are in English. So are more than half the world's technical and scientific periodicals.

cals; it is the language of technology from Silicon valley to Shanghai. Nearly half of all business deals in Europe are conducted in English; The European Common Market has adopted Euro English as its common language. It is the language of sports and glamour: The official language of the Olympics and the Miss. Universe competition. Five of the largest broadcasting companies in the world (BBC, CNN, NBC, ABC, CBC) transmit in English to audiences that exceed one hundred million.

English has few rivals, but no equals. Neither Spanish, nor Arabic both international languages, have this global sway. Germany and Japan have, in matching the commercial and industrial vigour of the United States, achieved the commercial power, but the languages have been invaded by English. The United States has become the super power mainly because it uses English.

All these will ultimately mean that English is the language of communication—spoken and written. Very few people study English literature in order to master communication in English. Only those who are interested in the study of British, American, or other literatures in English take up the study of English literature as a specialised field. The study of English literature has a very limited market in the contemporary world—may be in the Universities and colleges where English literature is taught as a specialised subject. Though English was introduced in India basically for the study of literature, its market value has steeply gone down in the present day world. Only communication skills in English has the market value. Multinational companies, outsourcing centres like call centres ask for competence in everyday English and not in the study of English literature.

Communicative English concentrates on one's ability in using English in everyday context like the following—

1. English for social roles—greetings, introducing, interacting in social contexts etc.
2. Doing things in English—interviews, asking for information, narrating, requesting, ordering, explaining, placing an order etc.
3. Expressing attitudes—agreeing, disagreeing, apologizing, arguing, expressing one's point of view etc.
4. Participating in meetings, seminars, conferences, turn taking etc.
5. Accent sensitizing—listening and understanding English spoken in different ways like British accent, American accent, the African accent, the Indian accent etc.
6. Note making or note taking—form filling, writing letters, preparing notes, memos, orders, writing e-mail etc.
7. Writing slogans, advertisements, conducting campaigns, arranging events, etc.
8. Reference skills—looking up dictionaries, encyclopaedias, railway time tables, directories, etc.

The ability to use skills like the ones mentioned above are asked for in the market and not the ability to interpret a literary text. Communication skills in English have a world wide market because English is the language of technology, science, business and commerce, journalism and media, the internet and IT enabled services. If one is proficient in communicative English and if the accent is internationally intelligible the market is wide open. The gift of the gab in English can take one to all corners of the world.

Indians whose English is good teach English in different parts of the world. Some of them teach English even in the USA and UK because the written English of even those whose mother

tongue is English is not up to the mark. So there is a great demand for those who can teach practical day to day communication even in written English. There are other Indians who teach English in Africa, in the Middle East, in Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore etc. Multinational companies in India always look for people who are professionally competent and whose English is good. Thus English has an international as well as a national market.

18.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. Globalization and information explosion have affected human communication in a revolutionary way. More than the industrial revolution the advent of computers has affected all kinds of communication both internationally and nationally. The world has become a small place and it is shrinking. The internet with its worldwide web (www) has made it possible for anyone to reach any part of the world in a split second. Communication has become very fast and the speed has affected business, industries and knowledge explosion. Almost anything that you are looking for is available on the internet.
2. Like the microchip and petrol English has become an international commodity. Almost 85% of the computers use English. English has become the language of the media, both electronic and print whether it is Europe or China, Russia or South America English is the language that is heard and understood throughout the world. English is no longer the language of the British or Americans. It has become truly global.
3. As a result of globalisation and information explosion the English language has become very native and innovative. Many new words have been coined and a large number of words have been borrowed and absorbed in English. This has enriched English vocabulary and has enhanced its value.
4. Since it has become a global language it has a world wide market. The career prospects of English knowing people is also global. With multinational companies opening their branches all over the world and diversifying their interests English knowing people are in great demand. If one is professionally competent with a command of English the world market is wide open. That is why English knowing Indians are able to find lucrative jobs in the USA, in Europe and in several technologically advanced countries.
5. The focus now is on communication skills in English and not on the study of English literature. The study of English literature has become a specialised field and only those who are interested in it are taking it up because of the special interest; otherwise the market is for communication skills in English.

18.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. What is globalisation and what is its impact on communication?
World becomes small—world comes into drawing rooms—locality expands communication fast—people mobile—move to different parts—migration takes place geographically and socially—computers and internet—revolutionise communication. (Also see 18.2)
2. What is the impact of globalization on the English language?
English has become a global language—globalisation needs a global language—English performs that role—it is truly international—used in different parts—used

in different walks of life—language of internet—electronic media—of business and technology—absorbed words from different languages—created and coined new words—English is flexible—varieties of English like American and British—no one country can claim English as its language—(Also see 18.3)

3. Write a note on communication skills in English and its market value.

World wide market for English—market for literary study limited—market for communication skills (spoken and written)—very productive—multinational companies—media—business—technology—science—teaching communication skills—cross cultural communication—multi million dollar industry. (See also 18.4)

BRAOU

UNIT 19 - GLOBAL ENGLISH AND LOCAL CULTURES

Structure

19.0 Objectives

19.1 English has gone international

19.2 The tower of Babel

- i. Ebonics
- ii. Pidgin English
- iii. New Englishes (a) English in India
(b) The Pacific variety

19.3 Language and culture

- (a) Cockney (b) the American language (c) the Australian Twang
(d) English in Africa (e) Raggae (f) English/Hinglish etc (g) conclusion

19.4 Let's sum up

19.5 Self assessment questions (SAQs) and answers

19.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit is meant to

- make you aware of the effect of English on local languages and cultures, and the impact of local cultures on English.
- give you an idea of the nature of English as an international language.
- outline the new Englishes that are emerging as a result of globalisation of English.

19.2 ENGLISH HAS GONE INTERNATIONAL

There is an old Hindi proverb which says that "language changes every eighteen or twenty miles"; this is true of English too! Throughout the history of English there has been a tussle between the force of standardization and the forces of localization at both the written and spoken levels. Dictionaries and grammar books always attempt written standardization. It was Victorian England that projected the idea of "the Queen's English" a spoken standard to which all should aspire.

Despite the influence of television and radio, one can find a surprising number of regional varieties of spoken English even within the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia. People travel more and read novels but as George Bernard Shaw said that "it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him". The Received Pronunciation (RP)—the spoken standard of the upper middle class in London—is another standard that is projected; the BBC, first on radio, then on television, helps to reinforce the idea of standard English but there are other acceptable accents like, Irish, Edinburgh, Scottish, etc. Some phoneticians have demonstrated the clear differences between the RP of 50 years ago and the RP of today!

Language is always on the move. The war in Europe had brought Americans to several bases in the world. Along with Americans came Americanisms. The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945. This terrible event introduced new expressions into the English

language: *holocaust, fusion, fission, fallout, countdown, test site, fireball, mushroom, cloud, chain reaction*. There was also a process of commercial infiltration called *coca-colonialism*. This dependence on American technology, business and finance has introduced twenty thousand English words into regular use in Japan. Some Japanese words entered English. After the bomb—the *Cold War*—a phrase entered the dictionaries in 1947, marked the emergence of United States and the Soviet Union as two Super powers.

The influence of the movies on the spread of English was—and still is an influence now intensified by the world-wide American television programmes and advertising. Phrases like “try it, you’ll like it”, “does she, or doesn’t she?”, “it tastes like a cigarette should”, etc. The American way of life and with it the American language was exported to many parts of the world. Many American Presidents like Ronald Reagan from California, and George Bush from Texas have also influenced American English. The computer industry in Silicon valley coins a number of terms that are quickly adopted through out the English speaking world. Words like *interface, software, input, online, data processing, hi-tech, hacker, to access, diskette, modem*, have already entered the dictionary. Other languages like French and German have borrowed a number of computer terms. The Silicon valley story highlights a way in which technology influences society effortlessly.

English is no longer dependent on its British and American parents; it is now everyone’s second language and is often used in non English situations. An Italian pilot learns English to talk to ground control in Kuwait and India; a Russian might learn English to do research in Germany; an Indian doctor learns English to practice in Dubai. We have reached the age of global English. Some year ago, Global English was spoken only with two voices—British and American. Throughout the world people learnt either British English or American, the differences are essentially differences of accent, inflection, spelling and above all vocabulary: *apartment* versus *flat*, *buddy* versus *mate*, *candy* versus *sweets*, *diaper* versus *nappy*.

The first level of the global sway is to be found in the former British colonies in which English has become a second language. In Nigeria it is an official language; in Zambia, it is recognised as one of the state language; in Singapore, it is the major language of government and education; and in India, it is an associate official language. The cross cultural spread of English is unprecedented. It is more widely used than any other colonial language like Spanish, French, or Portuguese. It has a wider use than some of the languages associated with religion—like Arabic or Sanskrit. In countries like India and Nigeria, English is used at all levels of society: in English language news papers, in films, in administration, in university education, in the courts, in the civil service, and in business. English in India unifies the country; it is a vital means of intercommunication.

Some countries like Singapore Japan, China, Indonesia and the Philippines use English as a foreign language. Many multinational Japanese companies write international memoranda and advertisements. Aramco—a big oil multinational—teaches English to more than ten thousand workers in Saudi Arabia. In Kuwait, the University’s language centre teaches English. The pressure to learn English has become commercial. A businessman who doesn’t know English is at a serious disadvantage. Company executives take courses to improve their proficiency. People who do not know English cannot benefit from multinational development programme. For developing countries like India, China, English is vital. English has become the language of international trade and finance; it is the language of technology, especially computers, of medicine, of international aid, international diplomacy; it is the language of the U.N, the WHO, and the Olympic committee.

Check your progress

1. The English language has not only become a global phenomenon but has a family of its own with all kinds of varieties (or *Englishes* as some scholars call them)

within the family.

2. About three hundred and fifty million people use English as their first language in the traditional bases of English like UK, USA, Canada, Australia etc.
3. About three hundred and fifty million people use it as their second language in countries like India, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Nigeria etc.
4. About one hundred—one thousand million people actively learn with reasonable competence and try to use English in countries like China, Japan, Russia, other European countries, and South America.
5. The European common market has resolved to use "Euro English" as the common language of communication.
6. No other language has spread around the world extensively and that too in such a short span of time, maybe the last one hundred years.

19.3 THE TOWER OF BABEL

- i. **Ebonics:** The cruel process that brought Africa into collision with European cultures, particularly in the U.S., has brought about *Afro-American English* or *Black English* or *Ebonics*. This variety, a byproduct of the clash of two cultures is often thought to be lazy or ungrammatical or even to suggest an inferior intelligence. Now it is gradually being recognized as another variety of English, neither worse nor better than the way English is spoken by Scots or New Yorkers or Londoners or Sydneysiders. Black English has come to exist as a variety of English—as an authentic means of self expression for Black English speakers throughout America and the world. The collision of cultures has enriched the English language with expressions like *banana*, *jam session*, *tote*, *banjo*, *a high five*, *yum-yum*, *nifty-gritty* etc. Within the Black community Black English continued to flourish. Novels, short stories and even poems are written in Black English. The Civil Rights Movement after the II World War wanted equal opportunities. People started to talk about Black power. Black English and Black studies. The following passage eloquently expresses the point of view about Black English.

"I consider Black English as a dialect of a particular ethnic group. I would want an understanding of it, an appreciation of it, as we would do for other dialects...but we should never lose sight of the need to provide for our young people access to standard English, which is really a gateway for them to the broader community.

Here is a poem written in Black English:

I ain't never been to heaven but Ah been told,
coming tuh to carry me home,
Dat de streets in heaven am paved wif gold,
coming to carry me home.

- ii. **Pidgin English:** The word Pidgin comes from the Chinese pronunciation of the English word *business*. (It was a form of English used between the English and the Chinese in sea ports in China and other settlements in the 19th century.) Technically, a "Pidgin" is an auxiliary language, one that has no native speakers. In other words, it is a speech system that has been formed to provide a means of communication between people who have no common language. When a "Pidgin" becomes the language of a speech community—as on the slave ships, or between butlers and their masters in Colonial India—it evolves to be a *creole*. For example the

children of pidgin speaking slaves who have been brought up to speak their parents pidgin as a native language, develop it into a Creole. This is how the English based Caribbean Creole of Barbados, Jamaica and other English speaking islands of the West Indies has developed. A pidgin usually dispenses with the difficult or unusual parts of the language. For example even Black English, whose distant ancestor is the English Pidgin of the slave ships has too simplifying features:

1. The omission of verbs like *is*, as in *you here; you out in the field*.
2. The dropping of the present tense inflections, as in *he fast in everything; he do*.
3. The verb *be* is used to indicate the stable condition in sentences like: *some of them be big*. In Black English *he working* means *he is busy now*, but *he be working* means *he has a steady job*

We have the world famous Pidgin spoken in the Pacific; even the speeches of the Pope or of Prince Charles to Polynesian islanders is televised in Pidgin.

iii. New Englishes

(a) **English in India:** By some estimates there are more speakers of English in India than in Britain, about seventy million, and their sounds range from the most *pukka* 'Oxbridge accent' to the obscure Pidgins of the street. India, a country with many languages has remade English with many voices. The English administrators added more and more local words to their basic vocabularies—words like *chutney*, *guru*, *purdah*, *memsahib*, etc. Hobson—Jobson: a glossary of Anglo Indian words, compiled and published in 1886 by Colonel Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, is a classic summary of the mingling of the two cultures before the age of independence. It deals with all classes of words that are used in the daily intercourse of English in India. Starting with freedom struggle, English in India got more and more Indianized; it has varieties within varieties—ranging from less educated varieties like Bearer English, Butler English, Bazar English, Contonement English, Babu English to educated or standard Indian English, often very scholarly and bookish. A number of words and expressions clearly mark the use of English in India. Words like *darshan*, *gurudhwara*, *puja*, *mixie grinder*, *Eve-teaser*, *play back singer*, *newspaper wallah*, and expressions like *you donkey's husband*, *street corner Murthy*, *flower bed*, *as helpless as a calf*, *I bow at his feet*, *nation building*, *a welcome address*, *a key bunch*, and a host of other expressions add Indian flavour to the English of Indians. Indian English has its own literary credibility and a number of writers—both living in India and non-resident Indians—have created an international market for Indian writing in English.

(b) **The Pacific variety:** This variety is used in Singapore, Malaysia in the West, Japan, Hong Kong and Korea in the North. In Singapore English is favoured by the government and it is the standard English of international trade, finance and technology. For Singaporeans English is a learned language, influenced by the grammatical structure of Mandarin or Cantonese or Malay or Tamil. Singaporean English is something like this

I like hot hot curry—very *shink* (terrific, beyond description);

big *bluff*, man, he! (he's just a show—off);

You can *drop* here (you can get out here);

my name, you write it with three *alphabets* (letters) not four;

stop *shaking legs* and do some work (shake legs, a direct translation from Malay, means to be idle).

19.3 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- a) **Cockney:** Even within great Britain there are so many varieties of English that exhibit the culture of a particular region or class and the attitude of people. For example the London middle class and upper middle class who used "the general practice of men of letters and polite speakers in the Metropolis" have always felt and criticized the "rusticity" of the Irish and the Scottish tongue. Even within London, cockney derived from (coke + -ay = a cock's egg), is taken as bad English. But cockney has become the English of the working class in London; Cockney has its rural roots—for instance it is very common to find the *g* missing from *ing* endings in words like *eatin'* and *drinkin'*, *shooten'* or *fishin'*. The characteristic long *O* for *ew* is found in cockney: *noos* for "news". Cockneys will drop letters and slur words in many different ways. "Old" becomes *ol*, 'you' becomes 'yer', the *O* in words like "tomato" or "potato" becomes *er*—*tomater*, *potater*. Words get run together in cockney—"lot of" becomes 'lotta' as in *gotta lotta bottle*.
- b) **The American Language.** The English language has always been one of the battle grounds of Anglo-American rivalry. The American revolution marked the turning point in the making of "the American language". Not only spelling differences as in *honor* for *honour*, *theater* for *theatre*, *curb* for *kerb*, *plow* for *plough*, and differences in vocabulary as in *gas* for *petrol*, *truck* for *lorry*, *wrench* for *spanner*, there are also differences in grammar and idioms.

Canadian English is usually under the influence of both British and American English. American visitors at first think how British Canadian vocabulary sounds (*tap*, *braces* and *porridge* instead of *faucet*, *suspenders*, and *oat meal*). The British think the Canadians have become Americanised. Canadian English is difficult to distinguish from some North American varieties; the differences are mainly of vocabulary and pronunciation. There is no distinctive Canadian grammar. Until recently most of the books Canadians read were either American or British. The most obvious feature of Canadian speech is probably its vowel sound, the diphthong *ou*—as in "out and about in a boat" sounds as "out and about in a boat". Some people say this comes from Scotland. The younger generation of Canadians are adopting American pronunciation.

Several gold rush words from California have also become part of everyday speech. California became the melting pot or the salad bowl of the USA and Californian English too reflects this. A number of place names like *Bonanza*, *Prompt Bay*, *Bread Winner*, *Gold Coin*, etc and Spanish names like *San Jose*, *Santa Clara*, are found in California. The following words have become part of English vocabulary.

Bonanza : originally a Spanish word meaning fair weather.

Diggings : the place where the prospectors mined for gold, abbreviated to *digs*.

Eldorado : the name of the legendary Indian Kingdom of Gold sought by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century.

Pan out . the gold would be *panned* in a river it was accumulated by *panning out*, which came to mean, generally, to produce to be successful.

Prospector : this was first recorded in 1846, derived from a *prospect*, a promising place to search for gold.

Stake a claim : the process of establishing exclusive rights to mining land, a phrase which goes back, referring to land generally, to the earliest days of White American.

Strike : the Californian Gold Rush spawned a whole family of *strike* phrases—*strike it rich/big, lucky strike, etc.*

- c) **The Australian Twang:** Australians put a number of under-employed English words to good use. They also brought in cockney expressions like *mate, chum, love, duck* and typical local expressions like *Kangaroo*. The Australian passion for abbreviations is now wide spread: *garbo* is the *garbage collector*. A number of new similes and metaphors like as '*bald as a bandicoot*', '*as lonely as a country dunny*', '*as scarce as roching horse manure*', reflect the country culture of Australia.

The similarity of New Zealand English is as irritating to New Zealanders as the similarity of Canadian and American English to some Canadians. New Zealanders believe they speak "better English" than most Australians. Like Canada, New Zealand has been over-shadowed by her larger richer and more populous neighbour. New Zealand is a younger country than Australia and its English is supported to be slightly closer to British English than Australian. The New Zealanders borrowed local words for trees, flowers and animals. The Kiwi became a national symbol like the Kangaroo in Australia. A common slang in New Zealand is *dragging the chair* which means "to work slowly"; *The bush* means *uncleared* land and it gives rise to many compounds like *bush-fire, bush-telegraph, etc.*

- d) **English in Africa:** English speaking South Africans have co-existed with Afrikaner Dutch since the middle of the seventeenth century and have added a number of Afrikaner words like *spoor, trek* and *weldt* to the English language.

Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutula write in Nigerian English; they write as writers exploring national cultures in a language that is at once national and international. Such writers believe that English is no longer an English language and it now grows from many roots and many colonies are caring out their own territories within the English language.

An African writer might refer to a *knocking—fee* for a bribe or *snatch boys* for pickpockets. Some vivid African English idioms include: *Where there is dew there is water; wisdom is like a goad's skin—everyone carries his own; and to eat other's ears* (to talk privately)

- e) **Raggae:** Raggae is the heart beat of Jamaica. In Jamaica standard English words take on meanings and pronunciations that are a long way from the English of London or New York. In Jamaican English a word like *form* can mean to *pretend to be*, as in a sentence like:

Di kuk di tel mi mi faamin, bot it nat so. (The cook told me I was shamming sick, but it's not so.)

A Caribbean poet, Edward Brathwaite, describes the condition of Caribbean English today: With the new generation, the people who are really using nation language, the idea is not really to write it at all, but to have it recorded, and best of all filmed. There you have a complete correlation between what a culture dictates, and what the media would like, and how you communicate it.

Barthwaite makes the point that English in the Caribbean is refracted through many lenses, historical and local; it is much more mobile, an essentially oral tradition that bubbles from underneath searching for new forms of expressions; there are the beginnings of a written Caribbean English. They are turning their backs on standard English though they had a university education. They have chosen to write in a language of their own culture and to disseminate it throughout the English speak-

ing world in records, tapes and books. In Jamaica people say that many are denied access to education because the education system operates only in English. It must be stated that the international power of English is the force that arrests the full, separate development of Caribbean English. School teachers teach a Caribbean version of standard English rather than the nationalistic Caribbean English. Most parents who send their children to school for education want this to achieve a weakening of the "dialect" and they complain when their children talk "local". This is something like the situation in India where teachers in English medium schools and colleges teach an Indian version of standard English and the children talk 'local'.

- f) **English/Hinglish etc:** The Indian version of English used in India has become a medium of expression like all other languages of India. Look at the piece given below: Lakhs of devotees had gathered on the banks of the Godavari for the "Mahasnan" or holy bath during the on-going *Kumb Mela*. Over thirty thousand pilgrims were held back by barricades in a narrow street leading to the *Ramkund*, a holy spot, so that the *sadhus* could take the *ceremonial dip* first.

So many philosophical, religious and cultural expressions are used by the people in their day-to-day English by the English newspapers, by the media, by the films and by the creative writers writing in English. Expressions like *shanthi*, *sacred thread*, *mangal sutra*, *mandir darshan*, etc are widely used in addition to words like *atman*, *brahman*, *samadhi*, *mukti*, *kundalini*, *yoga* etc. Every day in newspapers we come across words like *lathi charge*, *bandh*, *hartal*, *dharna*, *garibi hato*, *desh*, *neta* etc. We have the old colonial borrowings like *brahmin*, *rajah*, *calico*, *curry*, *coolie*, *juggernaut*, *banglow*, *pundit*, *bhandhana*, *jungle*, *jute*, *toddy*, *verandah*, *dacoit*, etc. Another characteristic of Indian English is the literal translation of idioms from Indian languages: *May the fire ovens consume you*, *a crocodile in lion cloth*, *as good as a Kitten*, and other polite forms like *I bow at your feet*, *long live the Gods*, *God is merciful*, *we pray for your kindness* etc. A number of phrases are created: *nation building*, *freedom movement*, *change of heart*, *dumb millions*, *a match box* (for a box of matches), *beer bottle* (for a bottle of beer), *bio-data*, *preponed*, etc.

There is a distinct Indian colouring as Raja Rao wrote—"the tempo of Indian life must be infused into English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life gone into the making of theirs. We in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on."

In 1976 the Little Oxford Dictionary included a thirty two page "supplement of Indian words" and in the last twenty five years or so many other dictionaries have brought out supplements expanding the list in the Oxford Dictionary. A number of words like *sathyagrahis*, *razakars*, *naxalites*, *gheraos*, *idlis*, *achar*, etc are also included.

- g) **Conclusion:** There are many other Englishes like Pakistani English, Bangladesh English, Sri Lankan English, etc. Since every nation claims that it has its own variety of English. Indian English has now been sufficiently recognized—within the country and outside—as institutionalised on its own terms. Indian writers in English like Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukerjee, Rohinton Mistry, Geetha Hariharan, Ania Lumba and others in addition to the old timers like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand and Kushwant Singh are recognised nationally and internationally.

The emergence of dictionaries of Australian English, Canadian English American English, Jamaican English and South African English very clearly show that English is no longer the language of any one culture or nation. Every nation claims that its English is an expression of its own culture. English has become a language with many voices—the language that has its own family; that is no longer just British or American. The cross cultural spread of English is unprecedented and unique; probably it is a language that could unite the world and bring about a global consciousness. Users of English may be confronted with different versions of the language but the process of globalization may bring about standardization in the years to come. The cultural, social, economic and political forces have made English the first world language in human history. The richness and power of English can inspire astonishing affection among those who use it; it is, in fact “more expressive” and richer than any other language.

The very idea of globally understood language, without proper standardisation, may bring about the decline of English. When a language is allowed to become so flexible that anything goes in the name of functional communication, people start to take liberties with it. There is a risk of atomisation; with too many of its indigenous versions, where every continent and every country has its own English, a stage might come when one set of ‘English-speaking’ people might not be able to understand another group of “English-speaking” people. The sheer spread of English has forced it to become a mere tool of communication, shorn of style or aesthetics. English may become a victim of its own success!

19.5 LET'S SUM UP

1. English has become an international language—a global phenomenon. It is used in England, Scotland, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and many other countries like Russia, countries in Europe and countries in South America and Africa. It is estimated that over one billion people use English and it is spread all over the world. About three hundred and fifty million people use it as their mother tongue in Great Britain, America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; another three hundred and fifty million people use it as a second language in countries like India, South Africa, Singapore, etc and in many other countries like China, Russia, European countries and Latin American countries it is taught and learnt as a foreign language.
2. Since it is so wide spread it has developed a number of varieties and varieties within varieties. Maybe, globalization can bring about standardization but as of now every country claims that it has its own variety, Americans were the first to claim that theirs was the American language—a distinctive variety of English; Canadians claim their English is Canadian; Australians too claim that their English is Australian. There are also other varieties like Indian English, Nigerian English, South African English, Singaporean English etc. Each variety has got expressions denoting its own culture and each local culture has also contributed words and expressions to the global stock of English. There are also the other varieties that are very dynamic like Black English or Ebonics, Pidgin English, Creoles etc. In short English has become a salad bowl—each ingredient claims an identity and a separate colour of its own but they are all basically English.
3. There is also a fear that each variety if not checked may become a Creole and they might become mutually unintelligible but the process of globalization, the internet and the electronic media may bring about some kind of standardization. The varieties within varieties like the regional varieties within the English of Indians, has to be checked in order to bring about standardization. There are many dictionaries

in the world for American English, Australian English, Jamaican English but a dictionary for Indian English is yet to be compiled.

19.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

1. Write a brief note on English as a global phenomenon

Hints: English language of small community is West Europe 2000 years ago—not a respectable dialect in England—introduced in the schools and colleges in England only end of 19th century—Two World Wars—English spreads—science, technology and information revolution—Americans develop own variety—similarly Australians—British colonies—now the language of internet (See also 19.2)

2. Write short notes on (a) Ebonics (b) Pidgin English (c) Cockney (d) Raggae (e) English in India (See sections 19.3 & 19.4)
3. Trace the relationship between language and culture with reference to the spread of the English language.

Hints: normally language goes with culture—growth of English unique—spread of English so widespread and fast—national pride goes with nation language—American started this—Blacks followed—now every country proposes own English—examples to be given from various regions (See section 19.4)

BRAOU

UNIT 20 - ENGLISH EDUCATION, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA

Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 The dynamics of power and neo-colonialism
- 20.2 Search for alternatives
- 20.3 English in post-independence India
- 20.4 Let's sum up
- 20.5 Self-assessment questions and answers
- 20.6 Further Reading

20.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- list the aims and objectives of English education in post-independence India.
- describe the role of English in enriching Indian languages
- discuss ways of decolonising the mind so that you can think of alternatives.

20.1 THE DYNAMICS OF POWER AND NEO-COLONIALISM

Power, like colonialism, has different manifestations—political power, muscle power, money power, language power, literary power, discursive power, etc. Colonialism and 'power dynamics' have become the central concern of many 'post-colonial' or 'neo-colonial' studies and it is worth considering what may be called 'politics of education' in some detail.

Colonization and decolonisation are generally (mis)taken only as a political process, perhaps because of its linguistic and etymological associations. The word 'colony' in English, according to etymological dictionaries, was borrowed from Latin and used in the sixteenth century to mean 'farm, settlement, landed estate, etc.' it takes the form 'colonized' during the seventeenth century and gets more converted as 'colonized', 'colonial', 'colonist', and 'colonization' with emerging European colonies all over the world.

This does not mean that there was no colonialism or colonists before European colonialism. Though, dictionaries, even today, define 'colonialism' as a practice by which a powerful country controls less powerful countries and uses their resources in order to further, its own interests, wealth and power. In the last decade or so, the word 'colonialism' is used in several other meanings and contexts, representing new notions that were dormant. There are several *avatars* of colonialism in the form of neo-colonialism-economic colonialism, etc.,—and these expressions are widely used in current literature—the latest one being coca-colonization! The compound 'post-colonialism', also widely used, implies 'after colonialism' but, as we know, colonialism never ends (and according to some feminists, it began with Adam and Eve)! Exploitation and power—dynamics are innate human tendencies and, it is better to use the term *neo-colonialism* to talk about different manifestations of 'power-politics'.

We must look at the magnitude of the pressures on the ordinary people of this vast subcontinent, as vast and as varied as Europe, in order to understand the multi-faceted phenomenon called neo-colonialism. A vast area deeply entrenched for centuries in oral traditions and religious practices was converted into an 'illiterate' country by print-capitalism and English edu-

cation; the written word was established over the 'voice' of the people, and education was equated with literacy; they have been exploited by various groups through a written constitution, written rules and regulations evolved by the British by the Macaulayan plan—call them, 'interpreters' 'urban elites', 'leaders', 'politicians', 'bureaucrats'; 'petty bourgeoisie professionals', 'babus', 'neo-Brahmins of Western culture', 'Euro-Indians', etc. The 'Brown Sahibs', the 'enlightened natives, rajahs and the maharajahs, nabobs, chiefs, zamindars, and the 'white sahibs' are now spread all over the country. They have taken over the 'Masks of Conquest' from the British and have repainted them with nationalist colours and patterns—call them 'Masks of Nationalism', 'Masks of Regionalism', 'Masks of Fundamentalism'. The products of the technological education—the 'gifted' or the 'privileged' English-educated minority—are everywhere, in education, in government offices, in politics, in judiciary, in the media, in administration—*thinly distributed but visible* and exercising their domination over others, the ordinary people, who do not know the 'Chosen Tongue'. The invasion of the satellite network, the influence of the emerging 'MTV generation' and the Western pop-culture, the all-consuming consumerism of the multinationals and such other onslaughts that started centuries ago is growing in strength; the landscape is very vast but the canvas is so small and the brushes are not very strong; such is the story of neo-colonialism.

Yet, India/Bharat is alive; that is a miracle. The struggle continues. The subcontinent has a rich, pluralistic asset and that is our capital; capital is a form of power, not only economic but also social and cultural. We must capitalize on our rich pluralistic asset. A multilingual, multicultural, multireligious, multiethnic society has done a lot with its 'heteroglossia', the multiplicity of interaction. As Gulam Mohammad Sheik rightly points out, 'Living in India means living in several cultures and times' (1989:107). Creating several 'modules' has been part of the ethos of the subcontinent. An 'Indian' can be a Bengali, or a Muslim, speak Hindi and Urdu, and work in Maharashtra as a professor of English; even in earlier days, one could have seen an inhabitant of the Maratha region speaking Marathi as the mother tongue, married to someone in a non-Marathi family, and paid revenues to a Muslim King.

Every 'Indian' operates within various modules without any sense of conflict or contradiction as though there is a mothership controlling the modules! That is India. Others may get perplexed and say that people in India are full of paradoxes and that people in India are complex and hypocritical, but the modular style of functioning has become part of the living yet the invisible tactics of the practice of our everyday life. Whatever one might call it—'cheerful chaos'/'glorious confusion' for the outsiders, and 'functional heteroglossia', 'segmented identities' (Thapar, 1989), 'fluid identity' (Nandy, 1988/83), 'mosaic identity', or 'salad-bowl identity', for the insiders, has become part of our survival strategy—a weapon for restricting influences and containing them within certain domains or pigeon-holes; it is also a strategy for subverting the influences from within at appropriate times and for creating fluid identities, absorbing the essence in every contact and rejecting the non-essence. One may say that what is called 'Indianness' has been moduled over the centuries and an Indian 'multiverse' has been built up; it has layers and layers of what some call 'tolerance', or some say 'the middle-path'. Such a dialectical conceptualisation of the dynamics of the 'context of contacts' in the Indian subcontinent can explain what we call 'unity in diversity' or 'identity in difference'.

This inherent power of the people in the subcontinent can be activated and be activated for planning our own educational programmes and used as a tool in our search for alternatives—alternative ideologies, alternative curricula, alternative materials' (reaching on well as resting), alternative approaches and alternative structures in form and content. It is this local wisdom, our people's intuition, and the traditions and practices of our 'multiverse' that can give us ideas and the inspiration to chisel out a new pattern of education suitable to a country like India. Unfortunately, our commissions and committees have not asked our people, whom we call masses, about what they want to make out of education. 'It is well within the purpose and power of the Indian people to fashion a country Great Indian Renaissance', wrote M.V Kamath

in his 'The Great Indian Renewal' (*The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Sep.6-12, 1981). We can add that it can be done only through a true and purposeful education—an alternative that can be clinched through a rigorous process of activating the local wisdom.

20.2 SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

It is obvious that an educational system should meet the aspirations of the people; it should not be cut off from society but at the same time change the society. Education must become an instrument of social change and truly educate people. The system must produce professionals—doctors, engineers, teachers, managers, artisans, etc., but, at the same time it must train them to question 'professionalism—without—social commitment' in a critical and creative way. This is a dual responsibility that appears to be incompatible, but in fact, complementary. The social component is to make the professionals as conscious as possible about the problem of professionalism without social responsibilities. In other words, education is market-driven as well as welfare-driven. The consciousness-raising component, which is missing in our colonial pattern of education, is meant to remove the 'illiteracy' among the literates and make them truly educated and contemplative. The colonial system of education, which was meant to promote and protect the interests of the rulers, is a transplanted model that was implanted in India without taking into account the earlier systems of education that were 'native' in character. The colonial system is not a continuation of the welfare-system that took into account the welfare of the people. As pointed out earlier, the colonial system had different aims and objectives.

The decolonised system of education should encourage a critical contemplation of the impact of English education and cultural colonialism, and expose the imperialistic designs hidden in the alien model. On the one hand, it must encourage a searching scrutiny of our dependence on the Eurocentric Western approaches to education and life, and free the mind from the colonial cussedness that is so very deep-rooted in our thinking so that it can come out of the 'cultural amnesia'. On the other hand, the new system of education must reactivate and recognize the knowledge systems of the subcontinent and make them relevant and beneficial to the society. It must enable the society to restore its lost confidence and character so that the deep-rooted inferiority complex in us, carefully cultivated by the West, is erased.

The alternatives we are dreaming of must strike a balance between totally romanticizing our past and condemning all that is Western aping all that is Western, and thinking all that is modern is Western. We must decolonise a mind that has been conditioned to live on *Received Knowledge, Received Theories*; and *Imported Models*; at the same time, we should not import the ancient past into our present without looking at the present realities in our country.

Those who think that we can just walk into the ancient past and try to re-establish a Nalanda or a Takshashila, the *Ashrams* and the *Gurukula*-type of education must know that in the ancient past the total population of the subcontinent was perhaps about a hundred million or so. At present, we have crossed the one billion mark and the population explosion has brought in enormous pressure on the resources of the country and on all other human and material resources; it is just not possible to reduplicate the ancient system unless we reduce the present population to that level!

Secondly, the present administrative system—the world's largest bureaucracy—was not present in the days of the ancient past. It can be stated with certainty that there was no University Grants Commission in those days. There was no Registrar in Nalanda, no Controller of Examinations in Pataliputra, and no Accounts Officer in Takshashila. The entire administrative machinery that is over-sized and entrenched in colonial institutional practices and procedures based on suspicion and distrust cannot be so easily decolonised. The search for alternatives must take into account the present population level, the huge burden of bureaucracy that has a colonial mindset, and the academic programmes to be evolved. Academic programmes cannot

be evolved in a vacuum. For creating history, historical forces must be taken into account, our own account of our history and not somebody else's account

Check your progress

1. Colonialism is not just political domination; it takes many forms.
2. India and Indian people have faced many forms of colonialism and Indians can handle colonialism.
3. We always look for alternatives; in a pluralistic society, there is always another way of doing any given thing—the same is true of the English language.
4. We know how to make use of English education and the English language; our leaders did it during the freedom struggle.
5. History must be taken into account in shaping our future.

20.3 ENGLISH IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

One important task in the new educational system is the bridging of the gap between the languages of India on the one hand, and the English language and English-educated in India on the other. Our critical questioning, contemplation and consciousness-raising must start with an interface of the languages, literatures and knowledge systems of the subcontinent and all that is English; a proper and matured dialogue based on the 'yoking' of the cultural productions in the systems concerned will narrow down the communication gap created by the 'colonial divide' and result in a productive ploughing of our fertile field; such 'yoking' will be beneficial to the society at large and create a level field for the players. The critical awareness resulting from the interface will make one section of the society realize that English literature is no longer central to our educational or cultural enterprise and that great literature exists even outside English literature or what is written in English; the interface is meant to remove the illusions in the minds of some of our teachers of English, who think that only by exposing our learners to the language and values in the great literary pieces in English, the English language can be taught effectively; it is meant to make such teachers realise that they are indulging only in 'self-satisfaction' and 'self-deception' (if at all even these happen!), and that the sub-standard bazaar guides with the blessings of the benevolent Greek gods—Jupiter Guides, Minerva Model Papers, Apollo Question and Answers, Venus Victory Notes, etc., very successfully subvert their 'noble' intentions of making the learners 'experience' the great literature. Only these advocates 'fall upon the thorns of life and bleed' in the classroom loudly and profusely but all alone. Even the other teachers and educationalists must be made to realise that the present examination-centred education results only in *reduction* and *reproduction* without any understanding or thinking, critical or creative. What matters is the 'right answer', and the ability to memorise and reproduce the right answer in the examinations, using whatever 'methods' that one can adopt. The 'yoking' of the two systems of knowledge must result in critical and creative contemplation and expression.

The blending of the two systems must be done in such a way that it helps us to reinstate our 'pride and pleasure in our own mental efforts' that was swept away, 'annihilated and depressed' by the calculated moves of the rulers and to regain our lost confidence; it must make us feel that we are capable of 'aspiring to great intellectual distinctions'. It must make us generate our own ideas and the expressions in which to clothe them. Our learners must be made to talk about our rich traditions in language and literature, in philosophy and in sciences—traditions that can engage the best in the West. We must be able to talk about Paṇini, Tolkāppiyar, (a Tamil grammarian) Nāgārjuna, Bhartṛhari, Ūnānā, Rāmānuja, Madhva and many others, not only in effective English but also in our own tongues so that the world—not only the world outside the country but also the world outside one's own State or community within the country—can

understand and appreciate our intellectual distinctions. In turn, the dialogue envisaged will also make us introspect, revisit our inner world, reinterpret our ideas, reinvent our achievements, and recognise our traditions and knowledge-systems to make them relevant to our contemporary life; this will make us understand our own powers and enable us to demonstrate to the outside world that the iconic interpretation or the myth-making processes in our mythologies and religious practices are not barbaric practices but manifestations of semiotic processes in the deep-structure of a rich culture and civilization. We ourselves must understand and also make the world understand that we do not just worship an 'elephant god with a human body and four hands', a creator called Brahma with four faces, or blindly recite the four Vedas and talk about the four stages of life, and worship in a temple that has four towers (i.e. entrances). What is the significance of the number four in our culture? What is the significance of 'nine'—'navadhvars' (nine holes) and 'nava-grahas' (nine planets)? Why are certain 'ragas' sung during a particular time of the day or during certain seasons? Is there any relationship between sound and reality or is it only arbitrary as some scholars in the West say? What is the relationship between reciting certain 'mantras' and the physical and mental changes that they produce? Does meditation or yoga produce physical changes? Is language meant only for communication as most Western linguists say or is it meant for contemplation too as believed in the East? Is it our language teaching methodology based only on rote learning and loading the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society', as pointed out by Rammohan Roy in his letter of 1823? Is the sutra-commentary tradition that was followed in the subcontinent more contemplative and revelatory in nature than the essay tradition of the West? Do we have our own concept of tragedy based on our own literature or should we start only with Aristotle? Can't we find postmodernist thinking in ancient India—in the *anekāntavāda*, *naya-vāda* and *syādvāda* of Jainism, in the *apohavāda*, *sūnayavāda* of Buddhism, and in the *sphota-vāda* of Bharthari or shall we wait for the West to come and tell us that the post modernist doctrines have 'always already' been there in ancient Indian thinking? Is India a land of only Maharajas, God men, snake charmers and the Taj mahal, as portrayed by the makers of the Disney Land in California? Are there only God men and swamis in India and no 'gentlemen as propertied by the West? Our pluralistic *multiverse* finds no explanation in the Western *universe* because those who know our traditions and rich symbolism in India do not know English and those who know English do not know India/Bharat! There has not been a dialogue so far.

The interactive discourse in education must take place at various levels. It is not only between the East and the West but also between the old and the new within the country; it must also take place among the various linguistic groups, religious communities, regions, and between the urban and the rural people. Only then the unity in the plurality and the identity in the difference that we call India will emerge. Only such a discourse will prevent the hegemony of one over the other. In a land of multiple modules, no one system or layer can be privileged over the others. We cannot think, as some people do, that India is the Sanskrit India of the ancient past or the Hindi India of today. We must realise that there is a Dravidian layer, a Mughal layer, a Tibeto-Burman layer, and other layers in our civilization.

For example, we should know that like Pāṇini or Bharthari, there exists an ancient Tamil treatise called *Tolkāppiyam* (may be 500 B.C.) that described the present-day notion of *biome* in the name of *ṭiṭai*. The modern concept of *biome* is a natural community with its distinct flora and fauna, the entire ecology; *ṭiṭai* refers to a kind of social order, which is intrinsically bound to a specific natural environment. This social order that includes the natural and cultural features offers a viable alternative that is suitable to our own conditions. This layer that is Dravidian in origin can be studied and activated. Similarly, like Valmiki we have Kamban or Tulsidas. There are many other versions of the old classic in the subcontinent.

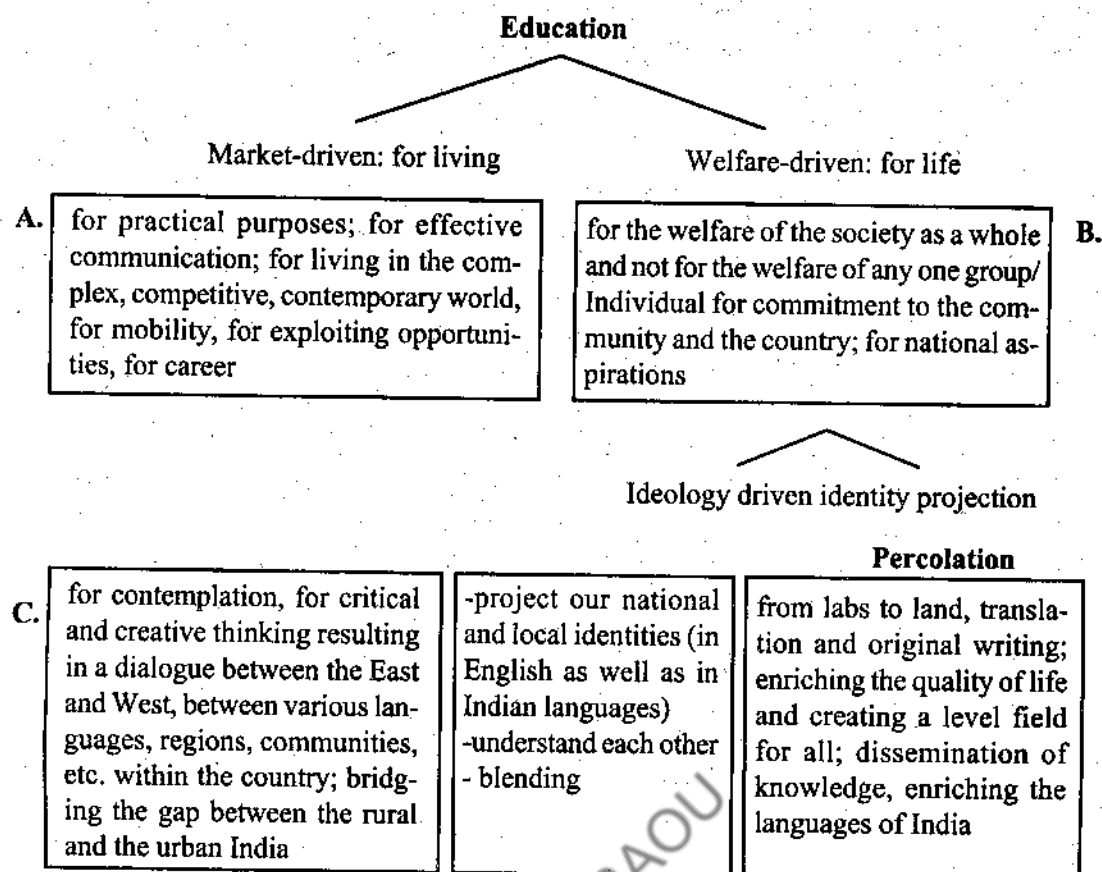
We have Bharathi, (the Tamil poet) Kalki, (a Tamil novelist) Vallathol, Thakazi Sivasankaran Pillai, Pothana, Nannaya, Tikkanna, Peddanna, Vemana, Tenali Rama, Premchand, Umashankar

Joshi, and many others in this vast area called India. We have in addition to Satyajit Ray, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal, K. Balachander, Mani Ratnam and a host of others in the field of popular media—entertainment. Similarly in music, in art and architecture, in science and technology, we have so many 'makers and movers'; the list is long because the area and the time span is vast. We should be able to incorporate the contributions of our thinkers and scholars in our educational talk about our identities (i.e. our multiple identities) in English as well as our own languages; a very nice and delicate blend alone can produce alternative systems in education.

This involves a massive translation project—a project that has to be incorporated in our educational system. We must at present train an army of translators, or 'interpreters' (in the new sense), and authors—a *class of persons Indian in blood and colour and Indian in taste, in opinions in morals and intellect*—who will project India in English and interpret India in all the tongues of India. That class will redefine and enrich our languages and render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great masses of the population. This new 'theory of percolation' will be welfare driven, taking all knowledge from the lab to the land by translating, interpreting and transforming India. This new theory will enrich the land, in every aspect, and bridge the gap between rural Bharat and urban India. This newly created class of truly educated people will not only translate India but also create new 'texts', in every sense of the term; this class will create the new blend incorporating the manifoldness and the identity of India. This should be our Minute of 2001—the Minute of the Millennium. If Macaulay gets back from his grave, he should be able to read it clearly—the stated aims of our NEP!

Like in the field of medicine, where there is a growing revival of interest in native cures—home remedies of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers, yogic cures of our yogis, herbology, ayurvedic, unani and siddha systems of treatment—or in other systems like homeopathy, a German alternative that has become established in India, or in the acupuncture treatment from China, there must be integrated alternative systems keeping in view the new perceptions, changing realities and post-independence contexts. Like alternatives in energy sources, alternatives in education must be evolved so that our energy systems in our thinking are revitalised and charged to suit the aspirations of the generations of people in this vast region. In the land of oral traditions, in addition to the written mode, we must make use of the electronic media that is available now with its large network as an alternative mode for de-linking education from literacy. Our forefathers, grandfathers and grandmothers were highly educated though not literate! The technological devices now available to us can empower the oral traditions and decolonise the hegemony of the written world. After all, the modern myth that has been created of the native speaker is more of a speaker, with some functional literacy. If the trust-system is built up in the society, the spoken word can certainly be reinstated.

What has been outlined so far can be represented as follows:



We need a 'think tank' to put the flesh and blood to the skeleton given above. We need a *Planning Commission for Education* like in the field of economic planning since planning education forms the basis for economic planning. Planning education properly in the field of physical sciences and in human sciences is fundamental to the process of de-colonisation. Unplanned growth and development in education, as it is happening in the country today, can only perpetuate and universalise the colonial pattern of 'education' and the mind-set that goes with it and result in chaos and exploitation, as it is happening in the case of our towns and cities. Unplanned growth in education can only create more imbalances and disorder in the name of education. So, we must plan it, taking into account the quality, quantity and proper distribution.

Such a planning commission, must not only plan and monitor the educational process but also set up an enlightened (not the colonial type) machinery for generating alternative curricula, syllabi, materials for teaching and evaluation—in physical sciences as well as in human sciences, in English as well as in Indian languages. The alternatives we are thinking of must include the alternative modes—residential, distance, electronic, written as well as visual and oral—for the various regions, not only linguistic but rural and semi-urban too. Any attempt towards 'standardization' (in the sense of one kind or the same for all) will only result in imbalances and encourage the hegemony of one over the other. A pluralistic set-up demands a pluralistic planning. Only when alternatives are made available in the market, the system can change. Otherwise, as we do today, we will keep on blaming the 'Boards of studies, 'committees', and other educational administrators who are busy only administering the available remedies in the market. They neither have the time for planning nor the inclination because administering the existing remedy is either easy or suits their own interests. So, we cannot expect the State/Central machineries, which are themselves creations of colonialism, to create alternatives. To begin with, non-government agencies, experienced teachers, the field-workers, inter-

ested educationalists, and the enlightened public should make serious attempts in different parts of the country and produce alternatives and put them in the market. Initially, even the publication industry in the country, is bound to resist such attempts but a change in the mind-set can change the market conditions. This needs a sustained effort of those interested in changing the system. A system that is in coma has to be brought back to life and that is no easy task.

Secondly, the planning process must take into account the ground-realities. It has to be a 'bottom-up' process and not a 'top-down' one as it happens today. In any planning, the basic principles must be 'small is beautiful' and 'local is effective'. The field workers know what is small and what is local and that they can be made beautiful and effective. Empowerment of the grass-root workers, making them responsible, training them to produce local alternatives, respecting them to make them feel confident, making use of experienced teachers instead of throwing out the experienced as (re)tired, building up systems that will be suitable for local conditions, using local wisdom and local technology, and such efforts alone will bring about changes in our educational system; not the grand narratives and grand slogans that are used today.

Decolonising the colonial English educational pattern in India is an attempt to examine and study certain fundamental issues—the suitability of Western models as universals, problems in adoption and adaptation, and how adept we are in handling colonialism and neo-colonialism. It is not a question of Shakespeare or no Shakespeare, or Russell or Radhakrishnan, or American literature or Indian writing in English, or Western science and technology or 'swadeshi' technology, as some people think. More fundamental issues like cultural colonialism, continuation of our culture and heritage, preserving our system of knowledge, decolonising the mind, and understanding power-dynamics and neo-colonialism are also involved in this project. Our attempt in India will be a case-study and an experiment in the process of decolonisation and it can serve as a model for many other areas in the world that are struggling to get rid of exploitation in various forms. Like the Mahatma's experiments in non-violence that inspired many in the world, our decolonisation enterprise can be a source of inspiration to the rest of the world.

It is a massive operation that can be compared with the freedom movement in India; it can be called the *second freedom movement*. The subcontinent was colonized through education backed by gun power; the gun power is gone but neo colonialism is backed by muscle power and money power; real freedom can be achieved only through decolonising education. Colonialism is established in the minds of men and women and it is in the minds of people that the foundations of anti-colonialism must be built; it is in education that we should start the process of decolonisation. It cannot be done in a day or two; colonialism was built up over a period of time and decolonising the mind and the system of education will take time—maybe, even a century. But we must make a beginning someday, somewhere, sometime. It is the teaching community that should start this process. A real teacher is one who thinks of future generations and not just of the next examination. Let's start a second freedom movement—sooner the better. History has shown us that those who do not respond to change soon become extinct. This is true of education as of living organisms. Otherwise civilization will stagnate and perish, and future generations will blame us. Despair and hope cannot wait.

20.4 LET'S SUM UP

1. India is pluralistic and we always work out alternatives. English education was meant to 'enlighten' the natives and we made use of it for a different purpose.
2. In free India too, we must know what to do with English; English is an asset and we should use it to our advantage.

3. There are three important functions that we can think of for the right use of English;
 - a. English for career and living;
 - b. English for the welfare of the people, and
 - c. English for projecting our identity.

20.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION (SAQS) AND ANSWERS

- i. What is meant by the search for alternatives? Explain with reference to English. (See 12.3)
- ii. What are the aims and objectives of English teaching in post-independence India? (See 12.4)
- iii. English need not have the colonial hang-over if we know what to do with the language. Explain.
- iv. How do we start a second freedom movement? (See 12.4)

For further reading

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***Recommended reading**

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER

COURSE III : ENGLISH IN INDIA

Maximum Marks : 70
Minimum Pass Mark : 35

Section - A

Answer any *four* of the following questions. All Questions carry equal marks. Your answer should be of about 500-600 words.

4X 10 =40 marks

1. Write an essay on the activities of the East India Company with special reference to the beginning of English education in India.
2. Explain the stated and hidden aims of Lord Macaulay in introducing English education and the English language and literature in India.
3. The transportation of English and English education to India was done not in day but over a period of about 250 years. Explain and illustrate your answer.
4. The tightening up of the government control over the educational system of India was done carefully by the British. Explain with examples.
5. The Indian Universities Commission and the University Act were meant to strengthen the colonial rule in India. Discuss.
6. Write an essay on the growth of Indian nationalism and the contribution of English to its growth.
7. The Colonial rulers were never serious about encouraging Indian languages and they paid only lip service to the growth of indigenous education. Explain and illustrate.
8. How did the World Wars help the spread of English in the world and in India?

Section - B

Answer any *four* of the following questions. All Questions carry equal marks. Your answer should be of about 300-400 words.

5X 6 =30 marks

9. Write about the importance of the following years in the history of English in India. Attempt any *two*.
(a) 1835 (b) 1857 (c) 1949 (d) 1986
10. Explain the important suggestions given by the Study Group on the Teaching of English in India.

11. 'Globalization has helped localization.' Explain with reference to the spread of English in the world.
12. In what ways the information age and the IT revolution has helped English? What is their impact on English?
13. Indian English, if left without any proper standards, may become a pidgin or a Creole, Explain and illustrate your answer.
14. What are the aims and objectives of teaching English in post-independence India?
15. What was the impact of Macaulay's *Minute* on Indian Education.
16. Write a brief note on *Wood's Despatch*.
17. Comment on the Kothari Commission (1964-66).
18. Explain how India has dealt with the issue of plurality in languages in Education.

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Assignment I

Answer any two questions, selection one from each section.

Section A

1. Name the European powers that came to India for trade and describe the power struggle amongst them.
2. Give an account of the various invaders who came to India and their impact on the linguistic situation in India.

Section B

3. Do you think that Indians asked for English and Western education? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Explain the important features of the Wood's Dispatch with reference to English in India.

Assignment II

Answer any two questions, selection one from each section.

Section A

1. Give an account of the Anglicist - Orientalist controversy and the impact of it on Indian.
2. What are the important recommendations of the Indian Education Commission.

Section B

3. Trace the development in the use of English during the struggle for independence.
4. What is the National Education Movement and what is its impact on English education in India.

Assignment III

Answer any two questions, selecting one from each section.

Section A

1. Name some of the important committees that were appointed after 1947 and list some of the important recommendations.
2. What is the connection between globalization and local varieties of English? Illustrate your answer.

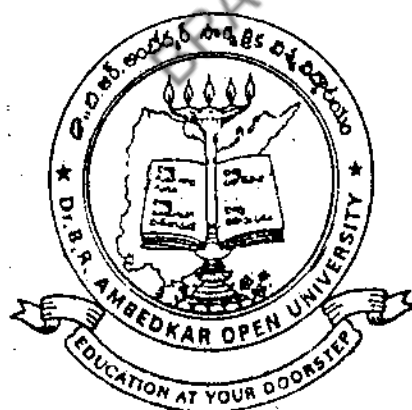
Section B

3. English no longer belongs to England. Explain and illustrate.
4. 'Indians have several advantages because English has been in the country for more than one hundred and fifty years. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

COURSE II



**DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY
HYDERABAD**

2004

COURSE TEAM

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Prof. E. Nageswara Rao

Course Co-ordination

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First Edition : 2004

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is a course in American literature. It is not a history or survey of American Literature; it is not a book or treatise on American literature. A course is written according to the syllabus prescribed. A course also has limitations of space: only a certain number of units are assigned to the course. There are other constraints like the choice of authors and their works. If some users of this course do not find some of their favourite American authors or their works in it, they will understand the reason for such omissions. Also, no course can be comprehensive and exhaustive in dealing with its subject.

Based on the prescribed authors and their works, an attempt has been made in this course to give a fairly representative and balanced account of the important issues and developments in various genres in American literature. Block I consisting of three units deals with the literature of the Native Americans of the colonial period, the Enlightenment, and the Romantic Age. Block II of five units is devoted to a discussion of American fiction, including the short story in the last two hundred years. Block III with five units discusses developments in American poetry over two centuries. Block IV with four units presents a discussion of the growth of drama in America. Block V with three units traces recent trends in women's literature, Jewish writing, and African American literature.

Within the constraints of space and time, this course on American literature has not only attempted to provide a cogent and comprehensive account of American literature, but highlighted some of the classics of American literature. It is hoped that users of this course will find it a rewarding experience not only to fulfill their immediate academic goals, but also for the enrichment of their knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BLOCK I

INTRODUCTION

Unit 1	Introduction : Major Themes
Unit 2	The Beginnings
Unit 3	The Age of Reason and Revolution And The Romantic Age

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UNIT -1 : INTRODUCTION : MAJOR THEMES

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Recurring Themes
 - 1.2.1 Wandering Heroes
 - 1.2.2 Adventures
 - 1.2.3 Pioneers
 - 1.2.4 Resourcefulness
 - 1.2.5 Male Companionship
 - 1.2.6 Alienation
 - 1.2.7 Isolation
 - 1.2.8 Innocence and Experience
 - 1.2.9 The Racial Problem
 - 1.2.10 Crime and Violence
 - 1.2.11 The Protestant Ethic
 - 1.2.12 Man vs Nature
 - 1.2.13 Symbol and Allegory
- 1.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.4 Answers to Check your progress questions
- 1.5 Sample Examination Questions
- 1.6 Recommended Books

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Unit 1 are to discuss the unique features of American Literature, its major and recurring themes. After reading this unit, you will have a clearer idea of the Americanness of American literature.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

If you are asked "what is French literature?", the answer is simple and direct. You would say that it is literature written in the French language. The same is true of Russian, Hindi or Telugu literatures. But can we say American literature is written in American language? The language spoken in the United States is not very different from the language spoken in England or Canada. Hence to designate the literature produced in the United States by a linguistic label such as American is not justified. But American literature is distinctive; it is not like any other literature. In themes and their treatment American literature is unique. Broadly, the American experience is the subject of American literature.

You may have heard the expression, "American Dream." Strangely, America is the only nation which boasts of a dream. It is not easy to define the American Dream, but every American understands what it is. Vernon L. Parrington explains the American Dream as the promise of 'a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank'. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are the declared aims of the American nation. American literature may be described broadly as an expression of the American Dream.

America was looked upon as the New World, another Paradise or a second Garden of Eden bestowed on man who had lost the original Paradise through his willful act of disobedience. The thirteen original colonies are thought, not surprisingly, as the thirteen tribes of Israel. There

are more frequent references to the Old Testament in American literature than in other literatures. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* amply illustrate this point.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. What is the broad theme of American literature?

.....

.....

2. Explain the term, 'American Dream'.

.....

.....

1.2 RECURRING THEMES

Let us now consider some of the recurring themes in American literature. America is a nation of immigrants from different parts of the world. Immigrants are uprooted or rootless people.

1.2.1 Wandering heroes

When a people leave their hearth and home, they tend to wander at least until they strike roots again in a new place. We have several examples of wandering heroes in American fiction: Captain Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick*, Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August*. Even American writers have gone to England (Henry James), to France (Ernest Hemingway), or some other country and written about their countrymen.

1.2.2 Adventures

A wandering person generally faces adventures. It is not surprising that quite a few American novels are titled, 'adventures': Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*. The wanderer in search of adventure becomes a pioneer, a path - finder, or a trail - blazer.

1.2.3. Pioneers

As the pioneer moves to the frontier, he confronts new dangers. The Mississippi is the frontier in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the West Coast is the frontier in Eugene O' Neill's *Desire under the Elms*, and Alaska is the frontier in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The frontier beckons the American promising freedom, adventure, and fulfillment.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1. Why is a wandering hero a recurring figure in American literature?

.....

.....

2. What shape do the pioneer's travels take?

1.2.4 Resourcefulness

Living in constant danger requires resourcefulness and pragmatism. Huckleberry Finn overcomes many threatening situations through his harmless lying and practical approach. He could save himself and his companion, Jim, through his resourcefulness.

1.2.5 Male Companionship

The pioneering forays into the unknown and the hazardous journeys make male companionship almost obligatory. We often find two men together in American fiction: Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby Dick*, Huck and Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, Jake and Bill in *The Sun Also Rises*. In Melville's *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, there are no women at all. It is significant that Hemingway entitled a collection of his stories, *Men without Women*. The recurring theme of male companionship makes Leslie Fiedler comment that American literature is a homosexual literature.

1.2.6 Alienation

We have noted that Americans are largely immigrants who have separated themselves from their countries and cultures. This leads to alienation and a desperate quest for identity. The questions, "Who am I?, Where do I belong?" nag many an American. Henry David Thoreau and Emily Dickinson express their sense of alienation in their writings. Captain Ahab, Hester Prynne, and Huckleberry Finn are alienated characters; they either wander in search of identity, or live on the fringes of society, or light out or start out for the territory. The conventions and customs of society restrict their freedom of movement and behaviour.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. Why does Leslie Fiedler call American literature, 'a homosexual literature'?

2. Give an example each for an alienated author and an alienated character in American literature.

1.2.7 Isolation

Alienation from one's own immediate family, society, or nation leads to a sense of isolation. This is seen as a recurring feature in American literature. The characters have no sense of belonging; they reject society as they don't fit in there. Hester Prynne and Joe Christmas are ostracised and driven out; Huckleberry Finn chooses to go where he could have freedom to live as he wishes. Characters such as these prefer to live alone rather than accept the restrictions imposed by society. Such lonely people are known as 'isolatoes'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. Who are the 'isolatoes'? Why are they called so?

1.2.8 Innocence and Experience

Yet another recurring theme of American literature is the passage from innocence to experience. Quite often, innocent characters such as Huck Finn are exposed to the ways of the world, to its evil, cruelties, and hard realities. In Ernest Hemingway's short story, "My Old Man," a young boy is shocked when he learns that his father (a well known jockey) whom he admired took bribes to lose a horse race.

1.2.9 The Racial Problem

The racial problem is a unique feature of American literature. America has been described as "a melting pot" of races as it is a nation of immigrants from different races, cultures and languages. Perhaps a great deal of homogeneity is achieved among the white immigrants from different parts of Europe. But the black people, the Native Americans, and several other groups feel they are outside the main stream of American society. So the idea of 'a melting pot' is questioned. Another description of America is that it is 'a salad bowl' where races and cultures have a separate, recognizable identity as the different pieces in a vegetable salad. Even this term is not very satisfactory. So, another description of American society is that it is a quilt, a quilt of many hues.

The racial problem in the United States is a legacy of the plantation culture. Large numbers of Black people from Africa were forcibly brought to America to work on the cotton plantations in the South. They were considered less than human and treated as such. The Declaration of Independence with its laudable objective of liberty did not notice any contradiction in the new nation supporting and practising slavery. The under-privileged people of the Black minority in American society, particularly in the southern states, figure prominently in the fiction of William Faulkner and others. Problems of racial hatred, miscegenation (mixed racial marriages), double standards for Whites and Blacks, figure in American literature. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* exposes the fears, anxieties and humiliations suffered by Nigger Jim in a predominantly white society. William Faulkner's Joe Christmas, believed to be of mixed racial parentage, is hounded out by white bigots. The sufferings and the marginalization of the coloured people in a white-dominated society is presented by the Black writers. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is an example.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

1. Explain the terms, 'melting pot', 'salad bowl,' and 'quilt'.

2. What is the origin of the racial problem in the U.S.?

1.2.10 Crime and Violence

Crime and violence also recur in American literature. In a way, violence is inherent in the colonization of a new-found country. America won its independence after a bloody war with England. The Westward expansion to the Pacific coast involved violent encounters with the Native Americans and wild animals. Whether it is the violence of the battlefields (Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), or domestic violence (Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*) or self-inflicted wounds (Hemingway's "Indian Camp"), it finds an inevitable and disturbing expression in the literature of the United States.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

1. Why is violence a persistent theme in American literature?

.....

.....

1.2.11 The Protestant Ethic

The American way of life is informed and underscored by the Protestant ethic. This implies the cultivation of thrift, industry and sobriety. The general attitude of Americans is, if one works hard, one can get rich and hence prosper and be happy. Ephraim Cabot in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* illustrates the Protestant Ethic. He had made a sterile piece of land yield rich harvests through his hard work.

1.2.12 Man vs Nature

Another distinctive feature of American literature is that, by and large, it is not concerned with the usual love affairs of men and women, or man in conflict with the society around him as in much of European literature. It depicts man against nature, that is, man pitted against elemental forces. In Melville's *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab's vengeful pursuit of the white whale across the seven seas is full of adventure and drama. It was presumptuous on the part of Captain Ahab to join issue with 'a dumb brute' and seek revenge for a past wrong.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

1. What is meant by 'the Protestant Ethic'?

.....

.....

2. State one work of American literature dealing with a universal theme.

.....

.....

1.2.13 Symbol and Allegory

Finally, the distinctiveness of American literature lies in the fact that it is symbolic, allegorical, and emblematic. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a fine example. The Scarlet Letter which Hester Prynne is compelled to wear is a symbol of her adulterous affair. There are multiple and deeper layers of meaning in Melville's *Billy Budd* where an innocent young man was hanged for unwittingly killing his tormentor.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

1. What technical features distinguish American literature from other literatures?

1.3 LET US SUM UP

As we stated at the beginning of this unit, American literature is an expression of American experience which is unique. The experience includes immigration, acclimatization, acculturation, colonization, Westward movement, wars, racial conflicts, industrialization, scientific advances, technological developments, and environmental pollution. The thematic concerns of the American authors are rather different from those of their counterparts elsewhere. The frequent use of symbols and allegory makes American literature different even technically.

So the term, "American literature," is not simply a matter of linguistic or national description of a body of writing as in the case of French or Russian literature. American literature is defined by certain recurring themes which arise from the unique American experience, from the complex fate of being an American.

1.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress - 1

1. The broad theme of American Literature is the expression of the American Dream.
2. The term 'American Dream' refers to a promise of a better, richer and happier life for all citizens. It aims to provide life, liberty and happiness to all.

Check your progress - 2

1. A wandering hero is a recurring theme because America is a land of immigrants who wander from place to place till they can strike roots in a new place.
2. Pioneers travels bring them to new dangers as they go towards the frontier in search of freedom, adventure and fulfillment.

Check your progress - 3

1. Fielder gives this name to American Literature because it frequently describes male companionship in the uncertain pioneering journeys of its heroes.
2. Henry David Thoreau is an alienated author and captain Ahab in 'Moby Dick' is an alienated character.

Check your progress - 4

1. The 'isolatoes' are lonely people who do not accept the regulations laid down by Society and prefer to live alone.

Check your progress - 5

1. 'Melting Pot' refers to the coming together of immigrants of different European nations and achieving a common culture.

'Salad bowl' refers to the natives' keeping their identities recognisably different inspite of coming together as vegetables in a salad. Quilt is the description of American Society, as bits of different nations form a new identity.

2. The racial problem springs from the plantation culture where large numbers of Black people from Africa were treated as slaves to work in cotton plantations.

Check your progress - 6

1. Violence as a theme recurs because the new-found country had been through a violent war for freedom and had to face opposition from the Native Americans and wild animals.

Check your progress - 7

1. Protestant Ethic is the disciplined way of life advocated by the Protestants in which thrift, industry and sobriety are emphasized.
2. Melville's *Moby Dick* describes man's fight against the forces of nature - a universal theme in American Literature.

Check your progress - 8

1. American Literatures use symbols allegories and emblematic features to convey deeper layers of meaning.

1.5 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss three recurring themes in American literature and show their inter-relationships.
2. Explain how American literature is different from other literatures.

1.6 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Carpenter, Frederick I. *American Literature and the Dream*. New York: Philosophical library, 1955.

Chase, Richard. *The American Novel and its Tradition*. London: Bell, 1958.

UNIT - 2 : THE BEGINNINGS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Native American Literature
 - 2.2.1 The Themes
 - 2.2.2 The Genres
 - 2.2.3 Conclusion
- 2.3 The Colonial Period
- 2.4 The Religious Background
 - 2.4.1 The Pilgrims
 - 2.4.2 The Puritans
 - 2.4.3 Influence of Luther and Calvin
 - 2.4.4 Some Puritan Writers
(Capt. John Smith, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor)
 - 2.4.5 The Diarists
(Samuel Sewall, William Byrd II)
 - 2.4.6 The Sermon
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Sample Examination Questions
- 2.8 Recommended Books

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to discuss

- native American literature, its themes and genres,
- the Puritan and Calvinistic background
- the writings of major authors of the Colonial Period.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are two sections in this unit:

- 1) Native American literature
- 2) The Colonial Period

Native American literature which has a rich oral literature is the real beginning of literature in America. An understanding of this literature is useful for a proper and fuller study of American literature.

The Colonial period saw the beginning of literature in the written form in America. It was produced under the Puritan influence, mostly by Puritan immigrants to the Colonies. They laid the foundations of modern American literature.

Now, let us consider Native American literature.

2.2 NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

Most university - level courses in American literature start with Emerson. However, there is some awareness of the Colonial and pre-Emerson literature. The general assumption is that American literature has its origins in the European migration to the New World. The fact is that American literature is many centuries, even millennia, older. N.Scott Momaday, a Kiowa Indian, rightly observes: "American literature begins with the first human perception of the American landscape expressed and preserved in language." There has been a vibrant literary tradition among the innumerable native American (Red Indian) tribes. But this is largely an oral tradition as Native Americans did not have writing systems for the hundreds of languages they spoke.

The oral literature of the Native Americans gives us a picture of their cultures and values. The need to live in harmony with nature was realized by the tribes. In their view, breath, speech and verbal art (songs, oratory, etc) are related. In some of their languages, the same word is used for all these three human acts. The Native Americans respected the word and believed that it has symbolic power to change the world for better or worse.

2.2.1 Themes

The literature of Native Americans reveals deep reverence for the land. A contemporary Native American writer, N.Scott Momaday, states, "Once in his life a man ought to connect his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it."

The circle is an important symbol in native literatures. It stands for the sun and the earth and human life. Mythic heroes perform circular journeys and return to their own tribes after many adventures. There is a strong sense of solidarity with the tribe as also with the soil. The following song of Keres exemplifies the tribe's oneness with the community and with the land:

I add my breath to your breath
That our days may be long on the Earth
That the days of our people may be long
That we may be one person
That we may finish our roads together
May the mother bless you with life
May our life Paths be fulfilled.

Like several ancient cultures, the Native Americans respect age, experience, and harmony.

While the aforesaid themes may be noticed in the compositions of many Indian tribes, there are other themes which are culture-specific. The Hopis valued hard work, the nomadic Navajos emphasized movement. Mythology and history also find a place in native literature. The performer in an Iroquois ritual does not stick to the memorized lines of a song, but improvises. This gives scope for his own creativity and for bringing in contemporary experiences into the performance. Oral literature is held sacred by each tribe and outsiders are not permitted to know them. The Native Indians recognized the bond between the performer, and the audience and accorded priority to audience participation.

2.2.2 The Genres

There are several genres in the oral literature of Native American. However, *ritual drama* which includes chants, ceremonies, and ritual play is quite popular. As we observed

earlier (2.1), the native tribes thought that words have occult power. The sacred language of the rituals is not understood by the common people. It is a means of communication only between the *shaman* (medicine man) and his aides. The ritual dramas are performed by priests, shamans and singers. *Song* is another prolific form of oral literature. Some tribes believed that a song is "magic which calls upon the powers of Nature and constrains them to man's will." For others, songs are vehicles of prayer. The natives expressed every major event in life through songs. In addition, there are work songs, lullabies, and elegies.

Narrative is another oral literary genre. Mythology and history of the tribe are told in this manner. The adventures of culture-heroes are included in narrative. The culture-hero has divine origins. Hence he has super-human powers; he can change human beings into animals and *vice versa*.

Oratory is another type of oral literature. It is used for settling disputes. Ritual or ceremonial oratory deals with the hero's travels. Oratory is also used for initiation ceremonies. There are speeches exhorting the tribes to unite against the white invaders.

Autobiography is another popular form of native literature. Generally, myth, history, and personal experience are presented in autobiographical narratives. A recent autobiography such as Momaday's *Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) praises tribal, family and personal memory; it recognizes that change and loss are inevitable. Momaday believes that the place of residence moulds a person's character.

2.2.3 Conclusion

The oldest American literature, the Native American literature, has both variety and richness. It deals with the origin and migration of the tribes, the bond between the tribe and the land, and between an individual and the community.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. Enumerate some of the common themes in Native American literature.

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2. What is the importance of songs in Native American culture?

.....

.....

3. What role does oratory play in Native culture?

.....

.....

2.3 THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Before Independence, there was a considerable body of writings in the colonies. These works gave descriptions of the New World, of Indian wars and of explorations. These writings have been a useful resource for understanding the formative experiences of a new nation. We will discuss the prominent writers in this section.

2.4 THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

At this point, it is useful to understand the background of the first settlers, their religious beliefs and their goals because the writers of the Colonial period also shared the same background and beliefs. Their writings often reflect their beliefs.

The early settlers were the Puritans and the Pilgrims. Both these groups were Protestants. That is, they protested against the authority of the Pope, of the priests, many of whom were ignorant, corrupt and immoral. The Puritans and Pilgrims who migrated to America were fired by the zeal for reforming the Church radically. Both the groups opposed pageantry, rituals, choirs, organ music, and even stained glass windows. In their view, these things distracted the devout from the sermon. They also attacked the administrative structure of the Church with its rigid hierarchy. They did not find any support for these in the Bible. They thought that the Bible was their only authority and it was the word of God. So they were called the "People of the Book." Their Bible was the Geneva Bible which was widely used by the English-speaking Protestants all over Western Europe.

2.4.1 The Pilgrims

The Pilgrims settled in Plymouth in New England in 1620. They were religious dissenters in England and were persecuted. They were originally known as "separatists" because they wanted to break away completely from the Church of England. In 1608 they escaped to Holland which welcomed such dissenters. The "separatists" were soon unhappy with their life in Holland and feared their absorption by the Dutch culture. So they decided to abandon their second home and go on a 'pilgrimage' to America. Because they went to America as "pilgrims", the name stuck.

2.4.2 The Puritans

The Puritans established a colony at Massachusetts Bay. They too followed the Bible and thought the Church of England could be "purified". Hence the name. The Puritans wanted religion to play a role not only in the church, but in the farm also. Their adherence to the Bible and attempts to apply it to all spheres of life brought them a negative public image. They were believed to be serious, unconcerned about beauty and happiness. This is not a correct picture because the Puritans participated in feasts and games; they had an excellent esthetic sense.

2.4.3 Influence of Luther and Calvin

The Pilgrims and the Puritans were influenced by the teachings of two great leaders of the Reformation, Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564). Martin Luther declared "Neither Pope nor Bishop nor any other man has a right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian man without his consent." He advocated the "priesthood of believers." Calvin argued that man is totally depraved because of Adam's disobedience, the original sin. He said further that salvation is granted only by God to a few, the elect. It can neither be earned nor rejected. He also preached 'predestination' by which he meant that God had predestined all events including the salvation and damnation of individuals.

The Puritans believed that they were a chosen (by God) people and found many similarities with the Israelites. They also believed that they were the elect who would escape damnation and would be taken to heaven.

The literature of America, particularly of the Colonial period, is influenced very much by Puritan beliefs and attitudes as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1. Why were the "Pilgrims" called so?
.....
.....
2. Who are the "People of the Book"?
.....
.....
3. What are the main beliefs of the Puritans?
.....
.....
4. What are the important doctrines of Calvinism?
.....
.....

2.4.4 Some Puritan writers

Captain John Smith (1580-1631) one of the early settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, wrote reports of explorations of the New world. His descriptions included themes, myths, images, characters and incidents which provided a basis for American literature. He depicted America as a new promised land, a land of opportunity. His account of his capture by Red Indians in Virginia was published in 1608. It became a model of what was called "Indian captivity narrative" which was a popular form at one time. His *General History of Virginia* (1624) presented a vision of America as a new paradise to which the Pilgrims and Puritans were attracted in large numbers.

The first American poet, Anne Bradstreet (1612 - 1672), articulated Puritan beliefs and attitudes with charm and insight. She knew that the Puritans did not approve of women writing:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits.

Her first collection of poems, *The Tenth Muse*, was published without her knowledge in England in 1650. These couplets deal with the transitory nature of pleasure and life itself. They also illustrate her knowledge of the Bible. Although she described her early poems as "ill-formed offspring", they were a success in London. Her new poems were published in 1678 after her death. These are superior in their lyrical quality and expression of Puritan attitudes:

Men at best a creature frail and vain,
In knowledge ignorant, in strength but weak,
Subject to sorrows, losses, sickness, pain,
Each storm his state, his mind, his body break,
From some of these he never finds cessation,
But day or night, within, without, vexation,
Troubles from foes, from friend, from dearest, nearest relation.

The following stanza reminds us of James Shirley's "Death the Leveller" and foreshadows the sentiments of Thomas Gray's "Elegy" and P.B. Shelley's "Ozymandias":

O Time the fatal wracks of mortal things,
That draws oblivion's curtains over kings;
Their sumptuous monuments, men know them not,
Their names without a record or forgot,
Their parts, their ports, their pomp's all laid in th' dust,
Nor wit, nor gold, nor buildings scape time's rust:
But he whose name is graved in the white stone
Shall last and shine when all of these are gone

Edward Taylor (1642-1729) was a Puritan minister who subscribed to Calvin's theories of sinfulness and damnation of all men and in the salvation of a few who are the elect. He wrote sensuous poems, he probably thought that a clergyman's reputation would suffer if such poems were published. However, his poems are in the metaphysical tradition of John Donne and George Herbert. He too invented conceits and homely metaphors which made use of spinning wheels, insects, etc; to express his strong emotions. His poems are an illustration of 'a mystical union with God'. The intense mysticism and striking metaphors of Taylor's poems prefigure Emily Dickinson's poetry. Here are a few examples:

Make me, O Lord, Thy spinning wheel complete,
Thy holy word my distaff make for me,
And make my soul Thy holy spool to be.
Like John Donne, he challenges death in his poem, "A Fig for Thee Oh! Death".
The soul and body now, as two true lovers;
E'ry night how do they hug and kiss each other
Why can'st thou then so slowly? Mend thy pace.
Thy slowness me detains from Christ's bright face,
Although thy terrors rise to th' highest degree,
I still am where I was, a fig for thee.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. What are the chief contributions of Captain John Smith to American literature?

.....

.....

2. What Puritan beliefs are noticed in Anne Bradstreet's poetry?

.....

.....

3. In what way is Edward Taylor's poetry similar to John Donne's?

.....

.....

2.4.5 The diarists

Diary is another genre of colonial American literature. Samuel Sewall's (1652-1730) Diary earned him a place in the annals of the colonial period. Like Taylor, he was also educated at Harvard. His diary was started in 1673 and it recorded events and commented on a wide variety of topics for fifty-six years. It shows the Puritan dislike of many Christian institutions and rituals, including Bible oaths. Sewall did not approve of change. The value of his *Diary* lies in its demonstration of the resistance of Puritans of the second and later generations to change.

Another diarist was William Byrd II (1674-1744). He was a plantation aristocrat who loved the good things of life. He maintained a secret diary from 1709 in coded language. It was decoded only in the 1940s. It was a truthful record of his private and public life. He was a polyglot, an admirer of Horace, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift. He combined rationalism and religion and thus became an early exemplar of Enlightenment.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. Name two diarists and state how their diaries are useful.

2.4.6 The sermon

The Sermon is another important form of literature in the colonial period and even beyond. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was a brilliant and renowned preacher. His sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," became well-known. He delivered more than a thousand sermons. With a style remarkable for its precision, he became a very influential writer of the colonial period. With Enlightenment which stressed reason, and romanticism which gave importance to man and nature, Edwards' teaching based on the Bible and Calvinism lost its attraction to the new nation. He was at once a relic of Puritanism and the first modern American. The following short passage illustrates both Edwards' beliefs and style:

"This world is all over dirty. Everywhere it is covered with that which tends to defile the feet of the traveller. Our streets are dirty and muddy, intimating that the world is full of that which tends to defile the soul, that worldly objects and worldly company tend to pollute us.

2.5. LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learnt that American literature has its origins in Native American oral literature such as ritual drama, songs, oratory, and autobiography. The Native American literature speaks of man's attachment to land and the importance of the word.

In the second section of this unit you learnt the Puritan, including Calvinistic, influence in the colonial period. These influences moulded American literature in the seventeenth century. We also looked at a few examples of colonial writings.

2.6. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

1. Some of the common themes in Native American Literature are a deep reverence for the land, respect for age, experience and harmony and a strong sense of solidarity with the tribe.
2. Songs are used express very major event in life. They are also vehicles of prayer.
3. Oratory helps in settling disputes and initiating ceremonies.

Check Your Progress - 2

1. 'Pilgrims' was the name that was first given to the 'Separatists' or religious dissenters from England who set out on a pilgrimage from Holland to America.
2. Puritans and Pilgrims who thought of the Bible as their only authority and word of God came to be called 'People of the Book'.

3. The Puritans thought that the Church of England could be 'Purified'. Religion, they felt, should play an important part in farm life as well as in the church.
4. Calvinism Teaches that man is depraved and only a few, the Elect, can be granted salvation by God. Salvation cannot be earned. It is predestined.

Check Your Progress - 3

1. The main contribution of Captain John Smith was his General History of Virginia (1624) which contained themes, myths, images, characters and incidents that were to influence later writers.
2. Ann Bradstreet acknowledged that Puritans did not approve of women writing.
3. Like John Donne, Edward Taylor uses metaphysical conceits and homely metaphors to express his strong feelings. He too describes a mystical union with God.

Check Your Progress - 4

Samuel Sewall and William Byrd II are two of the American diarists. Samuel Sewall did not approve of change and recorded the Puritans' dislike of many Christian Institutions and rituals. Byrd loved the good things of life and combined rationalism and religion.

2.7 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the major themes of Native American literature.
2. Write a note on the literary forms of Native American literature.
3. What are the beliefs and aspirations of the Pilgrims and Puritans?
4. Illustrate the impact of Puritanism on Colonial literature in America.

2.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Bradley, Sculley, et al. (Eds.) The American Tradition in Literature. Vol. I (Third Edition) New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967.

McMichael, George. (General Ed.) Concise Anthology of American Literature. Second Edition, New York: Macmillan, 1985.

Velie, Alan R. American Indian Literature An Anthology. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.

Wiget, Andrew. Native American Literature. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.

UNIT-3: THE AGE OF REASON AND REVOLUTION AND THE ROMANTIC AGE

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Age of Reason and Revolution
 - 3.2.1 Benjamin Franklin
 - 3.2.2 St. Jean de Crevecoeur
 - 3.2.3 Thomas Paine
 - 3.2.4 Thomas Jefferson
 - 3.2.5 Philip Freneau
- 3.3 The Age of Romanticism
 - 3.3.1 Washington Irving
 - 3.3.2 James Fenimore Cooper
 - 3.3.3 William Cullen Bryant
- 3.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.6 Sample Examination Questions
- 3.7 Recommended Books

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to discuss

- the background to the Age of Reason and Revolution and the Age of Romanticism
- the major writers of these periods and their contributions
- the changes taking place in America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and their impact on literature.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is split into two sections. In the first section, we discuss how the ideas of Descartes, Voltaire and Newton contributed to a shift from religion to reason in America. Benjamin Franklin, St. Jean de Crevecoeur, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Philip Freneau were some of the prominent leaders and writers of this period. Some of them like Franklin and Jefferson were interested in science. They contributed significantly to the development of the new nation and its nascent literature.

In the second section, we discuss the Age of Romanticism and its early practitioners such as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant. They were innovators or pioneers in different ways. Irving and Cooper acquired an international reputation. While Irving attempted several literary forms successfully, Cooper experimented with different subgenres of fiction. Bryant celebrated the American fauna, flora, and frontier in his poetry. The writings of the early Romantic period heralded the growth of American literature in various forms.

3.2 THE AGE OF REASON AND REVOLUTION

The Age of Reason began in England in the seventeenth century. Descartes's (1596-1650) condemnation of authoritarianism, Voltaire's (1604-1778) attack on dogma, and the establishment of the Royal Society (1662) for "the improvement of Natural knowledge" helped the growth of rational inquiry. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) explained that the universe works on a rational principle and that it is not a mystery as was believed earlier. The Age of Reason embodying these new ideas reached America in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson through their numerous writings and speeches advocated reason. The British philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704), argued that the kings had no divine right to rule and that governments ought to be "social contracts" between men. A corollary to this line of argument is that governments which did not respect natural rights and trampled on the weak should be replaced. Such ideas encouraged political dissent which in its turn led to the revolution in America.

3.2.1 Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin's (1706-1790) career illustrates the triumph of reason over religion which dominated public life in the previous century. He started publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* in 1732. Besides the usual information on weather, etc., Franklin's *Almanack* included proverbs such as "A penny saved is a penny earned." The *Almanack* made a strong impact on Americans. Apart from his very important role in politics and as an inventor, he wrote many essays, satires and an autobiography. He is considered the greatest American writer in the eighteenth century. Here is an extract from *Poor Richard Improved* (1758) which reveals his mind and style:

"Leisure, is Time for doing something useful; this leisure the diligent man will obtain, but the lazy Man never; so that, as poor Richard says, a *Life of Leisure and a Life of Laziness are two Things*. Do you imagine that sloth will afford you more comfort than Labour? No, for as poor Richard says, *Trouble springs from Idleness and grievous Toil from needless Ease. Many without labour, would live by their WITS only, but they break for want of Stock.*" Franklin, through his writings, established a simple, lucid style. He also set the pattern for writing an autobiography. He embodied the ideals of Enlightenment in America. To this day, he is the most widely read and respected American author.

3.2.2 St. Jean de Crevecoeur

St. Jean de Crevecoeur (1735-1813) was a Frenchman who travelled a good deal in the British colonies. He spent many years as a surveyor and diplomat in America. He wrote many essays on America, the land and its people; he presented a picture of a very peaceful and abundant country, the kind of a new Eden the Europeans were looking forward to. He described America as "the most perfect society now existing in the world." Such extravagant praise was rather embarrassing to Americans, but it was a welcome relief from the hard life in the Colonies. His essays embody a significant European interpretation of the new country. They underscored the prevailing European view of America as a land of paradox, of innocence and progress. His essays were published as *Letters from a Farmer* in 1782. One of these letters entitled "What is an American" became an important report on America. Here is an extract from the same letter to give you the feelings of a contemporary Frenchman:

"Americans are the western pilgrims who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, science, vigor, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle... Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor... those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all, without any part being claimed by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord... The American is a new man,

who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Name two important works of Benjamin Franklin.

.....

.....

2. How does Crèvecoeur answer the question, "What is an American?"

.....

.....

3.2.3 Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was a powerful and energetic pamphleteer who roused the nation to the cherished goal of independence. He arrived in America at a time of great social and political changes. Six months before the Declaration of Independence, he published *Common Sense*. He asserted that the problem of the colonies could be solved not by obedience to the British government, but by common sense. He described monarchy as a "fraud," and urged Americans to rebel. He helped the cause of the revolution by bringing out a series of *Crisis* papers which boosted the morale of the Americans fighting the British. Tom Paine's next book was a spirited defence of the French Revolution against the strong objections raised by Edmund Burke. Paine's *The Rights of Man* argued that man is not bound to accept hereditary rule like that of royal dynasties. Another book authored by Paine was *The Age of Reason*. In this he attacked religion as "the source of the most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, that have afflicted the human race." It pleaded for reason against revelation. Throughout his life, Paine championed revolution and freedom, equality of man, and natural rights. He was the most powerful advocate of the American Revolution. Here are the opening lines of *The American Crisis* which inspired the American soldiers during the Revolutionary War:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: It is dearness only that gives every thing its value.

3.2.4 Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the nearest approximation to a polymath, a man of a wide range of interests including politics, art, science and education. He served the United States in many capacities, even as the president. He drafted the Declaration of Independence which bears the stamp of his personality and style. His words have become memorable to freedom-loving people everywhere: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and pursuit of Happiness." He had written over 25,000 letters which are "*the richest political correspondence in American history*." His *Notes on the State of Virginia* is an illuminating statement of American life and the ideals of American Enlightenment. It is also proof of the wide-ranging, scholarly, scientific, and artistic interests of Jefferson. It records his faith that "*those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God*." The following is an extract from Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

"Before we condemn the Indians of this continent as wanting genius, we must consider that letters have not yet been introduced among them. Were we to compare them in their present state with the Europeans north of the Alps, when the Roman arms and arts first crossed those mountains the comparison would be unequal, because, at that time, those parts of Europe were swarming with numbers; because numbers produce emulation, and multiply the chances of improvement, and one improvement begets another. Yet I may safely ask how many good poets, how many able mathematicians, how many great inventors in arts or sciences, had Europe north of the Alps then produced? And it was sixteen centuries after this before a Newton could be formed."

Clarity of thought, cogency of argument, breadth of knowledge and a simple, direct style mark Jefferson's writings.

3.2.5 Philip Freneau

Philip Freneau (1752-1832) has been described as the poet of the American Revolution and as the father of American Poetry. He is the most notable American poet in the eighteenth century. In this creative art, he combined neoclassical and romantic tendencies. His poetry with a political slant used eighteenth century verse forms, diction and landscapes. At the same time it also showed the lyricism, the praise of nature, and sensuous imagery of romantic poetry of a later period. More specifically, he foreshadowed several romantic tendencies in his poems. "The House of Night" uses demonic images, gothic horrors, and obsession with death which we find later in the stories and poetry of Edgar Allan Poe. The romantic tendency to use images of nature may be noticed in "The Wild Honey Suckle." Primitivism and the idea of the "Noble Savage" are evident in Freneau's poem, "The Indian Burying Ground." Freneau's poetry anticipated the romantic movement of which Bryant, Emerson, Poe and Melville are important writers. The following stanza from "The House of Night" is an example of Freneau's reflections on Death:

What is this Death, ye deep read sophists, say?
Death is no more than one unceasing change,
New forms arise, while other forms decay.
Yet all is Life throughout creation's range.

Freneau pays tribute to the "Noble Savage" in "The Indian Burying Ground." The Red Indians bury their dead in the sitting posture and paint images of birds, bowls, food, and arms because they believe that the soul needs these for the journey ahead:

His imaged birds, and painted bowl,
And venison, for a journey dressed,
Bespeak the nature of the soul,
Activity, that knows no rest.

In another poem, he speaks in praise of Nature:

All that we see, about, abroad,
What is it all, but nature's God?
In meaner works discover'd here
No less than in the starry sphere.

In seas, on earth, this God is seen;
All that exist, upon him lean;
He lives in all, and never stray'd
A moment from the works he made.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1. What is the general trend of Tom Paine's thought?

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.....

2. Why is Thomas Jefferson considered a polymath?

.....

.....

3. Name three romantic tendencies in the poetry of Philip Freneau.

.....

.....

3.3 THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM

We have seen in the preceding section of this unit how the revolutionary fervour in America with the importance given to man and his liberty, with its emphasis on equality, with its contempt for monarchy has prepared the ground for Romanticism. Poets like Freneau have actually written on romantic themes and used romantic techniques. The American idea of wilderness and frontier also suited the romantic temper of the age. The romantic preference for folk art-forms was welcome to the Americans as a change.

Satires, political writings and sermons of the previous eras in America gave place to novels, short stories, and poems. American writers felt free from the restrictive rules of neo-classical literature. They began to describe American landscape, the prairies, the lakes and the oceans. A return to nature, persistently urged by William Wordsworth, is a recurring motif in American literature. Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and Thoreau's *Walden* illustrate this longing to commune with nature. In the same manner, Huckleberry Finn wishes to light out for the territory, the unspoiled frontier.

In this section, we shall discuss the contribution of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant.

3.3.1 Washington Irving

Washington Irving (1783-1859) was the first American author to receive international recognition. He has many other pioneering achievements to his credit. He was the first great prose stylist of the romantic age in America. He was the first great bellettrist; he was a great humorist before Mark Twain; he was the first modern short story writer. "Rip Van Winkle" is an example. He was the first significant writer of children's literature; he was the first modern writer who wrote histories; he was again the first important biographer; he wrote biographies of Columbus and Washington. He revived the Gothic romances. His *Salmagundi* papers are sketches of New York society in the manner of Addison. *A History of New York* (1809) is a burlesque of the history of the early Dutch settlers.

The following piece extracted from his essay "English Writers on America," is a timely and friendly advice to American authors. It is also a fine example of his style:

20 But above all let us not be influenced by any angry feelings so far as to shut our eyes to the perception of what is really excellent and amiable in the English character. We are a young people,

necessarily an imitative one, and must take our examples and models, in a great degree, from the existing nations of Europe. There is no country more worthy of our study than England. The spirit of her constitution is most analogous to ours. The manners of her people - their intellectual activity their freedom of opinion - their habits of thinking on those subjects which concern the dearest interest and most sacred charities of private life, are all congenial to the American character, and in fact, are all intrinsically excellent.

It was in the fitness of things for Irving to gently tell his compatriots on British criticism of Americans because he lived and wrote most of his books in England. His work brings out the contrast between Europe and America, a theme developed with consummate skill by Henry James later in several of his novels such as *The Ambassadors*.

Irving did not share the general view that America is another Eden. He valued the past and the "well-established principles" of the older European civilization. He was not in sympathy with the growing materialism and commercialism.

3.3.2 James Fenimore Cooper

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) is not only a prolific writer but an innovator in several subgenres of fiction. He set the pattern for sea-fiction with his *The Pilot* and other novels. The American historical novel started with his *The Spy* in which he portrayed George Washington and other historical figures. His frontier tales such as *The Pioneers* are patterned on European chivalric romances. Cooper created absorbing tales out of purely American sources. His major theme is the destruction of the American wilderness by the advance of civilization. The wilderness symbolized a simple and innocent way of life. The contrast between civilization and nature, between the East and the West fascinated Cooper. His Leatherstocking novels are an attempt to reconcile civilization and wilderness. Natty Bumppo is a character in five novels under various names, some of which he earned through his exploits. The Deerslayer becomes the Hawk-eye and then the Pathfinder, and finally the Leatherstocking. He becomes an archetype of a man who lights out for the frontier wilderness to escape from both the family and society. The five novels of American frontier life are *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841). This is not the chronological sequence of the events in the life of the central figure. These five novels may be called an epic of the westward movement in America.

These novels have many "literary offenses" as Mark Twain and other critics pointed out. Cooper did not pay sufficient attention to technique and revision. The plots are improbable, the characters are flat, the women are one-dimensional and the dialogues are artificial. With all these faults, Cooper succeeded because he was a good story-teller. The crowning irony is that the man who wrote on the frontier at such length never visited the frontier. He confessed: "I was never among the Indians. All that I know of them is from reading and from hearing my father speak of them."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. What pioneering literary efforts were made by Washington Irving?

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2. What subgenres of fiction did James Fenimore Cooper attempt?

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3.3.3 William Cullen Bryant

William Cullen Bryant (1794 - 1878) was the first American poet to receive international acclaim. He uses American landscape, American fauna and flora, rather than European birds and scenes. Even the titles of his poems, "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," "A Forest Hymn," "The Prairies," and "To a Water Fowl," show Bryant's love of nature. He was not only the first American poet, but the first romantic poet in America. In the poem, "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," there is a wonderful description of the forest scene:

Even the green trees
Partake the deep contentment, as they bend
To the soft winds, the sun from the blue sky
Looks in and sheds a blessing on the scene.

In "A Forest Hymn," he identifies Life and Love with the soul of the universe:

That delicate forest flower,
With scented breath, and look so like a smile,
Seems as it issues from the shapeless mould,
An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this great universe.

Bryant is ecstatic on seeing the prairies:

I beheld them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch,
In airy undulations, far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever - Motionless?—
No - they are all unchained again.

Bryant's reaction on watching the prairies is similar to William Wordsworth's spontaneous joy on seeing the myriad dancing daffodils. Another poem, "The Poet," ends on an optimistic note on his poetic power:

So shalt thou frame a lay
That haply may endure from age to age,
And they who read shall say:

"What witchery hangs upon this poet's pages.

What art is his the written spells to find
That sway from mood to mood the willing mind!"

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. What is Bryant's reaction on seeing the prairies?

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2. How does Bryant view the power of poetry?

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3.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the major shift from Puritanism and the Bible to rational inquiry and revolution. We considered the writings of the Founding Fathers of America. Then we studied some of the works of Irving, Cooper and Bryant who were pioneers and innovators in the Age of Romanticism.

3.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

1. *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732) *Poor Richard Improved* (1758) are two popular works of Benjamin Franklin.
2. Crèvecoeur extravagantly praises the American stating that the western pilgrims carry a mass of arts, science, vigor and industry to the east. By his labour the new American man breaks away from idleness, dependence and poverty to be rewarded by generous crops that feed and clothe them all.

Check Your Progress - 2

1. Paine attacked religion and pleaded for reason. Throughout his life he championed revolution and freedom, equality of man and natural rights.
2. Thomas Jefferson is considered a polymath because he had a wide range of interests including politics, art, science and education. He knew a lot about many different subjects.
3. Like the later Romantics, Freneau works showed lyricism, the praise of nature and use of sensuous imagery.

Check Your Progress - 3

1. Washington Irving was the first prose stylist of the romantic age in America. He was the first great humorist, historian, biographer modern short story writer. He was also the first significant writer of children's literature.
2. Cooper wrote sea fiction, historical novels, frontier tales and chivalric romances.

Check Your Progress - 4

1. Bryant's heart is filled with joy and happiness at the sight of the praise and he is inspired to write about his emotions.
2. For Bryant poetry is an optimistic expression of his love of nature. He identifies life and love with the soul of the Universe.

3.6 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the contribution of Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson?
2. What tendencies of Romanticism does the poetry of Philip Freneau anticipate?
3. Enumerate the innovative and pioneering contributions of Irving and Cooper.
4. Write a note on Bryant's poetry.

3.7 BOOKS RECOMMENDED

Bradley, Sculley, et al (Eds.) The American Tradition in Literature. Vol. I Third Edition. New York: W.Norton & Co., 1967.

McMichael, George (Ed.) Concise Anthology of American Literature. Second Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1985.

BRAOU

BLOCK II

FICTION

- Unit 4 Introduction to Fiction
- Unit 5 The American Short Story: Edgar Allan Poe
- Unit 6 Nineteenth Century American Fiction:
Herman Melville and Mark Twain
- Unit 7 Twentieth Century American Fiction:
Hemingway and Faulkner
- Unit 8 Contemporary Fiction

BRAOU

UNIT 4: INTRODUCTION TO FICTION

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 What is an American Novel?
- 4.3 The First American Novelist
- 4.4 James Fenimore Cooper
- 4.5 Nathaniel Hawthorne
- 4.6 Harriet Beecher Stowe
- 4.7 Realism
 - 4.7.1 William Dean Howells
 - 4.7.2 Henry James
- 4.8 Naturalism
 - 4.8.1 Stephen Crane
 - 4.8.2 Frank Norris
 - 4.8.3 Theodore Dreiser
- 4.9 The "Problem Novel"
- 4.10 Sinclair Lewis
- 4.11 Sherwood Anderson
- 4.12 F. Scott Fitzgerald
- 4.13 Women Novelists
- 4.14 Southern Novelists
- 4.15 African American Novelists
- 4.16 Experimental Novel
- 4.17 John Steinbeck
- 4.18 Other Trends
- 4.19 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.20 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 4.21 Sample Examination Questions
- 4.22 Recommended Books

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- describe American fiction
- provide a short historical account of its origin and development
- discuss the major trends in American fiction
- give an idea of the contributions of major American novelists.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel appeared late in America. In the colonial period, those who had the skill to write served the cause of religion or politics. A few wrote verse, but hardly anyone attempted fiction. Surprisingly, within a hundred years the American novel became independent of the British novel. After World War I, the American novel excelled the British novel, a fact conceded by the British novelists themselves.

4.2 WHAT IS AN AMERICAN NOVEL?

There is a controversy about what should be considered an American novel. Does it mean the first novel written by an American or does it mean the first novel written with typical American themes? Both these are unsatisfactory explanations. Perhaps, it is more appropriate to confer the status of the first American novel on a work of fiction which deals with a characteristic American theme and technique. However, it is true that until almost the mid-nineteenth century, there is hardly any novel which qualifies as an American novel if we apply this definition. But a large number of novels were written in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The early novels are William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Susannah and Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794). This sentimental fiction is based on Samuel Richardson's novels such as *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48).

4.3 THE FIRST AMERICAN NOVELIST

Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) has been described as the first American novelist. He published five novels including *Wieland*, *Edgar Huntly* and *Ormond* between 1799 and 1801, and won the praise of British writers like Shelley, Keats and Scott. Among the Americans, Cooper, Poe and Hawthorne thought of him highly. Brown's fiction may be described as mood novels with loose plots.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What is an American novel?

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4.4 JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) whom we discussed in unit 3, wrote thirty-three novels most of which betray lack of craftsmanship and haste. Yet Cooper's novels were popular in America and Europe. How do we account for his popularity? These novels deal with romance of various types, of the sea, of the frontier, and of the forest. Americans looked upon the novels of Cooper as an epic of the frontier. His novels are novels of adventure, of action at sea, or in the wilderness. Americans loved adventure and action.

4.5 NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

When we move from Cooper to Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) we see a different kind of artist at work. He was influenced by the gothic novel of terror; he was a romantic but not a transcendentalist. The Calvinistic tenet of damnation fascinated him; he was interested in a study of the impact of an awareness of sin on the human soul. This interest made him take up moral themes and analyse neuroses and fixations. He also considered the impact of environment on individuals. These are, as you know, very contemporary themes even today.

Hawthorne uses symbolism and allegory to communicate the moral significance of his stories. His settings have a supernatural aura. His symbols have multiple meanings. The *Scarlet Letter* which is the title of his famous novel is a superb example of different meanings in a single symbol. The letter A in scarlet which Hester Prynne wears round her neck is at once a symbol of adultery and of her pride. It is a token of her defiance of the bigotry of the community. *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is his best novel. It deals with the consequence of sin, of an adulterous relationship between Arthur Dimmesdale, the minister, and Hester Prynne, a married woman.

The sinners suffer. Theirs is a sin of passion of genuine love. But Roger Chillingworth's (Hester's husband) calculated and relentless pursuit of vengeance is a greater sin. In Hawthorne's words, he has "violated, in cold blood the sanctity of the human heart." Melville said that Hawthorne depicted the "great power of blackness."

In the decade, 1850-60, Hawthorne published his most important work: *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and *Marble Faun* (1860). He wrote a number of short stories. He called himself a romancer rather than a novelist. In his view, the novel aims at a minute fidelity to the possible and the probable. A romance gives a certain freedom to the writer. In a romance, the author can "retouch the photo" and add the supernatural events. The entire work is conceived as a poem in a romance. Hawthorne was not quite successful in maintaining this difference in his fiction.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

In what way were Hawthorne's themes modern?

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4.6 HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

A contemporary of Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) wrote her famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. It was immensely popular. She dealt with the most dangerous issue of the time, namely, slavery. It was translated into many languages. Abraham Lincoln said with some exaggeration that this novel brought about the Civil War.

Mrs. Stowe's knowledge of slavery and the laws in different states in the south was not accurate. But she had intuition which is the quality of a romancer. The novel has a double plot or two journeys. In one, the slaves escape to freedom in Canada; in the second, Tom goes to the South and becomes a martyr. Tom's life falls into three phases. In Kentucky, he lives with his first owners. In the second, his new masters treat him well. In the last phase, he is tortured by Simon Legree. Mrs. Stowe presents a charitable picture of the problem of slavery; she does not blame the South alone.

Mrs. Stowe's great success eclipsed Herman Melville who had to wait to obtain recognition as America's greatest novelist. By coincidence Melville's and America's greatest novel, *Moby Dick*, was published in the same year as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. We will discuss Melville's novel in Unit 6.

4.7 REALISM

A new phase in the development of the American novel started with Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Henry James. They inaugurated the Age of Realism and represented several facets of realism. Let us first try to understand what realism is before we consider the work of these three novelists. Broadly, it is an accurate representation of actual life in literature. It includes both the selection of themes and the manner of presenting them. It developed somewhat as a reaction to the romantic movement. It is an attempt to record the ordinary experiences of daily life. The novel form was found to be particularly suitable for realistic expression. Some of the more important features of realism are:

- 1) Depiction of middle-class life
- 2) Focus on ordinary rather than unusual events

- 5) An objective presentation of facts
- 4) Absence of didactic comments
- 5) Stress on phonographic and photographic reality.
- 6) Absence of improbabilities
- 7) Treatment of money as a strong driving force in the modern world.
- 8) Novel as a critique of society

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Explain the term, "realism."

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4.7.1 William Dean Howells

Howells (1837-1920), one of the exponents of realism, defined it as "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material." His novels such as *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, (1885) *A Modern Instance* (1882), and others depict the attractive side of American life. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is the study of a self-made businessman. Although he was shrewd in business, he is awkward in social behaviour. The 'rise' of Silas Lapham is not success in business, nor is it an improvement in his social status, but a growth in his moral stature. He refuses to cheat for personal gain, goes bankrupt by remaining honest.

The achievement of Mark Twain is far greater. He was America's greatest humorist. Most people took his writings to be funny. But he was serious and became a pessimist towards the end of his life. His most important novels are boys' books, but only apparently so. We shall discuss *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Unit 6.

4.7.2 Henry James

Henry James (1843 - 1916) is more sophisticated in the choice of his themes and in the development of his technique. His fictional canvas is much wider than that of either Howells or Twain. He invented the novel of Cosmopolitanism. While his predecessors, Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne were concerned with adventures in the wilderness or on the seas or the warping of the soul by Puritanism, James sought to study the moral and psychological problems faced by Americans in Europe. The picture is that of an American innocent confronting a complex, cultured and corrupt European civilization. James's models were Balzac, George Eliot and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He anticipated Proust and Joyce in fictional structure. He admired Turgenev.

James's novels are usually put in three phases. In the beginning he dealt with the international theme." *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) belongs to this phase. In the second phase, novels written under the influence of French naturalism such as *The Bostonians* (1886) were published. In the third phase novels such as *The Ambassadors* (1909) were written. He returned to the international theme in his last phase.

James's novels are located in New York, London, Paris and Rome. His characters are an international elite. The world which James portrayed with great skill may not be seen today, but James has secured a permanent place in literature by virtue of his penetrating psychological analyses of character and by his attempts to elevate the novel to a respectable art-form. Edith Wharton (1862-1937) wrote in the manner of James. *The Age of Innocence* (1920) which depicts the New York society of the 1870s is her best novel. *Ethan Frome* (1911), another famous novel deals with three wasted lives.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

What is meant by James's "international theme"?

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4.8 NATURALISM

In the last decades of the century, a group of American writers were influenced by naturalism which was found in Emile Zola's novels. Among these are Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Let us try to understand the term, "Naturalism." It started in the late nineteenth century. It is found mostly in fiction and drama. It may be described as a heightened form of realism which we discussed earlier. The main difference between realism and naturalism is that realism is more a matter of technique of presentation whereas naturalism is a set of philosophical beliefs. It has its roots in biological and deterministic ideas based on Darwin's theories. According to "naturalism", man is an animal, a complex one. He is also influenced by heredity and environment. Man's environment is conditioned by social and economic factors. He is almost powerless against these forces. In naturalistic writing man is reduced to his material components. So there is a frank discussion on sex and hunger. They aim at a dispassionate (or scientific) documentation of 'a slice of life', a phrase used by Zola. They wish to "tell everything" and to "experiment" with characters as in a laboratory. They tried to explain human behaviour in terms of heredity and environment.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What is "naturalism" in fiction?

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4.8.1 Stephen Crane

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) attacked romantic idealism and attempted to depict fighting a hostile world alone. He saw human beings as victims of environment and heredity. *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), a novel about the Civil War, is at least partly a study of the impact of environment in shaping the behaviour of Henry Fleming.

4.8.2 Frank Norris

Frank Norris (1870-1902) was the foremost exponent of literary naturalism in America. *McTeague* (1899) exposes greed and inhumanity. *The Octopus* (1901) also deals with the insatiable greed of railroad owners and growers of wheat. Norris portrays the lives of individuals who are in the grip of heredity and environment. He viewed fiction as a better medium of truth than painting, poetry, or music. It enabled him to reach the truth by piercing the "tissues and wrappings of flesh, down deep into the red, living heart of things."

4.8.3 Theodore Dreiser

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) is considered the greatest practitioner of naturalism in American fiction. His novels document a mass of details of human experience. His frank treatment of sex and social relations opened up new themes. In the portrayal of characters like Sister Carrie, he exploded the American myth that success depended on hard work and virtue. Dreiser

invented the term, "Chemis," by which he meant the inner urges which subjugate the human will. *Sister Carrie* (1900) is the story of a country girl who was driven by the ambition to possess things which were beyond her reach. She yearns for love, wealth and fame. She gets all these but loses her virtue. Charles Drouet, a travelling salesman, George Hurstwood, manager of a fashionable bar, and Robert Ames, a cultured young man, figure in her life as she climbs the ladder of fame. At the end, she remains dissatisfied in spite of her material success. *Sister Carrie* dealt with illicit sexual relations which were taboo when it was published in 1900. Dreiser's other novels like *An American Tragedy* (1925) also show man as a powerless victim in the grip of heredity and environment.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What new theme did Dreiser present in *Sister Carrie*?

4.9 THE PROBLEM NOVEL

Another trend in American fiction is the "problem novels." They are allied to naturalistic fiction. They were popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Upton Sinclair (1878-) a socialist reformer and a propaganda novelist, wrote a series of novels which are exposés of American business and industry. *The Jungle* (1906) exposes the meat industry, *King Coal* (1917) and *Oil* (1927) are also in the same vein.

4.10 SINCLAIR LEWIS

This trend is called muck-raking and a variant of it is the sardonic realism of Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) in novels like *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922). In the first of these, he introduced the American small town to Europe. *Babbitt* portrays an American businessman, a perfect conformist. He is a typical salesman in a business-oriented civilization. The salesman becomes a recurring figure in American literature. One well-known example is Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*. In another novel, *Arrowsmith* (1925), Lewis exposed the malpractices of the medical profession. The picture one gets in this novel is that the entire country is focussed on money-making, dishonesty, and quackery. Lewis's novels underscore that material success does not necessarily bring happiness.

4.11 SHERWOOD ANDERSON

Contemporaries of Sinclair Lewis were busy looking at American life from other angles and presenting their perceptions in fiction. For instance, Sherwood Anderson's (1876-1941) *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) deals with isolation and its sequel, alienation, in American life. The characters are "grotesques"; they fail because they are unable to communicate. The stories in Anderson's book are diverse; the isolated lives of different characters present a pattern of the underlying sadness of human life. He revolted against industrialized civilization and favoured a natural way of life. His influence not only on his contemporaries like Ernest Hemingway, but on succeeding generations of novelists is wide-spread.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7.

What is the theme of *Winesburg, Ohio*?

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4.12 F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

F. Scott Fitzgerald is called the spokesman of the Jazz Age. His novels like *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender Is the Night* (1934) give us a picture of that age. The characters in *Gatsby* pursue pleasure without bothering about the consequences. *Gatsby* symbolises America enslaved, in Fitzgerald's own words in "the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty." He is duped by material success. Fitzgerald was fascinated with the very rich and that was the undoing of his characters and himself. *Tender is the Night* testifies to the consequences of living with the very rich.

4.13 WOMEN NOVELISTS

It is time to consider the work of some women writers. Carson McCullers writes of isolation and its tragic consequences. Her characters are grotesques. Eudora's *Welty Delta Wedding* (1946) is a single novel by a short story writer. Katherine Anne Porter is a successful story writer, who wrote two connected stories in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939).

4.14 SOUTHERN NOVELISTS

The Southern novelists, Allan Tate, Robert Penn Warren and William Styron have been spokesmen of the South. In Tate's (1899) single novel, *The Fathers* (1938), an old man narrates the events around the start of the Civil War. It portrays the collapse of the Southern feudal structure. Warren's (1905-) *All the King's Men* (1946) is a political novel, depicting the career of Huey Long, the Governor of Louisiana. Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951) traces the change of fortunes of a fashionable family. It is more of an American story, than a limited Southern one.

4.15 AFRICAN AMERICAN NOVELISTS

The African American's privations have been voiced by white writers like Mark Twain and William Faulkner. They have been narrated by their own kind thus adding credibility. Richard Wright's (1908-1960) *Native Son* (1940) tells the story of a slum resident who becomes a victim of his environment. William Faulkner and Ralph Ellison have also addressed African American problems. We shall discuss them later.

4.16 EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL

We have the experimental novel pioneered by John Dos Passos (1896 -). His trilogy, *U.S.A.*, starting with *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) and *1919* (1932), and ending with *The Big Money* (1936) is a serial novel; here the USA is the hero, the villain and the victim. He calls his technique "Newsreel." It contains newspaper headlines, advertisements, etc. Then there is "The Camera Eye" which is the novelist's commentary on the events in the form of stream of consciousness.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

What new technique did Dos Passos use in his fiction?

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4.17 JOHN STEINBECK

James T. Farrell (1904) an admirer of Dreiser, wrote a trilogy, *Studs Lonigan* (1932-35), on the Chicago Slums. John Steinbeck (1902-) wrote a number of novels on the migrant workers. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) stands above the rest of his fiction. It documents the sufferings of migrant workers just as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* documents the iniquities suffered by the Blacks. Thomas Wolfe's (1900-1938) *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) depicts a hero seeking a home that eludes him. The hero's journeys take him across many cities and make him interact with different people. That is an absorbing story of America as Wolfe observed it.

Saul Bellow achieved critical acclaim, but we shall consider his work later on. Nathaneal West's (1904-1940) *The Day of the Locust* (1939) depicts the boredom suffered by the Mid-western retired people who migrate to Los Angeles in search of glamour, but end in boredom, self-pity, agony and hate.

4.18 OTHER TRENDS

Other trends in American fiction are:

- 1) The war novel attempted by Stephen Crane *The Red Badge of Courage*, (1895) on the Civil War, by e.e cummings (*The Enormous Room* (1922)), by Hemingway (*A Farewell to Arms*, 1929) on World War I, by Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*, 1948)) on World War II.
- 2) The historical romance produced by General Lew Wallace (*Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, 1880). Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) deals with the Civil War which became the greatest best-selling novel.
- 3) The superior type of Westerns such as Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1940).

We shall consider the work of other important novelists of recent times later.

The novel in America is just about two hundred years old. But it has achieved an eminent position in world fiction. Its contribution to themes and techniques is remarkable. Herman Melville, Mark Twain and Henry James and their novels are among the greatest in world literature. Henry James tried to enhance the status of the novel as an art-form.

4.19 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learnt how the novel developed in America. We also learnt about its subgenres, its themes, and techniques. We have also discussed the contributions of major novelists in America.

4.20 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

1. A controversy exists about defining the American novel. Is it the first novel written by an American or written with American themes. Perhaps it is rather a work of fiction that deals with a characteristic American theme and technique.

Check Your Progress - 2

1. Hawthorne was interested in the impact of an awareness of sin on the human soul. He analysed neuroses and fixations and took up moral themes. These psychological themes are also contemporary concerns.

Check Your Progress - 3

Realism in literature is an accurate representation of actual life including the selection of themes and the manner of presenting them.

Check Your Progress - 4

Henry James wrote about the international elite in a cosmopolitan society. In the development of his technique too he was sophisticated and studied the moral and psychological problems faced by Americans in Europe.

Check Your Progress - 5

Naturalism is a heightened form of Realism. It is a set of philosophical beliefs which has its roots in biological and deterministic ideas based on Darwin's theories. Human behaviour is explained in terms of heredity and environment with frank discussion on sex and hunger.

Check Your Progress - 6

In *Sister Carrie* Dreiser introduced an entirely new theme arguing that success does not depend on hard work and virtue. His heroine is dissatisfied with her material success and is finally depicted as a powerless victim of her urges which arise from heredity and environment.

Check Your Progress - 7

Anderson's novel *Winesburg Ohio* (1919) deals with isolation and alienation in American life.

Check Your Progress - 8

Dos Passos introduced the new technique called "Newsreel" which contains newspaper headlines advertisements, etc.

4.21 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the thematic concerns of Cooper and Hawthorne
2. Explain the term, "realism" and give examples of some writers who have used this form.
3. Distinguish between "realism" and "naturalism"

4. What is Henry James's specific contribution to fiction?
5. Comment on Dreiser as a practitioner of naturalistic fiction.
6. Write a note on Sherwood Anderson or the experimental novel.
7. Justify the view that the American novel is unique in themes and techniques.

4.22 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Chase, Richard. The American Novel and its Tradition. London: Bell, 1957.

Cowie, Alexander. The Rise of the American Novel. New York: American Book Co., 1951.

Hoffman, Frederick J. The Modern Novel in America. Chicago: Regnery, 1956.

Wagenknecht, Edward. Cavalcade of the American Novel. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1952.

BRAOU

UNIT - 5 : THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY : EDGAR ALLAN POE

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Types of Short Story
- 5.3 The American Short Story
 - 5.3.1 Washington Irving
 - 5.3.2 Nathaniel Hawthorne
- 5.4 Poe's Contribution to the Short Story
 - 5.4.1 Types of Poe's Stories
 - 5.4.2 Poe's Contribution to Literature
 - 5.4.3 Poe's Reputation
- 5.5 Poe's Stories
 - 5.5.1 Stories of Mental States
 - 5.5.2 Design of Poe's Stories
 - 5.5.3 Tale of Ratiocination
 - 5.5.4 Analysis of a Poe Story
- 5.6 The Fall of the House of Usher : the text
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Answers to Check your Progress
- 5.9 Sample Examination Questions
- 5.10 Recommended Books

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to discuss

- the development of the short story in America
- Poe's contribution to literature, especially the short story.
- the variety and range of Poe's tales, and
- analyze a story of Poe to illustrate his own principles

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will discuss how the short story developed as a significant art-form in America. In the last unit we learnt about the growth of the American novel. Another form of prose fiction is the short story. One important difference between the novel and the short story is the length. A story which is short enough to be read in about half an hour may be called a short story. This limit on length makes the writer achieve his aims with greater concentration. That is, every small detail in the story has to contribute to "a certain unique, or single effect." Because space is limited, the number of characters is small, their development cannot be elaborate and description of the setting has to be brief. A significant incident is chosen to reveal the character of the protagonist or to provide an insight.

5.2 TYPES OF SHORT STORY

Perhaps the short story as a literary form is as old as the human race. Stories were told orally long before writing was invented. Our own literature has the *Jataka* tales and the

Panchatantra. *The Arabian Nights* is another collection of stories. There are many types of short stories. There are those writers who strive for unity of effect in a story as urged by Poe. There are stories with a surprise ending like in O'Henry's stories; then there are stories which present a "slice of life" like Anton Chekhov's. There are stories of incident where the course and final outcome of events is important. An example of this is Poe's "The Gold Bug". Some of these may also be called "detective stories." Then, there are stories of character" which are concerned with the depiction of character, that is, a person's state of mind, motivation, and moral qualities. Chekhov's "The Kiss" is an example of this type.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Enumerate different characteristics of the short story.

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Although the folk tale, fable, parable, anecdote are sometimes called 'stories', the term, "short story", is applied to the carefully contrived literary form which has developed from the nineteenth century. It has its vogue in the periodical magazines which became popular in the nineteenth century. As a literary form, the short story reached a high level of excellence in the hands of Flaubert, Chekhov and Joyce.

5.3 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

It is sometimes said that the short story was invented by the Americans and that it is a uniquely American literary form. Frank O'Connor said that it is America's "national art form." There is some justification for this claim. The short story, strictly so called, began only in the early nineteenth century. Its development was made possible due to a variety of literary and cultural factors which prevailed then. These factors were more evident in early nineteenth century America than in Europe. The factors which contributed to the rise of the American short story are the absence of a rich and complex social structure. Henry James called this the "thinness" of American life. The intense and isolated life of Americans could be better expressed through a short story than through a long novel. Secondly, the American writers were influenced by the currents of Romanticism sweeping over Europe. A. Walton Litz argues that this "collision of local and fragmented social experience with a cosmopolitan artistic vision proved ideal for the growth of the short story."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What factors are responsible for the development of the short story in America?

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5.3.1 Washington Irving

The modern short story is a product of a variety of influences such as the eighteenth century essay, the traditional tale, the "sketch" in painting which required concentration, and the unity of effect demanded by Romanticism. Washington Irving was able to fuse all these diverse elements. He liked the shortness and fictitious narrator of the periodical essay; he was influenced by the ballad and other folk-forms; he liked the Gothic tale which used a romantic setting and

stressed an emotional atmosphere. Irving was more interested in the manner of telling than in the "story". His favourite form for short fiction is the "sketch" which gave him both a unity of scene (picturesqueness) and unity of emotion. He lacked the skill for psychological analysis.

5.3.2 Nathaniel Hawthorne

If Irving was concerned with the external reality, Nathaniel Hawthorne probed the dark recesses of the mind, the "spiritual essence" of his characters. This inner quality is revealed through "epiphanies", sudden flashes of illumination. Hawthorne's imagination is coloured by the Calvinistic notions of Innate Depravity and Original Sin. Melville called this the "power of blackness." Hawthorne's stories deal with guilt and its expiation. Thus he set a pattern for the dark strain in American fiction which Poe and Melville followed.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. What is Washington Irving's specific contribution to the short form of fiction?

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2. What were Hawthorne's concerns in his short fiction?

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5.4 POE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SHORT STORY

In the development of the American short story, Edgar Allan Poe has a very important role. He was a theoretician, critic, and practitioner of the short story. He was also an innovator. Poe's review of Hawthorne's *Twice - Told Tales* in 1842 is a seminal piece of criticism of the genre of short fiction. It is here that Poe speaks of "the unity of effect or impression." In Poe's view, an accomplished artist decides first the unique effect he wants to produce and then invents incidents which, when combined, produce the predetermined effect. Not a single word which does not contribute to this pre-established design should be included in the story. Poe argues that the tale is superior even to the poem. While rhythm might help a poem in creating beauty, it might hinder the presentation of truth. Truth is often the main aim of a tale. For instance, the "tales of ratiocination" (or detective stories) aim at establishing the truth. The possibilities of a tale are far greater than those of a poem:

"The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression - (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous) which are not only antagonistic to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm." (*Twice Told Tales: A Review*)

In this review as in his later essay, "Philosophy of Composition", he advocates the Romantic aesthetic for the short story. Therefore, his emphasis is on the unity of impression. The "sketches" of Irving or the "tales" of Hawthorne and others are different from Poe's tales. Poe gives psychological unity in place of the earlier unity of action. He thinks that the short story combines truth (or Reason) of prose and the beauty (or Rhythm) of poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. What, according to Poe, should be the main concern of a short story?

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2. Why does Poe say that a short story is superior to a poem?

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5.4.1 Types of Poe's stories

Poe's short stories are classified under three heads:

- i) the grotesques of the 1830s ("Metzenger stein")
- ii) the "arabesque" tales of 1838-44 ("Ligeia")
- iii) "ratiocinative" (detective) tales of 1840s ("The Purloined Letter").

Poe explained that the terms, "Grotesque" and "Arabesque" are fair descriptions of his stories. "Grotesque" refers to the absurd quality and Arabesque" means "Arabian" like in the *Arabian Nights*. Arabesque may refer to skillful design or ornament. As A. Walton Litz says:

"We may take the epithet "arabesque" as a powerful metaphor of Edgar Allan Poe's contribution to the development of the short story; his demonstration, in theory and in practice, that within the narrow scope of the traditional tale an amazing number of diverse elements can be fused into a psychological and structural unity through poetic suggestion."

(A. Walton Litz (ed.) Major American Short Stories, p.14).

5.4.2 Poe's contribution to literature

Poe's contribution to literature is great. He inaugurated a new genre of symbolist poetry and that too within forty-eight poems he wrote in his short, unhappy life. (Poe died in his fortieth year). He gave a new direction to the short story by emphasizing the unity of effect. He practically invented the detective story and influenced Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. He widened the scope of science fiction. He also started a new type of fiction in which psychological analysis and symbolism play a prominent part. He was also responsible for analytical criticism and a critical theory which rejected the didactic element in literature. He made out a case for art for art's sake. He pleaded forcefully for the creation of beauty and intensity of emotion. In "The Poetic Principle" he has stated: "I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of beauty*."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

1. What are Poe's main ideas on literary criticism?

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5.4.3 Poe's Reputation

Poe's reputation in the nineteenth century was not good, partly because of the false stories about his personal life. His reviews of contemporary authors were unsparing and he ended up making enemies. It is interesting to know the sort of comments which prominent writers made on him. Emerson called him "the jingle man", Henry James said that admiration for Poe's writings was "the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of development." Mark Twain declared that he would read Poe "on salary." Others complained that he lacked an American vision and that his themes are not American. In spite of the prejudices of some against Poe, his innovative ideas in poetry, short story and criticism have had a far - ranging and long-lasting influence. People as different as Conan Doyle, R.L. Stevenson, William Faulkner and T.S. Eliot have acknowledged their indebtedness to him. The French symbolists, Baudelaire and Mallarmé were influenced by the symbolism in his poetry. His symbolism came back to English poetry through French symbolists.

We have now a knowledge of the original contribution made by Poe to poetry, short story and criticism. Now we will consider some of his more important short stories. Then, we will analyse one of his famous stories in detail.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

1. What was Poe's contemporary reputation?

5.5 POE'S STORIES

Around 1832, when he was twenty-three, Poe started writing short stories as he found that composing poems did not bring him enough money. He started by ridiculing the prevailing tales. "Ms Found in a Bottle" is one such tale which won a prize for him. "Metzengerstein" is a parody of the popular German tale of terror. "The Assigination" mocks at the agony of lovers. In this way, he ridiculed every prevailing type of short story and realised that it was the proper genre for him. He wrote about seventy stories.

5.5.1 Stories of mental states

Edward H. Davidson divides these stories into two groups: stories which deal with mental states and stories which deal with the problem of art. Stories usually deal with unusual experience which may be termed a mystery. One of these mysteries is the working of the human mind. In his view, ordinary people become mad temporarily or gradually. The pity is a person may be conscious of his slipping into insanity. The process of disintegration of a mind is a horrible spectacle. Poe used this theme in some of his stories. "Ligeia" is an example of a husband obsessed with the death of his first wife, Ligeia. He sees the whole world, including his second wife, Lady Rowena, through the "eyes" of the dead woman. In "William Wilson" the reader more than Wilson, observes the cracking-up of his mind. In "The Oval Portrait", Poe shows the collapse of a mind in a picture rather in the person who is represented in the picture. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is an account of how the heart-beat of a suffering man suggests the internal break-up of a mind. In "The Black Cat", Poe illustrates that the mind is capable at once of originating and contemplating its own destruction. In "The Imp of the Perverse" the author observes: "To indulge for a moment, in any attempt, at *thought*, is to be inevitably lost." What he implies is that a mind which cannot think would be healthy; thinking rots the mind.

5.5.2 Design of Poe's stories

The second important concern of Poe in story writing is the design. Form and theme should be carefully blended in a story. The design of a tale ought to reveal its meaning too. "The Man of the Crowd" is a study of loneliness and the terror it produces. The story is presented in such a way that the reader "feels" the terrible consequences of losing all human contacts. This feeling overshadows the loneliness of the protagonist in the story. Loneliness in the midst of crowds in modern cities is a common experience of many people. "The Masque of the Red Death" is a skillfully wrought story in which the reader is made to feel the moods and sensations of a group of aristocrats who try to evade death, but fail. Reading the horror story, "The Pit and the Pendulum," is experiencing terror.

5.5.3 Tale of Ratiocination

The third type of story is what Poe called "tale of ratiocination." This is more commonly known as the detective story. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter" are examples of this type of tale. In these tales it is not only the detective, C. Auguste Dupin, who has to apply his mind and draw proper inferences, but the reader also has to use his logic. In the first of these detective tales, two carefully projected women were killed. How could they be murdered by a non-rational, inhuman being breaking laws, customs and the rules of civilized society? No "human" being could do such a thing. The mystery is solved when the human mind functions in logical conformity with the irrational behaviour of a beast. "The Purloined Letter" is a carefully designed story. The criminal is known at the beginning. The reader and the detective must work in a parallel way, penetrate the mind of Minister D_____, and retrieve the purloined letter. In Poe's scheme of things, a detective tale is not a way to mislead the reader, but a way of providing a logical condition and pursuing that condition to its conclusion. As long as that condition remains the result will be the same. In "The Cask of Amontillado," Montressor seeks revenge on Fortunato because of the "thousand affronts." Montressor is an unusual villain who not only enjoys killing but even the idea of killing. The process of killing becomes an art. As Fortunato is gradually entombed alive, the killer enjoys his activity which may be bestial. Montressor is not punished because he returns from a bestial action to the human level and conceals his criminal subhuman act.

"If a man fully decides to become a brute and kill, he can accomplish his aim and never be caught, just so long as he remains a clever brute and can return from his brutishness to humanity again."

(Edward H. Davidson "Introduction" to *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe* p.xx)

Poe's story is not one of action or of character study. It is really the presentation of a design. Poe thought that the short story is superior to both the poem and the novel. It can present an idea which impacts directly on a reader. The poem is too concentrated and the novel too loose to create that kind of effect.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

1. What is distinctive about Poe's "tales of ratiocination"?

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5.6 THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER : THE TEXT

*Son courest un luth suspendu;
Sitôt qu'on le touche il resonance.*

De Beranger

During the whole of a dull, dark and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens ... I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was-but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me — upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain-upon the bleak walls-upon the vacant eye-like windows — upon a few rank sedges and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium- the bitter lapse into every-day life-the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sickening of the heart-an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it I paused to think what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down-but with a shudder even more thrilling than before upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however had lately reached me in a distant part of the country a letter from him which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writter spoke of acute bodily illness of a mental disorder which oppressed him and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said - it was the apparent heart that went with his request - which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of decent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have

exercised upon the other-it was this deficiency, perhaps of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher" an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment-that of looking down within the tarn-had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition-for why should I not so term it? served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy-a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity - an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from an extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen water of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me-while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy - while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around, the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered

about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it. I at first thought of an overdone cordiality - of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down: and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly alerted, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy, hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity) these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face. I could not, even with effort, connect its arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence - an inconsistency, and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidency an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision - that abrupt, weighty, un-hurried, and hollow sounding enunciation - that leaden, self-balanced, and perfectly modulated, guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy - mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms and the general manner of their narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved — in this pitiable condition — I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR".

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the physique of the gray wall and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had at length, brought about upon the morale of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution of a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him ((him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skills of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself, and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavours to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together, or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupation, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vagueness at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least—in the circumstances then surrounding me—there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to

throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which I felt ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel; with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid facility of his impromptus could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace," ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:

I

In the greenest of our valleys,
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace
Radiant palace—reared its head,
In the monarch Thought's dominion
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair.

II

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow;
(This all this—was in the olden
Time long ago)
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A winged odour went away.

III

Wanderers in that happy valley
Through two luminous windows saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Round about a throne, where sitting
(Porphyrogene!)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
 Was the fair palace door,
 Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing
 And sparkling evermore,
 A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty,
 Was but to sing,
 In voices of surpassing beauty,
 The wit and wisdom of their king.

V

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
 assailed the monarch's high estate;
 (Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow
 Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)
 And round about his home, the glory
 That blushed and bloomed
 Is but a dim-remembered story
 Of the old time entombed.

VI

And travellers now within that valley,
 Through the red-litten windows see
 Vast forms that move fantastically
 To a discordant melody;
 While, like a rapid ghastly river,
 Through the pale door,
 A hideous throng rush out forever,
 And laugh—but smile no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad, led us into a train of thought, wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention not so much on account of its novelty, (for other men have thought thus,) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest abandon of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with his character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the *Vervet et Chartreuse* of Gresset; the *belphegor* of Machiavelli; the *Heaven and Hell* of Swedenborg; the *Subterranean Voyage* of Nicholas Klimm of Holberg; the *Chiromancy* of Robert Flud, of Jean D'Indagine, and of De la Chambre; the journey into the *Blue Distance* of Tieck; and the *City of the Sun* of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorum*, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela about the old African Satyrs and

(Egipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of a forgotten church—the *Vigilie Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesie Maguntine*.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment,) in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavoured to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and the tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremour gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste, (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night,) and endeavoured to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

"And you have not seen it?" he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—"you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall." Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet strenly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so long as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars—nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapour, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

"You must not—you shall not behold this!" said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. "These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement;—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen; and so we will pass away this terrible night together."

The antique volume which I had taken up was the "Mad Trist" of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favourite of Usher's more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for

the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I could read) Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

"And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and malicious turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow" sounding wood alarmed and reverberated throughout the forest."

At the termination of this sentence I started and, for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me) — it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

"But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of scaly and prodigious demeanour, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten —

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;
Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win.

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard."

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of the second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question, although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly.

His head had dropped upon his breast—yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot which thus proceeded:

“And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty the great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllabus passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Not hear it? yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long-Long -Long many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!— I dared not—I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I dared not speak! And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!— the breaking of the hermit’s door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield!—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footsteps on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!” here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul — “MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!” As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell—the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing-gust but then without those doors there DID stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold, then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death agonies bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened — there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight — my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls

rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters — and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher.”

5.6.1 Analysis of Poe's story

Now let us analyse Poe's best story, “The Fall of the House of Usher.” It is a study of the disintegration of a mind. The story is a fine example of Poe's cherished goal of a tale, namely, the unity of effect. All the elements of this story, the atmosphere, the setting, the mood, the characters and the dialogues work together to produce the unity of effect. The opening sentence sets the atmosphere and mood of the story which continues till the very end:

“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.”

Let us observe the way the atmosphere appropriate to the story is evoked. It is a “dull, dark, and soundless day”. The dullness and darkness and silence are frightening. Then we are told that the season was autumn when trees wither and signs of life ebb away. We are informed that “the clouds hung oppressively low.” Such clouds add to the general gloom of the scene. Then the narrator was ‘alone’. Loneliness in such a setting would only inspire fear. The same ideas of dullness, darkness and loneliness are reinforced by the phrase, “a singularly dreary tract of country.” The dreariness of the place is underscored by the “shades of the evening.” The words “autumn,” and “evening” suggest the proximity of winter and night which are both conventional metaphors for death. The house of Usher which the narrator visits appeared “melancholy.” Thus in the beginning itself, Poe was able to create a mood and an atmosphere which are appropriate to his theme. The impending doom is indicated by a series of images which are gloomy. Thus, we are told the windows are “vacant”, the walls “black”, the trees “decayed”, and the soul “depressed”. The tarn in front of the ancestral house which reflects the Usher mansion is “black and lurid.”

The owner of the house, Roderick Usher, spoke of “a mental disorder”. The building was dilapidated; there was a “fissure” from the roof of the mansion to the tarn at its base. The passage through which the narrator passes was “dark and intricate”, the floors were “dark and ebony.” Usher's own room had “dark draperies”.

Usher was “incoherent” and “inconsistent” in his manner. He suffered from a “family evil”. His beloved sister was approaching “dissolution.” She was suffering from a disease which baffled the doctors. The occupants of the building were cracking up as their house was cracking. Here, the “house” refers to the building in which the twins Roderick and his sister Madeline, were residing. It also stands for the dynasty or family of the Ushers. With the coming death of the twins, the family line of the Ushers would end. Not only the old building, but the ancestral family is doomed.

Even the books in the Usher library are not particularly cheerful. The sister is “entombed” alive because of her incurable malady. As the “cadaverously wan” Mr. Usher knocks at the narrator's door with “mad hilarity”, a violent storm blows outside. The fate of the twins is sealed. The sister becomes a vampire and kills her brother as she succumbs to her own strange malady. Within moments the cracked house of Usher also crumbles with a loud noise and sinks into the tarn amidst a violent whirlwind.

The unity of impression which in Poe's view is the touchstone of a good short story is underscored by every word and every little detail in “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Another

point to be noted in this story is that the tripartite division of the body, mind and soul may be observed in the person of Mr. Usher and the house in which he resides. All the three decay and crash both in Mr. Usher and his mansion. The death of the twins, the disintegrating residents, and the crashing of their dilapidated house are almost simultaneous. With the collapse of the house, the family also disintegrated. Thus Poe achieves unity of impression.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we attempted to understand the development of the short story as an important literary form in America. We discussed the unique contribution of Poe to American literature, particularly to the short story. We obtained a general view of the themes and designs of Poe's tales. Finally, we analyzed a famous story of Poe and saw how his theory was put into practice by him.

5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

The short story as an art form developed significantly in America. It is a story which is short enough to be read in one sitting, (perhaps of half an hour,) all the details of which contribute to a unique or single effect. The number characters is small and elaboration of description is limited.

Check Your Progress - 2

The short story emerged in America in the early nineteenth century. The absence of a rich and complex social structure which could be expressed in a long novel led to the growth of the short story. Fragmented local and social experiences could be better expressed through the story.

Check Your Progress - 3

1. Irving was able to fuse all the diverse elements of the short story to create "the sketch" which gave unity of scene, (picturesqueness) and unity of emotion to the form.

2. In his short fiction Hawthorne dealt with guilt and expiation probing the dark recesses of the mind.

Check Your Progress - 4

1. According to Poe, the unique effect of impression that the writer wants to produce should be the main concern of the short story. All other details, events should then be combined to produce that effect.

2. In his opinion the short story rhythm in a poem hinders the presentation of truth which is the main aim of a story. It is therefore superior to poetry.

Check Your Progress - 5

Poe was responsible for analytical criticism and a critical theory that rejected the didactic element in literature. He pleaded for *art for art's sake*.

Check Your Progress - 6

Poe's reputation during his time was very negative. He made enemies because of his harsh critical reviews. Writers such as Emerson, Henry James and Mark Twain criticized him.

Check Your Progress - 7

Poe's tales of ratiocination entail the reader's attention through logic and drawing of inferences. In Poe, the detective tale is not a way to mislead the reader but a way of providing a logical condition and pursuing that condition to its conclusion.

5.9 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the development of the short story in America.
2. Examine the themes and theories of Poe in relation to his "Tales"
3. Analyze the contributions of Poe to support his view that a story must have unity of effect.
4. Illustrate how the vocabulary of "The Fall of the House of Usher" contributes to unity of effect.
5. Explain how the "house" symbolises Mr. Usher, its owner.
6. What images in the story reinforce the meaning of the story?
7. What double meaning is implied in the "house" of Usher?

5.9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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UNIT - 6 : NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN FICTION :

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- analyze and interpret two great novels of the nineteenth century, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.
- indicate their importance in the development of the novel in America.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The American novel grew in stature in the nineteenth century. Some of the novels published in this century received international acclaim. Two novelists who became famous are Herman Melville and Mark Twain. The American novels which may be considered on par with the greatest works of fiction are Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Once, Somerset Maugham, a British novelist, was asked by a publisher to name the greatest American novel. He was unable to decide between these two. These novels are not only great but they reflect American values and culture. Therefore it is worthwhile studying these novels.

6.2 *MOBY DICK*

Melville's *Moby Dick* is a very unusual novel. It does not fit into the ordinary definition of a novel either in its theme or its treatment. It is a compendium of several narrative modes. Its setting is vast: all the oceans on earth. It is perhaps the greatest novel with the sea as its setting. There are no women among the scores of characters. But the characters represent almost every race and religion in the world.

The novel may be considered in different ways. It is a story of adventure with an exciting chase and a great fight on the high seas. It is a story of relentless pursuit of revenge. There is mystery and terror as in a Gothic story. Elijah and Fedallah issue warnings and prophecies about the impending catastrophe. It is a novel on whaling; it can be called a treatise on the subject, especially because of the cetological chapters embedded in the novel. These chapters provide the necessary background to the reader and prepare him for the bloody battle between man and whale.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What are the different ways of reading *Moby Dick*?

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6.2.1 The plot

Moby Dick describes the voyage of a ship named the *Pequod*, commanded by Captain Ahab. The declared purpose of the journey was to bring as much whale oil as possible. However, the captain has his secret plans. He wants to take revenge on a white whale, called Moby Dick, that has chewed off his leg in an earlier voyage. The captain directs the ship and its crew to that end. Moby Dick is sighted, chased, and a fight starts. The *Pequod* is sunk and all the crew except Ishmael, the narrator, meet a watery grave.

6.2.2 The Characters

Moby Dick has a large number of characters drawn from all over the globe. Some of them appear only briefly like, for instance, the officers of the passing ships; some like Captain Bildad and Peter Coffin are minor characters. But they are all depicted vividly. Starbuck, the first mate, is portrayed in a convincing manner. He is developed as a foil to Capt. Ahab. The American Indian, Tashtego, the African American, Daggoo, and the pagan from Polynesia, Queequeg are all portrayed with understanding. Ishmael, the narrator, and Ahab, the protagonist, are memorable characters.

6.2.2.1 Ishmael

Ishmael partly represents Melville in that he voices the author's feelings on occasion. He is the narrator of the novel. He begins the novel with a casual announcement: "Call me Ishmael." We are drawn gradually into a deep vortex of events and experiences on the high seas. The name Ishmael, literally means a wanderer and outcast. A wandering hero is very much in the American grain as we observed in the first unit of this course. Ishmael is also a participant in the action of the story. Somewhere in the middle of the novel, the narrator and the omniscient author become one or Ishmael disappears only to re-emerge as the sole survivor of the *Pequod*. He was the first to oppose Ahab's insane pursuit of revenge on Moby Dick.

6.2.2.2 Ahab

Ahab shares with his biblical namesake and Melville several qualities. He is a rebel like Prometheus or Milton's Satan. Prometheus stole fire from the gods for man and was punished by Zeus. Satan warred on heaven's matchless king and was hurled headlong into hell by God. Ahab challenges a mighty creature of God, the White Whale, pursues him across dangerous oceans, and engages him in a fierce encounter. He is vengeance personified. He breathes defiance when he vows that he would strike the sun if it insulted him. He tempers a forged harpoon in the pagan blood of the harpooners. As a climax to his defiant mood, he baptizes the harpoon in the name of the devil. His deep sense of hurt caused by Moby Dick drives him to an obsessive urge for revenge. His confidence in his own power borders on *hubris*. Other sailors who lost their limbs to the ferocious whale thought discretion was the better part of valour and kept away from Moby Dick. Not so Captain Ahab.

6.2.2.3 Moby Dick

What about Moby Dick, the white whale? What does it stand for? Was it just a dumb brute, which means no harm to Captain Ahab? Ahab was convinced that Moby Dick is "the monomaniac incarnation of all these malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them." It represented evil to him. Ishmael thinks that the hideous whiteness stands for demonism. To Starbuck it is a 'dumb brute'. He is willing to hunt whales, but not for Ahab's vengeance. As he puts it, Moby Dick does not seek Ahab, but Ahab is hunting it. Ahab is unmoved by the pleading of Starbuck. He considers himself Fate's lieutenant and assumes a godlike posture.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Who are the main characters and what roles do they play?

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6.2.3 The Theme

The novel is a complex one. So its theme is difficult to grasp. However, there are a few clues to its meaning in the novel. One clue is Father Mapple's sermon in chapter IX. The sermon was delivered just before the start of Captain Ahab's voyage. The message of this sermon is: "If we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists." Father Mapple urges the shipmates: "Sin not, but if you do, take heed to repent of it like Jonah." These words are a timely warning to the sailors on board the *Pequod* and its self-willed, arrogant captain. Melville and his spokesman, Ishmael, realise the self-destructive voyage undertaken by Captain Ahab. But the novelist seems to have admiration, like Stubb, for Ahab who plays Fate's lieutenant. The defiance and the energy of his hero kindle a certain degree of sympathy in Melville.

The second clue to the meaning of this novel appears in chapters 41 and 42. In chapter 41, Ishmael tells us what the White Whale means to Ahab. In the next chapter he explains what the whale means to himself: "All evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick." No wonder, Captain Ahab was "intent on an audacious, immitagable, and supernatural revenge." In the very next chapter, Ishmael says: "Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright." The idea in this sentence is at the core of the whole novel. The distinction between the visible and the invisible worlds as well as the blank terror which the invisible world inspires in Ishmael appear at other places in the book. In chapter CXIV, Melville waxes eloquent on the beauty of the ocean: "These are the times of dreamy quietude when beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it." The visible world

is tranquil, beautiful and brilliant, and the invisible world has a "tiger heart." The visible world with green fields and flowers is a world of trust and love. Man is an eternal wanderer, an orphan in search of his father. In chapter CXXXII, entitled "The Symphony," Melville again grows lyrical:

"It was a clear steel-blue day. The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all - pervading azure; only the pensive air was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep."

The external beauty is like that of a woman, and the sea is masculine. The allusion to Samson reminds us that he was betrayed by a woman, Delilah. So the surface beauty, the appearance, is deceptive, even treacherous. Beneath the surface, in the depths of the ocean, there are "mighty leviathans, sword-fish, and sharks; and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinking of the masculine sea." Melville suggests that if the visible (or surface) world is treacherous, the invisible world is worse; it is murderous."

Ishmael and Ahab have a common attitude to the White Whale. To both of them, the whale was a symbol of demonism. Ishmael, however, concedes unlike Ahab, that the whale is endowed with divinity. From the denouement of the novel which ends in the cruel, violent death of Ahab and the survival of Ishmael, we may draw the inference that Ahab met his just deserts for his *hubris* and blasphemy. Ishmael was not punished as he had faith in divinity. Ishmael is capable of love and Ahab incapable of it in spite of his "humanities".

There are several ambiguities in the novel. The White Whale is both divine and demonic. Melville admires and sympathises with Captain Ahab and yet he destroys him. The ambiguities are perhaps on account of a hidden conflict in the author's own mind. When he finished writing *Moby Dick* Melville wrote to Mrs. Hawthorne: "I have written a wicked book and feel spotless as a lamb." This statement is itself ambiguous. Why did he consider the novel "a wicked book?" Was the writing of the novel, then, a sort of catharsis which cleansed him and made him feel like a "spotless lamb?" Perhaps Melville got rid of some aggressive feelings towards God through this creative process. We have said earlier that both Ahab and Ishmael have something in common with Melville. The fact that Ahab was destroyed and Ishmael was saved in the end is perhaps a clear pointer that Ishmael's spirit of reconciliation rather than Ahab's confrontation is the path for survival.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Explain the theme of *Moby Dick*.

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6.3 ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

The second novel for our study in this unit is Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This novel is ostensibly a sequel to Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Both these are supposed to be "boys' books". This term is rather ambiguous. It may mean books written for the enjoyment of boys. Another possible meaning is that these books deal with the adventures of boys. It may be a boys' book with the first meaning, but it is meant for adults. The book hits American society as no other American book does. It attacks a number of institutions, customs and culture in a devastating manner. It attacks the institution of slavery; it attacks organized religion; it attacks romantic fiction; it attacks sentimentalism; it exposes mob psychology. It is

not surprising that one of America's greatest novels was banned from public libraries and schools on the plea that it would corrupt the youth by setting up Huck Finn as a role model.

6.3.1 Huck as persona

The criticism of American society in the novel is ingeniously embedded in the events which Huck Finn witnesses. He describes the incidents as he saw and understood them; he reports the conversations of several characters as he heard them. It is through the eyes and ears of an almost illiterate, backwoods boy, a teenager, that Mark Twain tells the story. Huck is the author's persona. So whatever Mark Twain wants to say must suit the age and character of this boy. Huck is a naïve boy, an innocent teenager, exposed to the cruelties, deceptions, injustice and violence in American society as he travels South. Such a naïve boy-narrator is called an *ingénu*. The *ingénu* is a very effective device to expose the hypocrisies of society. He admires what he observes and experiences, but the reader knows the novelist's intentions. For instance, Huck admires the Grangerford home where he spends a few days. It is a symbol of Southern gentility. Emmeline Grangerford is like a typical sentimental heroine. Emmeline's "Ode to Stephen Dowlin Bots, Dec'd," is a piece of sentimental verse. She would similarly write a "tribute" to anyone who died in her neighbourhood. *Huckleberry Finn* is an attempt to write an anti-sentimental novel. The Grangerfords would mourn the death of a bird and do not have any hesitation in violently pursuing their feud with the Shepherdsons.

Mark Twain is also critical of the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott and of James Fenimore Cooper. He had written a scathing attack on Cooper's "literary offenses." Scott's novels with their chivalric ideals, romantic settings, beautiful heroines, adventures, tournaments, and violent combats set up a wrong model to the Southern aristocracy in the United States. They lived in an imaginary world of their own. Mark Twain named a boat in which the bandits attempt to loot as *Walter Scott* to show his contempt for Scott's kind of romantic adventures.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. Explain the term *ingénu*.

6.3.2 Huck's Language

We said that the narrator is a naïve teenager almost without education. Huck cannot think in an abstract way, nor can he voice abstract concepts. Abstract words like courage and honesty are absent in his language. His experiences and vocabulary are limited to what he observes, to the sights, sounds and smells. These he reports faithfully. Mark Twain's language stresses the concrete and shuns the abstract. That way he makes a direct, immediate impact on the reader.

6.3.3 Dialects in the Novel

Talking of language, there are several dialects in the novel. Mark Twain belonged to a school of novelists who introduced "realism" and opposed "romanticism" in fiction. Realism demands use of language which is in vogue. Since Huck is barely literate, his vocabulary and sentence patterns are quite limited. The black people in *Huckleberry Finn*, notably Jim, speak the Missouri negro dialect; an extreme form of the South-Western dialect is used for Mrs. Hotchkiss (chapter 41) and the gossiping neighbors at the Phelps farm; the "Pike county" dialect is used for Huck, Tom, Pap, Aunt Sally and others. In reproducing with phonographic authenticity

the nuances of several varieties of American speech, Mark Twain beat the "local colorists" at their game. He triumphed in the use of the colloquial speech and set a pattern. Realism extends to the choice of incidents and characters also. Both these are common and taken from every day life as it was in Mark Twain's time.

6.3.4 Attack on Organized Religion

Mark Twain attacks organised religion. He exposes the 'holy lie' of religion. The whites are all pious Christians who swear by Christian virtues and ideals of tolerance, forgiveness, charity, understanding, etc. yet they don't see the contradiction between their profession of Christianity and the way they treat Negroes. The Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords are devout Christians; they attend the same church and they listen intently to a sermon on brotherly love. But there is no brotherly feeling in their hearts. They are inveterate enemies and that for no reason. While attending the church service they carry guns. So what happens to their swearing by brotherly love?

6.3.5 Attack on Slavery

The more severe criticism in the novel is reserved for slavery. The novel was written twenty years after slavery was legally abolished by Abraham Lincoln. But the events in the novel refer to the pre-abolition era, to some forty years before the Emancipation Proclamation. It was a society which was brain-washed to believe that slavery is good, that the negroes are not human, and that they are like any other property which can be sold at will. In selling the negroes, the white owners did not care if members of the same negro family, for instance, husband, wife, and children are sold away to different persons in different places. That happens to Jim. The built-in insensitivity of the whites to the lives of the negroes is shown in a devastating way at the Phelps farm. Huck arrives at the Phelps' home pretending to be Tom. He had to explain why he was late. He invents a story that the steam boat on which he travelled blew out a cylinder-head on the way. Aunt Sally inquires anxiously:

"Good gracious! anybody hurt?"

"No'm. Killed a nigger."

"Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt." (chapter XXXII)

Apparently, Aunt Sally does not consider the death of a nigger - (although it was Huck's lie) as the death of a human being to worry about.

Huck was brought up in such a society by people who had strong racial prejudice. His father Pap Finn's drunken tirade against voting rights for the negroes is an indication of the prevailing culture. Huck thought that there was nothing wrong if negroes are humiliated or insulted. In his heart he knows his companion Jim to be good, loyal, helpful, considerate and noble, but he suffers qualms of conscience when he realises that he is helping a slave to escape to freedom. He undergoes a serious moral crisis. His heart prevails and he decides to help a good friend, albeit a negro, to escape to freedom. His culture has taught him that he would go to hell if he helped a slave negro to escape. But he risks it. "All right, then, I'll go to hell." (chapter XXXI)

Huck's difficult moral choice was based on considerations of friendship. That is why Mark Twain described this book as "the story of a boy with a good heart but depraved mind". The depravity of his mind was caused by the ceaseless teachings of the society in which he grew up. The fact that Huck resolves to help Jim gain freedom does not mean that Huck was against slavery as such. He was taught to believe that slavery is divinely sanctioned.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

1. What is Huck's moral crisis?
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6.3.6 Structure

Let us consider the structure of the novel. It has certain picaresque elements. Huck and Jim travel down the Mississippi presenting us a cross-section of American society. Huck lies, but his lies are harmless. Neither Huck nor Jim is a picaro (or rogue). The king and the duke qualify as picares but these two are incidental characters. The novel is not a picaresque novel like *Don Quixote* or *Tom Jones*. The hero in a typical picaresque novel is callous and amoral. Neither Huck nor Jim is callous and amoral. In fact, Huck goes out of his way, to help those like the king and the duke who cheated him. Jim is too noble and dignified to be called a picaro. Moreover, Huck and Jim are not aimless loafers. They are strongly motivated to obtain freedom. Huck seeks freedom from a drunken and tyrannical father; Jim seeks freedom from his white masters. Huck wants to light out for the territory to escape the "civilizing" influence of Aunt Sally. From this point of view, the novel is one of escape. It also provides escape to the reader through its humour.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

1. What picaresque elements do you find in *Huckleberry Finn*?
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6.3.7 Humour

Huckleberry Finn is perhaps the most humorous novel in American literature. At any rate, Mark Twain is recognized as the greatest humorist America has produced. The kind of humour that we notice in this novel is known as "deadpan" humour. Huck is entirely without humour; he doesn't know that he is being funny. He maintains a serious posture while narrating funny incidents. Mark Twain was a witty platform speaker, who maintained a gravity even while narrating the most humorous situation. This type of humour is called deadpan humour.

There are several incidents which are funny. Huck disguises himself as a girl when he visits Mrs. Loftus to find out what was happening in the town after Jim's escape. This disguise causes him trouble and he tells a series of lies to Mrs. Loftus (chapter XI). Pap Finn's drunken speech on the negroes voting rights is a funny parody. The old king acting the role of the young Juliet and the quarrel between the king and the duke over the gold stolen from the Phelps girls are some examples of funny incidents. Twain's parodies of preaching at the camp meeting and the king's speech at the funeral of Mr. Phelps are replete with humour.

6.3.8 Setting

The setting of the novel is also significant. Much of the action takes place during the voyage down the river. The river has such a central role in the novel that it can be called a character. The river has its moods: tranquil, stormy, floods, foggy. The river has hazards also: pirates, steam-boats crashing on rafts, etc. The river provides a contrast to the land. Whenever Huck goes ashore in his long journey, he encounters cheating, hypocrisy, violence or cruelty.

Life on the shore is devoid of humanity, love, or sympathy. By contrast, life on the raft, (or on the river) is peaceful and happy. Mark Twain maintains this contrast to drive home the point that the raft is a paradise, at least until the king and the duke invade it.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

1. Why is the river important as a setting in this novel?
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6.3.9 The Ending of the Novel

There is a controversy about the ending of the novel. Hemingway praised the novel in an extravagant way: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*... It's the best book we've had." But he found fault with the ending and called Tom's elaborate plans to free an already free slave as "cheating." Leo Marx called the ending a farce in view of the innumerable pranks authored by the fertile and romantic imagination of Tom Sawyer to the discomfort of Jim. Lionel Trilling justifies Twain's ending as formally apt. T.S. Eliot goes a step further and says that Huck must disappear since he has no beginning and no end.

6.3.10. Mark Twain's pessimism

The great humorist that Mark Twain was, he became increasingly disillusioned and a pessimist, almost a misanthrope, towards the end of his life. His pessimistic vision found full expression in *What is Man* (1906) and *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916). But the seeds of his pessimism may be noticed by discerning readers even in *Huckleberry Finn*. The novel is undoubtedly an attack on slavery; it is also an attack on the culture (of the South) which allowed and continued slavery. More than these, the novel is an exposé of 'the damned human race', but in subdued and subtle tones. Chapter XXI deals with the daylight murder of Boggs in the market place by Colonel Sherburn. We get the impression that Sherburn is inhuman in killing a harmless drunk. In chapter XXII, Sherburn comes out as an admirable and fearless man when compared to the large crowd of cowardly and foolish men. Twain seems to be speaking through Sherburn in condemning American culture. At about the same time, Twain wrote in *Life on the Mississippi* approving Mrs. Trollope's unflattering views on America. She had said that the chief characteristics of American "civilization" were slavery, rowdiness, false godliness, and "chivalric" murders. Sherburn says that the average man is a coward. He would come masked and kill in the dark and from behind. Sherburn's comments are applied generally to people everywhere. This daring speech is an early sign of revulsion against mankind that Mark Twain started developing. There is one more indication in chapter XXXIII. Huck watches the tarring and feathering of the king and the duke at Pikesville and says:

"Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another."

The inhumanity of man to other men is a sad commentary on the condition of mankind. Wasn't Mark Twain justified in calling it "the damned human race?"

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied two great American novels: Melville's *Moby Dick* and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *Moby Dick* raises deep ethical questions.

6.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

Moby Dick can be read as a novel with the sea as its setting. It symbolizes the bloody battle between man and whale (nature). Its characters represent every race and religion. It can be read as a treatise on hunting and whaling. It is like a Gothic story of mystery and terror. It is a tale of adventure and a great fight on the seas. The story is also the story of revenge.

Check Your Progress - 2

Three main characters in this novel are Ahab, *Moby Dick* and Ishmael. Ahab is a rebel like Prometheus who challenges a mighty creature of god, the white whale, *Moby Dick*, the white whale represents the uncontrollable forces of nature. For Ishmael *Moby Dick* is like a demon and for Ahab it stands for all evil that eats up a human being. Ishmael is the story teller who is a wanderer and outcast. He is typical of the American wandering hero. He does not accept Ahab's attempts to take revenge on *Moby Dick*.

Check Your Progress - 3

The theme of *Moby Dick* is a complex one which centres round the perceptions of Ahab and Ishmael about the white whale. While Ahab wanted to take revenge, Ishmael accepts that the whale is also a symbol of divinity. The novel also depicts the contrast between the visible and invisible worlds. Melville suggests that if the visible world seems formed in love, the invisible world is formed in fright.

Check Your Progress - 4

Ingenu is the term used to refer to a naive boy-narrator. It is an effective device to expose the hypocrisies of society.

Check Your Progress - 5

1. Huck's moral crisis is to break away from the teachings of his society to help Jim, his good friend, a negro, to escape to freedom. The fact that he helps Jim does not mean that he is against slavery as such which his culture has taught him to believe is divinely sanctioned.

Check Your Progress - 6

The structure of the novel has certain picaresque elements such as a journey that Huck and Jim undertake down the Mississippi river. Huck tells lies but he is not a rogue or picaro. The king and the Duke are picares but they are only incidental characters. The novel is not callous or amoral like the typical picaresque novel.

Check Your Progress - 7

The river is important in this novel because it almost plays the role of a character. It has its moods - tranquil, stormy, floods and fogs. The river also has dangers - pirates, streamboats crashing on rafts. Unlike the land which has violence, cruelty and hypocrisy, the life on the raft (on the river) is peaceful and happy.

6.6 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of *Moby Dick*?

2. Contrast the attitudes of the principal characters to the White Whale.
3. Discuss *Huckleberry Finn* as a critique of American society.
4. Why is *Huckleberry Finn* considered a great classic?

6.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Chase, Richard. (Ed.) Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Clemens, Langhorne Samuel (Mark Twain). Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. (Eds.) Souleley Bradley, et.al. (Norton Critical Edition) New York: Norton, 1962.

Hillway, Tyrus, and Luther S. Mansfield, (Eds.) Moby Dick: Centennial Essays. Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1953.

Inge, M.Thomas. (Ed.) Huck Finn Among the Critics: A Centennial Selection, 1884 - 1984. Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 1984.

Kar, P.C. (Ed.) Mark Twain: An Anthology of Recent Criticism. Delhi: Pencraft International, 1992.

Melville, Herman. Moby Dick. (Eds.) Harrison Hayford, et.al. (Norton Critical Edition) New York: Norton, 1967.

BRAOU

UNIT - 7: TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL

HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*
 - 7.2.1 The Setting
 - 7.2.2 The Theme
 - 7.2.3 Remedies for Alienation
 - 7.2.4 The Code
 - 7.2.5 Ritual
 - 7.2.6 Style
 - 7.2.7 Structure
- 7.3 Faulkner's *Light in August*
 - 7.3.1 The Plot
 - 7.3.2 The Structure
 - 7.3.3 Christian Symbolism
 - 7.3.4 The Characters
 - 7.3.5 Technical Innovations
 - 7.3.6 The Title of the Novel
- 7.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.5 Answer to Check Your Progress
- 7.6 Sample Examination Questions
- 7.7 Recommended Books

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After giving through this unit you will be able to

- discuss modern American fiction.
- analyse and interpret two important novels
- assess the contribution of Hemingway and Faulkner.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with two great novelists, Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961) and William Faulkner (1897 - 1962). Both of them made their mark between the two World Wars. Both of them were near contemporaries. Both of them won the Nobel Prize, Faulkner in 1949 and Hemingway in 1954. Both of them made unique contributions to the American novel. Hemingway fashioned a distinctive style of his own which became a model for several other writers. Faulkner developed an involved narrative method using the stream of consciousness technique. Hemingway emerged as the spokesman of the "lost generation" while Faulkner became the narrator of the "saga" of the decadent post-Civil War society in the South.

7.2 HEMINGWAY'S *THE SUN ALSO RISES*

We have chosen Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) for discussion. It is a novel in which his major concerns and stylistic achievement are displayed at their best. It is quintessential Hemingway, in theme, characterization, technique, and style.

7.2.1 The Setting

The setting of *The Sun Also Rises* is Paris and Pamplona and other places in Spain. The time is after World War I. The characters are mostly American and British expatriates. The main characters in the novel are personally and grievously affected by World War I. Jake Barnes is an American journalist who was wounded in a strange fashion; he is a sexual cripple. He is the narrator in the novel. He is desperately in love with Brett Ashley and yet he could not fulfill his desire. Brett's fiancé died in the war due to dysentery. Although she is engaged to Mike Campbell, she is promiscuous and runs off with several people like Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero. To add to Jake's agony, he becomes an accomplice in arranging her affairs with other men.

7.2.2 The Theme

The war has literally unmanned Jake Barnes as it did many more. Europe has become a waste land which was depicted poignantly in T.S. Eliot's famous poem, *The Waste Land*. Hemingway's novel was also written against the same backdrop of a sterile Europe. Alienation which is a recurring theme in American literature as we noted in Unit 1, is an important theme in this novel also. The trauma of a violent, mechanized war alienated people from their society and environment. Jake is alienated because of his war wound, although he puts on a brave face, he is filled with despair and deep disappointment. In the privacy of his hotel room when he is alone, he has nervous breakdowns. We have already spoken of Brett's loss. She is unable to marry the man she loves, Jake Barnes. Her fiancé is alienated because he cannot manage money.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What is the theme of the novel?

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7.2.3 Remedies for alienation

How do the alienated characters cope with their unenviable plight? They are unable to live normally because of their traumatic experience. That is the heart of the matter in this novel. There is hardly a plot in the conventional sense of the term. It is a situation, a pathetic one perhaps, that the novelist describes. The characters have their own ways to forget their trauma and continue to exist. One of the ways is drinking. Alcohol is an anaesthetic. The characters consume large quantities of it to overcome their unspeakable agony. The second manner of escape is watching spectator sports like boxing and bullfighting. All the characters in this novel move from Paris to Pamplona in Spain to watch a bullfight and the fiesta. Jake Barnes knows all about bullfighting and could explain the finer points to his friends, notably Brett. The final sword thrust between the shoulder blades of the bull is known as "the moment of truth." Watching a bullfight is like watching a Greek tragedy complete with catharsis. The "moment of truth" provides the catharsis for the war-damaged psyches of men like Jake Barnes. Yet another way is to cultivate friendship. Living among friends could provide temporary relief to the troubled minds of Hemingway's characters.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

How do the characters in the novel overcome alienation?

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7.2.4 The code

The characters also live by a code to be able to survive and maintain some dignity. The traditional ethical values have crumbled in the war; such values are also rejected by the post-war generation. Their code has emerged from the demands of their situation. This has become famous in the fiction of Hemingway. This code is a touchstone of one's character in a crisis when moral choices are involved. For instance, Brett has had a very satisfying sexual experience with the bullfighter, Pedro Romero. Yet she decides to leave him in order to save him. She explains to Jake: "I'm not one of these bitches that ruins children (p.243) and she feels "rather good" on sparing Romero (p.243).

7.2.4.1 Principles of the code

The Hemingway code is a set of a few principles which are well understood by an in-group. They form a secret society and those who belong to this society instinctively recognize one another immediately. On meeting Count Mippipopolous (chapter 7) for the first time, Brett tells Jake that the Count was one of them. This was later confirmed by the Count's "arrow wounds." Brett signals her recognition of a member of the group by "wrinkling the corners of her eyes" (p. 58). Pedro Romero, an exemplary bullfighter, is an insider, but Robert Cohn does not qualify for membership. The contrastive attitudes of Romero and Cohn to several things draws the line between the insiders and the outsiders. One test is the appreciation of a bullfight. Cohn does not like it at all, he is nauseated by the gory spectacle. Jake and his friends enjoy the bullfight. A more important point of the code is the ability to suffer silently. Jake never complains though Brett's promiscuous conduct hurts his ego several times. Mike Campell, Brett's fiancé, also does not complain about her affairs with other men. Cohn complains and physically assaults others; he has not learnt to suffer silently. "He is ready to do battle for his lady love (p.178). This comment of the narrator on Cohn's sexual jealousy shows Jake's contempt for the old idea of sentimental love. Another test of being an insider is the attitude to the cathedrals and historical monuments. An outsider like Cohn is eager to know their history but insiders do not bother about it. The past is unnecessary; they live in the present. A physical wound is a sure sign of an insider; Jake has one, the Count has "arrow wounds." Both of them participated in wars. Others like Romero take part in hazardous sports like bullfighting. Romero is admired for holding "his purity of line through the maximum of exposure" (p. 168). A real man keeps cool when he is faced with the gravest danger to his life. This is courage at its best. Hemingway calls such an attitude "grace under pressure." The insiders display this virtue when they are in a crisis.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Explain the code of conduct in Hemingway.

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7.2.5 Ritual

The discussion of the code of conduct raises the question of morality. What kind of morality prevails when people simply eat, consume lots of liquor, (passively) watch sports, and indulge in sex? Hemingway is depicting a situation, one which prevailed in post-war Europe. It is a situation which is full of despair. How can one come to terms with a harsh and hopeless world? Hemingway's characters seek to escape the trauma by a deliberate cultivation of a sensuous life. Eating, drinking and sex are part of that way of life. They also resort to ritual activities to forget the harsh world outside. Bullfighting is one such act of ritual. There are other forms of ritual like fishing. It is for this reason that Jake Barnes and his friend, Bill Gorton, go fishing to Burguete. Ritual immersion releases the tensions, fears and hatreds. This release makes a man feel better and this is what a wounded and traumatised Jake settles for. Ritual is a form of therapy for troubled minds. When some one like Jake learns how to live in a hostile world, he will probably know "what it is all about". As he observes, "May be if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about" (p. 148).

7.2.6 Style

Another important contribution of Hemingway is his innovative style. He found out through his personal participation in World War I that the high sounding rhetoric to win popular support for the war was empty. There was a wide gap between the ground realities of fighting and the idealism mouthed by the political masters. He distrusted the old rhetoric which no longer carried conviction. He deliberately fashioned a new style and a new rhetoric to make a deal on minds saturated with false propaganda. His early training as a reporter and his close association with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound in the formative period of his literary career taught him to avoid overstatement and clichés.

A novelist needs a style which can persuade the reader to his view. Hemingway swears to present "the way it was" or "the real thing." So it is a matter of recording or reporting facts without explicit comment. The simple (or declarative) sentence is a useful instrument for this. So Hemingway writes a series of short, simple sentences. Such a syntax is known as parataxis. Each sentence describes a fact and facts are piled up. The reader can draw his own inferences from the reported facts. This type of syntax depends on juxtaposition rather than exposition. Placing facts together is a more effective way than explaining the events to persuade a reader. Parataxis enables Hemingway to repeat words or phrases to approximate his writing to actual speech. The skillful playing with words may be noticed in the dialogue between Count Mippipopolous and Brett. They repeat the word, "joke." The boredom of their talk becomes apparent; it also underscores the embarrassing and unwanted presence of the Count when Brett is with her lover, Jake.

Another feature of Hemingway's style is the deliberate avoidance of abstract words because such words might mislead and hence be false. The repudiation of abstract words such as 'honor', is because such words are encrusted with value judgments of the past. Also, Hemingway chooses simple words. In a world dominated by propaganda which is invariably overstatement, Hemingway found an effective means of getting across his point through deliberate understatement. Jake understates his personal anguish in this novel. Although his unique injury is central to the action in the novel, Jake never expresses his misery or sexual jealousy publicly even when he is provoked. He is "hardboiled" and in Bill Gorton's phrase, he never gets "daunted" in public. To the prostitute Georgette's persistent questioning about his lack of response to her gestures of love, he simply replies he "got hurt in the war" (p.17). he tells Brett that what happened to him was supposed to be "funny" (p.26); to Bill Gorton, he says, "I just had an accident" (p.115). This laconic style, the statement of the bare facts, the studied avoidance of ornamental language are an inevitable consequence of war and similar harsh experiences. Another feature of Hemingway's style is the avoidance of direct statement. Brett is in love with Jake. 69

But this is not stated explicitly in the novel. When Brett and Jake are alone together in the taxiride (chapter 4), there is no statement of love. Similarly, Brett's beauty is never directly mentioned; it is suggested by passers - by their stopping to watch her.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

Discuss the components of Hemingway's style.

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7.2.7 Structure

The novel's structure is cyclical. It is divided into three books. In Book I, the characters are introduced, in Book II, they witness the bullfight and the fiesta at Pamplona and two of them go to Burguete for fishing. Brett goes off with Romero. Book III comes back to the starting point. Brett and Jake who love one another so much are together alone, but are unable to consummate their love.

The title of the novel comes from the epigraph which in turn comes from *Ecclesiastes* in the Bible: "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose". This passage stresses the circularity of all action in the universe and the lack of any new thing under the sun. The circular motions of the sun underscore the circular structure of this novel.

The Preacher of *Ecclesiastes* speaks to a disillusioned generation. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abides for ever." He urges people to eat, drink, and be merry. Was Hemingway doing the same thing in this novel? Did he set up Jake, Bill and others as role models for his generation? Was the novel a plea for hedonism. The epigraph from *Ecclesiastes* begins with the reference to the passage of generations, and this has a reference to the first epigraph which is a quote of what Gertrude Stein had said to Hemingway in Paris: "you are all a lost generation." Stein was referring to the young men who were disillusioned after World War I and felt betrayed by their leaders. Hemingway does not accept Gertrude Stein's comment as valid. He argues that his generation is just as good or as bad as any other generation. The passing of one generation and the arrival of another is an unending process just like the circular motion of the sun. So the epigraphs underscore the circularity in the structure of the novel. The second epigraph suggests repetitiveness, the same things happening again and again. The characters indulge in repetitive (and not very significant) activities such as eating, drinking and sex. This repetitiveness is underscored by Hemingway's style in which he repeats the same word several times, sometimes with minor variations. There is an inevitability in the circular and repetitive journey of the sun; there is an inevitability in the passing and coming of generations. Circularity and repetitiveness are built-in processes of the universe itself.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

How would you describe the structure of the novel? Why?

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7.3 WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *LIGHT IN AUGUST*

This novel, published in 1932, deals with the problems of the South after its defeat in the Civil War. It is a complex novel where the theme, the structure, the style and the technique are all complex. This complexity at different levels makes it a difficult novel to understand. But it is a rewarding experience to study the novel to understand the American South. Things have not changed much since the Civil War or the publication of this novel seventy years ago. So it has a contemporary relevance.

7.3.1 The plot

The main event in *Light in August* is the murder of a white woman named Joanna Burden by Joe Christmas, a man believed to have mixed (white and negro) blood (chapter 12). After the murder, the house was set on fire accidentally by Lucas Burch. The murder takes place on a Friday in August 1929. Actually, Joe raped Joanna, a spinster, before killing her. The novel begins with the Saturday following the day of murder. Lena Grove, travelling towards Jefferson, Mississippi, (patterned after Faulkner's own Oxford, Mississippi) observes at a distance the smoke coming from Joanna's burning house (chapter 1). The next eleven chapters provide a lengthy explanation for the cause of the smoke which was observed by Lena during her journey. After the murder, Joe Christmas escapes from the scene and wanders on foot through the countryside. Later he is pursued and killed. Lena is unwed, but pregnant through Lucas Burch. She is in search of Lucas and narrowly misses meeting him. However, another man, Byron Bunch meets her and falls in love with her (chapter 42) Lena's child is born. Lena and Byron Bunch leave together.

Chapters 5 to 10 narrate the thoughts of Joe Christmas on the fateful Friday night as he stands outside Joanna Burden's house. Chapters 11 and 12 tell us about Joanna's life and of her murder. In chapter 13 we come to know that Byron Bunch is in love with Lena Grove, but that he is willing to sacrifice his love and take her to Lucas Burch who shares a room with Joe Christmas. Chapter 14 is narrated from the sheriff's (police officer) point of view. He is an ethical frame of reference to evaluate the other persons in this novel. He is detached. Half way through this chapter the narrative shifts to Joe again. He has hitch-hiked (reminiscent of Lena's hitch-hiking) for seven days after the murder and reaches Mottstown where he is arrested.

In chapter 15, two new characters Mr. and Mrs. Hines are introduced. They are Joe's grandparents. Mr. Hines is a religious bigot who is nearly out of his mind. He believes that the taint of Negro blood is like original sin. Suspecting Joe to have mixed blood, he attempts to lynch Joe. Mrs. Hines tries to stop him because Joe is her grandson (daughter's son). Otherwise she has no moral qualms. Chapter 16 throws new light on the early life of Joe Christmas. Mr. Hines believes him to be evil and has been persecuting him even in the orphanage where Joe was admitted. In chapter 17, we learn that Lena's child is born on Saturday, eight days after the murder. Chapter 18 narrates one last attempt by Byron Bunch to bring Lucas Burch (who was involved in a crime) and Lena Grove together. But Bunch fails and Lucas Burch escapes. This happens on a Monday, ten days after Joanna's murder. By coincidence Joe Christmas is killed on the same day. In Chapter 19 Peter Grimm, a Guardsman and a racist appears with a lynch mob and kills and castrates Joe. Chapter 20 records the meditations of Gail Hightower, a recluse. Chapter 21 is a sort of epilogue. The novel closes on an affirmative note. The novel starts with Lena travelling towards Jefferson. The implied conclusion is that evil is dead, and good is victorious. Lena's return journey provides a cyclical and symmetrical ending to the novel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What is the main event in the novel?

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7.3.2 The Structure

There are two opposite forces, that of good and of evil, in the novel. Lena Grove (who is introduced in the beginning of the novel) symbolizes virtues, health, light, and affirmation, broadly the forces of good. Joe Christmas stands for the forces of evil, which include alienation, perversion, hatred, sterility, and death. The evil forces are also embodied in Joanna Burden, Percy Grimm, the Hineses and the McEacherns (Joe's foster parents). Gail Hightower, (a Presbyterian minister who becomes a recluse). Byron Bunch, and Lucas Burch are links between the two forces as they are represented in Lena Grove and Joe Christmas. For instance, Lucas is the father of Lena's child. He lives with Joe Christmas in the cabin on Joanna's premises. Byron Bunch is in love with Lena, brings her to the same cabin, asks Mrs. Hines to help in the delivery of Lena's child. Byron Bunch reports to Gail Hightower all the events from time to time. Joe Christmas was murdered by Percy Grimm in Hightower's home. Finally, Byron Bunch escorts Lena Grove on her return journey.

In Faulkner's presentation, the evil forces, their vengeful pursuits, and bigotry get more space than the affirmative forces. However, the novel begins and ends with the fountain of affirmation, that is Lena Grove. Thus the forces of affirmation are shown at prominent places, making up a large length of coverage. Lena is almost alone in embodying the forces of good in the novel. Her role does not appear to be central but her qualities of peace and faith pervade the whole novel even though she may not be physically present throughout. In Faulkner's scheme of things, evil takes many forms such as religious fanaticism, particularly the fanaticism of Presbyterianism. Such fanaticism has ruined Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden. Joanna's father, it may be useful to remember, was called Calvin Burden. (Calvinism dominated and dictated religious life for many years in America). Hines is a religious and racial fanatic almost to the point of insanity. For him, Negro blood is equivalent to original sin.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

What does Lena Grove personify?

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7.3.3 Christian Symbolism

Faulkner is not against religion, but only against rigid and fanatic pursuit of religion. He uses several Christian symbols in the novel to enrich the meaning. Joe Christmas has the same initials as Jesus Christ. Joe got his name because he was abandoned at the orphanage on a Christmas Day. The coincidence invests the event with spiritual significance. Joe's own life has some ironic parallels with Jesus's life. But these parallels suggest the opposites of Jesus's virtues and good deeds. Lucas betrays Joe like Judas for money. Joe's wanderings in his early life and his journey in the last seven days towards his cruel death are suggestive of events in Christ's life. But Joe is not a redeemer. His death does not save any soul. Joe cannot redeem the South from its rigid religion. He becomes a scapegoat who suffers torment.

7.3.4 The characters

The central character is Joe Christmas. He stands for the evil forces such as violence, hatred, murder and disorientation. He has been subject to evil influences right from infancy. People around him are irrational to the point of insanity. They definitely had a role in shaping Joe's own attitudes and personality. Such people warp and pervert his character.

Who are the people who had such an evil influence over Joe? First the Hineses. They are his grandparents as he is born to their daughter. They suspected that she had an affair with a Negro. Even before Joe's birth, the grandfather decided that Joe will be an evil force. He deems it his sacred duty to punish him. He prevents medical help at the time of delivery and simply watches Millie, his own daughter, die. Later, as a janitor in the orphanage in which Joe was admitted, he persecutes him. Then, we have Joe's foster parents, the McEacherns. Mr. McEachern is almost as bad as Mr. Hines. He regards Joe as "the Lord God's abomination." He is cold and merciless in punishing Joe. For instance, he beats the boy Joe severely for not learning the catechism (an established group of answers, esp. about a set of Christian beliefs). His behaviour is brutal. The third influence on Joe is Joanna Burden. She is a middle-aged New Englander. Her upbringing makes her resolve to help the Negro even though she does not accept him as an equal. These three and several other minor characters have a disastrous effect on Joe's personality. They shaped his thinking and responses.

Finally we have Gail Hightower. He too is an eccentric like several other characters in the novel. He is also a fanatic in his own way like Hines, McEachern, and Joanna Burden.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

List the evil influences on Joe Christmas and explain their relationship to him.

7.3.5 Technical Innovations

- i) **Flash back** This technique is as old as Homer, but it has been given a new shape in post World War I fiction. Faulkner refines it further to shatter chronological continuity. When events are deliberately jumbled up against chronological time, there is disorder and disorientation. The technique is meant to undermine any notion of order in the world. Faulkner stresses that an external order does not exist in a world controlled by bigots and insane people. Faulkner's world, like Hemingway's, is a dark and violent, harsh and hostile world. Faulkner depicts the irrational violence caused in the name of religion and race.
- ii) **Enveloping not developing.** Faulkner tends to envelop rather than develop a story. He begins the narration of the story at the end (like Lena's search for Lucas) and tells it in a disjointed time frame. In a way, he moves from the present to the past. And the past events are not in a continuous block. They are split up and scattered throughout the novel. The reader has to piece them together to make sense. This technique underscores the lack of a neat pattern in the world. Two or more stories seemingly unrelated and stretching back into the past are told almost simultaneously. In *Light in August*, there are at least three stories, that of Lena Grove, of Joe Christmas, and of Gail Hightower. There are incidents and persons linking these stories as we have seen.
- iii) **Shooting from different angles** Like the flashback which is a film technique, Faulkner uses another film technique in fiction. He likes to "shoot" some of his scenes from different

unusual angles. For instance, Joe Christmas is presented from several angles: Hines's, McEachern's, Joanna's, and so on.

- iv) **Stream of Consciousness** This is a technique used for tracing the inner workings of a character's mind. It is relatively easy to give a physical description, but it is not so easy to inform the reader of the thoughts passing through a person's mind. Faulkner marks his use of stream of consciousness through the use of italics. You will find an example in chapter 10.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 9

Explain Faulkner's use of the flash-back technique.

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7.3.6 The Title of the novel

The title is ambiguous and can be interpreted in several ways. One meaning of the word is that some burden or weight is removed making someone or something light. If this is the intended meaning, Lena appears in the first chapter in an advanced state of pregnancy. In the last chapter, that is after ten days, she is unburdened, her child is born. The lightening takes place in August. Hence the title, *Light in August*. The second meaning of the word light is "enlightenment," or the dawning of wisdom. Gail Hightower's enlightenment regarding certain realities also occurs in August 1929.

Faulkner's own explanation is quite interesting. He says that in the month of August every year in his native Mississippi, there is "a luminous quality to the light, ... It lasts just for a day or two, then it's gone... that's all that the title meant, it was just an evocative title because it reminded me of that time, of a luminosity older than our Christian civilization". It is this light which shines on the day of Joe's death and at the moment when Hightower recognizes his responsibility both for his own suffering and that of his dead wife. So the author used the word "light" as a noun and not as an adjective. If that is the case, light stands for the dawning of wisdom, for enlightenment. Hence the title *Light in August*.

7.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied two important American novels of the twentieth century. We studied the theme, characters, and techniques of Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* and of Faulkner in *Light in August*. We attempted to assess their contribution to the American novel.

7.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

The theme of the novel *The Sun Also Rises* is alienation. It describes the trauma of a violent mechanised war and the alienation of people from their society and environment. The impact of World War I on the American and British expatriates is poignantly depicted in the novel.

Check Your Progress - 2

There are different ways in which the characters overcome their alienation. They either drink heavily, watch sports like bullfighting and boxing or cultivate friends and move from one place to another

Check Your Progress - 3

The code of conduct that binds characters together has some shared principles such as the appreciation of a hazardous sport, the ability to suffer silently, a lack of interest in the past, and an ability to remain cool in the gravest dangers of life. These principles are understood by the in-group or secret society which recognises members instinctively.

Check Your Progress - 4

Hemingway's style is marked by a series of short, simple sentences. Such a syntax is known as *parataxis*. The facts in each sentence are piled up for the reader to draw his own inferences. There is juxtaposition rather than exposition. Hemingway also deliberately avoids abstract words. He uses understatement rather than direct statements and repeats words or phrases and often plays upon words for creating an impact.

Check Your Progress - 5

The novel has a cyclical or circular structure. Book I introduced the characters. In Book II they witness the bullfight and the fiesta. In Book III the story returns to the starting point. Like the sun which goes on its circular motion, the story moves from one generation to another. The entire process is unending with mechanical functions being performed repetitively.

Check Your Progress - 6

The main event in *Light in August* is the murder of a white woman named Joanna Burden by Joe Christmas.

Check Your Progress - 7

Lena Grove personifies the forces of good in the novel. Her role is not central but her qualities of peace and faith pervade the novel even though she herself is not physically present throughout. She is contrasted with the evil forces who are vengeful and wicked.

Check Your Progress - 8

The evil influences on Joe Christmas are his grandparents the Hineses and his foster parents, the McEacherns. Both the families consider Joe to be an evil force because he is a Negro. Joanna Burden is another major character who has a disastrous effect on Joe's personality. Although she wants to help him she does not consider him her equal.

Check Your Progress - 9

The flashback technique is a technique of narration in which chronological continuity of events is jumbled up. It causes disorder and disorientation because of the moving back and forward of the narrative in time. It depicts the lack of order in the world. Faulkner refines this technique further and stresses that external order does not exist in a world controlled by bigots and insane people.

7.6 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the theme of *The Sun Also Rises*.
2. Write a note on the moral code and its operation in this novel.

3. Illustrate the distinctive qualities of Hemingway's style.
4. Show the relationship between the structure, the epigraphs and the title of *The Sun Also Rises*.
5. Examine *Light in August* as a struggle between good and evil.
6. Write a note on the technical devices used by Faulkner in *Light in August*.
7. Comment on the appropriateness of the title, *Light in August*.

7.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

A. For Hemingway

Baker, Carlos. Ernest Hemingway: The Writer as Artist. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Hemingway, Ernest. The Sun Also Rises. New York: Scribners, 1926.

Rao, E. Nageswara. Ernest Hemingway: A Study of His Rhetoric. New Delhi: Arnold Associates, 1983.

Young, Philip. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966.

B. For Faulkner

Faulkner, William. Light in August. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1960.

Millgate, Michael (ed.) New Essays on "Light in August". New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

O'Connor, William van. The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954.

Thompson, Lawrance. William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963.

UNIT - 8 : CONTEMPORARY FICTION

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 The Postwar Novel
 - 8.2.1 Drug Addiction as a Theme
 - 8.2.1.1 William Burroughs
 - 8.2.1.2 Robert Stone
 - 8.2.2 Old Myths
 - 8.2.3 Passivity (Kurt Vonnegut)
 - 8.2.3.1 Richard Bratigan
 - 8.2.4 Art (John Barth)
 - 8.2.5 Revolt against History (Vladimir Nabokov)
 - 8.2.6 Sexual Attitudes
 - 8.2.7 Contemporary Politics
 - 8.2.8 Impact of Technology
- 8.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.4 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 8.5 Sample Examination Questions
- 8.6 Recommended Books

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- discuss the trends in post-World War II fiction.
- examine the work of a few prominent novelists.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we discussed one novel each of Hemingway and Faulkner. In this unit we will discuss some significant trends in American fiction in the second half of the twentieth century. We will also examine fresh themes of the novelists after World War II in America.

8.2 THE POSTWAR NOVEL

The war has brought dislocation, both physical and psychological. Postwar life and values in the United States are different from prewar life and values. A large middle class has grown after World War II. So the problems of this class rather than those of businessmen and industrialists as in the past become the subject matter of fiction. The middle class is under pressure. It is driven to despair, even to nihilism. The new situation throws up new problems and they provide fresh themes for fiction. These are drug addiction, sex, and violent crime.

8.2.1 Drug addiction as a theme

War has induced a desire for aggression, for power, for control. Such a mental stage leads to a search for escape through drugs. The relation between the drug addict and the drug pusher is one of a dependent and a controller. Drugs were used extensively during the war to kill pain and reduce physical suffering. Not surprisingly, drug addiction becomes a theme in American fiction. The drug addict is a new character in Nelson Algren's and William Burroughs' novels.

He is an oppressed man who expresses himself by his dependence on drugs. He commits violence on himself. The "noble sufferer," a heroic type of the past, is replaced by the man who wilfully inflicts suffering on himself. The disorder of an individual mind, rather of a society, becomes a theme for post-war fiction. The theme of drug addiction is significantly used by William Burroughs and Robert Stone.

8.2.1.1 William Burroughs

William Burroughs uses drug addiction as a metaphor for other types of addiction such as addiction to power, to cruelty, to sex. His novel, *Naked Lunch* (1959) is an example. In another novel, *Nova Express* (1964), the power play is extended to outer space, where one star preys on another and becomes brighter leaving the second one dimmer. The novelist aptly summarises the situation: "First it's symbiosis, then parasitism." Burroughs' fictional world is dominated by the "wild boys," those who are drug-addicts or drug - pushers. It is governed by the law of the junkie jungle which states: "steal from him before he steals from you." This is the principle underlying power-politics in the world.

8.2.1.2 Robert Stone

In Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers* (1974), a Marine becomes a drug - pusher, but he dies as his heroin was stolen by a policeman who shot him. As Josephine Hendin puts it: "Heroin is the symbol of a corrupt society: it is peace, currency, and poison. It stands for American destructiveness, greed, and vulnerability". In another novel, *A Hall of Mirrors* (1966), Stone depicts exploitation and vindictiveness. The political system in the South is symbolized by Rheinhardt who has a compulsive urge to become a powerful boss. He oppresses others. He is also a drug-addict who feels nothing and who cares for nothing including the girl who adores him. In Stone's fiction those who care simply don't survive. Drugs are the metaphor for the corruption in American society. If it is not heroin, marijuana, or alcohol, it might be other metaphorical forms of drugs. A phony preacher makes money by preaching Christianity while Rheinhardt himself becomes rich as an announcer on a racist radio. Drugs are seen as palliatives for anger. Drugs, their necessity, addiction to them, and pushing them, have become a way of life in America. They have become powerful tools for gaining power at different levels of society. In Burroughs' novels, drugs may keep a person away from violence, in Stone's novels they are a protective shield for selfish people.

8.2.2 Old Myths

Another innovation in themes is the adaptation of an old myth to the modern context. John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) tells the story of Beowulf from the monster's point of view. There is a clash between Grendel, an alienated monster, who would like to believe in civilized order and King Hrothgar who boasts of a magnificent palace as his great achievement. Grendel destroys the palace and all that belongs to the King. His bitterness and loneliness have not diminished. Grendel expresses a doubt about the unlovability of the hero as killer. The experimental novel usually presents an argument over what is good and what is evil. Violence in contemporary world drives people either to drugs or to detachment.

8.2.3 Passivity (Kurt Vonnegut)

Another contemporary theme is passivity. If one cannot win, one avoids such a situation. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., points out the futility of human endeavour. Setting his science fiction, *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), against the vast spaces of the universe, he illustrates how trivial human life and achievement are. In this novel, a Tralfamadorian "machine", is stranded on a satellite for want of a spare part for his spaceship. He cannot continue his intergalactic voyages to deliver a message to all the planets. Vonnegut shows that the passage of civilizations on our

planet was hindering the Traifamadorian plan to fetch that crucial part. The message that Salo wishes to deliver to all the planets is a dot. This dot stands for "Greetings" in Salo's language. Vonnegut suggests in this science fiction that the inhabitants of earth suffer and strive for a mere dot; that is for nothing. He does not see any hope for earthlings.

In *Cat's Cradle* (1963) three unhappy children are bequeathed ice-9 by their scientist-father. This last discovery of the scientist has the potential to solidify water or blood. The paternal legacy of ice-9 brings them the hope of happiness and control over the world. They want to be happy which is a legitimate and normal desire. But their simple desire for happiness destroys the world. Vonnegut's novels propose to offset helplessness in life by resignation and passive acceptance. In *Slaughterhouse - Five or the Children's Crusade* (1969), the novelist juxtaposes science fiction and realism. This novel is based on Dresden fire-bombing in 1945 during which the prisoners of war (Pows) including the author save themselves by hiding far below the earth's surface. In his fiction also, the characters survive by hiding beneath the surface. For instance, Billy Pilgrim, the hero of this novel, hides at the bottom of the swimming pool. That is a way of escaping violence on the surface. This blending of personal danger and public tragedy enables Vonnegut to improvise a defence strategy against suffering. Detachment and meaninglessness reduce the pain of suffering.

8.2.3.1 Richard Brautigan

The traditional American values of hard work and perseverance are no longer important in the fiction of passivity. Richard Brautigan in *Revenge of the Lawn* (1971) cautions ordinary people from aspiring too high. Sheer hard work would not get them far if they do not have rich parents and powerful connections. Brautigan attempts to drive away the anxiety of the disillusioned by erasing such things as status, wealth and ambition.

8.2.4 Art (John Barth)

The contemporary novelists use art as a theme, not for escape as in the past, but as a survival tool. The artist too has many masks. He too invents strategies for survival. In John Barth's novel, *The End of the Road* (1958), the central figure, Homer, stands for contemporary man. He is without any aim as he is without any feeling. When he finishes his college, he goes to the bus station with twenty dollars. But he is unable to decide his destination. He has no motivation to go anywhere or to do anything. He ceases to exist: "I was without a character, without a personality. There was no ego; no I." The doctor who attends on an immobilized Homer tries his favourite "Mythotherapy." He believes that Homer cannot exist; he can be a parody of another. The doctor advises him to play roles and put on masks because the ego is also a mask. The doctor wants to transform life into drama, and making people aware of fiction if they fail in life. The implication is that for the doctor people are not human beings capable of personal emotions and attachments. They can be story tellers, actors, performers without any feeling, without any involvement. Tell a story, play a role, put on a mask - these are all the same activities without personal involvement. The idea that life is an isolated episode rather than a logical narrative is brought out in Barth's novel; *The Floating Opera* (1956). If you stand on a river bank and watch a floating opera, you can see only the small bit enacted at the spot where you stand. Life, in Barth's scheme of things, is fragmented, episodic. Such fractured life will hardly have a coherent meaning. If life is fragmented, Barth's characters are bundles of ideas, roles and terms. The extension of this is that the world itself is made up of many fragments.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What are some of the major themes of the Post-War novel ?

8.2.5 Revolt against history (Vladimir Nabokov)

Vladimir Nabokov, a Russian immigrant, revolts against history, against the past. He alludes to the past literature, not like Joyce or Eliot to enrich his meaning but to substitute it. *Invitation of a Beheading* (1938) deals with incest between brother and sister who are mirror images. The artist is a narcissist who loves his own image. Art or literature is the artist's defence against the external world. One of Nabokov's novels is entitled *Invitation of a Beheading* (1938). One character in this book likens everything in the world to harlequins: "Trees are harlequins, words are harlequins. So are situations and sums. Put two things together – jokes, images – and you get a triple harlequin. Come on! Play! Invent the world! Invent reality!"

Obsession is an important running theme in Nabokov's fiction. This is brought out clearly in *Lolita* (1958). Humbert Humbert is obsessed to possess Dolores Haze (Lolita) a twelve-year old nymphet. He marries her mother to be close to her. When the mother dies, he travels across the state and fulfills his desire. But he loses Lolita to another man, tracks him down and kills him. Humbert embodies a type of American lust. It is a parody of American ambition. It demonstrates how "songs, ads, magazines, and movies create and control their consumers." Nabokov mocks at American single-mindedness and concreteness. By the time Humbert regains Lolita, she is pregnant and old. His obsession leads him to murder her lover and time thwarts his dream. Lolita is no longer youthful or attractive.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What aspects of American life does Nabokov satirize?

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8.2.6 Sexual Attitudes

The War has changed the sexual mores (traditional customs and ways of behaving that are typical of a particular society) of the people. J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) deal with a life of sensation. John Updike's novels, *Rabbit, Run* (1960) and *Rabbit Redux* (1971) are concerned with the revolution in attitudes to sex. Rabbit's mother is the boss who directs her son. Her husband works hard, but he is passive before her. Their son is a basket-ball star. At the early age of twenty-six, Rabbit is married, grows prematurely old through the worries caused by his wife and their two-year old son. At work, he is humiliated. He is afraid that he might grow like his father. Unable to face his problems, he escapes. His sister follows a different course. She manages people well, is independent, and down-to-earth, and becomes a call girl. The new generation of Americans is represented by Rabbit and his sister. The man is angry and driven to self-destruction, the woman has no qualms on promiscuity. For Updike, maleness includes responsibility for women as sexual and economic partners. His diagnosis for the decline of American society is the decline of masculinity. The complexion of life in the U.S. has changed after World War II. With increasing automation, work is devalued. The nation-wide protests over the Vietnam War questioned authority. The women's sexual freedom undermined the position of men in the family. The values of a male-oriented society have become outdated. Technology also has an impact on family and sex. Rabbit the linotyper is replaced by a photo-offset machine. His mother takes pills to pep her up in her old age. Rabbit's wife takes another lover.

8.2.7 Contemporary Politics

Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* (1977) focuses on the analogy between politics and nightmare. It deals with the events of the Eisenhower era and moves from New York to

I smoke marijuana every chance I get.
I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet.
When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.
My mind is made up there's going to be trouble.
You should have seen me reading Marx.
My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right.
I won't say the Lord's Prayer.
I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.
America I still haven't told you what you did
to Uncle Max after he came over from Russia.
I'm addressing you.
Are you going to let your emotional life be run by Time Magazine?
I'm obsessed by Time Magazine.
I read it every week.
Its cover stares at me everytime I slink past the corner candy store.
I read it in the basement of the Berkley Public Library.
It's always telling me about responsibility.
Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Everybody's but me.
It occurs to me that I am America.
I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me.
I haven't got a chinaman's chance.
I'd better consider my national resources.
My national resources consist of two joints of
Marijuana millions of genitals an
unpublished private literature that goes 1400
miles an hour and twenty five thousand
mental institutions.
I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions
of underprivileged who live in my
flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns.
I have abolished the whorehouses of France.

Tangiers is the next to go.
My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I'm a Catholic.
America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?
I will continue like Henry Ford strophes are as
individual as his automobiles more so
they are different sexes.

America I will sell you strophes \$2500 a piece
\$500 down on your old strophe

America free Tom Money

America save the Spanish Loyalists

America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die.

America I am the Scottsboro boys.

America when I was seven momma took me a
Communist cell meetings they sold us garbanzos
a handful per ticket a ticket cost a nickel
and the speeches were free everybody was
angelic and sentimental about workers
it was all so sincere you have no idea
what a good thing the party was in 1935
Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real
mensch Mother Bloor made me cry I once
saw Israel Amter's plain. Everybody must have been a spy.

America you don't really want to go to war.

America it's them bad Russians

Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen.

And them Russians.

The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's
power mad. She wants to take our
cars from our garages.

Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red
Reader's Digest. Her wants our auto
plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy
running our fillingstations.

That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn
read. Him need big black niggers.

Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.

America this is quite serious.

America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.

America is this correct?

I'd better get right down to the job.

It's true I don't want to join the Army or turn lathes in precision
parts factories, I'm nearsighted and
psychopathic anyway.

America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

This poem may not be as epoch-making as Ginsberg's *Howl*, but this is fairly representative of the kind of poetry he wrote, of the kind of concerns he had, of the kind of criticism he heaped on the received culture of America. It is a spontaneous poem. It is a blend of several moods and tones: sad, comic, bitter, impatient. But it makes a strong point about contemporary America as seen and experienced by the generation of the 1950s.

There is no consistent structure. Sometimes it is dialogue at other times it is monologue. It attempts to capture the mood of a generation of angry young Americans. Thomas F. Merrill says: "It is a drunken poet arguing after hours with a drunken nation." It is a tirade against American values. The arguments and the language may not present any logical discourse and yet they reflect the illogicality that is America.

"America" re-captures many of the attitudes, postures, and beliefs of Ginsberg's previous poems. The most significant one is the withering of Walt Whitman's optimism. What follows is a disillusionment: "America I've given you all and now I'm nothing." A little later, the poet appeals to America to give up its self-deceptions and rise to Whitman's expectations: "America when will you be angelic?"

Another aspect of American culture which Ginsberg attacks is the competitive urge, sometimes called the rat race. This competitive urge is the basis of acquisitiveness and greed. Zen Buddhism which appealed to Ginsberg is opposed to such competition.

I'm obsessed by Time Magazine...

It's always telling me about responsibility. Business men are serious

Movie producers are serious. Everybody's serious but me.

The poem raises several questions and moves from one issue to another. The illogicality that is America is on the television screen watched by millions daily. The contradictions in American society confuse a reader.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What is Ginsberg's principal aim in "America"?

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13.4.2 Ginsberg's Achievement

Ginsberg's poetry is a departure from the prevailing and dominant poetic and aesthetic tradition. He belongs to the Romantic tradition which considers the poet as a demonic and inspired voice attacking the corrupt basis of a hypocritical society. It offers another way of feeling, another mode of expression and an alternate way of life. Ginsberg pulled out poetry from the study onto the podium. He shaped poetry into a means of public performance. His poems like *Howl* and "America" are meant to be delivered publicly and performed on a stage. He was a revolutionary and a visionary. Blake and Whitman, the prophets of the Bible are absorbed by him. Hebraic, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu strains blend in him. The poems in *Howl* are called prophetic in the Biblical sense. They denounce evil and show the right path. They have incantations and catalogues as in Whitman's poetry. Ginsberg may appear rather pacific on social and political issues but he is aggressive in his denunciation. His poems are noted for the intensity of expression and passionate advocacy of ideas. Whatever his detractors might say there is little doubt that he exemplifies a real tradition in American poetry. He became a pop hero and cult-leader for a whole generation.

13.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the trends in poetry after World War II. We studied some of the poems of three outstanding poets of the later half of the twentieth century. We also discussed the themes and techniques of Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell, and Allen Ginsberg. We assessed their individual contributions to American poetry.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

The main tendencies in American Poetry after World War II are represented by two groups of poets - one, attempting to preserve the tradition, and the second favouring the poetry of process and improvisation.

Check Your Progress - 2

The green house is an important symbol in Roethke. It has a far-reaching impact on his poems, standing for a study of life. It symbolises "the whole of life, a womb, a heaven on earth". The colours, smells and touch of the greenhouse flowers and leaves and its fragrance are important for Roethke.

Check Your Progress - 3

The recurring themes in Lowell's poetry are the decline in values and morals, the vulgarity of public life and the preservation of traditional values.

Check Your Progress - 4

The theme of 'Skunk Hour' is the search for order in a world filled with despair and depression. The poet tries to rise above his inward agony. He attempts to create poetry and of his experience of a small decaying town on the seacoast of Maine

Check Your Progress - 5

"Beat Generation" refers to a term coined by Jack Kerouac, a novelist of repute. It was used to describe poets whose poetry was based on hallucinations produced by drugs or jazz music. The 'beat attitude' comes from an anti establishment culture hence it 'beats down'. It also includes a sense of wonder or 'beatitude' at trivial things.

Check Your Progress - 6

Ginsberg's principal aim in "America" is to express the concerns he had and to criticise the received culture of America. The poem blends several moods and tones to emphatically present the illogicality of contemporary America.

13.7 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss with suitable illustrations the new trends in American poetry since World War II.
2. Comment on Roethke's attitude to nature.
3. How does Robert Lowell bring out his concern for a decline in American values?
4. Consider Allen Ginsberg as a spokesman of the Beat generation.

13.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Hoffman, Daniel. Ed. Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979. (Chapter 10, 11 and 12).

Merrill, Thomas F. Allen Ginsberg. Revised Edition. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988.

Parkinson, Thomas. Ed. Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice - Hall, 1968.

Stein, Arnold. Ed. Theodore Roethke: Essays on the Poetry. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965.

Thomas, C.T. Ed. Twentieth Century Verse: An Anglo-American Anthology. Madras: Macmillan, 1979.

(For texts of Poems by Roethke and Lowell).

BLOCK IV

DRAMA

- Unit 14 Introduction to Drama
- Unit 15 Eugene O'Neill: *Desire under the Elms*
- Unit 16 Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman*
- Unit 17 Contemporary Drama

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UNIT - 14: INTRODUCTION

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 The Beginnings
- 14.3 Drama from 1800 to 1865
 - 14.3.1 Poetic Drama
 - 14.3.2 Character Types
 - 14.3.3 The Minstrel Show
- 14.4 American Drama Between 1865 and 1914
- 14.5 The Impact of Realism on American Drama
 - 14.5.1 Howells's Contribution
 - 14.5.2 Themes of Realistic Drama
- 14.6 Revival of Poetic Drama
- 14.7 American Drama between the Two World Wars
- 14.8 Expressionism
- 14.9 Drama In the 1930s
- 14.10 Thornton Wilder
- 14.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.12 Answers to Check your Progress
- 14.13 Sample Examination Questions
- 14.14 Recommended Books

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- give a brief history of the origin and development of drama in America
- discuss the major trends in American drama
- describe the more significant plays and playwrights

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama in America has had a rather late start compared to other genres like poetry, short story and novel. It has also not received sufficient critical attention. The first play in America was written nearly three centuries ago. The plays written in the first two hundred years may not have much literary merit, but they provided the basis and background for drama to flourish as a powerful medium in the twentieth century in the United States.

14.2 THE BEGINNINGS

Before 1800, there was hardly a good play written by an American on an American theme. Propaganda plays, and plays imitating British or European dramas, and translations were produced. It is useful to remember that there was considerable opposition to drama and theatre from various groups and agencies. Several religious groups, the Quakers, the Germans and the Scottish-Irish opposed theatrical performances. Some government agencies also prohibited the staging of plays reflecting the prevailing popular mood. However, David Douglas, an actor and builder of the first American theatre (in Philadelphia) in 1767, produced the first play written by an American, Thomas Godfrey. The play was called *The Prince of Parthia*. The actors were

American, so were the stage and the company. The first American comedy, *The Contrast*, was written by Royall Tyler in 1787. It appealed to patriotism in the context of American independence. The first professional playwright in America was William Dunlap (1766 – 1839). He was a prolific writer who won respectability for drama. He was also a theatre manager and historian of America theatre. Because of his pioneering work in the field, he is called the “Father of American Drama”.

Immediately after the War of Independence (Revolutionary War), nationalistic, patriotic or political themes became popular on the stage. A number of plays on social foibles were also written in the post – revolutionary period. It is worthwhile to remember that the theatre even in England and Europe at that time, (late eighteenth century) was not strong.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Explain the origins of American Drama.

14.3 DRAMA FROM 1800 TO 1865

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the situation of American drama was not very encouraging. There were either translations of successful European plays, or plays written to suit a particular actor. Very few dramatists made a name for themselves in this period. Usually playwrights were actors and actor-managers too. At the end of the eighteenth century, the functions of a play were:

1. a source of entertainment
2. a weapon of political satire
3. a means of praising the new nation
4. a vehicle of moral preaching

These trends in play writing continued upto the Civil War with some variations. In this period industries were started and cities grew in size. Social classes became recognizable. The features of these classes were the butt of ridicule. Social caricature received popular approval. The Revolutionary War provided themes, incidents, and fashions for the stage. George Washington was often used in plays as a hero.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What were the accepted functions of drama at the end of the eighteenth century?

14.3.1 Poetic Drama

Poetic drama was also popular in the theatre. The example and experience of the British play-wrights became a model for Americans. In other genres, American literature attempted to strike out new paths, independent of British and European traditions. Poetic drama in America has had a cyclical development. It was popular in the early part of the nineteenth century, but during the Age of Realism, it was neglected. It was revived in the beginning of the twentieth century, but was again eclipsed during World War I. Poetic plays have been written

and performed occasionally since then. The themes of poetic drama in the nineteenth century were romantic love, unfaithfulness in marriage, tyranny of parents, and duty of children.

14.3.2 Character Types

White American, the American Indian, and the Negro were introduced as character-types on the American stage. They had something in common. The American (Yankee) was seeking freedom from the British, the Indian wanted to be free from the Yankee, and the Negro wanted to be free from slavery.

14.3.3 The minstrel show

The minstrel show is an original contribution of America to the world stage. It reached out to the average man and entertained him. In a minstrel play there were six to eight black faced men. They carried either bones or tambourines. They were introduced by a white man in pairs. After introduction, they sat on either side of the interlocutor (the white man). The chorus stood behind in a semi-circle. The show had two parts. In the first, there were songs and jokes. The second was an "olio" or variety show. The "olio" included variety acts sketches, or after pieces. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the minstrel show became a spectacle show. Negro life was no longer important. The variety acts were replaced by vaudeville entertainment. The show boat, a product of American geography, enacted plays along the course of big rivers like Ohio and Mississippi. There were also Tom shows which grew out of the success of sentimental melodramas. While American literature in other genres could boast of great authors like Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, drama was like a poor cousin. American drama upto the Civil War is not comparable in its achievement to American fiction and American poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. Explain what a minstrel show is.

14.4 AMERICAN DRAMA BETWEEN 1865 AND 1914

In this section we shall take a look at the development of American drama in the fifty years between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War I. The Civil War and World War I are two great political events and hence convenient epochs to consider developments in other areas. It does not follow that these political events shaped the direction of the development of drama in the United States. However, during these five decades American drama graduated from a mere profession to a respectable art-form which enhanced the status of the playwright in society. One significant change was the gradual shift to realism from romantic melodrama. The focus changed to problems of society. So social drama, particularly social comedy, became popular. During this period the drama critic emerged on the scene. In the first decade of the twentieth century the playwrights devoted more attention to artistic presentation and displayed deeper insight in their themes

14.5 THE IMPACT OF REALISM ON AMERICAN DRAMA

In the second half of the nineteenth century the pendulum of literary taste swung from romanticism and sentimentalism to realism. It started with some writers giving prominence in

their writings to 'local colour'. This indicates some particular place or region, its customs, dialect, characters. Such local colour authors flourished in New England (Sarah Orne Jewett), in the South (George Washington Cable) and the Far West (Bret Harte). The spirit of local colour writing spread to drama also. An enlarged view of the essential principle of local colour writing is realism. William Dean Howells who is called the Father of America Realism said that realism is nothing more than the truthful representation of life. The 'truth' in presentation depended on the perception of the writer. Concurrent developments were the growth of science and the spread of Democracy in the nineteenth century. The theories of Darwin, Marx, Comte, Spencer, and many other events of the time, compelled man to look at life in a realistic, rather than a romantic way. Such a view of life produced literature which displayed social awareness. However, some playwrights in their enthusiasm for realistic representation crossed the bounds of good taste.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. What is 'local color' writing?
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14.5.1 Howells's Contribution

William Dean Howells (1837 – 1920) who was a pioneer in realism in America was a successful novelist and critic. He also wrote thirty-six plays. He rebelled against sentimentality in fiction and drama. His plays are good examples of realism in drama. In his view the purpose of drama was to depict life truthfully. He was opposed to poetic drama, Soliloquies, asides, and the device of *deus ex machina* (god out of machine) which were hardly true to life. Realistic portrayal of characters and action gradually spread to truthfulness of idea by the end of the nineteenth century. A realistic drama should deal, with problems of real life, with truthfulness as the main issue. Howell's plays are full of details of contemporary events and persons. He drew from his own personal experience for constructing his plots. The language and dialogues used in the plays are also taken from everyday speech. The theatre managers in Howells's time wanted plays filled with excitement and violence. However, Howells's interest was portraying everyday life of the ordinary man. It was a difficult task taken up by Howells and he set the course of American drama, both in content and technique.

Howells was good at writing brilliant and witty dialogue. His satire was also superb. He ridiculed the foibles of society. In one of his plays, *A Letter of Introduction*, he pokes fun at Englishmen, New Yorkers, Boston snobbery, American language, and American culture.

14.5.2 Themes of Realistic Drama

American dramatists from the end of the nineteenth century developed an interest in various issues and contemporary problems such as race relations, marriage, and divorce, immorality, etc. Economic issues and the new problems thrown up by industrialisation also received the American playwrights' attention. The clash between the industrialists and the labourers, the problems between speculators and investors started finding a place in drama. Politicians and political issues were also presented on the stage. A play entitled *The Senator* (1889) written by David Lloyd and Sydney Rosenfeld exposes the life of a senator in Washington. Science, a growing discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, attracted the dramatist's attention. Howells used the new gadgets like the telephone in his plays. Another playwright, Herne, made use of determinism in his play, *Margaret Fleming*. Eugenics for producing an improved human being is the theme of *Tomorrow* by Percy Mckaye.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What are the themes of realistic drama?

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14.6 REVIVAL OF POETIC DRAMA

Realism believed that poetry in the theatre was unnatural. Hence the rise of realism was a serious hindrance to the development of poetic drama in America. However, there was a revival of poetic drama in America in the beginning of the twentieth century. Poetic drama in contrast to realistic drama, presented both beauty and truth. The poetic dramatist drew his themes from history, legend and myth. In spite of stiff competition from prose (realistic) drama, poetic drama made an impressive revival in the first decade of the twentieth century. Maxwell Anderson (1888 – 1959) wrote over thirty plays. He believed that it is "incumbent on the dramatist to be a poet." He thought that the theatre should be essentially a cathedral of the spirit. In his view, man must feel so that he can endure. Such enduring can be made possible through dramatic art. He thought man's destiny is essentially tragic, and so the playwright should show the individual his dignity. Modern American drama may be dated from 1890. In that year, James A Heme who followed Henrik Ibsen, produced his best play, *Margaret Fleming*.

14.7 AMERICAN DRAMA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

American drama in the decades between the two World Wars registered great development. The Provincetown Players and Eugene O'Neill are largely responsible for the world recognition that American drama received during this period. The little Theatre Movement of which the Provincetown Players is a part, opposed commercialization of the theatre. Playwrights were not satisfied with only entertaining their audience; they felt that they had a greater responsibility towards society. They enjoyed more freedom and hence a variety of plays were written: social comedy, folk drama, pageant drama, and poetic drama. The 1930s witnessed a social consciousness which inspired the writing of plays of social commentary, problem plays, satirical plays, etc. Dramatists also attempted to probe their characters' motives. Eugene O'Neill's contribution in the success of the Provincetown Players was great. We shall discuss O'Neill's achievement in the next unit.

The drama of the 1920s displayed bold innovations in the theme and technique. There was a release from the "tyranny of happy ending" which was deemed necessary in earlier plays. Maxwell Anderson's plays shocked their audiences by their truthfulness; Elmer Rice's experimental plays baffled the viewers.

14.8 EXPRESSIONISM

As part of experimental plays and as a reaction against the prevailing realism, expressionism was introduced in the plays. It is a "movement in art which transfers the emphasis from technical display and imitated surface aspects of nature to creative form: from descriptive and representative truth to intensified emotional expressionism; from objective to subjective and abstract formal qualities". (Sheldon Cheney, *The Primer of Modern Art*). It had its origins in Germany. It has two aims: 1. 'to fling the inner life of the dramatic figures immediately upon the stage', 2. "to synthesize, instead of describing their world and their universe into symbolic visions that shall sum up whole histories, moralities, cosmogonies in a brief minute and a fleeting

scene." Elmer Rice used this new device in his experimental play, *The Adding Machine*, (1923). He satirizes the mechanical life in the modern world where people don't matter, but machines do. Mr. Zero's (the main character in this play) emotions are revealed through expressionistic devices. When he was dismissed by his Boss, his voice is drowned by the music of a merry-go-round. The Boss's jaws open and close and the words are not heard. The music swells.

14.9 DRAMA IN THE 1930s

The concern for society and its shortcomings find a place in realistic drama. It could take the form of propaganda or subtle and witty comedy. The Russian Revolution and Marxist thought seemed to be practical alternatives to the capitalist economy which ended in the Crash of 1929 heralding the Great Depression in America. In the 1930s, understandably, drama was used as a vehicle of propaganda. The themes included industrial unrest, unemployment, oppression and persecution. Some of these plays are called agitprop (agitation + propaganda). These plays could be performed in the street. Clifford Odets's play, *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) belongs to this category.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What is Agitprop?

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14.10 THORNTON WILDER

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) is an experimental playwright who achieved distinction. He expressed his views on his art in an essay, "Some Thoughts on Playwriting". He said that the stage is a "fundamental pretense" which generates additional pretenses. In his view, a play should kindle the imagination of the spectator. Using colloquial speech and imaginary scenery, he wanted the events in the play to be raised from the specific to the general. His departure from realistic theatre, his literary style and thought-provoking ideas, made Wilder's plays appealing. *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942) is a successful play in which a serious theme is treated in a comic way.

American drama between the two world wars has grown in stature competing on equal terms with European drama. The spirit of the 1920s, freedom and individuality, shaped the growth of American drama. There was variety both in themes and techniques in this decade. The 1930s emphasised social drama. In the period between the two world wars, there is a significant shift to spiritual ideas. In drama, O'Neill, Anderson, Wilder and Saroyan showed an awareness of the spiritual side of life. This provided a necessary depth to American drama.

14.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied the origins and development of American drama. In the beginning, it was imitative of European drama. Translations were also plentiful. The aim was to entertain people. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Little Theatre Movement challenged the established commercial theatre. New themes and new techniques of production raised the stature of American drama to international levels.

14.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

American drama had a rather late start. Though there was considerable opposition to theatre and staging of plays from religious groups, David Douglas produced the first play written by an American, Thomas Godfrey, in 1767. It was called *The Prince of Parthia*. The first American comedy was written in 1787 but it was only through the work of William Dunlop that American drama won respectability.

Check Your Progress - 2

At the end of the eighteenth century drama was expected to be a source of entertainment, function as a weapon of political satire, be a means of praising the new nation and act as a vehicle of moral preaching.

Check Your Progress - 3

A minstrel play was the original contribution of America to the world stage. It was written to appeal to the common man. There were six to eight black men carrying bones or tambourines who were introduced by a white man in pairs. After the introduction they sat on either side of the white man.

Check Your Progress - 4

Local color writing is writing which swung away from romanticism and sentimentalism to realism. The spirit of the writing included special details about a particular place or region, its customs, dialect and characters.

Check Your Progress - 5

The themes of realistic drama are contemporary concerns such as race relations, marriage, divorce and immorality. Economic issues and new problems of industrialisation and scientific discovery also find a place in the new drama.

Check Your Progress - 6

Agitprop is the term used to describe a new kind of drama that combined agitation with propagandism. Clifford Odets's play *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) is an example.

14.13 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Trace the development of American drama upto the end of the Civil War.
2. Write a note on poetic drama in America.
3. Discuss the impact of realism on American drama.
4. Comment on the new directions of American drama in the twentieth century.

14.14 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Downer, Alan S. Fifty Years of American Drama 1900 - 1950. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951.
- Meserve, Walter J. An Outline History of American Drama. Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield Adams & Co., 1965.
- Quinn, Arthur Hobson. A History of the American Drama. New York: Appleton-Century - Crofts, Inc., 1943.
- Weales, Gerald. American Drama Since World War II. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962.

UNIT-15: EUGENE O'NEILL: *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS*

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 O'Neill's Experiments
- 15.3 O'Neill's Themes
- 15.4 *Desire Under the Elms: An Analysis*
 - 15.4.1 The Plot
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 - 15.4.2.1 Ephraim Cabot
 - 15.4.2.2 Eben
 - 15.4.2.3 Abbie
 - 15.4.3 The Theme
 - 15.4.3 Greek Myths in the Play
 - 15.4.3.1 The Oedipus Myth
 - 15.4.3.2 The Phaedra Myth
 - 15.4.3.3 The Media Myth
- 15.5 O'Neill's Achievement
- 15.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 15.8 Sample Examination Questions
- 15.9 Recommended Books

15.0 OBJECTIVES

- After going through this unit you will be able to
- appreciate Eugene O'Neill's contribution to drama
 - discuss O'Neill's play *Desire Under the Elms*.
 - assess O'Neill's contribution to American drama

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Eugene O'Neill (1888 – 1953) came at a very opportune time to give a new lease of life and direction to drama. His contribution to American drama is significant and memorable. With the exception of a single comedy, *Ah, Wilderness*; he wrote only tragedies. He was interested in the experimental plays of European authors; he also studied psychology and philosophy which proved valuable in portraying characters. Among the European playwrights, Strindberg and Ibsen fascinated him. German expressionism also attracted his attention. He was influenced by the work of Freud, Jung and Adler as his plays *Desire Under the Elms*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Mourning Becomes Electra* testify. There are frequent references to Greek myths and the Bible. We have both these in *Desire Under the Elms* as we shall see. Nietzsche's philosophy interested him. Greek theatrical practices like the masks, for instance, and new ideas from different sources stimulated his thinking. He attempted to use many of these in his plays.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Name the European playwrights and thinkers who influenced O'Neill.

15.2 EXPERIMENTS

When O'Neill arrived on the scene, realism was the dominant trend in drama. He felt that realism was unable to penetrate the inner self of man. He used expressionism as his main technique to probe the hidden conflicts of man. He also used other devices such as monologue trilogies (a set of three plays), symbols, split characters and masks to make his plays more meaningful and satisfying. Thus *The Emperor Jones* (1920) is a monologue pushing man back to an earlier Darwinian form. Congolese religious drumbeats are introduced as an experiment in this play. *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) is a trilogy in which the dramatist grafted Freud and Jung on the Greek myth of the House of Atreus. It is a psychological play. The villagers are used as chorus. Oedipus and Electra complexes are presented in a modern context. In *Dynamo* (1929) a machine is used as a symbol of science which failed to substitute religion (Christianity). A split personality is presented in *Days Without End* (1934). *The Great God Brown* (1926) uses masks as in Greek drama.

15.3 O'NEILL'S THEMES

O'Neill was concerned with what he called "the sickness of society". It is more an inner conflict than an external manifestation. Sensitive man's soul is destroyed by various forces in contemporary society. It may be crass materialism (*Marco Millions*); it may be the inability to match one's integrity with "success" in life (*The Great God Brown*). Yank the *The Hairy Ape* (1922) tries to comprehend life, to find his place in the universe. In O'Neill's plays, man is usually defeated in his search for meaning. Perhaps *The Hairy Ape* is a fine dramatisation of man's quest for meaning. O'Neill said this play is a "symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way... The struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt to belong."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What are the major themes of O'Neill?

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15.4 DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS: AN ANALYSIS

Let us now take a closer look at O'Neill's play, *Desire Under the Elms*, and analyse its plot, theme, characters and other features.

15.4.1 The Plot

The play is divided into three parts. In each part there are four scenes. Part I is what is traditionally called the exposition. The central issue in the play is the possession of the farm in New England. There are several claimants. Ephraim Cabot developed a stony tract of land into an arable farm.

Scene i: Simeon and Peter, sons of Ephraim Cabot, through his first wife, are fed up with the harsh life on the farm. They think of going away to California for gold. They are possessed by the American Dream of success. They are likened to two oxen. Animal imagery is used to underscore the bestial nature of their desires and development.

Scene ii: Eben, (Ephraim's son through his second wife), asserts his claim to the farm. He argues that it belonged to his dead mother and so it should be his.

Ephraim had gone away for two months. Eben goes to Minnie, a woman who was earlier visited by Ephraim, Simeon and Peter by turns. Ephraim is called a "mule," a beast of burden, and his eyes are like "snake's eyes."

Scene iii: Returning from Minnie, Eben informs his brothers, Simeon and Peter that their father had married again (a third time). Simeon and Peter who covet the farm suspect that it may go to their new step-mother. The three brothers hate their father ("paw") and wish he were dead.

Scene iv: Simeon and Peter sell away their share of the farm to Eben who pays them the money he had stolen from his father during his absence. Ephraim arrives with his young wife, Abbie. Simeon and Peter ridicule their old father and go away to California to seek their fortune.

PART II. Abbie schemes in a cunning way to beget a male baby to doubly secure her claim to the farm. (She had married the old Ephraim only for the farm).

Scene i: This scene begins two months after the arrival of Abbie. She attempts to seduce Eben, so she could bear a child. (Her husband Ephraim, is too old to give her a child). So she wants to take revenge on him by poisoning Ephraim's mind against his son, Eben. Ephraim wants a son and is willing to give away the farm to Abbie.

Scene ii: Ephraim tells Abbie his past (his two wives, three sons and how he had developed the rocky tract into a prosperous farm. Abbie rushes to Eben with great desire and invites him into the parlor.

Scene iii: is located in the parlor. It is like a tomb of Eben's mother whose memory haunts him. Eben feels strongly that his mother was wronged by Ephraim. He wants to take revenge on him. Abbie is his stepmother; so she is a surrogate mother. He has a conflict of emotions because Abbie is (technically) his mother and now his lover. Having an affair with Abbie is one way of taking revenge on Ephraim.

Scene iv: Eben's self-confidence grows after his affair with Abbie. He feels satisfied that he has in a way avenged his dead mother. He taunts his father and shows him scant respect.

PART III. The conflicting interests of Ephraim, Abbie and Eben reach a climax.

Scene i: Ephraim arranges a birthday party for Abbie's son under the mistaken impression that the baby was his. All the guests know that Eben was the father. So they ridicule the old man and taunt Abbie for deceiving Ephraim.

Scene ii: Ephraim tells Eben that Abbie has secret plans to eliminate Eben, so she can have the farm to her self. Although Abbie's original was that, she had a change of heart and loves Eben sincerely now. She wants to kill the child to prove the sincerity of her love.

Scene iii: Abbie smothers the baby hoping to secure Eben's love. Eben still suspects Abbie's motives. He runs away.

Scene iv: Abbie reveals to Ephraim that she has murdered the new-born baby. Eben feels that he has instigated the murder and so he is guilty. Eben and Abbie are arrested by the Sheriff for the murder of the infant. Ephraim who married Abbie in order to avoid loneliness is left alone. Abbie and Eben who schemed to own the farm land in jail.

15.4.2 The Characters

As we have seen in the analysis of plot in the previous section, there are only three main characters in the play: Ephraim Cabot, Eben, and Abbie. The other characters are minor or peripheral. Eben's dead mother has a brooding presence because he is driven by mother-fixation. His actions are stimulated by what he perceives to be the wrongs done to his mother by his father.

15.4.2.1 Ephraim Cabot

Ephraim is a biblical name like the names of several other characters in this play. Ephraim is the progenitor of the tribes of Israel; he is the father-figure. His name stands for "fruitfulness." He is virile and begot three sons. Through his hard work, he could transform a stony field into a fertile farm. He is strict follower of the Puritan ethic which requires thrift and hard work for prosperity. He is proud of his "fruitfulness." That turns out to be his *hubris*. He is like an old testament God, harsh and lonely. To his sons, he is a tyrant, demanding hard work. He is inconsiderate to their aspirations. He is so selfish that he hardly ever thinks of the future of his sons. He is strong and proud like Samson and Milton's Satan. Like them he causes the destruction of others. His greed to possess the farm makes him a representative of the materialistic society, a society bereft of humanity, love and understanding. He is hated by his sons. He does not trust them. He marries a third time at the advanced age of seventy-five to escape loneliness, but ironically, as the play ends he finds himself alone.

15.4.2.2 Eben

This is another biblical name. It is a shortened form of Ebenezer which means "stone of hope." He is a typical son in O'Neill's plays. He is considered the hope of the Cabot family. But he is at loggerheads with his father. Although he denies it, he is like his father, in his tenacity. He feels that his father has usurped both his mother and the farm. We will discuss the theme of usurpation later. Eben is strongly motivated to take revenge on his harsh father for the latter's ill-treatment of his mother. His double aim is to possess his father's farm and his new wife. In hating his father to the extent of wishing his death and committing incest (albeit symbolically) he exemplifies Oedipus Complex.

Eben is cleverer and more practical than his loutish brothers, Simeon and Peter. He is drawn to Abbie for three reasons. First, by lust for the young woman, second by greed for the farm, and third for revenge against his tyrannical father. He shares the qualities of his father and mother. Like his father, he is self-centred and without pity; like his mother he is sensitive to beauty and love. His brothers repeatedly tell him that he is the "spitting image" of their father, but he says he is like his "Maw". His strong determination to avenge his mother shows the streak of his father. When he buys off his brothers' share of the farm, he shows that he is just as greedy as his father. Similarly his father's lust may be noticed in his affair with the scarlet woman, Minnie, and later his passionate affair with Abbie. His greed and lust have come to naught when he is arrested for his complicity in the infanticide. A streak of nobility which redeems him is confession to Abbie that it was he who put the idea of murdering their child. He says: "I got t' pay fur my part O' the sin!.... I want t' share with ye, Abbie—prison 'r death 'r hell 'r anything'!"

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

How does Eben resemble his father?

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15.4.2.3 Abbie

When Abbie comes to the Cabot farm as the young third wife of an old, tough, self-centred man, Ephraim Cabot, she is looking for economic security. She does not expect any marital bliss. To secure the farm for herself, she wants to have a child. Since her husband cannot give her son at his age, she lures Eben to make her conceive. In the beginning she uses Eben for a selfish purpose. Eben acquiesces in the affair because he wants to take revenge on his father; He thinks possessing his woman is a way of accomplishing his aim. Abbie begins to

love Eben sincerely and to prove her love for him, she kills her child. When Eben offers to share her guilt and punishment, she tries her best to dissuade him. In the end, she loses the farm, the sole aim with which she married Ephraim; she loses her child too. As the play ends she faces gallows. Her only consolation is that Eben stands by her and that he accompanies her without any hesitation. Abbie is greedy and she secretly plots to assure herself of the farm. She does not mind being unfaithful to her husband in the pursuit of her aim. But during the execution of her plan, she has a change of heart. She becomes a true lover of Eben. Nothing else matters now, not the farm, not her child. She sacrifices everything for Eben's love. It is rather late and she has to face punishment for the murder of her infant son.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

Explain Abbie's motives in enticing Eben.

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15.4.3 The Theme

A clue to the theme of O'Neill's play may be found in its title. The word, "desire," is significant in this connection. Almost every character in the play has a strong desire to possess the farm. Ephraim Cabot wants to keep it for himself. His sons, Simeon and Peter, also attempt to claim the farm, but they are outsmarted by Eben. Eben thinks that he has a stronger claim to the farm as it belonged to his mother. Abbie marries the old Ephraim only for the sake of the farm. It is the insatiable greed for the farm which is the source of conflict in the play. This greed makes people selfish and they begin to plot against one another. Even the sheriff casts his covetous eyes on the farm and says: "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin. Wished I owned it."

There is desire for other things in the play. Simeon and Peter desire gold and go in search of it to California. All the men have lust for the scarlet woman, Minnie. Eben has lust for Abbie. He has a strong desire for revenge against his father for the wrongs done to his mother. Abbie desires a son as part of her secret plan to obtain the farm. She also desires security and home. Thus desire (or greed) motivates the actions of almost all the characters in the play. It is this emphasis on material possessions that O'Neill criticises.

Another theme is usurpation. Ephraim usurps the farm of Eben's mother. His sons usurp Ephraim's woman, Minnie. Eben usurps his step-mother, Abbie. He steals Ephraim's hoarded gold. Ephraim claims Eben's son as his own for sometime. All these usurpations come to nothing in the end.

There is disagreement over who is the real hero of the play. Frederic I. Carpenter argues that none of the men, including Eben and Ephraim, qualify for that role. In his view, the spirit of nature is the real hero. The older sons of Ephraim are likened to "oxen." Ephraim is more comfortable sleeping with the animals in the farm than in his house. Abbie warns her initially reluctant lover, "Nature'll beat you, Eben." She is right and Eben succumbs to her charms. The title of the play refers to the two enormous elm trees which droop over the house on each side. "They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house." Thus the setting of the play, the New England farmhouse, the cattle, and the large elm trees, stress the importance of nature in its several aspects as a central presence in the play. Their maternal aspect which is specifically mentioned by O'Neill in his description of the setting of the play is a strong pointer to the dominance of the female, Eben's mother and Abbie, the step-mother in the entire play.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

1. Discuss "greed" as a theme of the play.
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15.4.3 Greek Myths in the Play

O'Neill makes use of several Greek myths in this play to reinforce his meaning. These myths are adapted to a modern setting to be more purposeful.

15.4.3.1 The Oedipus Myth

First, there is the Oedipus legend. The legendary Oedipus killed his father unwittingly and married his mother without knowing who she was. In O'Neill's play all the three sons, notably Eben, hate their aged father, Ephraim, to the point of wishing his death. All of them have had sexual relations with Minnie who was kept by Ephraim. Eben, for whatever reasons, has had an affair with Abbie his step-mother. It is incest in a symbolic sense. Eben may not have killed his father and married his own mother, but his hatred of his father and his sexual relationship with his step-mother come close to what Oedipus had done in the Greek myth.

15.4.3.2 The Phaedra myth

Another Greek myth which is skillfully blended with the theme of this play is the Phaedra myth. In the classical legend, Phaedra is the daughter of Minos and Pasiphoë. Hippolytus is the son of Theseus (King of Athens) and Antiope. Phaedra is the step-mother of Hippolytus; she loves him, but she is rebuffed by him. Then she falsely accuses him of dishonoring her and poisons Theseus's mind. She commits suicide and Hippolytus is killed by Poseidon at the bidding of Theseus. The triangular plot involving Ephraim, Abbie and Eben in O'Neill's play is quite similar. When Eben initially rejects Abbie's advances, she tries to poison Ephraim's mind. Instead of killing herself and causing the death of Eben, both of them agree to share the punishment for the murder of their child. The focus is on the love between a young woman and her step-son, whatever their motives are and whatever the final outcome is.

15.4.3.3 The Medea Myth

The third classical myth used in this play is the Medea myth. Medea is a sorceress who helps Jason to obtain the Golden Fleece. She kills her own children by Jason, and goes to Athens to marry Aegeus. Abbie in O'Neill's play may not be a sorceress, but she has secret plans for the farm. Like Medea, she kills her own child. The comparison between Phaedra and Abbie cannot be stretched too far.

The careful use of these three classical myths to suit a modern situation serves to reinforce the meaning of *Desire Under the Elms*.

15.5 O'NEILL'S ACHIEVEMENT

O'Neill is the founder of American drama. His influence and example created American drama. He gave a respectable status to American drama in world drama. He was not only a pioneer in American theatre but he is the greatest dramatist of America. There is an autobiographical background to many of his plays. He continued to grow as a dramatist, both

artistically and spiritually. So his best plays were written last. O'Neill shared the pessimism of modern existential philosophy.

In O'Neill's view, emotions are primary. Expression of emotions through tragic drama is a "life giving" process which leads to deeper spiritual understanding. For him theatre is a kind of church where "symbolic celebration of life is communicated to human beings." Reason has no place in the church and in the theatre. In the modern age when the influence of religion recedes, the theatre takes its place.

15.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied O'Neill's experiments in drama, his themes, and his contribution to American drama. We discussed one of his plays, *Desire Under the Elms*, in detail to understand O'Neill's concerns as a playwright.

15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress -1

The two great European playwrights who influenced O'Neill are Strindberg and Ibsen. He was also influenced by the psychologists Freud, Jung and Adler.

Check Your Progress -2

O'Neill's major themes are the degeneration of contemporary society and the inner conflict of the modern man. In his search for meaning, the sensitive man who has lost harmony with nature is generally defeated.

Check Your Progress -3

Eben is self-centred and without pity like his father. His strong determination to avenge his mother and his greed and lust are also qualities that show his resemblance to his father.

Check Your Progress - 4

Abbie entices Eben because she wants to have a child to get the farm for herself and her husband, Ephraim, is too old to fulfill her aim.

Check Your Progress - 5

Greed is a dominant theme in the play. Simeon and Peter desire gold. All the men lust for Minnie, the scarlet woman. Eben has lust for Abbie. He desires to take revenge against his father. Abbie desires a son and the security of a home. Through all the different types of greed O'Neill wants to criticise the desire for material possessions.

15.8 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the use of classical myths in *Desire Under the Elms* and their relevance to the play's theme.
2. Explain the significance of the title of the play.
3. "*Desire Under the Elms* refuses to judge and therein lies much of its greatness. Discuss.

15.9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Carpenter, Frederick I. Eugene O'Neill. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

Falk, Doris. Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension: An Interpretative Study of the Plays. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958.

Leech, Clifford. Eugene O'Neill. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

O'Neill, Eugene. Three plays. New York: Vintage Books, 1924.

BRAOU

UNIT - 16 : ARTHUR MILLER: *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

Structure

16.0	Objectives
16.1	Introduction
16.2	<i>Death of Salesman</i> : An Analysis
16.3	Willy Loman
16.4	Manual Labour as a Theme
16.5	Willy's Role Models
16.6	Realism in the Play
16.7	Expressionism
16.8	Expressionistic Techniques in the Play
16.9	Miller's Achievement
16.10	Let Us Sum Up
16.11	Answers to Check Your Progress
16.12	Sample Examination Questions
16.13	Recommended Books

16.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- analyse and discuss *Death of a Salesman*
- evaluate Miller's achievement

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Arthur Miller confessed that Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* made him resolve to be a writer. He had read Shakespeare, Bertolt Brecht, George Bernard Shaw, Eugeno O'Neill, Jean Anouilh and other writers. He was deeply indebted to Henrik Ibsen.

Miller lamented the commercialization of all media. A writer's independence is not respected by producers. By mid-twentieth century, he became the best known American playwright. During and after World War II, Miller championed many liberal causes. He was worried about the situation in the theatre. It was no longer commercialization, but a threat to a playwright's freedom of expression which worried him. Loyalty tests became a means of harassing individuals with a conscience. His play, *The Crucible*, exposes how terror was planned and engineered in American society. In a world of crass commercialization of art, Miller pleads for artistic values. His work both in the theatre and outside is a call for sanity in a world which is increasingly losing its balance. He saw the theatre as "a direct reflection of the preoccupations of society... You change society because you sharpen its consciousness."

16.3 *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*: AN ANALYSIS

Death of a Salesman is perhaps Miller's most successful play. It was published in 1949. It deals with the core of American society and its values. America's is a business culture where the salesman has a crucial role. The ability to sell one's wares is the yard stick of success in one's business as well as in life. A salesman feels thoroughly exhausted after thirty-six years of loyal service to his company and is driven to suicide. The death of an ordinary salesman is raised to the level of tragedy through Miller's artistry.

The play is divided into two acts; there is a "Requiem" (a prayer for the dead) at the end. Act I is the traditional "exposition" in which the problem is explained and the characters are introduced. Willy Loman is the central character. He is a travelling salesman for over thirty-six years in New England. He is past sixty and shows visible signs of fatigue. His wife, Linda, is very understanding and supportive. Their two sons, Biff and Happy, in their thirties, have been leading desultory lives. They are not interested in working and helping their father. The father's dreams of seeing Biff as a successful businessman are dashed. Biff does not like the dominant idea in a fiercely competitive country: "And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still that's how you build a future." One has to work hard for fifty weeks to get a two-week vacation in the American society.

Willy Loman envies his brother Ben who apparently made it big in Alaska at the age of twenty-one. He regrets he didn't follow Ben to Alaska to become rich. Like most Americans, Willy is bitten by the success bug, but it is too late, he is too old and too weak. The pity is that Willy Loman knows what makes a salesman successful and yet in his own professional and family life he is a miserable failure. He knows that a salesman must be handsome, well-dressed and must have contacts to build his business and his own future.

Willy Loman is the only bread-winner in the family. He lost his salaried job and is on commission which dwindles as his physical strength dwindles. There is tension between Willy and Biff, each accusing the other of ruining their future.

Only Linda understands the plight of the exhausted salesman: "Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, must be finally paid to such a person." She alone knows that her husband attempted suicide twice out of sheer desperation. At the end of Act I, Biff is encouraged to seek a job with one Oliver. Willy, on his part, is to entreat his employer, Howard, to give him a job in New York with no travelling any more.

Act II begins with a note of hope. Willy Loman is full of plans for the family. Biff goes to meet Oliver to seek a job. Willy meets his employer and begs him to give him a stationary job, or at least raise his weekly commission. He appeals to Howard: "I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away - a man is not a piece of fruit!" Howard, the hard-nosed businessman is unmoved and he advises Willy to go to his sons. Ben tempts Willy with a lucrative job in Alaska. But Linda is down-to-earth: [We have] Enough to be happy right here, right now. Why must everybody conquer the world? You're well-liked, and the boys love you."

In spite of several failures, Willy is not short on his romantic dreams. He wants Biff to be a champion baseball player. He expects Biff to pull off a big deal with Oliver. Biff's boyhood friend, Bernard, explains to Willy why Biff had been a failure all along. He didn't train for any trade or profession. Bernard has become a successful lawyer. The hard work and modesty of Bernard is in contrast with the Lomans' false pride and wild dreams of success. Bernard's father and Willy's friend, Charley, tells Willy: "The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that."

Biff, true to character, does not meet Oliver. He realizes that his whole life has been a "ridiculous lie" for the past fifteen years. Oliver does not care to talk to Biff who then steals his gold fountain pen. Biff loses his face before Oliver. Willy Loman loses face when Biff discovers him in the company of a woman in Boston. Biff calls his father; "you fake! You phony little fake! You fake!" In a final showdown between Willy and Biff, the father says: "You cut down your life for spite." Biff accuses his father: "And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody!" The false dreams with which the father sustained Biff are exposed for what they really are when Biff declares: "I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!" Biff

urges his father : "Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" But Willy has other plans. He drives off on a suicidal car ride.

The play closes with a brief requiem in which the Loman family is joined by Charley. While Biff thinks that his father had the "wrong dreams," he acknowledges his father's manual labour: "there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made." Charley eulogises: "Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life... Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory." Happy vows: "He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have to come out number one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him." In a moving tribute to her husband, Linda says: "It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry." Ironically, on the day she made the last payment on the house, and claimed rightful ownership, there was nobody home. The requiem reveals more about the living characters and their attitudes and values than about Willy Loman.

16.3 WILLY LOMAN

Willy Loman is the victim of the success myth which America has nourished. Loman's culture has made him believe that success is an American's birthright. The seeker of success needs good looks, humour, confidence, and the ability to be not liked, but well liked. There are the things that Willy constantly dings into the ears of Biff. But Willy is a failure, a fact borne out by his dismissal. He lies to his family about his success; he deceives himself by believing in an elusive dream. Even while dying he does not realise that success is neither inevitable nor necessary. Biff seems to stand for a system opposed to his father's success myth.

The important plays of Miller, including *Death of a Salesman*, revolve round a family situation. In *Death*, it is specifically the conflict between father and son, between Willy and Biff. It can also be called domestic drama because the problems of a family figure in it. Again, the play is a critique of American society and its values. In this sense, it is a social drama. Willy Loman like several other Miller heroes is trapped by social and psychological forces which eventually destroy him. The playwright's view is that the death of a salesman, Willy Loman, is not insignificant. It is not just an illustration of the crashing of a low man (note the pun on Loman), by larger, powerful forces. Speaking of another of his characters, Eddie Carbone, (in *A View from the Bridge*, 1995), Miller says: "he possesses or exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity and justice." This holds true for Willy Loman also.

16.4 MANUAL LABOUR AS A THEME

There is yet another theme in the story of Willy Loman. Almost all the characters in the play recognise that Willy attaches a good deal of importance to manual labour. In the "Requiem," Biff says: "there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made." Willy's friend, Charley, makes the same point: "He was a happy man with a batch of cement." Even on the eve of his suicide, he plants seeds to grow a kitchen garden. There is a satisfaction, a pleasure, in producing or creating something. Contact between a man and his work is a vital necessity. Willy's love of manual work and his desire to grow a garden are a mingling of two important American values: the dignity of labour, and the return to nature.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What American values does Willy represent?

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16.5 WILLY'S ROLE MODELS

Willy Loman has three role models before him. His father was an inventor; he made the flute. He worked with his hands, but he did not feel any responsibility towards his family and abandoned his family. He did not believe in material prosperity nor the good opinion of his neighbours. The play opens with the flute melody just to remind us however vaguely, that Willy Loman could have done something, like his father. The second model, Willy's brother, Ben is a business buccaneer. He says on one occasion: "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy." Ben is boastful about his contacts and his sudden wealth. Miller presents him as a caricature. Willy is attracted by Ben's example and proposition, but Linda evaluates the situation more realistically. The third model for Willy is Dave Singleman, the old salesman who went on with his job even in his eighties. Willy admires him for doing business over the phone in a hotel room. Like a typical salesman, Singleman dies while travelling on business in his velvet slippers. Willy does not follow any of these three models. He is carried away by the American advertising to the point of believing that labels and brand names are real and that they would fetch instant success.

16.6 REALISM IN THE PLAY

The play is full of realistic details, following the pattern in Ibsen's middle phase. Lower middle class life in American cities is depicted: aspirin, subways, instalment buying, advertising, faulty refrigerators, mortgages, life insurance, high school foot-ball players as heroes. The dialogues, especially the speeches of Willy Loman, are full of clichés reflecting contemporary American speech. There are other touches of realism to re-create the American scene and values. For instance, Willy and his sons value manual labour. They believe that it is necessary for a man to keep fit, to handle tools and produce things. Willy's manual work may be noticed in and around his house. His father loved manual work; his son, Biff, was a ranch hand. Willy's love of manual skill, is an indication of the pioneer life he yearned for. He is in revolt against modern city life. Willy's own home was in a wooded suburb, but the trees were felled and the house was surrounded by huge apartment complexes. There was no sunshine to raise a few plants in his backyard. This is interpreted by Brian Parker as a sterile, urban civilization, not allowing Willy to establish anything to "outlast himself ruining the lives of his sons as well as his own." Willy runs into accidents because he watches the trees and scenery as he drives. Ben offers Willy a job in timber sales in Alaska.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What realistic touches does Miller add to the play?

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16.7 EXPRESSIONISM

Miller uses expressionistic techniques along-side realistic details. In expressionism, objects in art are not used for representation, but for transmission of impressions and moods of a character or of the author. When art is being devalued in a modern industrial civilisation, expressionism provided new means of making art forms valuable for man. Basically, expressionism is a revolt against realism. It attempts to show the world as it appears to a troubled mind. This includes dislocation of chronological time, and sudden shifts of scene. The expressionistic artist seeks to present the state of mind of his characters without using the conventional realistic details.

16.8 EXPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES IN THE PLAY

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller uses several expressionistic techniques to transmit the disturbed state of mind of Willy Loman who was guilt-ridden and anxiety-ridden. Shifts in the colour of lighting is a useful device in this regard. The apartments over-shadowing Willy's house are in orange. When he remembers his past, the house is shown in the green of vanished trees. When Biff and Happy have fun with girls and ignore their father, the lights are in red. Willy plants seeds at night just before his suicide. The light changes to blue to suggest moonlight and Willy's despair.

Another expressionistic device in this play is the change of music. Flute music with which the play opens represents the rural setting. The memories of a quiet, happy life are suggested by the flute. But with commercialization, Biff, unlike his grandfather, whistles in the lift, which habit is not considered worthy of a businessman. With advances in technology, the flute and the whistle are replaced by the tape-recorder bought by Howard. Willy's suicide is signalled by a harsh, prolonged sound which ends in discordant notes. This is slowly changed to a dead march to prepare for the requiem scene.

The way Miller introduces Ben is also an example of expressionism. Ben appears only in the memory scenes of Willy; so he is not "real." He appears only when Willy remembers him. That too, as Willy's troubled mind imagines Ben to be. Expressionism comes in handy for Miller to reveal Willy Loman's motives, dreams and disturbed emotions. He blends realism and expressionism to present a convincing picture of Willy Loman. Guilt and anxiety colour the hero's imagination. He is a split personality subject to severe mental breakdowns. In such a state, the past and the present mingle freely, destroying any cause-and-effect relationship of events. In Act II especially, Miller presents the past and the present simultaneously. Dream and reality, the wild hopes and the actual events merge inextricably in Willy's mind.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Illustrate the use of expressionistic techniques in the play.

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16.9 MILLER'S ACHIEVEMENT

In several of his early plays including *Death of a Salesman* Miller deals with the problem of identity. Willy Loman, like his counterparts in other plays, lacks self-understanding. The identity crisis takes the form of a conflict between an individual and his family, the community or the system. The author stresses the need for a link between the individual and the society. If

that link does not exist, or if it snaps, disaster would occur. Each man should know the truth about himself and learn to live within the limits urged by society. Otherwise he becomes a "misfit."

Sex is the cause of catastrophe although this is not stated explicitly. Willy's adultery in Boston is the cause of conflict between him and Biff. The stability of the family suffers when sex plays a role. Miller wants the family to survive.

We discussed earlier (see 16.6) how Miller throws in a lot of realistic details in the play. The speech of almost all the characters in this play is full of clichés and sentiments commonly heard in the U.S. of the time. Willy, Biff, Happy, Linda, Charley – all of them use a language which is trite. One example from Willy Loman will suffice: "Well, bottoms up!... And keep your pores open!" some other words and phrases fail to make an impact because they are used ever so often by Willy: "well-liked," "make." A character who mouths clichés and cant becomes a caricature. And that is what Willy Loman is.

The narrative technique used by Miller in the play is like Ibsen's. The play begins in the middle and the crucial, motivating event which occurred sixteen years earlier is mentioned much later in the play, Willy's affair with a woman in Boston which was witnessed unexpectedly by his son, Biff, is the starting point of the strained relations between father and son, and the consequent ruin of the family. This delayed exposition has its dramatic uses of creating tension and suspense. Miller achieves success through a judicious use of devices and techniques from several sources to produce one of the outstanding plays of the twentieth century.

16.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we analysed the plot, characters and themes of Miller's play, Death of a Salesman. We discussed the techniques – realistic and expressionistic -- employed in the play. We attempted an appraisal of Miller in this play.

16.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

Willy Loman represents the American values of dignity of manual labour and the return to nature.

Check Your Progress - 2

The realistic touches in the play are the subways, disprin, instalment buying, advertising, faulty refrigerators, mortgages, life insurance, high school football players as heroes. Other realistic touches include Willy's love of manual labour in a sterile urban civilization.

Check Your Progress - 3

The play uses different techniques to transmit the disturbed state of mind of Willy Loman. Shifts in colour of lighting, music and the introduction of Ben (in the memory scenes) are all examples of expressionism.

16.12 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Consider *Death of a Salesman* as a critique of American values and culture.

2. Illustrate Miller's use of realistic and expressionistic techniques in this play.
3. Can we call *Death of a Salesman* a tragedy? Support your answer.

16.13 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Corrigan, Robert W. ed. Arthur Miller: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Meserve, Walter J., ed. The Merrill Studies in "Death of a Salesman." Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1972.

Mos, Leonard. Arthur Miller. Revised edn, Boston: Twayne, 1980.

Weals, Gerald. Ed. Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman. New York: Viking, 1967.

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UNIT - 17 : CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Tennessee Williams: The Glass Menagerie
 - 17.2.1 Analysis of Plot and Characters
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17.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- discuss the development of drama after World War II in America.
- analyse one play each of Tennessee Williams and of Edward Albee.
- consider the technical experiments in the American theatre initiated by these playwrights.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

In a discussion of drama in America after World War II, it is necessary to acknowledge that O'Neill wrote some of his best plays in this period. These are *The Iceman Cometh* (revived in 1956), *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1957), *A Touch of the Poet* (1958), *Hughie* (1964) and *More Stately Mansions* (1967). In some of these plays, O'Neill returned to naturalism. *Iceman* is a comedy arguing for illusion. In Harry Hope's bar, the customers are happy living on cheap liquor and an illusion-filled world of their own. This placid world of the bar is invaded by a travelling salesman, Hickey, who nearly destroys the group before urging it to rebuild. Hickey for all his commitment to truth has his own illusions. *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a fearful family play. The action moves through a series of contrasts, morning and night, light and darkness, sunshine and fog, hope and despair, to a circle. The four principal characters the Tyrones, go through a cycle of emotions such as love, suspicion, hatred, cruelty, and guilt. O'Neill does not sacrifice artistic integrity for sentimental demands of the spectators.

There are many other dramatists who wrote plays with varying degrees of success in the last fifty years. But two playwrights are prominent for the impact they made on the American theatre. In the following sections of this unit, we shall discuss one play each of Tennessee Williams and of Edward Albee.

17.2 TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*

Tennessee Williams's (1911–1983) *The Glass Menagerie* is not only a successful play, but it includes several technical innovations. Let us first analyse the plot of the play before we discuss other aspects of the play.

17.2.1 Analysis of Plot and Characters

The play is in two parts. The first part has five scenes and the second two scenes. Part I deals with waiting for the Gentleman—caller by Amanda, Laura and Tom. In Part II the Gentleman—caller, Jim O'Connor, visits.

PART I

Scene I: Tom Wingfield, the narrator, explains that the setting of the play is in the U.S. in the 1930s. This was the period of the Great Depression. There were mild reactions in the U.S. to the Spanish Civil War. Tom announces that it is a memory play; it is sentimental, but not realistic. Tom is both the narrator and a character in the play. He says that his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura, are the other characters. A gentleman—caller appears in the last scenes. The father deserted the family sixteen years ago but he is remembered as he sends picture post cards without mentioning his address. Amanda is lost in a world of romantic illusions including that she had received seventeen gentlemen—callers (suitors) on a Sunday afternoon. She is now waiting for a gentleman—caller for her daughter Laura. The girl is slightly lame which is considered a disadvantage.

Scene II: Amanda is shocked to learn from Laura's Business College that Laura was not attending the typewriting classes at all for which the mother paid high fees. Laura was spending her time visiting the museum, the zoo, the movies, and the glass (green) house. Amanda feels deceived because her plans and hopes for Laura are dashed to pieces. Laura likes a high school hero called Jim who called her Blue Roses. (Laura suffered from Pleurosis). Jim is engaged to another girl. Laura is self-conscious about her physical handicap.

Scene III: Tom bursts out explaining to his mother how disgusted he is with his job in a warehouse. He is the only breadwinner in the family. Amanda is naturally upset about Tom's lack of interest in his job. In a violent reaction, Tom hurls his overcoat which hits Laura's glass menagerie. Laura is deeply hurt.

Scene IV: Amanda is worried that Tom is going the way of his father, drinking, spending nights out and returning home late, etc. She impresses on him to find a husband for Laura, so that he will be free to pursue whatever career interests him. Laura cannot make friends with boys; she fools around with her glass animals and old phonograph records.

Scene V: Tom announces that he has asked one of his colleagues at the warehouse, Jim D.O'Connor, to dinner next day. Amanda is very curious about Jim's habits, character, salary, etc. Tom cautions his over-enthusiastic mother that he had not said anything about Laura to Jim. But Amanda is overjoyed, particularly because Jim would be the first gentleman—caller for Laura. Part I is thus the exposition of the play. It introduces the characters, the tensions between them, and the problem before the Wingfields.

Part II of the play seeks to solve the problem by exposing the illusions and fantasies of the main characters.

Scene VI: The appointed day for Jim's visit comes. Tom had known Jim as a school hero. People expected Jim to rise to some important position because of his talents and opportunism. But he also ended up as a clerk in the same warehouse as Tom, only with a slightly better pay.

Amanda had worked the whole day to clean up her flat, dress up Laura and herself so that they could make a favourable impression on the gentleman—caller. Jim arrives; Laura senses it was her school hero and tries to avoid him. Amanda dresses herself as a girl; she looks ridiculous. She tries her best to present Laura in a good light.

Scene VII: In this last scene, Jim and Laura meet. Jim senses that Laura's problem is inferiority complex just because she has a small physical defect. He cheers her up to build her confidence, dances with her and kisses her. All these make Laura believe that Jim was in love with her, but he reveals that he was engaged to be married to Betty. Laura is thoroughly disappointed. During this rendezvous, Jim accidentally breaks the horn of the glass unicorn in Laura's glass menagerie. The unicorn was unique because of its single horn. It was a legendary and extinct animal. When the horn breaks, it becomes just like any other horse. What was a freak becomes a common animal. Laura identified herself with the glass unicorn. She is fragile like glass; she is unique like the unicorn because of her physical defect. The meeting with Jim made her lose her uniqueness. As a souvenir, Laura gives the broken unicorn to Jim.

Amanda is crest-fallen when she learns that Jim was already engaged to be married to Betty. She takes Tom to task for bringing such a person as a gentleman—caller to their house. Tom pleads ignorance about Jim's "engagement" and runs out to watch movies. He lives in a world of illusions created by movies and poetry. Amanda has not outgrown her girlish dreams. Laura lives in a secluded, narrow world of her own, among glass animals and worn-out phonograph records. Jim's visit shatters the illusions and fantasies to some extent.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. Explain the problem of the Wingfields

17.2.2 The Themes

The Glass Menagerie is a sort of parody of the fable of the sleeping beauty. The princess (Laura) sleeps because her virtues are shrouded by a "sickness" (slight lameness). Like the princess in the fable, Laura is awakened figuratively by the kiss of a prince (Jim). The prince (Jim) perceives the positive qualities of Laura and boosts her morale by downplaying her minor defect.

Loss is another theme. Amanda lost, in her opinion, seventeen gentlemen—callers who could have given her a better status in life than Mr. Wingfield ever did. Her plans and hopes for Laura crash as Jim announces that he is already engaged to Betty. She is disappointed in her son Tom, who follows in the footsteps of his father and deserts the family. Laura's feeble expectations about Jim crash like her precious glass unicorn. Jim's own great expectations, and the hopes that his schoolmates had for him, have also failed. He ends up in the same warehouse where Tom works. Tom too could not realise his ambition to be a poet, to travel freely wherever he wanted, because he had to look after his mother and sister. He drifts aimlessly. In the lives and careers of the principal characters the same pattern may be observed: anticipation, brief (partial) fulfillment and subsequent loss. Jim and Tom between them represent two aspects of Mr. Wingfield: the smiling caller (note the "hello" in his picture post cards) appears as Jim. The role of the deserting husband is played by Tom when he leaves his mother and sister at the end of the play. If Jim's smile is the greeting "hello", Tom's going away is "goodbye" as in Mr. Wingfield's postcard.

Tom's fondness for movies is a vicarious experience of adventure. He explains to Jim: "Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America, while everybody in America sits in a dark room and watches them have them. Yes, until there is a war. That's when adventure becomes available to all the masses. Then the people in the dark room come out of the dark room to have some adventures themselves."

Another theme in the play is frustration. Almost all the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* are frustrated for some reason or other. Amanda's aspirations for marrying into an aristocratic family are unrealized. She is also sexually frustrated as her husband deserts her. Tom is frustrated because the dull routine at the shoe store is against his romantic and poetic temperament. Laura is frustrated because of her physical defect and the consequent inability to make friends. These are people trapped by circumstances and there is no easy escape for them. Tennessee Williams said on one occasion that he is "a deeply disturbed person and I write about disturbed people." The disturbed people are not normal in their behaviour and attitudes. So their lives become interesting. These people (Amanda, Laura, Tom) are unable to face reality. Probing the lives of such frustrated persons is a fascinating exercise which Williams has undertaken in his plays. Williams's characters, as stated earlier, live in a world of illusions, fantasies, or dreams. The reason for this is that life is tolerable only when the characters spin their own webs of illusions.

We find in Williams's plays that the sensitive and the romantic are destroyed by the insensitive and the unromantic. Tom is a poet, but his dull job nearly kills his creativity. He is fired by his boss for writing poetry. Another hidden theme is the search for beauty in an ugly world. Laura's collection of glass animals is her way to build a world of beauty in an otherwise unattractive world. The play also touches on non-conformity. Tom learns the hard way that the consequences of non conformity are disastrous. On the other side is the conformist, the average American, Jim O'Connor, in this play who gets along well in this world. We also notice another character type recurring in Williams's plays: the fragile, pathetic, Southern gentlewoman representing a vanishing culture. Laura Wingfield in this play and Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* represent the southern gentility and culture.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1. Explain how this play is a parody of the fable of the sleeping beauty.

17.2.3 Technical Innovations

Tennessee Williams has introduced several new features in his dramas to underscore his meaning. He wanted to replace the realistic devices in the theatre which were a legacy of Henrik Ibsen. He introduced the plastic theatre. In the plastic theatre various elements are shaped and moulded to stress the meaning. These elements include lighting, music, the screen device etc. He found that photographic realism on the stage is not appreciated any longer. Truth, life, or reality can be transformed by poetic imagination into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance. One important technique is the *screen device*. Important motifs or ideas in the play are flashed on a screen concurrently as the characters grapple with those ideas. One example of this is the legend "souvenir" on the screen when Laura presents the broken glass unicorn to Jim as a token. The purpose of the screen legends is to reinforce the meaning more effectively than through simple dialogue. Yet another significant new device is the *manipulation of light*. Lighting is changed to suit the mood of the play. The stage in *The Glass Menagerie* is as dim as the lives of the characters. Shafts of light in different intensities

and colours are used to strengthen the dominant mood of a scene. Another device is *music*. Laura winds the victrola and plays her old phonograph records. There is loud music from the dancing hall near Amanda's flat. The music in different scenes and on different occasions is chosen to heighten the mood of the play.

The most important innovation is the introduction of a *narrator*, Tom. He is both a narrator and a character. He narrates the play at crucial points. The incidents in the drama are Tom's recollections from his memory. Hence it is a memory play. All these innovations of Williams are meant to grasp and transmit truth which quite often lies beneath the surface appearances.

Williams's drama is sometimes called *subjective drama* which came as a reaction to Ibsen's realistic drama. He explores the subconscious and the hidden motives of his characters. Subjective drama digs deeper into the turbulence of life than realistic drama does.

Williams uses several *symbols* to emphasise his meaning. The glass menagerie, Laura's precious collection of fragile, small, glass animals stands for her small, fragile world. The unicorn is another symbol because it is a unique and legendary animal. Laura's own uniqueness, her physical defect, is underscored by the unicorn. When Jim breaks the horn, it is just like any other horse. Jim's pep talk and his kiss awaken Laura into a world of reality.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. Write a note on the technical devices employed by Williams in this play.

17.2.4 The Achievement of Tennessee Williams

Williams is a pioneer of the new American drama which emerged after World War II. He freed American drama of European (notably Ibsen's) traditions. He boldly introduced themes in the theatre which were considered taboo until then. These themes included murder, rape, castration, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. He set a trend which was followed by Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Edward Albee who showed violence and sex more boldly. He employs a large number of expressionistic literary and theatrical devices; special settings, musical themes, unusual sound and lighting effects to enable the spectators to observe the truths hidden behind appearances. He often makes use of classical myths to build his themes. Some character types recur in his plays: the outsider (Jim), the physically or emotionally deformed (Laura), real or aspiring artists (Tom), strangers (Jim). Williams believes that "we are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence." It is the desperate lives of frustrated people that Williams chooses to dramatise for our edification.

17.3. EDWARD ALBEE AND THE ABSURD DRAMA

Edward Albee changed the concept of the purpose of theatre by a series of plays which exposed the most nauseating aspects of the American way of life; he changed the language and idiom of the theatre. In America, the theatre is represented by Broadway in New York and Hollywood in Los Angeles. In Albee's view, these two giants on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts of the United States have desecrated almost all the values of drama as an art-form. Television only accelerated the process of desecration. The stage in modern times has attained technical excellence in direction, acting, music, lighting and sound effects. Computers and lasers have enhanced the technical skills of production. But the play itself is often stereotyped and

sentimental in plot, character, and theme. Albee thinks that there could be nothing more absurd than Broadway where money is the only criterion of success. He takes this line in his play, *Fam and Yam*. (Fam stands for famous American playwright and Yam for Young American playwright).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

What is Albee's criticism of the theatre in America?

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17.3.1 Absurd Drama

Martin Esslin wrote a book on Absurd Drama in which he says that the theatre of the absurd "does not reflect despair or a return to dark irrational forces but expresses modern man's endeavour to come to terms with the world in which he lives. It attempts to make him face up to the human condition as it really is, to free him from illusions that are bound to cause constant maladjustment and disappointment. For the dignity of man lies in this ability to face reality in all its senselessness; to accept it freely, without fear, without illusions and to laugh at it." Albee says essentially the same thing about the theatre of the absurd, but adds that it has its roots in existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical ideas. Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, and Albee have written plays in the absurdist manner. Albee who is the chief spokesman and practitioner of absurd drama says that this new theatre has changed the direction and history of drama forever in an irreversible way.

Albee thinks that the role of a playwright is not merely to entertain, but to criticise society and even offend it. Only when society is offended, can it shake off some of its complacency about its values and culture.

17.3.2 *The American Dream*: An analysis

This is a daring exposé of the rot in American society and the decline in American values. Albee describes it as 'A Play in one Scene.' But it is possible to split it into eleven scenes (or episodes). These eleven scenes may be put in three parts.

Part I comprises scenes one to four. This deals with the conflict between Mommy and Grandma (Mommy has secret plans to send away Grandma to an aged people's home).

Part II includes scenes five to seven. This part focuses on the visit of Mrs. Barker (a friend of Mommy's) who was heading an Adoption Service. Mommy and Daddy brought a child who was found "unsatisfactory" later.

Part III comprises the remaining scenes, eight to eleven. In this part the handsome young man arrives. He is called "The American Dream." Grandma uses this cleverly to foil Mommy's plans to send her away.

Albee calls it a comedy, but satire is more dominant in the play. In his own words: "The play is an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society.... A stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen." The targets of Albee's satire are:

- (i) Power as a substitute for love in family life.
- (ii) Sex as substitute for love.

- (iv) The importance of firmness, decisiveness, and masculinity in the American male
- (v) Sending old people to institutions is the only efficient way of treating them.
- (vi) Social climbing
- (vii) Worship of physical beauty.
- (viii) Personal comfort before public duty.

Scene I: establishes the supremacy of Mommy (the American female) in the home. Daddy is reduced to a yes-man.

Scene II: introduces Grandma who opposes Mommy's ill-treatment of her. Grandma evokes the sympathy of the audience by her insightful comments on the aged people.

Scene III: presents a dialogue between Mommy and Daddy. Mommy reveals that as a child she was selfish and deceitful and that Grandma was self-sacrificing. She shamelessly admits that she had married Daddy for his money: "I have a right to live off you because I married you, and I have a right to all your money when you die." She reveals her plan to send away Grandma to a nursing home.

Scene IV: Grandma learns Mommy's plans to send her away and that someone would come to take her away.

Scene V: shows Mrs. Barker, formerly of an adoption service, now a club lady, making herself comfortable. She even takes off her dress. This is Albee's satire on American women's tendency to show their sexual power by exposure. The conflict between Mommy and Grandma grows. Mommy orders Daddy to break Grandma's TV because she contradicted her.

Scene VI: gives further glimpses of Mommy's ill-treatment of Grandma. She threatens to send her to an institution and hide her dentures as a punishment.

Scene VII: Grandma and Mrs. Barker are alone as Mommy had gone to fetch water for Mrs. Barker. Grandma educates Mrs. Barker of Mommy and Daddy's life. She reminds her that she had given a child earlier for adoption to Mommy and Daddy. They had killed the child because it did not develop according to their own false values. They were so money-minded that they demanded return of the money they had paid for the baby. The reason is the baby (or goods) is not satisfactory to the customer. It was actually Mrs. Barker who sold the baby when she was with the Adoption Service.

Scene VIII : The unemployed young man arrives. Grandma mistakes him for the van man to take her away. She admires his muscle, his youth, his profile. He is fit to act in movies. He is the American Dream. He would do anything for money because he has no talents except his appearance. He reveals he was separated from his twin-brother which was a traumatic experience. "I have no emotions" after this. Grandma wants to help the young man and also benefit herself through him. Grandma cautions him to "play by the ear" when Mrs. Barker comes back with water. (Mommy deliberately delays fetching water in order to separate Mrs. Barker and Grandma).

Scene IX : Grandma introduces the young man to Mrs. Barker as "the van man". Grandma has a two-fold plan:

1. to pass off the youth as the van man.
2. to substitute him for the "unsatisfactory" child adopted by Mommy and Daddy earlier. (As it turns out the adopted child was a twin of the youngman).

In this way, Grandma attempts to outwit Mommy.

Scene X: Mommy is surprised that Grandma is missing. She had not actually called the aged people's home to send a van.

Scene XI: Mrs. Barker tells Mommy that she saw the van man taking away Grandma. Mommy's crocodile tears become clear. Mommy is attracted by the handsome young man. She thinks of him as a substitute for Grandma and the "unsatisfactory" child adopted by them. Mommy and Daddy are now satisfied. They celebrate it with drinks.

Mommy begins to feel that the young man was rather familiar. She promises to tell him what happened to the other child after Mrs. Barker's departure.

Grandma appears on the stage to address the audience: "Well, I guess that just about wraps it up. I mean, for better or worse, this is a comedy."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What aspects of American society does Albee attack?

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17.3.3 The Themes

The head of the family, Daddy is reduced to unmanly impotence. Mommy bosses over him and makes him accept her opinions as his, she cleverly passes off her plan (for Grandma) as his. He is reduced to the position of an eternal yea-sayr (yes-man). The play exposes the female domination in the American family. Where Daddy is vague, Mommy is clear and efficient. She asks him for his opinion, but he cannot contradict her. Mommy makes all the decisions and wants everyone's approval. She imposes her will on others. She gets pleasure in keeping everything and everybody under her control.

The play is a devastating criticism of the American family. It is more than that. It exposes the falsity of Americans. Mommy and Daddy wait for the image, the dream. Mrs. Barker and the young man are approximations to it. The young man is actually nick-named the American Dream by Grandma. The young man is physically attractive, but empty-headed. He has no particular skill or proficiency.

Mommy may gloat over her command over the others in the house, but Grandma is cleverer and uses Mrs. Barker and the young man to her own purposes and turns the tables against Mommy. She informs Mrs. Barker about Mommy's cruelty and money-mad materialism. Mommy looked upon adoption as a pure commercial transaction and she wants her money back because the child is not growing up as per her desires and rules. She has no guilt or pity in killing the baby. It is actually Grandma who controls the events and shapes them to her advantage. She hides on the sides, watches the events and the visitors and unobtrusively outwits Mommy. She has the last word and the last laugh in the play.

Sex or perverted sex, is a chief cause of action in the play. Mommy succeeds in reducing Daddy to an impotent man without any say or share in the affairs of the house. She even denies him sex. All she wants from him is his money. The so-called qualities of a male, firmness, masculinity and decisiveness, have evaporated in Daddy through the manipulative power of Mommy.

Mommy is selfish to a disgusting degree. She mutilates the adopted baby for selfish reasons. If the young man is the American Dream or Mommy's Dream of a handsome, athletic

young man, then Monony is the castrating female, the destructive woman. Monony is disgusted with normal sex but she has lust for the Young Man. (She "sidles up to him a little.")

There is the theme of incommunicability also in *The American Dream*. The Young Man's presence makes Grandma change her tone. He stands for the absence of human contact. He evokes pathos because of his lack of emotions. He cannot experience love as normal human beings do.

17.3.4 Albee's Achievement

One of the striking features of Albee's dramas is the small number of characters. Secondly, the plays are short. They present a series of encounters and dialogues. The pattern in an Albee play is a normal opening, deeper emotional conflicts, and a quick stop. Another pattern which is visible in several Albee plays is a middle-class American family living on illusion and dominated by an over-bearing woman.

Albee's favourite metaphor for the human condition is the zoo as he successfully dramatised it in his first play, *The Zoo Story* (1958). In this situation "everyone is separated from everyone else." Everyone has his or her own cage. Communication becomes difficult. They can escape from the cages through physical violence (as in *The Zoo story* or verbal violence (as in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*). The characters tend to withdraw. Albee's characters are alone, they are alienated. The situations depicted by Albee in his plays reflect a collapse of values in American society.

Albee's great achievement is his language. It is built on three principles: interruption, repetition, and the set speech. It is not simply a vehicle to convey information, it is a dramatic device for revealing character and theme. Anne Paolucci goes so far as to say that Albee's language is his most important contribution to American drama. He uses language to expose everything that has been taken for granted by the Americans. Language is Albee's means for the brilliance of his dialogues, for the symbolism, and for the narrative technique. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is considered the crown of his achievement, especially for the language. Albee brought a new vigour and vitality to the American theatre through his power of verbal gymnastics.

17.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed contemporary American drama with special reference to Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* and Edward Albee's *The American Dream*. We considered their themes, techniques and achievements.

17.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

The problem of the Wing fields is that they live in a world of romantic illusions. Tom is both the narrator and a character. He is obsessed by the world of movies and poetry. Amanda lives in her world of girlish dreams. Laura has her own fantasies built around her glass menagerie and old phonograph records.

Check Your Progress - 2

This play parodies the story of the sleeping beauty because Laura is the sleeping princess who is kissed and awakened by the prince, Jim who recognises her hidden virtues, shrouded by a "Sickness" (lameness). He boosts her morale but cannot completely change her life.

Check Your Progress - 3

Tennessee Williams introduces several new features into his plays. His drama is referred to as plastic theatre. Some of the technical innovations he introduced are lighting, music and the screen device. Important motifs or ideas flashed on a screen while the characters grapple with those ideas.

Check Your Progress - 4

In Albee's opinion the Broadway in New York and Hollywood in Los Angeles have desecrated the values of drama as an art form. He thinks that there could be nothing more absurd than Broadway where money is the only criterion.

Check Your Progress - 5

Albee attacks a number of social evils of contemporary American life such as power as a substitute for love, sex as a substitute for love, the role of money in marriage, worship of physical beauty, lack of concern for the old, social climbing and personal comfort before public duty.

17.6 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the significance of the title, *The Glass Menagerie*.
2. Discuss the technical devices used by Williams and their usefulness.
3. Consider Albee's *The American Dream* as a satire on contemporary American society and its values.
4. What is Albee's contribution to American drama?

17.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

A. For Tennessee Williams.

Donahue, Francis. *The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1964.

Tharpe, Jac. *Tennessee Williams. 13 Essays*. Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1980.

Tischler, Nancy M. *Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan*. New York: Citadel Press, 1961.

B. For Edward Albee

Amacher, Richard E. *Edward Albee*. Rev. ed. Boston: Twayne, 1982.

Bigsby, C.W.E. *Albee*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961.

BLOCK V

RECENT TRENDS

Unit 18	Women's Voices
Unit 19	Jewish Writing
Unit 20	African American Literature

BRAOU

UNIT - 18 : WOMEN'S VOICES

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Joyce Carol Oates
 - 18.2.1 Use of Symbols
- 18.3 Toni Morrison
- 18.4 Women's Autobiography
- 18.5 Women's Drama
- 18.6 Women's Poetry
 - 18.6.1 Anne Sexton
 - 18.6.2 Sylvia Plath
- 18.7 Other Women Writers
- 18.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 18.10 Sample Examination Questions
- 18.11 Recommended Books

18.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- describe women's literature
- discuss the work of a few prominent novelists, poets, and other writers
- examine the distinctive trends in women's literature.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

When we talk about women's voices, we are talking about women's literature. But the term, "Women's literature," raises some interesting questions. Does such a thing exist at all? If it does, how can it be identified or defined? Is it a sub-category of mainstream literature? Is it fair to classify or categorise literature on the basis of sex? Many women writers declare that they are writers and sex is an accident.

It is possible to differentiate women's literature from literature produced by women. Women may write, and have written successfully as per the norms prescribed by men, but such works may not automatically qualify as women's literature. Women's literature must have a strong flavour of its own and it must have universal appeal. It seeks to include women's experience which has been ignored. This experience is universally valid. Not everything written by women, or about women qualifies as women's literature. One important criterion for classification under women's literature is that it deals with "women's experience from within." Such experience should derive from women's lives. Women's existence must nourish and sustain women's literature. A woman writer need not subscribe to the aims of women's liberation movement and yet contribute to women's literature.

Since World War II, women's literature has emerged as a coherent entity. A relatively new literature such as women's literature is an evolving and open literature receiving new ideas and images. Women's experience which is the *sine qua non* of this literature may cut across

national, racial, cultural, political and linguistic boundaries. There may be an element of universality in women's experience to whichever race or culture they may belong.

Women's literature tends to focus on actual experience. Hence it might take the form of confessions. Women writers may deal with madness leading to suicide. Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton are examples among American women poets.

In many cultures, women have a passive role, that is, they are powerless. A woman writer has to take this into consideration. In a complex world, causality may not explain everything. The woman writer falls back on the reality of her own experience. This is a kind of quest for inner reality. If works of literature depict physical journeys of their heroes, women writers depict "interior journeys." (Physical voyages or journeys are described by many American writers including Melville, Mark Twain and Jack Kerouac). A result of this inward journey is an account of victimisation. The writer has a fresh insight into her experience. A consequence of this is a confessional, or partially confessional, narration. That is, fiction and autobiography are blended. Such a combination enables women to share their experiences and evaluations. If, in the past, women's lives were severely circumscribed by powerlessness, betrayal and victimisation, the same restrictions are now put to a different use in women's literature. Women are now prepared to leave and speak out on their experience rather than meekly submit to humiliations and deceptions. Women writers are thus personally involved with the stories of their fiction and poetry. In such a situation, objectivity might be a casualty.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What are the chief characteristics of women's literature?

18.2 JOYCE CAROL OATES

Let us now discuss the work of a few women novelists, poets, playwrights autobiographers, and critics to see what their perceptions of women's lives are.

The themes which we discussed in the previous section may be observed in the work of Joyce Carol Oates (1938 -). She has said that "all art is autobiographical." But the violent and terror-filled lives of the characters in her fiction do not seem to have a parallel in her own life. She is a prolific writer. She depicts how the lives of ordinary people are filled with fear and derangements. Her characters are factory hands, school children, businessmen, teachers, and preachers. Theirs is a middle-class world. This world is filled with houses, barbeques in the backyard, shopping centres, drive-in restaurants, cars, and television. For all external appearances these characters are ordinary. But inwardly they are complex, often terrorized by other people, by fate, or by their inner fears. Violence is frequent in Oates's fiction, violence in the form of murder, suicide, rape, riots, arson beatings, etc. She uses sudden horrors and grotesque experience. It is a new kind of gothic in which we have not ghosts but haunted lives, not ruined castles, but ruined cities. Oates views the contemporary situation as grotesque and gothic. Because terror, horror and fear abound in her work, she has been nick-named "The Dark Lady of American Letters." Amidst all the gloom in her fictional world there is a silver lining. There is a note of affirmation underlying the world of chaos. This is her ability to reveal the extraordinary behind the ordinary. She communicates a vision of urban America as a swirling, nightmarish world of obsessions neurotic fears and grotesque brutality."

Oates's characters are eccentric; sometimes they are rebels, at other times, puppets. These people are not like those who achieve fame, money, and success having been driven to those goals. Mered Dawe in her novel, *Do With Me What You Will* (1973), is a victim. He is arrested, assaulted, declared insane and driven to madness. But the society shown here is a machine which causes madness. Normal human relationships are not possible in such a society. According to Oates, stable identity is an obstacle to success. But without such an identity, it is not possible to share or validate one's experience. The characters in them are from the working class and their dreams are produced by the commercials. In *Expensive People* (1968) and *Do With Me What You Will*, the characters are powerful. Ironically, their wives elope with other men; their children rebel against them; their powers weaken with advancing age. They look for an alternative reality. That reality may be a world "where nothing is human... a hard, vivid world emptied of people and therefore permanent."

Alienation like the one described above, pushes one to madness. But the redeeming feature of this mad, murderous, violent, chaotic existence is an active search for something better. Oates's characters look for such a world, a world with a meaningful structure, a world in which dignified existence is possible. Joyce Carol Oates is among women writers who, according to Elizabeth Janeway, "are splitting open the atom to show us the mechanism inside. It is not a mechanism special to women. Understanding it enlarges our knowledge of psychological causation; another contribution to universality."

18.2.1 Use of symbols

Oates's fiction is characterised by several symbols adopted from everyday life. "Houses" are a symbol. The rental, the furnishings, and the locality, receive particular attention because a house provides a modicum of stability to restless people. A lawyer, Marvin Howe, takes over houses as partial payment from his clients. In spite of his cruelty and greed, he enjoys social approval. The telephone is another symbol in women's literature. Its silence indicates the lover's rejection; its rings might raise false hopes. But it is a possible means of communication. Marriage has symbolic significance. Is it necessary at all? What place do children have in a family? The parent-child relationship is a recurring theme in fiction, poetry and autobiography. Sylvia Plath complains bitterly about both her parents in separate poems ("Daddy" and "The Disquieting Muses"). The mother in women's writing is not only a source of life, but of knowledge also. Women writers start questioning what their mothers taught them and the validity of the future plans of mothers for their daughters. Attacks on mothers or mother-figures are rather common in women's literature, white or black.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Why is Oates called "The Dark Lady of American Letters"?

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18.3 TONI MORRISON

Let us now turn to the black woman writer, Toni Morrison. Black women writers depict poignantly the stresses and strains of living in what Elizabeth Janeway calls "a madness-inducing society." Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) records scenes from an underground where the inhabitants suffer from poverty and confused social demands. The fragmented form of the book reflects the fragmentation of life. That is so for every single individual. Blacks may go mad while aspiring for white standards of living. A black woman feels safe working in a white woman's house. Her work is valued, but not her with respect. She seems to prefer the white child whom she baby-sits to her own.

Morrison depicts this difficult situation

where white standards and aims are presented to the blacks as very attractive. But they cannot achieve them.

We noted earlier that powerlessness is a dominant feature of women's experience. This situation gives a capacity to see other, similar situations (of powerlessness).

18.4 WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

An important genre of women's literature is autobiography. Ellen Glasgow's *The Woman Within* (1954) describes an outwardly successful and pleasant life and inwardly violent life. She and her sister "lived and breathed and moved for months at a time in the atmosphere of despair. The very bread we ate tasted of hopelessness... I was devoured by this hunger... to discover some meaning, some underlying reason for the mystery and pain of the world." Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) deals with the all-important mother who passes on knowledge to her children. Angelou's look presents a split mother-figure, her own and her mother's mother. Her own mother, a city sophisticate, did not care to raise her, but when Maya became pregnant as a teenager and sought her help, the mother readily helped her. Elsewhere she says: "I write for the Black voice and any ear which can hear it. As a composer writes for musical instruments and a choreographer creates for the body, I search for sound, tempos and rhythms to ride through the vocal cord over the tongue, and out of lips of the Black people." Autobiography also figures in the poetry written by women. Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton are two notable examples. But we will discuss the work of these in the section on poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

What is the significance of the fragmented form of Toni Morrison's book, *The Bluest Eye*?

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18.5 WOMEN'S DRAMA

Women playwrights may not be large in number, but there are a few who made a mark. We shall discuss the work of Lorraine Hansberry in Unit 20. But now we shall consider the work of Adrienne Kennedy. Her theme is anger at several oppressions of class, race and sex. She helped in reviving black theatre in the sixties. She is a feminist dramatist. Her best-known play is *Funny House of a Negro* (1964). The main character in this play is a black woman called Sarah. She announces the play's aims in a monologue: "the days are past when there are places and characters with connections with themes as in stories you pick up on the shelves of public libraries. Too, there is no theme. No statements.... For the statement is the characters and the characters are myself." It is a dream play in which half-conscious memories and desires materialise magically in invented forms. Kennedy uses the expressionistic devices but with a difference. She interrupts the dream. Sarah, the middle-class, black girl dreams of Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Hapsburg and wishes to have white friends. She says: "I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself." Her fortress is realised by her isolation from the world and human contacts. But this fortress cannot protect her from the 'beasts' inside. Sarah is daughter of a black man and a white woman. She embodies the tensions arising from this miscegenation (mixture of races). She also embodies the conflicting social values attached to black and white male and female. *Funny House of a Negro* is a metaphor of cultural structures. These structures make self-deception an alternative to self-hatred for a person who is black and female. Like in Tennessee Williams's plays, here also the focus is on

the destructive power of the life. Her uncovering of the generally protected wounds of black women linger in the mind of the spectators long after the curtain is drawn. Kennedy wrote six other short plays. A brother and sister are transformed to rats in *A Rat's Mass*. The siblings commit incest at the command of a white girl. We learn at the end of the play that the sister Rat becomes pregnant by her brother and so goes mad and is sent to an asylum. The point of the play is the greater vulnerability of women to sexual manipulation.

18.6 WOMEN'S POETRY

We have seen that American society is a madness-inducing society. Women writers tend to pour out their fears and anxieties in fiction, memoirs, and fictionalised autobiography. The same themes may be observed in the poetry of women writers. Two women writers of promise who were driven to suicide by the madness-inducing society are Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. Both are confessional poets, that is, they are autobiographical.

18.6.1 Anne Sexton

Anne Sexton's (1928–1974) poems are confessions marked by wit, irony, self-mockery, and meditation. Mental disturbance is the recurring theme of her poems. She travels into madness and has visions of death. She converts experience into metaphors of victimisation, guilt, and disorder. She is fascinated by death. Suicide, in her view, is a rebuke of life and the living. According to her, poetry "should be a shock to the senses. It should almost hurt." Poetry is shock therapy. Many of the points mentioned here may be observed in the poem, "The Addict" (1966):

Sleep monger,
death monger,
with capsules in my palms each night,
eight at a time from sweet pharmaceutical bottles
I make arrangements for a pint-sized journey.
I'm the queen of this condition.
I'm an expert on making the trip
And now they say I'm an addict.
Now they ask why.
Why!

Don't they know
that I promised to die!
I'm keeping in practice.
I'm merely staying in shape.
The pills are a mother, but better,
every color and as good as sour balls.
I'm on a diet from death.
Yes, I admit
it has gotten to be a bit of habit –
blows eight at a time, socked in the eye,
hauled away by the pink, the orange,
the green and the white good nights.
I'm becoming something of a chemical mixture.
That's it!

My supply
of tablets

has got to last for years and years.
I like them more than I like me.
Stubborn as hell, they won't let go.
It's a kind of marriage.
It's a kind of war
Where I plant bombs inside
of myself.
Yes
I try
to kill myself in small amounts;
an innocuous occupation.
Actually I'm hung up on it.
But remember I don't make too much noise.
And frankly no one has to lug me out
and I don't stand there in my winding sheet.
I'm a little, butter cup in my yellow nightie
eating my eight loaves in a row
and in a certain order as in
the laying on of hands
or the black sacrament.

It's a ceremony
but like any other sport
its full of rules.
It's like a musical tennis match where
my mouth keeps catching the ball.
Then I lie on my altar
elevated by the eight chemical kisses.

What a lay me down this is
with two pink, two orange
two green, two white goodnights.
Fee – fi – fo – fum –
Now I'm borrowed.
Now I'm numb

The poem reveals in a playful way the psychology of a drug addict. The addiction is:

– Stubborn as hell, they won't let go.

Sexton compares her addiction to a kind of marriage. At the same time, it is also a kind of war. The eight pills of four different colours are bombs planted inside her stomach. Eating the tablets is likened to a ceremony and a sport with its own rules. More humorously, the pills are tiny tennis balls which her mouth catches. The eight pills are "eight chemical kisses." Sexton describes depressing, suicidal situation in a witty way to take the sting out of the painful experience. Another noteworthy feature about this poem is the simple diction, speech rhythm and conversational tone. The poem is confessional and speaks of Sexton's fascination with death.

18.6.2 Sylvia Plath

Now let us consider the poetry of Sylvia Plath (1932 – 1963). Her poetry also deals with death, suicide, etc. Her private agonies are made public with a strange clarity. So it is confessional poetry. Her detractors would call it "the longest suicide note ever written." Throughout her life she was obsessed with a deep feeling of isolation and entrapment. The poems collected in *Ariel* (1965) (her second anthology) speak of "her renewed sense of ungovernable chaos of human experience and her frightening visions of violence and horror."

Many of her poems were published after her suicide in 1963. They show the visions of a trapped person for whom "the world itself is a bad dream."

Now let us read one of Sylvia Plath's well-known poems.

Lady Lazarus

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin
O my enemy
Do I terrify?—

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I am a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

Then unwrap me hand and foot—
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands,
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
Dying

Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.
I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Come back in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
A mused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart –
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge,
For a word or touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby
That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash –
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there –

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

This poem is typical of Sylvia Plath for her constant preoccupation with death and suicide. Referring to "Lady Lazarus," Sylvia Plath says: "the speaker is a woman who has the great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is, she has to die first. She is the phoenix, the libertarian spirit, what you will. She is also just a good, plain, resourceful woman." In this poem,

Plath assumes the role of the female counterpart of the Lazarus story. She identifies herself with the Jewish victims of Nazi concentration camps. According to the Bible, (John 11: 1 – 44) Lazarus lay buried for three days until Jesus raised him from his grave. The speaker in Plath's poem equates her suicide attempts with the experience of Lazarus. There is a difference because Lazarus was saved from an unwanted death and the speaker in the poem talks of unsuccessful attempts at suicide. She made two attempts to kill herself before she succeeded in the third attempt in 1963. She identifies herself with the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. The Nazis are reported to have made lampshades from the skin of murdered Jews. It may be pointed out that Plath's father (who died when she was eight years old) was associated with the Nazis, her mother was believed to have Jewish blood. In lines 43 – 45, the speaker claims expertise on dying. She likens dying to an art. Art and death are the end results; they are beyond mutability; they are states of perfection. The two unsuccessful attempts of Plath at suicide make her say at the end of the poem that she rises out of the ash (like the Phoenix).

This poem also adopts a simple diction and conversational tone. Plath is playful even while talking of a serious matter like suicide. The poem is confessional. Sylvia Plath is a victim of the madness-inducing society.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

Comment on Sylvia Plath's handling of the theme of death in their poems.

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18.7 OTHER WOMEN WRITERS

Our study of "women's voices" or women's literature will be incomplete without at least a brief discussion of the well-known feminist writers. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is believed to have set in motion the feminist self-consciousness. She examines the frustrations faced by middle-class women. It is a social statement. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970) is another book exposing the male bias in literary evaluations. Mary Ellman's *Thinking about Women* (1968) is actually about male thought about women. With penetrating insight she exposed the prejudices and pitfalls of male criticism. Elizabeth Hardwick's *Seduction and Betrayal* (1974) considers the indignities suffered by women writers and how such treatment affected their writing. However, from the 1970s, women's literature is accepted as a worthwhile and growing field of study.

18.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we tried to understand what is meant by "women's literature." We discussed the contribution of some prominent women writers to fiction, autobiography, drama, and poetry. We examined the common themes in women's literature.

18.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

The chief characteristics of women's literature are that it is confessional and it blends fiction and autobiography to share their experiences and evaluations of the world around them.

Check Your Progress 2

Oates is called "The Dark Lady of American Letters" because she uses sudden horrors and grotesque experiences. Terror, fear and horror abound in her work.

Check Your Progress 3

The structure of Toni Morrison's book reflects the structure of life itself. Both are fragmented and people suffer from poverty and confused social demands.

Check Your Progress 4

Sylvia Plath treats the theme death in a direct and playful manner. For her art and death are the end results which are beyond mutability. Death is a state of perfection that brings her trapped life to an end.

18.10 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the implications of the term, "Women's literature"?
2. What are the principal themes in the writings of women authors?
3. What impact does American society have on the women writers.
4. How do you account for the obsession with death of writers like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton?

18.11 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Evans, Mari. Black Women Writers: Arguments and Interviews. London & Sydney: Pluto Press, 1983.

Janeway, Elizabeth. "Women's Literature" in Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Keyssar, Helene. Feminist Theatre: An Introduction to Plays of Contemporary British and American Women. London: Macmillan, 1984.

UNIT - 19 : JEWISH WRITING

Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Bernard Malamud's Fiction
- 19.3 Saul Bellow's Fiction
- 19.4 Norman Mailer's Fiction
- 19.5 Jewish Poetry
 - 19.5.1 Adrienne Rich's Poetry
- 19.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 19.8 Sample Examination Questions
- 19.8 Recommended Books

19.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- describe Jewish writing in America
- examine the work of a few prominent Jewish writers
- assess the Jewish contribution to American literature

19.1 INTRODUCTION

The Jewish contribution to American culture in various spheres is both substantial and significant. After the great migration from Eastern Europe during 1881-1924, the Jewish writers made their presence felt in the U.S.A. Between the two world wars, the Jewish fiction made its appearance in America. The 1940s saw a major contribution from the Jewish immigrants to American literature. During 1945-55, the Jewish writers became spokesmen for modern American literature.

The themes of these writers are derived from their European experience which includes war, brutality, depression, unemployment, etc. They also dealt with the implications of ideology, class and money. While the 1930s were marked by the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, and Stalinist terror, the 1940s were worse. The Jews were persecuted and annihilated in Europe. This genocide of the Jews is often referred to as 'holocaust.' (Holocaust is a complete destruction of people by fire). This traumatic experience of the surviving Jews found its way into Jewish literature. Disaster and shared sense of loss is a recurring theme in their work. World War II swept away the old assumptions and the Jews experienced a rebirth which was underscored by the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

The Jew who has been persecuted, wandering, victimized, has become a symbol of the "universal estrangement of man." The related themes of alienation, victimisation and marginalisation are common in Jewish fiction. The characters are moody, dangling men and schlemiels (bungling persons). Refugees like the authors themselves become central characters. But their new life in the United States was by no means a happy one. It was a sort of death-in-life. If Saul Bellow names one of his novels *Dangling Man*, Bernard Malamud uses the schlemiels who search for a new life. Isaac Bashevis Singer writes in Yiddish on events in Auschwitz. He prefers the short story to the novel as it gives scope for "concentration on quality."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

List the main themes of Jewish writing.

19.2 BERNARD MALAMUD'S FICTION

The Jewish contribution to American fiction is immense. It is also distinguished by the fact that two Jewish writers, Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer received the Nobel Prize. The schlemiel (the inefficient, bungling man) represents the Jew to himself in Jewish fiction. He is found in most Jewish works. His is a story of lost opportunities. Bernard Malamud (1914-1986) uses the schlemiel in his fiction. This type of man is isolated; he is an orphan, he is a writer, he is a drifter. He wants to shake off his past and search for a fresh life. When he finds a new way of life, it is not happy or attractive because of physical restrictions. His dreams about the future turn out to be nightmares of the past. Suffering "makes good people better" is a prevalent belief. Malamud's hero is in a ghetto wherever he may live. Somehow he is unable to break off his past. He learns to be a liberal. Frank Apline (in *The Assistant* 1957), belongs to this category. Malamud's characters are expected to learn cooperation and humility, qualities which are no longer of practical benefit. His novel, *The Assistant*, is described as "a grocery-store idyl" with pain on every side. But it is a very successful novel. One of the reasons for this is that the author could reproduce almost with phonographic accuracy the speech rhythms and nuances of the poor Jews who are the main characters in this novel. The characters, Morris Bober, his wife Ida, and his daughter Helen and his assistant Frank Alpine are all authentic. Morris had the "talent for suffering." Helen does not give up her ideals although she is poor and frustrated. The characters may be poor and suffering, but they are gentle and loving. The characters shape the novel's structure. Every event in it leads to Morris's death and Frank's conversion to Judaism through circumcision. Malamud achieves a dramatic effect through "implication, compression, and suggestion." He narrates the stories of poor and suffering Jews with understanding. Such characters have become representatives of all mankind. There is suffering and loneliness in his fiction but he affirms that the human spirit can overcome all that.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Write a note on Malamud's fiction

19.3 SAUL BELLOW'S FICTION

Saul Bellow (1915 -) is an outstanding novelist in the U.S. In many of his novels the marginal man, an alienated person, appears. He suffers on account of his own inadequacies and also by those imposed by society. His first novel, *The Dangling Man* (1944), contains several of his major themes. The title itself is symbolic of the position of the central character in his fiction. His second novel, *The Victim*, (1947) stresses a frequent theme of Jewish writing. The Jew saw himself as a victim. The third novel, *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), is in the

picaresque mode. Also, like several other American novels, it deals with the "adventures" of his hero. His other important novels are *Seize the Day* (1956), *Henderson the Rain King* (1958), *Herzog* (1964) and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1976). The Nobel citation praised his depiction of the modern anti-hero, the contemporary man "who keeps on trying to find a foothold during his wanderings in our tottering world, one who can never relinquish his faith that the value of life depends on its dignity not its success" in 1976.

The Adventures of Augie March is a picaresque novel written in different parts of Europe and America. It depicts the zest for life which imposes order on the chaos of the modern world. The infinite variety and endless experimentation in the world provide joy. Augie March, the protagonist, wants to be free, but he is not unaware of society's demands on him. He sifts ideas and experiences through his consciousness; he rejects those which are transient, or not relevant. He is attracted by the physical and mental temptations, but resists being a slave of either. He knows the alienation of man, symbolised in the Jew, but refuses the path of escape. The family has lost its role of a binding force in the contemporary world. So man has to look for other means of reconciling himself with the world. The world may be hostile, but man abides. Men like Simon March (Augie's elder brother) whose desire for wealth and power is insatiable face psychic annihilation. Augie March finds comic possibilities in adversity and sees himself as man laughing. Bellow insists that one has to go through experience, suffer it, enjoy it, feel it, to be able to survive. While despair seems to be the general trend in work of other writers, Bellow leads the opposition. He affirms life vigorously. In *Seize the Day* also he emphasises that man must recognise the absurdity of his world and live in it as well as he can. *Henderson the Rain King* also deals with a similar theme, but it has an African setting. *Herzog* is praised as Bellow's finest novel; it describes the spiritual crisis of Moses Herzog, a college professor.

Excepting Henry James, Saul Bellow is unique among American novelists to describe the complexities and mores of city life. Three of Bellow's novels, *Seize the Day*, *Herzog*, and *Humboldt's Gift* may be described as novels of manners. Mark Shechner classifies Bellow's novels into two kinds:

- 1) Depressive novels. (Examples: *Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, *Seize the Day*, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*)
- 2) Expansive novels. (Examples: *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Herzog*, *Humboldt's Gift*).

The gloom of the novels in the first category is somewhat offset by the joy of the novels of the second category. Violence, the holocaust, and the decline of the West are central to the depressive novels. Even the setting in these novels is depressing. For instance, we find in *The Victim*: "Already, at half past seven, the street looked deadened with heat and light." The clouds were heavily suspended and slow. To the south and east, the air was brassy, the factories were beginning to smolder and faced massively, India red, brown, into the sun and across the hot green netting of the bridges."

Bellow lived in Chicago which provides the setting for his novel on Augie March. Bellow's descriptions of Chicago are similar to Dickens's London or Joyce's Dublin. Such cities have an impact on their citizens by shaping their attitudes and conferring on them a collective identity. When Augie announces, "I am an American, Chicago born," he is not merely telling us the place of his birth, but conveying to us the character that he derives from being a Chicagoan who is tough and enjoys the good things of life. Chicago invokes a myriad of impressions in the minds of those familiar with that city.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

What are the principal themes of Saul Bellow?

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19.4 NORMAN MAILER'S FICTION

Norman Mailer (1923 -) is one of the most important writers of the twentieth century. His novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) is his first and most successful novel. He was a rifleman in World War II. This military experience is used in this novel. His second novel, *Barbary Shore* (1951), depicts the constraints of political radicalism. Somewhat like Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*, he questions such abstractions as honour, virtue, and order in the modern world. *The Deer Park* (1955) marks a departure. Here Mailer is concerned with self rather than society, the inner world of dreams and fantasy rather than the outer world of action. In this novel he shows Hollywood as a symbol of American society. He satirises the debauchery and sterility of Hollywood life. His later novels, such as *The Armies of the Night* (1968), portray a world filled with chaos, violence, and irrationality.

The Naked and the Dead is based on an earlier Mailer story "A Calculus at Heaven" in which he writes: "In America, men live, work, and die without the rudest conceptions of dignity." The novel provides further proof for the bitter conclusion of the short story. People usually assume that the lives of soldiers on the war front are in danger. But Mailer shows that the lives of those men were doomed even before the war started. To present the pre-war lives of the soldiers, Mailer uses a technique called the "time-machine" which he borrowed from John Dos Passos. Racial and religious discrimination has influenced the lives of Martinez, Goldstein, and Roth. For the bigot, Callagher, truth is twisted out of shape. Even he is victimised by the system of economy. It is not only the economic and social disabilities that almost all the characters in Mailer's novel suffer, but also the tensions caused by the sexual mores of Americans. Standing far above all these forces is the final struggle between Cummings and Croft (who represent absolute power) on one side and Hearn (who stands for liberalism) or Valsen (who stands for compassionate nihilism) on the other. The resolution of the conflict as depicted by Mailer is no resolution at all. Good and evil cancel each other out. Hearn is killed. Cummings' victory is hollow because it is not the result of his plan, but of an accident. Croft is humiliated. He is stung by hornets, adding a touch of irony. He wants to control the natural forces but he becomes a victim of the same forces. Mount Anaka in the novel is a symbol both of the hopelessness of aspiration as well as the defeat of evil plans. Although many readers consider, that the novel ends in despair, Mailer has a different interpretation. He says that in spite of the corruption and confusion of man "there are limits beyond which [man] cannot be pushed." Despite the corruption, "there are yearnings for a better world."

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is the best war novel based on World War II. The language in it may not sound polite to the prudish, but that only adds a realistic foil to the novel. Men on the battle field use such slang and vulgar expressions.

Another way of looking at this novel is, as Mark Schechner says, to consider it as a study in power at two levels:

- 1) the irrational brutality of organised destruction
- 2) the sexual ferocity of the masculine contest.

In the final analysis, Mailer's novel is a book on destruction slaughter of the enemies. In his later novels also the military is Mailer's favourite metaphor which stands for organised, national violence and collective repression. It is a senseless violence without courage, grace, or independent judgement.

19.5 JEWISH POETRY

Poetry written by American Jews does not appear to be as voluminous or distinguished as fiction written by them, with perhaps a few exceptions. Allen Ginsberg might be one of those exceptions and we have considered his work in Unit 13 (see 13.4). We shall discuss the work of Adrienne Rich so that you will have an idea of the Jewish concerns in the composition of poetry.

19.5.1 Adrienne Rich's Poetry

Adrienne Rich's (1929 -) poetry presents a changing view of man and woman. She says:

What we see, we see
And seeing is changing.

As a feminist, she displays hostility to "patriarchal politics and patriarchal civilisation." She voices a woman's viewpoint about human relationships, and the individual's search for sanctuary and freedom.

She is indebted to Robert Frost and W.B. Yeats as revealed in her first book of poems, *A Change of World*. Her later books, *The Diamond Cutter* (1955) and *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law* (1962) indicate a shift to a looser and more casual verse forms. These later volumes show the influence of William Carlos Williams and Robert Lowell. For her, a poem is not a commentary on life, but life itself, an artifact "created as experience, not as a reaction or defense against experience."

The following poem is reminiscent of William Carlos Williams's poetry:

Breakfast in a Bowling Alley In Utica, New York

Smudged eyeballs,
Mouth stale as air,
I'm newly dead, a corpse.

So fresh the grave unnerves me.
Nobody here but me
And Hermes¹ behind the counter

Defrosting sandwich steaks.
Paeans of *Vox humana*²
Sob from the walls. THIS LAND
IS MY LAND... It stands
mummified. Has no sex,
No liquor license.
I chew meat and bread
thinking of wheat fields—
a gold-beige ceinture³
and cattle like ghosts
of the buffalo, running

-
1. Greek god who conducted the dead to Hades.
 2. the human voice

across plains, nearing
the abattoir,⁴ Houses
dream old-fashionedly
to backwoods townships

while the land glitters
with temporary life
stuck fast by choice:

trailers put out taproots
of sewage pipe, suckers
of TV aerals—

but in one of them,
perhaps, a man
alone with his girl

for the first time.

We have stated earlier that Adrienne Rich feels that a poem is not so much about experience, but experience itself. In her own words, "instead of poems *about* experience I am getting poems that *are* experiences, that contribute to my knowledge and my emotional life even while they reflect and assimilate it."

In 1968, in her poem, "Planetarium" (included in *The Will to Change*, (1971), she says:

"I am an instrument in the shape of woman trying to translate pulsations into images... for the relief of the body and the reconstruction of the mind."

In a poem entitled, "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), Adrienne Rich makes from her own situation a fable of the condition of her time. Here are a few lines from this poem:

I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.
I came to see the damage that was done,
And the treasures that prevail

.....
The wreck and not the story of the wreck
The thing itself and not the myth

Adrienne Rich is essentially exploring herself in her poems. Her work shows development and change. There is an evolution of style and theme towards lucidity. Like William Carlos Williams, she stresses "the thing itself and not the myth."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

What is the theme of Adrienne Rich's poems?

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.....

3. belt or sash

4. slaughter house

19.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the Jewish writing. We considered the fiction of Malamud, Bellow, and Mailer. We also learnt about Adrienne Rich's poetry.

19.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

The main themes of Jewish Writing were related to their traumatic experience of the 1940s. They include alienation, victimisation and marginalisation.

Check Your Progress 2

Malamud's fiction is characterised by the Jewish experience. He uses the "schlemiel" (the insufficient bungling man) in his fiction. This type of man is isolated, an orphan, a writer, and a drifter. He tries to shake off his past and look for a new life but he is in a ghetto wherever he goes. His future is continually a nightmare of the past. But the success of Malamud is his ability to reproduce the speech rhythms and nuances of the poor Jews with phonographic accuracy.

Check Your Progress 3

The major themes of Saul Bellow can be categorised under two heads Depressive novels and Expansive novels. The depressive novels deal with violence and gloom, the predicament of the marginalised man, an alienated person. The expansive novels are novels of affirmation which suggest that man must recognise the absurdity in the world but live in it as well as he can.

Check Your Progress 4

Adrienne Rich's poems present an experience rather than an account about an experience. They are lucid explorations of her self.

19.8 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the main themes of Jewish fiction.
 2. Explain Saul Bellow's view of the human predicament.
 3. Comment on Mailer's use of the military as a metaphor for the modern world.
 4. Write a note on Adrienne Rich's poetry.
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19.9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Chapman, Abraham. (Ed.) Jewish American Literature. New York: New American Library, 1974.

Hoffman, Daniel, (Ed.) Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Kramer, Michael P. et al. (Ed.) Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

UNIT - 20 : AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Harlem Renaissance
- 20.3 Black Fiction : Ralph Ellison
 - 20.3.1 *Invisible Man*: An Analysis
 - 20.3.1.1 Criticism of the Novel
 - 20.3.2 James Baldwin
- 20.4 The Black Arts Movement
- 20.5 Black Poetry
 - 20.5.1 Langston Hughes
 - 20.5.2 Imamu Amiri Baraka
- 20.6 Black Drama
- 20.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 20.9 Sample Examination Questions
- 20.10 Recommended Books

20.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Comment on African American literature
- discuss the work of major black writers (novelists, poets, dramatists, etc)
- evaluate the contribution of the African American literature.

20.1 INTRODUCTION

Multi-racialism and multi-culturalism is a fact of American society. With a sizable black population spread over the entire country, the racial mix and cultural mosaic in the United States are rich and varied. The terms for describing the people of African origin went on changing to suit changing sensitivities of the affected people. Terms like "Nigger" and "Negro" were used by Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* without causing much offence. But as the coloured people became more conscious of their position and their rights in America, the term adopted for them was "black people." But the adjective, "black", has an unpleasant connotation. So, once again the description changed to "Afro-American" which is further refined to "African American." The latest term refers to the African origins and the American domicile of these people. In this unit we will discuss the creative work of the African Americans, their thematic concerns, and innovations in language and techniques. We shall consider the work of a few well-known novelists, dramatists, poets and autobiographers to give you some idea of the contribution of this community to American literature.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Explain the origins of the term "African American."

20.2 HARLEM RENAISSANCE

From the late 1920s to middle of the 1930s a movement of great promise flourished. There was a sudden emergence of a large number of black writers. Many of them belonged to or visited Harlem (Harlem is a locality in New York city), which provided a common meeting ground. Hence the name Harlem Renaissance was given to the significant appearance of black literature. The black writers and readers realised that they are heirs to a rich lyric tradition and that they could be proud of their novelists.

Langston Hughes' contribution to the Harlem Renaissance is quite impressive. He had been active in the field for over forty years. When Richard Wright's *Native Son* appeared in 1940, it was an important literary event. This novel describes the criminality of a Chicago Negro to confront an oppressive social order. Unfortunately, the novel accentuates the black anger to a point where the American Negro assumes the image of a cruel monster. The novel implies that to be black in a white America is to be an outsider. The seething discontent is sought to be hidden behind the controls imposed by civilisation. Richard Wright's two novels, *Native Son* and *The Outsider*, and his autobiography, *Black Boy*, have assured him a place among the black writers because he articulated powerfully the accumulated anger of the black people.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1. What is Harlem Renaissance?
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20.3 BLACK FICTION: RALPH ELLISON AND JAMES BALDWIN

Although Richard Wright's *Native Son* and James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* are adjudged very good novels, by black writers, Ellison's (1914-1983) *Invisible Man* (1952) is considered to be superior in several respects. It is not simply a novel written by a Negro about Negroes. It has a much larger scope; it is deemed to be a novel on mankind and not any particular race. Ellison's creative power and narrative skill are praiseworthy.

20.3.1 *Invisible Man* : An Analysis

Now, let us look at the plot of the novel. The narrator is a black living in the basement of a white man's apartment complex. In a bid to make himself visible (He starts the narrative announcing: I am an invisible man"), he taps the electric wires and provides himself with more than a thousand lights. The intense light is symbolic of his quest for truth about himself, his psychic identity. The novel relates how and why the narrator became "invisible", sought a shelter in the basement, and chose to remain there until he can leave the artificial electric light and come out into natural light.

He remembers how he won a scholarship to attend a Negro College by boxing at a club. At college, he was asked to drive Mr. Norton, a benefactor of the college, in the countryside. During his tour Mr. Norton is horrified to learn from an old black farmer, Jim Trueblood, that he (the Negro) had committed incest with his daughter. Norton is troubled to remember his own incestuous affair with his daughter. The narrator takes him to an inn and brothel, Golden Day, for a drink. The entertainers here are inmates of a mental institution brought there by a man called Supercargo. Norton had a terrifying experience with injuries to his head. The narrator is expelled from college for this incident. Dr. Bledsoe, the head of the college, tells him that black

people have to please white people and accept their own in-significance. Bledsoe admits that he had "to act the nigger" to reach his position. With a sealed letter of reference, the narrator goes North in search of his identity. After wandering for sometime he gets a job with the Liberty Painting Company. He has to add the ingredients to make a special paint called Optic White which is used on national monuments. He is asked to add a specific number of drops of black until it is dissolved and makes the white paint even brighter. Unfortunately, he adds the wrong material which makes the black to show. As a punishment, he is shifted to the boiler room to assist a Negro, Lucius Brock-way who is loyal to his white employers to the point of suspecting other Negroes in the company. Brockway causes an accident in which the narrator is badly injured. He is treated with electric shocks in the company hospital. This treatment deprives him of memory and identity. Then he moves to Harlem where he tries to re-assert his identity as a Negro by eating Negro food (baked yams) by smashing a Negro figurine, and by throwing it away. But it is returned to him by a passerby.

Then the narrator gets involved in a violent incident while pleading the case of an old Negro couple who were evicted by the white marshal. The narrator rouses the mob to action. When the police arrive, some white people help the narrator to escape. One of these, Brother Jack, invites the narrator to be a speaker for the underprivileged in his organisation. He is a hired speaker and should speak on the orders of the Brotherhood. He gives an emotional speech to a group of Negroes on the dispossessed. Although the audience received his speech well, Brother Jack objects to its emotional appeal. For the next four months, he is put through a course on scientific materialism. The lessons are intended to make him submerge his own deeply-felt passion. He is put under strict discipline. Once again the narrator has to grope for his identity. Sex-starved white women entice him. One of them seduces him. Later, he suspects that she is a bait to discredit him.

The Brotherhood is fighting a rival organisation which is led by Ras, the Exhorter. Ras uses aggressive, terroristic methods. Tod Clifton, a youth leader of the Brotherhood, takes the narrator to disrupt a meeting of Ras's party. They subdue Ras who impresses on them that they are agreed on Negro unity. In his view, cooperation with white men is both futile and treasonous. Tod does not agree because he thinks Ras wants the Negro to plunge outside the current of history. A few weeks later, Tod is shot dead by a policeman for punching him. The narrator delivers a funeral oration eulogising Tod. Ras incites the mob to avenge Tod's murder through violent acts.

During the course of a riot, a girl approaches the narrator and addresses him as Rinehart, mistaking him for her lover. A policeman also calls him by the same name assuming him to be a local pay off runner. Others mistake him for a gambler, a minister, etc. (The narrator is actually in disguise to avoid trouble from Ras). The narrator realises that he has totally lost his identity. He is at once all men and no man. He has no racial, regional or party identity. He is denied identity by the external world. So he turns his gaze inward to find out for himself who he believes himself to be.

Ras is hunting for the narrator to hang him. The narrator wants desperately to live. The choices open to him, hanging at Ras's hands, loyalty to the white man, rebellion against the white man, will not make him visible at all. So he escapes and falls into an open manhole. In the underground world he continues to think of his place in the universe. He is now disillusioned, but he is not without hope nor empty of love. As the novel closes, he says: "There is a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Why does the narrator feel that he has no identity?

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20.3.1.1 Criticism of the Novel

Ellison's *Invisible Man* is an established classic of modern American literature without any racial or regional labels. Like the Southern white novelists, Faulkner and R.P. Warren, he howls and rages with laughter. He presents through fiction "the direct impression" of the world of man. He gives an absorbing account of Black experience in a white society. Harlem comes alive in the novel with its racy speech, street riots, etc. The pent-up anger of the Black nationalist and the ride of Mr. Norton to the country side with the horrifying tale of Jim Trueblood and the riot in the Negro bar add realistic touches to the narrative. The novel records accurately the manners, idioms and styles of Black life in the South as well as in the North.

The hero of the novel is appropriately nameless; he is black; he is invisible; he is invisible in a society where visibility is essential. As a young man, he is full of hope regarding his future. He impresses his white masters in the South as a "good Negro." After his expulsion from the Negro College, he moves North hoping to achieve visibility or identity. When he plunges into the manhole, he goes through a period of "hibernation." As a good Negro, he has tried the path of "humility;" he has attempted to fit into American industry (the paint factory), he has joined leftist politics (the Brotherhood). He has tried all the possibilities open to him to achieve visibility. None of these has helped him. So he has chosen to be an underground man. His failures and frustrations are due to his blackness. He decides to stay in his cellar where he can steal electric power and light up 1369 bulbs.

It is true that Ellison's hero lives in the basement, but it is a basement which is flood-lit. He says, "step outside the narrow borders of what men call reality and you step into chaos... or imagination." He may be invisible; he may be confined to a basement; but he has vision. It is this which enables him to create poetry out of his pain. This poetry may yet redeem all those of different races who refuse to recognise their neighbors. The narrator, in spite of his violent encounters with the outside world, is a winner.

Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* influenced Ellison in writing his novel. The "underground man" is the alienated, isolated, neurotic, product of disorder. These are American themes as we have seen in the previous units. Another important theme is that of initiation. The narrator is initiated through a series of traumatic experiences into the world of reality—black, white, South, North, militant, political. Ellison rendered them in an American way. Folk materials, evangelical fervour, and the language of jazz (at which Ellison was good) especially the blues, provide a rhythmic energy. The blues, for example, come in handy. The author says: "it (the blues) is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's consciousness... and to transcend it, not by consolation of philosophy, but by squeezing, from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism." These techniques are blended in *Invisible Man* to produce what Ellison himself described as "the bright magic of the fairy tale."

But it is a fairy tale with a difference. It is grim and gothic; it is a nightmarish story of violence and guilt told by a haunted hero. The very irrationality of the narrator's situation—whether in the lighted cellar or in the chaotic world outside—produces a sense of the comic and of the tragic. In his quest for identity, the narrator maintains ironic detachment. Both the white and black races have refused to recognise him as a man. Thereby they made him invisible. In this "invisible" status, he is very much alone (isolated), but he now has the capacity to observe

people around him and judge them and their failures. In this exercise, he can perhaps begin to recognise himself and even discover the selfhood he has never known.

Ellison's novel achieves a universal appeal because it deals with the basic human predicament. It is an existential novel because the narrator-hero sheds all abstract notions about reality. He has total freedom that demands choice and a course of action. In this basement, he has to re-evaluate everything anew. Received opinions are no longer valid for him. With his own insights he can proceed with confidence in his own existence. The narrator is a Negro experiencing the agony of being black in a white society. But in Ellison's novel the suffering Negro emerges as everyman. His quest for identity is a universal quest affecting people of all races, cultures, and climes.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

In what sense is Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*, universal in its appeal?

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20.3.2 James Baldwin

James Baldwin (1924–87) is another important black novelist. He is Wright's successor; he is the "native son" who is the heir to black American fiction. Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), an autobiographical novel on his youth, was published a year after *Invisible Man*. Baldwin's themes in his novels are homosexuality, inter-racial love, and racial conflict. Baldwin became increasingly disillusioned with the United States and wrote several protest and angry novels. In his writings, both fiction and essays, he warned white America of the explosions to come. Similarly he told black America that excessive racial hatred would be self-destructive. He sought to give a wider meaning to Henry James's famous phrase, "complex fate," by saying that the lives of the whites and the blacks in America are closely tied up in the twentieth century.

Go Tell It on the Mountain deals with the formation of a boy's character. John Grimes, the hero of this novel, decides to revolt against the repressive atmosphere of a primitive religion in Harlem, against his own family, and against Harlem's backwardness. He dreams in Central Park that the residents of New York city are ready to take him and show him the wonders he had not seen. But this dream is not realised. On the other hand, he had to reconcile himself with the institutions which he had opposed. At the end of the novel he walks through the streets of Harlem with his parents and others. His soul is happy and he has vowed to fight the good fight. What this climactic incident means is that his dream in Central Park will be fulfilled only through a pilgrimage which requires climbing the Mount of Primal Pain that has been trodden by Hager's children.

Through his numerous essays and reviews, Baldwin has become a spokesman of the Negroes. He tried to rouse the American conscience over the injustices heaped on the blacks. In 1962, he published "Letter from a Region of My Mind" which is an eloquent "moral manifesto." This is the most severe indictment of the United States. White Americans believe that their ancestors were freedom-loving and that America is the greatest country. The blacks in America do not share these myths or "superstitions." Baldwin has not forgotten or forgiven the cruelties and humiliations – "rope, fire, torture, castration, infanticide, rape, death and humiliation; fear by day and night, fear as deep as the marrow of the bone." He wants the nation to recognise reality. He warns that if appropriate lessons are not learnt from the experience of Harlem and other similar places, and suitable measures taken to set right matters, America may 'get the fire' next time (which is the title of one of his novels).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What is Baldwin's contribution to Black literature?

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20.4 THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

In the 1960s, there were several rallies and movements to assert the rights of the blacks. Slogans like "Black Power," Black Nationalism," and "Black is Beautiful" caught the imagination of the Negroes. Ironically, the Negroes in African countries achieved independence from the colonial powers, but the Negroes in the U.S.A. had a different experience. There was a strong attempt to promote a separate ethnicism, a separate literature, and separate arts. The idea was to consolidate what was distinctively black in literature and arts. So began the Black Arts Movement. Le Roi Jones (alias Imamu Amiri Baraka) and others spearheaded this movement. The basic aims of this were explained by Larry Neal: "The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology." "Black Aesthetic" became the watchword. Of course, this phrase has many definitions. For instance, Ron Karenga, a Black nationalist says: "Black art must expose the enemy, praise the people and support the revolution. It must be like LeRoi Jones' poems that the assassins' poems, poems that kill and shoot guns." Le Roi Jones himself says: "The Black Artist's role in America is to aid in the destruction of America as he knows it." Adam David Miller asserts that a literature professing the Black Aesthetic should tell "like it needs to be" told and not simply "telling it like it is." John O'Neal defines Black art as an "affirmation of Black reality... Affirmation of Black potential." The Black Arts Movement of different persuasions is part of the larger aggressive assertion of Black identity or separatism.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What are the objectives of the Black Arts Movement?

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20.5 BLACK POETRY

The ethnic emotions roused by the Black Power movement and the goals set by the Black Arts Movement have found an intense expression in the poetry composed by the black writers. Le Roi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) and many others wrote poetry which asserts their pride in racial heritage. They are not prepared to make any allowances for their white counterparts. Thus they defined the new Black radicalism. It is a poetry that is "loud, gaudy and racy." And focuses on Negro life in Harlem, Watts and other riot-hit cities. So it is a poetry of urban life giving a feel of Black experience in huge cities like Chicago or Los Angeles. The rhythms of this poetry are similar to Jazz rhythms. Although Black poetry deals with the hard life in the Negro ghettos, its traditions go further back. The legacy of Richard Wright (of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*) in his strident advocacy of the cause of the blacks influenced the urban poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

What are the striking features of Black poetry?

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20.5.1 Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1902-1967), the leader of the Harlem Literary Renaissance of 1920, published about sixty books. He wrote poetry, fiction, and essays, and became a significant voice of the African American culture in a predominantly white America. His writings record the Black achievements, frustrations, and values in the middle of the twentieth century. His poems suggest the richness of the Black American culture, although his literary models were white American poets such as Walt Whitman, Rachel Lindsay, and Carl Sandburg. His poems present a new register of literary language. The elemental identity of Black culture is suggested in his poems. *The Weary Blues* (1926) is his first book of poems. Here he celebrates Harlem during the Renaissance. He liked the Harlem dialect because it has a colour of its own. The poems use jazz rhythms. But the 'Blues' tradition is underlying the strong rhythms. There is also an undercurrent of resigned weariness. Hence the title of this volume.

The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.

He has published several volumes of poetry, but *Montage of a Dream Deferred* seems to be his best. It has more than ninety poems. They are variations on Harlem themes and rhythms. Hughes explains his techniques in a preface: "In terms of current Afro-American popular music... this poem on contemporary Harlem, like be-bop, is marked by conflicting changes, sudden nuances, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, and passages sometimes in the manner of the jam session, sometimes the popular song, punctuated by the rifts, runs, breaks and distortions of the music of a community in transition." The title suggests an analogy with painting and he explains the structure in musical terms. The poems bring together different voices, ideas and rhythms. The variations in rhythm indicate the deep sense of unrest and frustration. The recurring themes underscore the Harlem tragedy. The poems are written for the people of Harlem which is both a setting and an important symbol for Hughes. He evokes the spiritual nature of his black culture in an early poem, "Fire":

Fire,
Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna to burn my soul!

I ain't been good,
I ain't been clean -
I been stinkin, low-down, mean.

The following lines are reminiscent of Walt Whitman:

I, too, sing America,
I am the darker brother.

He aims at anti-climax:
I could just as well've
Stayed home inside:
My bread wasn't buttered
On neither side.

Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening....
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

Write a brief note on Langston Hughes' poetry.

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20.5.2 Imamu Amiri Baraka

We shall discuss another prominent Black poet, Le Roi Jones, who changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka (1934 -). He has published a few collections of poems, plays, fiction, and essays. As a poet he was influenced by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. He has attempted to write "quantitative verse" like Williams. He has sought to use spoken rhythms in his poems by relating his line lengths, pauses, phrasings and the arrangements of stanzas to the rhythms of breathing. As he got involved in the black revolution, his poetry has become more and more nonformal. He has tried to write about his experiences free of traditional diction, images and received ideas. He considers these parts of the "white" public tradition. The following poem may be taken as typical of Baraka's poetry:

Poem for Half-White College Students

Who are you, listening to me, who are you
Listening to yourself? Are you white or
Black, or does that have anything to do
With it? Can you pop your fingers to no
Music, except those wild monkeys go on
In your head, can you jerk, to no melody,
Except finger poppers get it together
When you turn from star checking to checking
Yourself? How do you sound, your words, are they
Yours? The ghost you see in the mirror, is it really
You, can you swear you are not an imitation greyboy,
Can you look right next to you in that chair, and swear,
That the sister you have your hand on is not really
So full of Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton is
Coming out of her ears. You may even have to be Richard
With a white shirt and face, and four million negroes
Think you cute, you may have to be Elizabeth Taylor, old lady,
If you want to sit up in your crazy spot dreaming about dresses,
And the sway of certain porters' hips. Check yourself, learn who it is
Speaking when you make some ultra-shoptisticated point, check yourself
When you find yourself gesturing like Steve McQueen, check it out, ask
In your black heart who it is you are, and is that image black or white,
You may be surprised right out the window, whistling dixie on the way.

The speech rhythms, variable line lengths, pauses, etc, which we mentioned earlier may be observed in this poem. One final point on Black poetry: "whenever Black poetry is most distinctly and effectively *Black*, it derives its form from two basic sources, Black speech and Black music."

Discuss Imamu Amiri Baraka's views on writing poetry.

20.6 BLACK DRAMA

The Black contribution to fiction and poetry, as we have seen in the preceding sections of this unit, is substantial. In the field of drama, it is not so large or significant. But there have been plays by Negroes and they have been staged in Harlem or off-Broadway. Between 1945 and 1955 quite a few plays by Black dramatists have appeared.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* was a success in several cities before it was staged in New York in 1959. The author is a young Black woman from Chicago; the play is about a black family. The play questions the American myth that success is not only possible but inevitable. The plot of *A Raisin in the Sun* revolves round the theft of the insurance money. This is a typical device for testing the protagonist. The setting is a Chicago flat. The realistic touches in the play make it rather universal in its appeal. Competing with the plays of well-known dramatists like Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, Hansberry's play won the Critics Circle Award for 1958-59. Her play is compared to Anton Checkov's *The Cherry Orchard* and Sean O'casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. Thus, Lorraine Hansberry's play made theatre history which is a creditable entry for a black playwright into a well-reserved white establishment.

It is a play about a black family in a Chicago ghetto. The protagonist learns the hard way that being a man and being successful are different. The author is deeply concerned in this play in exploring what it means to be black. She is equally worried about the place of a black writer. Her second play *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964) is set in Greenwich Village. It shows a group of villagers, but only one of them is a Negro. The protagonist of this play is a middle-class Jew. Thus, Hansberry has not restricted her choice of themes, settings, or characters to blacks only. The second play indicates her interest in non-realistic dramatic techniques. Her heroes are made to seek a sense of self in the midst of disorder.

James Baldwin and Le Roi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) wrote plays which stressed black militancy. Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Baraka's *Dutchman* seem to emphasise black rather than drama unlike Hansberry. Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* has a trial scene in the middle of the play. It is a comment on both the white and black communities. The liberal attitudes of the whites and the moderate attitudes of the blacks are depicted here. The principal figures are the angry young black and the poor white. The latter kills the black. Baldwin is dramatising the difficult racial relations in the U.S.. *Blues* is not much of a success on the stage. We cannot escape a feeling that the play is not the thing for Baldwin wherein he can successfully convey his message.

Baraka's *Dutchman* is a better play. Lula and Clay confront one another in a subway. The setting of the play shows figuratively that the society acquiesces in the inter-racial tensions. The society is willing to accept the situation which prods the black to murder; it provides masks to stifle the desire to kill; it permits a violent white backlash. Baraka wrote two more plays, *The Slave* and *The Toilet* in 1964, which are not as successful as *Dutchman*. Soon after these plays, Baraka turned away from the white people and the theatre. He became an aggressive champion of the blacks. His attitudes changed. He wanted to use the theatre as a weapon to fight the whites or a tool to teach his people. Only one of his plays, *Slave Ship* (1969), attracted a mixed (black and white) audience.

In the mid-1960s, the black theatre split into two groups: one of them wanted a large mixed audience; the second wanted to voice the concerns of only the blacks. Edwin Bullins won recognition through his play, *The Electronic Nigger and Others* (1968), which is a collection of three playlets. Some of his plays (as part of a cycle of twenty), through the device of recurring characters, explore the black society and show its strengths and weaknesses. By the 1970s, the tastes of the black audiences shifted to the musical plays. So the black playwrights and the black theatre are not as vibrant as they were in Hansberry's or Baraka's time.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 10

How are the plays of Baldwin and Baraka different from Hansberry's plays?

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20.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learnt about the contribution of African American novelists, poets and playwrights to American literature. We discussed the work of the more prominent writers from the black community. We examined their themes, their innovations and their reception. Black literature is a rich tributary of American literature.

20.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

Originally the term used for black natives of America was 'Negro'. Mark Twain uses the term 'nigger' in his novels. But as the coloured people in America became more conscious of their rights, there was a move towards the use of the term 'black people'. Since the adjective had negative connotations it was changed to Afro-American and later further refined to African, American.

Check Your Progress 2

The Harlem Renaissance is the term used to describe the upsurge of literature from the black writers who belonged to or visited Harlem (a locality in New York). Their work is characterised by the anger of the black hero who revolts against the white American society. He assumes the image of a cruel monster.

Check Your Progress 3

The Narrator is constantly forced to hide his individuality and his deeply-felt emotions. Finally he is mistaken for a gambler, a minister etc. and he realises that he has lost his identity. He is at once all men and no man. He is devoid of racial, regional or party identity. He is denied identity by the external world and has to search for an inward reality about himself.

Check Your Progress 4

Invisible Man is universal in its appeal because it deals with a common human predicament of a quest for identity.

Check Your Progress 5

Baldwin is an important black novelist. His themes are homo-sexuality, inter-racial love and racial conflict. In his works he warned white America of the explosions to come on account of racial conflict. Similarly he told black America that excessive hatred would be self-destructive. His famous book *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), is an autobiographical novel on his youth. Through his numerous essays and reviews Baldwin became a spokesman of the Negroes.

Check Your Progress 6

The objectives of the Black Arts Movement are to aid in the destruction of the America as he knows it. It should not "tell it like it is" but tell it like "it needs to be" told. The idea was to consolidate what was distinctively black in literature and arts. It proposed a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology, radically reordering the western cultural aesthetic.

Check Your Progress 7

The striking features of Black poetry are its attempt to give a feel of Black experience in huge American cities like Chicago or Los Angeles. Its rhythms are like the Jazz rhythms and it is loud, gaudy and racy. The Poetry asserts its pride in racial heritage.

Check Your Progress 8

Langston Hughes' poetry suggests the richness of the Black American Culture. His poems present a new register of literary language. They use jazz rhythms but the "Blues" tradition is a strong underlying current of the several volumes of poems he has published, *Montage of a Dream Deferred* is the best. It has ninety poems on various aspects of Harlem and its impact on the people living here. The title suggests an analogy with painting and he explains the structure in musical terms. The poems bring different voices, ideas and rhythms to convey a deep sense of unrest and frustration.

Check Your Progress 9

Imamu Amiri Baraka believed that Poetry should use spoken rhythms relating line lengths, pauses, phrasings and the arrangements of stanzas to the rhythms of breathing. He breaks away from traditional diction, images and received ideas to write more non-formally in Black speech and rhythm about the Black experience.

Check Your Progress 10

The plays of Baldwin and Baraka are different from Hansberry's plays because they stress black militancy, whereas she does not restrict her choice of themes, settings and characters to blacks only. Her heroes are made to seek a sense of self in the midst of disorder. Baldwin and Baraka emphasize black rather than drama.

20.9 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss *Invisible Man* as an initiation novel.
2. How do you account for the universality of appeal of *Invisible Man*?
3. Write a note on the Black Arts Movement and its impact.
4. What are the typical features of black poetry? Illustrate your answer.
5. Write a note on the African American drama.

20.10 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Bigsby, C.W.E. Ed. *The Black American Writer*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971.

Gayle, Addison, Jr. *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975.

_____. Ed. *The Black Aesthetic*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972.

Scott, Nathan A. Jr. "Black literature." In *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*. Ed. Daniel Hoffman. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Course II AMERICAN LITERATURE

SYLLABUS

BLOCK I INTRODUCTION

- Unit 1 Introduction Major Themes
- Unit 2 The Beginnings
- Unit 3 The Age of Reason and Revolution and the Romantic Age

BLOCK - II FICTION

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Hemingway and Faulkner
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- Unit 18 Women's Voices
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M.A. in ENGLISH

COURSE II—AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks 70

Section A

Answer any **four** of the following questions. Each answer should be in about 250 words. Each question carries 10 marks.

1. Explain how American literature is different from other literatures
2. Analyze any well-known story of Poe to support his view that a story must have unity of effect.
3. Discuss Huckleberry Finn as a critique of American society.
4. How does Kurt Vonnegut use passivity as a fictional theme?
5. Discuss Emerson's philosophy and show its relevance to his poetry.
6. What is Whitman's contribution to poetry?
7. Discuss with suitable illustrations the new trends in American poetry since World War II.
8. Can we call Death of a Salesman a tragedy? Support your answer with examples.

Section B

Answer any **five** of the following questions. Each answer should be in about 250 words. Each question carries 6 marks.

9. Explain the term, 'American Dream'.
10. Why is a wandering hero a recurring figure in American literature?
11. Give an example each for an alienated author and an alienated character in American literature.
12. What is the importance of songs in Native American culture?
13. Name two important works of Benjamin Franklin and give their themes.
14. What sub-genres of fiction did James Fenimore Cooper attempt?
15. What sort of structure does "Song of Myself" have?
16. Discuss the thematic concerns of Hawthorne.
17. Write a note on Malamud's fiction.
18. What is Harlem Renaissance?

BRAOU

ASSIGNMENT – 1

Answer any two questions selecting one from each section

Section - A

1. Write an essay on the major recurring themes in American literature.
2. Discuss alienation as a theme of *The Sun Also Rises*.

Section - B

1. Explain the nature of Puritan influence on American literature.
2. What is the contribution of James Fenimore Cooper to fiction?

ASSIGNMENT – 2

Answer any two questions selecting one from each section

Section - A

1. Comment on Mark Twain's criticism of American society in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
2. Discuss the innovations in Whitman's Poetry.

Section – B

1. What are Edgar Allan Poe's Views on the short story?
2. Explain the theme of *Moby Dick*.

ASSIGNMENT – 3

Answer any two questions selecting from each section

Section - A

1. Write a note on Emily Dickinson's themes in her poetry.
2. Comment on Eugene O'Neill's use of Greek myths in *Desire Under the Elms*.

Section – B

1. How does modern technology influence contemporary American fiction?
2. Comment on Robert Frost's achievement as a poet

ASSIGNMENT - 4

Answer any two questions selecting from each section

Section - A

1. Consider *Death of a Salesman* as a critique of contemporary American Society.
2. What are the common themes of Women's literature?

Section - B

1. What is Absurd Drama?
2. Explain the aims of the Black Arts Movement.

Washington, D.C. to California, and back again to New York's Times square. The trial and conviction of the Rosenbergs for passing U.S. atomic secrets to the Russians was the hot topic then. Real-life politicians like Richard Nixon who was then Vice-President are portrayed in the novel. It depicts American vindictiveness at its worst.

A variation on the theme of politics may be found in E.L. Doctrow's *The Book of Daniel* (1971). It also touches on the theme of spying for Russia. Daniel Lewin's parents, Jewish Communists, were executed for passing on atomic secrets to the enemy. The son attempts to find out the facts and his own relation to the U.S. The novelist re-creates the national mood of anger against the U.S. government in the 1960s with consummate skill.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Name two novels where contemporary politics figure prominently.

8.2.8 Impact of Technology

Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963) is a record of the impact of technology in moulding the lives of Americans. Benny Profane is the messiah "machine" in this novel. In the strange fictional world, beer is supplied through taps which are shaped like large breasts made of foam rubber. Profane is interested in a woman who will be a self-contained machine. As a person living in a technology-conditioned world, Profane says: "Any problems with her you could look up in a maintenance manual. Remove and replace was all." *V* is that kind of an autoerotic machine. She cannot feel anything so she conquers her vulnerability. Men like Profane control their destructiveness through their passivity. In another novel, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Pynchon presents a war-torn world where the lid on violence is taken off. There is a free-for-all and no control is effective. The questions which crave for answers are: "Why does destructive ambition control the world? Why does insane anger propel life?" The novel is also a satire on the expertise of scientists and psychologists. The suggestion is the inadequacy of science or reason to explain fully the truths of life. Aggression cannot be explained by psychologists. We are not conditioned by Pavlovian stimuli, but by our own parents and our social and economic environment. Pynchon's ire is directed against the symbols of centralised wealth and power such as the multinational corporations. *Gravity's Rainbow* is described as "a novel of sexual and political aggression." In the technology conditioned world of this novel a character named Myrtle the Miraculous adores robots and machines and hates men. Pynchon seems to feel that the U.S. is producing plastic people without emotional feelings. He rejects contemporary values; he exposes the realities of life. He goes further and challenges the traditional faith in effort and thought. Ideas would produce ideologies which in their turn lead to destruction. He devalues emotion which changes the very concept of a hero and of a heroine in contemporary fiction. The focus shifts from love to strategies for managing people.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

What are the targets of Pynchon's criticism in his novels?

8.3. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed some major trends and themes in American fiction after World War II. The fiction naturally reflects the life and concerns of people in America. Drug addiction, passivity, change in sexual mores, politics, and technology's impact are some of the themes which figure in the contemporary American novel.

Contemporary fiction in America, the postwar American novel, deals with the fears and anxieties of living in a world dominated by machines in every sphere of human activity.

8.4 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

Some of the major themes of the Post-War novel are drug addition, old myths' passivity and art.

Check Your Progress - 2

Nabokov satirizes the element of singlemindedness of American life and the ability of an individual to be obsessed with one thought. He revolts against history and the past only alluding to it to replace it.

Check Your Progress - 3

Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* (1977) and *The Book of Daniel* (1971) by EL Doctrow are two novels that portray contemporary politics and real-life politicians.

Check Your Progress - 4

Pynchon criticises the war-torn world in which violence is given a free hand. His novels also satirize science and scientists and their inability to explain the truths of life. His anger is directed against the symbols of wealth and power.

8.5 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss drug addiction as an important theme in postwar American fiction.
2. How does Kurt Vonnegut use passivity as a fictional theme?
3. Comment on the themes of John Barth in his novels.
4. How does Nabokov satirize American values?
5. What is the importance of sex and politics to the recent American novel?
6. How does American postwar novel illustrate the impact of technology on life.

8.6 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Baumbach, Jonathan. *The Landscape of Nightmare: Studies in Contemporary American Novel*. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965.

Hoffman, Daniel. *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Olderman, Raymond. *Beyond Wasteland: The American Novel in the 1960s*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972.

Unwin, G.G. (Compiler) *The American Novel Today*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.

BLOCK III

POETRY

- Unit 9 Introduction to Poetry
- Unit 10 Walt Whitman
- Unit 11 Emily Dickinson
- Unit 12 Early Twentieth Century Poetry:
Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost
- Unit 13 Contemporary Poetry

BRAOU

UNIT - 9 : INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POETRY

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
 - 9.1.1 The Poet in New England
- 9.2 Poets of the Establishment
 - 9.2.1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 - 9.2.1.1 Longfellow's Achievement
- 9.3 Edgar Allan Poe
 - 9.3.1 Poe's Achievement
- 9.4 Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - 9.4.1 Emerson's Poetry
 - 9.4.2 Emerson's Achievement
- 9.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.6 Answer to Check Your Progress
- 9.7 Sample Examination Questions
- 9.8 Recommended Books

9.1 INTRODUCTION

We saw in Unit 2 that American poetry originated in the songs of the Native Americans. After the European colonization in the seventeenth century the Puritans influenced American writing to a large extent. The age of Enlightenment, shaped the course of American literature in the eighteenth century. Romanticism brought about another major change in the direction of American literature. In Block I we discussed the development of poetry on the American soil in the early period. In Unit 9, which is an introduction to American poetry we shall discuss the contribution of Transcendentalists and some other poets such as Edgar Allan Poe and Longfellow. We have devoted separate units to Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. We have set apart one unit for Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost who dominated American poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. The last unit in this block deals with three important poets of the second half of the twentieth century, Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell, and Allen Ginsberg.

9.1.1 The Poet in New England

The writer played an important role in New England in the nineteenth century. He was expected to uphold traditional morality and accepted values. This is in sharp contrast to the current attitudes to creative writers. You will see in the last unit of this block that Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and others of the "Beat Generation" feel alienated from society and they protest vigorously against the prevailing culture and values. In the mid-nineteenth century, the writer in New England is an interpreter of the official values. During this period, religion had got the new connotation of moralism. As a sequel, the writers have replaced the ministers (of the church) as spokesmen of society. Thus they acquire a new dignity which belonged to the clergy earlier. Writers who assumed the mantle of clergymen felt it their duty to prepare sermons. They felt the need to preach. The Calvinist beliefs were replaced by a rigid theology which in turn was replaced by emotionalism which is another name for sentimentalism. In traditional literature, the focus of religion was on "original sin" (Adam's disobedience). But the literature of mid-nineteenth century stressed "Man's natural goodness", which is otherwise called sentiment. By this time, a total change of values had occurred in the U.S. An example of the change in values may be found in the family itself. The head of the family was a devout Christian, the mother was dedicated to the family. The genteel woman was the real center of the family. Hence there is a strong 'feminine' quality in the literature of this period. Whereas the earlier Puritan writers

were masculine, the writers of this period showed a tendency to present woman as a genteel and dedicated woman.

9.2 POETS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell are known as the poets of the establishment because they considered it their duty to affirm the traditional values of society. They are also known as Fireside poets or Household poets. They commanded a large number of appreciative readers. The huge output of these poets conveys the attitudes of nineteenth-century America better than the works of writers such as Emerson and Whitman.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, New England became the center of American culture and literature. The New England culture dominated the rest of the country. At this time the privileged people of Boston came to be known as "Brahmins". The term meant a class of people with a strong tradition of learning and culture.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. Who are the poets of the establishment?

9.2.1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882) was way ahead of the other poets in New England. He won fame second only to Tennyson's as a popular poet. His "A Psalm of Life" is known for the clarity and directness of statement. In spite of personal tragedies and several physical ailments, he maintained a cheerful attitude which he expressed in his poetry. Longfellow could keep poetry and life separate. One of his recurring themes is the missed opportunities, the knowledge that time is moving ahead. The image, "footprints on the sands of time, occurs in several of his poems such as "A Psalm of Life" (1938) and "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" (1879). Longfellow was a popular poet who wrote "The Village Blacksmith" and "Excelsior". He also wrote emotional verses such as "The Building of the Ship" and "The Arsenal at Springfield". In the later poems the design is simple and the statement is clear.

The long poems like *The Song of Hiawatha* and *Tales of a Wayside Inn* show Longfellow's skill at narration, description, and characterisation. *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) is based on American Indian folklore and history. The hero is not the usual noble savage, nor is he like the larger-than-life figure like Cooper's Chingachgook. Hiawatha is different; he is the 'Gentle Savage'. He is a mild person who does not resort to violence and cruelty. He teaches his fellowmen to raise corn, cure diseases, promote brotherhood, and to hunt animals. He passes through a series of adventures much like Beowulf in the old English epic of that name. Starting as a primitive hero, he develops into a great culture hero. In this process he is helped by friendly animals. Longfellow uses an unrhymed trochaic tetrameter with frequent parallelism and repetition to create the effect of primitive poetry. He was actually trying to adapt the metre of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. His best poems are his sonnets which were composed late in his life. Some of these are tributes to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats whom the poet admired much. The sonnets he wrote as epigraphs to his translation of *Divina Commedia* (1865 – 1867) are even better. There is a skillful blending of cathedral imagery and references to the poem itself. Let us read the first of the six sonnets.

Oft have I, at some cathedral door,
A labourer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor

Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.

So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minister gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

In the first eight lines (octave) he describes the general situation of a labourer, after a day's hard work, visiting a cathedral and kneeling and saying the Lord's Prayer. In such devotion, the din and bustle of the world outside don't make any impact. In the sestet (last six lines) the speaker (or poet) says that he visits the cathedral daily and kneels in prayers very much like the labourer. The violence of the Civil War (time disconsolate) dies away in the eternal ages. He has drawn a parallel between the prayers offered by a labourer and his own daily prayers. The second parallel is between the "loud vociferations of the street" and the "tumult of the time disconsolate." Both recede and are forgotten in the eternal ages. The loud shouts and the bloody wars become "inarticulate murmurs" in due course. The rhyme scheme used is *abba, abba, cdcdcd*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Write a note on Longfellow's poetry

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9.2.1.1 Longfellow's Achievement

Longfellow was popular in his own lifetime. He was the only American poet to have a European reputation until then. However, he had many detractors. Poe accused him of plagiarism from European sources. More recently Amy Lowell wanted to rid the world of Longfellow. His influence on serious poets is not significant.

There is a positive side to his achievement. He introduced European culture to Americans. He wrote on Native American themes and made them popular. He also attempted to develop a national literature. It is true that his poems were musical and were filled with sentimental preaching. He was accused of not showing social awareness. He symbolized the ideals of an emerging nation and a genteel tradition. His work holds a mirror to nineteenth-century culture which still survives. He has largely been confined now to the schoolroom where students enjoy his versified introductions to the legends of American history.

9.3 EDGAR ALLAN POE

We have seen in Unit 5 Edgar Allan Poe's (1809 – 1849) contribution to the short story, and to literary criticism. As a poet also his contribution is immense although his own compatriots

including R.W. Emerson, Henry James, and Mark Twain made derogatory comments on him, his great achievement was recognized by French symbolists like Baudelaire.

Poe opposed didacticism in poetry such as that of Longfellow. Poetry should not be a means for preaching morals or for long narratives. He could not share the transcendentalist view that there is a unity of forms at the heart of Nature. The central and recurring concern of his poetry is the search for the ideal which is personified in the beautiful woman. In his view the death of a beautiful woman is the "most poetical topic in the world". In 1831, he wrote an introduction to a collection of his poems. In this introduction he stated his aesthetic theory. Poetry, in his view, must have three important qualities: the indefinite, music, and symbolism. He says: "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure... Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without music is prose from its very definitiveness". Poe defined poetry as "The rhythmical creation of beauty."

Poe contrives his poems in their music. Assonance, alliteration rhymes, refrains and repetitions (as in "The Raven") are frequently used in his poems. "The Bells" depends largely on its sounds to produce the desired effect. "Ulalume" (1848) is probably Poe's masterpiece. A poem's subject matter, in Poe's view, is poetry (or art). Here he anticipated Wallace Stevens (see Unit 12) It cannot be summarized or analysed. The matter and manner of a poem are inseparable. It is a self-contained unity. It does not rely on external facts for its existence or understanding. In arguing for the autonomy of a work of poetry, Poe anticipated the New Critics. Poe used symbols and thus was a pioneer of symbolist poetry in France and later in England. Symbolism is a technique in which emotions and ideas are presented by suggestion, not by description. The arrangement of images and even sounds of words could be symbolic. Poe's view is that a careful combination of sounds and images produces a poem. His theories and practices have a wide-ranging influence. They are the pre-cursors of the pre-Raphaelite movement.

Let us now read Poe's poem, "To Helen" (1845) so we can have a first-hand experience of his practices in the art of poetry.

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore.
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The Agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy-Land!

This is a famous lyric inspired by Mrs. Jane Stith Standard, the mother of Poe's school-mate. He described the poem as the "first, purely ideal love of my soul." As you know, the Helen of Greek myth was the beautiful daughter of Zeus. Her abduction by Paris led to the Trojan War. This incident was the source of Homer's epic, *Iliad*.

You may notice assonance (repetition of the same vowel sound) in the first line: *beauty, is, me*. The fourth line has strong alliteration (repetition of the same consonant sound): *weary, way-worn wanderer*.

Poe is admiring the incomparable beauty of Helen. She is a symbol of the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome. In the concluding lines, Poe compares Helen (the lady he had seen in real life) to Psyche who was Cupid's lover in Greek mythology. Psyche was so beautiful that Venus, the goddess, was jealous of her. The lady looked like Psyche from Jerusalem. Rhymes like 'face' and 'Greece' also stress the Grecian beauty of the lady.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Discuss Poe's views on poetry

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9.3.1 Poe's Achievement

Although Poe was derided by his own countrymen during his lifetime, the originality of his poetic theory and his accomplishment as a poet are recognized now. He pleaded for the autonomy of a poem; he was against any didactic function for poetry. The only function of poetry is the creation of beauty and of intense emotion. He also made out a strong case for symbolism in poetry. Many of his ideas were contrary to the dominant view represented by Emerson.

9.4 RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882) is a seminal figure in American literature. His essay, "The American Scholar", (1837) is described as America's declaration of intellectual independence. He urged his countrymen not to look to Europe for literary themes, forms and techniques, but write about their own country, their own people and their own experience. He also discounted bookish knowledge and argued in favour of experience. He stressed the essential unity of all things; he found a dark affinity between human and animal worlds.; Similarly, he found the transcendental unity of man and nature. Some of these ideas are explained in his essay, "Nature" (1835). Emerson also borrowed Swedenborg's idea that nature provides symbols. So Emerson said: "The whole of nature is a metaphor of the mind." Other ideas which are basic to Emerson's philosophy are: Every person might commune with God; God is the Over-Soul; There can be uninterrupted communication between God and man. Emerson's essay on "The Over-Soul" shows the individuality of transcendentalism, although British writers like Coleridge and Carlyle contributed much to the development of Emerson's philosophy. "Transcendental" is used to describe truths that were beyond the reach of man's limited senses. Emerson thought intuition is a guide to universal truth. He felt that nature is an image of the divine.

Transcendentalism was advocated by five great writers of the nineteenth century in America: Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman interpreted it as a decree of optimism. Hawthorne and Melville thought such an ideal cannot be attained. Hence there is pervasive gloom and pessimism in their writings. Poe was critical of Transcendentalism. He wrote: "Above all, study innuendo. Hint everything, assert nothing."

Besides his influential essays, Emerson wrote a number of poems, some of them under the influence of Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, etc. In his poetry, ideas are more important than sound or rhythm. He called Poe contemptuously "the jingle man." They were poles apart on the form and function of poetry. Emerson's originality as a poet is in his

philosophy, not in the art of poetry. It is not the language or images but the striking resemblances which his poems point out between unrelated things.

Emerson favours freedom of movement in verse. His poetic lines are uneven and of irregular length. He uses rhyme occasionally. In his opinion, breathing should determine phrase and line rhythms and lengths. His idea was developed by Charles Olson in our day. Some of Emerson's poems begin, like Emily Dickinson's poems, with surprise and dignity and unusual collocations such as funeral eloquence." Another feature of Emerson's poetry is the fusion of the concrete and the abstract. Emerson believed that a poet is a prophet and a seer. This view is diametrically opposite that of Poe's.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

State the main ideas of Emerson's philosophy.

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9.4.1 Emerson's poetry

As a poet, Emerson played several roles: as a seer, a prophet, a soothsayer. He considered himself a spokesman of God transmitting knowledge. The poet, in his view, simply vibrates to impulses that have existed for all time. The Romantic image of the poet as an Aeolian harp played upon by the blowing wind comes in handy to underscore the passive role of the poet. The poet simply lends a voice to the inaudible sounds of the spiritual universe. It is useful to remember that Emerson wrote in "The Poet", that "it is not meters, but a meter-making argument that makes a poem". This means that thought is more important than form in a poem.

Emerson's own poems are divided into two categories; (1) regular poems (2) free verse, or (1) the poems of character and (2) the poems of power. This division is made by Stephen E. Whicher. Among Emerson's successful poems are "Brahma", "Concord Hymn", and "Days." The poet's speaking voice makes them unique. They treat of chosen themes and lack spontaneity. The "free" poems show an overflow of powerful feelings. In such poems form is subservient to thought. They have their own "architecture" and adorn "nature with a new thing." Emerson stressed the poet's capacity to make symbols. This has developed into symbolist poetry in modern times. Emerson's "Bacchus" belongs to the category of symbolist poems. As a poet he was torn between two rather conflicting choices: (1) discursive regular verse, (2) free symbolic verse. The desire to sing freely and powerfully was restrained by his respect for decorum which pulled him in the opposite direction. He wrote some memorable lines:

The hand that rounded Peter's dome
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome –

Such poetic lines ensure Emerson's place as a poet.

Now let us study two well-known poems of Emerson to get an idea of his skill as a poet.

Concord Hymn

By the rude bridge that arched the blood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foelong since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft-stream,
 We get today a votive stone;
 That memory may their deed redeem,
 When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
 To die, and leave their children free,
 Bid Time and Nature gently spare
 The shaft we raise to them and thee.

This "Hymn" was "sung at the completion of the Battle Monument on July 4, 1837. The monument commemorates the first battle of the Revolution fought at Concord in 1775. Concord was Emerson's home town.

The first stanza recalls the historic event of the beginning of the Revolutionary War. It describes the scene from where the first shot of the war was fired. This first shot set in motion the liberation of a nation. The hymn written sixty-two years after the shot says that both the vanquished and the victor in that war are dead and the bridge (the site of the battle) itself bore marks of aging. Only the stream continues to flow towards the sea. The third stanza states that the monument was raised to redeem the deed of the patriots. The monument would stand even after their sons are dead like their fathers. The last stanza speaks of the daring sacrifice of the heroes so that future generations may live free. The concluding lines express the hope that the "shaft" (monument/column) erected that day might be spared by Time and Nature.

The diction is simple; so are the lines and stanzas. Rhymes are used for emphasis. The poem is a moving and dignified homage to those who gave up their lives for America's freedom.

Now let us read the poem, "Brahma", which will have particular interest to Indian students.

Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,
 Or if the slain think he is slain,
 They know not well the subtle ways
 I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
 Shadow and sunlight are the same;
 The vanished gods to me appear;
 And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
 When me they fly, I am the wings;
 I am the doubter and the doubt,
 And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
 And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
 But thou, meek lover of the good!
 Find me and turn thy back on heaven.

This is a cryptic poem and it is the clearest expression of Hindu philosophical ideas by Emerson. The ideas of this poem are mostly borrowed from the *Katha Upanishad*. It attempts to reconcile seeming opposites (see second stanza) and expresses the concept of absolute unity, the unity of man and nature, concealed by various appearances and illusions. Brahma is the Creator in the Hindu Godhead and thus the fountainhead of all life, the source of all energy, the Over-Soul. Emerson adapted the Sanskrit term, *Adhyatma*, as Over-Soul. This poem demonstrates how much and how well Emerson absorbed the Hindu philosophy. His intellectual make-up has a strong Indian strain.

9.4.2 Emerson's Achievement

Emerson changed the course of American literature by urging American authors to look at their own country and its resources for creative work. His view that nature provides symbols helped in developing symbolist poetry. Many of Emerson's ideas are used in twentieth century writers also. He helped create a national literature in America. He also wrote free (or irregular) verse. He may not be a great poet like Whitman, but he wrote some memorable poems.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What is Emerson's view on the role of a poet?

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9.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the role of the poet in the mid-nineteenth century in America. We discussed the work of the "poets of the establishment," notably Longfellow's. Two major contributors to the theory and practice of poetry, Poe and Emerson, are also discussed.

9.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes and Lowell are known as the poets of the establishment because they felt it was their duty to affirm traditional values in society.

Check Your Progress - 2

H.W. Longfellow was one of the popular establishment poets. His poems are known for their clarity and directness of statement. One of the recurring themes of his poems is missed opportunities. The image "footprints on the sands of time" recurs in several of his poems such as "A Psalm of Life" (1838) and "The Tide Rises", "The Tide Falls" (1879). He also wrote popular poems like "The Village Blacksmith", "Excelsior", "The Building of the Ship" and "The Arsenal at Springfield". His long poem "The Song of Hiawatha" is a much anthologised poem. Longfellow's sonnets written as epigraphs of his translation of *Divine Commedia* are his best poems.

Check Your Progress - 3

According to Poe poetry should not be used as a means of preaching morals or for long narratives. He believed that the chief purpose of poetry is the search for the ideal which is personified in the beautiful women. Poetry in his view, must have three important qualities : the indefinite, music and symbolism. The immediate object of a poem is pleasure, not truth. Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty.

Check Your Progress - 4

The main ideas of Emerson's Philosophy can be summarised in his belief that these can be uninterrupted communication between God and man. He perceived a transcendental unity between man and nature. Nature, for him, was an image of the divine and ideas are more important than sound or rhythm in poetry.

Check Your Progress - 5

In Emerson's view a poet is a prophet, a seer and a soothsayer. The poet, he feels, simply lends a voice to the inaudible sounds of the spiritual universe.

9.7 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Consider Longfellow as a poet of the establishment.
 2. Write a critical note on Poe's aesthetic theory.
 3. Discuss Emerson's philosophy and show its relevance to his poetry.
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9.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Arvin, N. Longfellow: His life and Work. Boston: Little 1977.

Davidson, Edward Hutchins. Poe : A Critical Study. Cambridge (USA): Harvard University press, 1957.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. The Continuity of American Poetry. Princeton: Princeton University press, 1961.

Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1960.

Stauffer, Donald Barlow. A Short History of American Poetry. New York: Dutton, 1974 (Chapters 3, 4 and 6). 1969.

Waggoner, H. Emerson as Poet. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

UNIT - 10: WALT WHITMAN

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 *Leaves of Grass*
 - 10.2.1 "Song of Myself" : Some extracts
 - 10.2.2 "Song of Myself" - An analysis
 - 10.2.3 Structure of "Song of Myself"
 - 10.2.4 Themes of "Songs of Myself"
- 10.3 Whitman's Mythology
- 10.4 New Elements in Whitman's Poetry
 - 10.4.1 Role of the Poet
 - 10.4.2 Role of the Reader
 - 10.4.3 Whitman's Influence
- 10.5 Three Great Poems of Whitman
 - 10.5.1 "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
 - 10.5.2 "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"
 - 10.5.3 "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Answers to Check your progress
- 10.8 Sample Examination Questions
- 10.9 Recommended Books

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Write about Walt Whitman's poetry,
- analyse a few important poems of Whitman,
- assess the contribution of Whitman to American poetry.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is a pioneer of a revolution in poetry which has had a wide-ranging and far-reaching impact. Some of his poems, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are among the best poems in any literature. His bold innovations in themes and techniques led to experiments by poets in other countries also. He was much ahead of his times when he wrote frankly on sex which he considered the "procreative urge of the universe." He preferred rhythm and its free flow to metre which imposed constraints. His poetic symbols are drawn from experience, rather than from stock images and clichés. He had faith in democracy, transcendentalism and individualism. His poems have been more influential than the poems of any other American poet. Emerson praised Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) as "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed.... I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be."

10.2 LEAVES OF GRASS

Leaves of Grass is a unique collection of poems. In a lengthy preface, Whitman announced the beginning of a new age for American poetry. The first poem is a long one entitled, "Song of Myself." The poems in *Leaves of Grass* are in free verse, in which the lines

are irregular, but there is rhythm. The book went through seven editions in the poet's life-time. The last edition contains 383 poems, Whitman subscribed to Schlegel's and Coleridge's principle of organic form. He saw the poem as a process, that is, the poem assumes a shape in the act of composition.

10.2.1 Song of Myself - Some Extracts

One's -self I sing

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word-En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the
Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

I Celebrate Myself

I celebrate myself, and sing myself
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy

Grass

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and the remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name some way in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?
Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.
Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kamuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same,
I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.
Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mother's laps,
And here you are the mother's laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.
I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about the old men and mothers, and the off-spring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men ?
And what do you think has become of the women and children ?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.
All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

My Barbaric Yawp

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering,
I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last seud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds.
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk,

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags,
I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know what I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

10.2.1 "Song of myself" - An Analysis

The poet or 'I' is at the centre of his poetry. It is a recurring and important symbol. Starting from the simple 'I', the poems expand in an endless way to the cosmos. From the outermost edge the poet looks back at his own inner personality.

The poem begins with:

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

These lines show some unconventional features of Whitman's poetry. The opening line is ungrammatical. The lines stress the importance of the individual, "A simple separate person." At the same time, they speak of En-Masse, that is, humanity at large. Whitman believes that it is necessary to re-examine all old and new things in the context of the emergence of America and democracy. His aim is "to chant those themes through the utterance of one, not only the grateful and reverent legatees of the past, but the born child of the New World." ("A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," (1888). He takes apparently contradictory elements, matter and spirit, life and death, good and evil as his province. Like the spider spinning one coil over another in ever-widening circles, the poet too would move from inward to outward, from the 'I' to the 'En-Masse', until he encompasses the whole universe.

10.2.2 Structure of "Song of Myself"

"Song of Myself" (1855) is the core of *Leaves of Grass*. It fuses lyric and epic features and ties up personal and national experience. It may be described as a national epic in which the high idealism of democracy is happily blended with the robust materialism of a young nation. Roy Harvey Pearce describes it as Whitman's "spiritual autobiography." The poem might appear at first glance to be an odd assemblage of descriptions, catalogues, quotations, etc. But a closer examination reveals a method and a meaningful structure. There is an introduction, dramatic development, mystical release, expansion, return, and conclusion. It has a musical structure. Certain themes are introduced, developed, and related to one another and finally synthesised. This is the structure of a symphony.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

What sort of structure does "Song of Myself" have?

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10.2.3 Themes of "Song of Myself"

The themes of "Song of Myself" may be observed in Emerson's essay "Nature." These are:

1. *Self*: This has both an internal and an external reference. The poet sees himself as an individual, but he is related to the En-Masse.
2. *Nature*: Like Emerson, Whitman regards natural objects as symbols of spiritual truths. Whitman, unlike Emerson, stresses the dynamic qualities of nature. For him, nature is a process, a bursting of energy. Images of movement appear often in this poem.
3. *Death*: Whitman's idea of death is also seen as a movement. There is a cyclical movement: birth, life, death, rebirth, etc.
4. *America*: Emerson strongly advocated intellectual nationalism which is abstract and general. Whitman considers that being an American is something special, something tied up with one's identity.

The image of grass in the opening lines is a recurring symbol. The speaker observes the summer grass and sings: "I celebrate myself." The Cartesian duality of matter and mind, the physical and the spiritual, is resolved by the speaker in the sexual union described in the fifth stanza. Such union brings "the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth."

The chants in "Song of Myself" focus on unity, fellowship and hope. They blend prophecy, rhetoric and irony. There are several instances of "prophetical screams" and "barbaric yawp." It is a combination of different styles, sentence - patterns, etc. Whitman attempts to capture the wide sweep of his experience in the following words:

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds.

As a whole, the poem produces a cosmic effect. But it has fine vignettes of people. He has an eye for minute details.

In the four years between 1856 and 1860, Whitman experienced something extraordinary. This experience comes out as self-doubt and loneliness in the lyrics written at that time. His

creativity is underscored by his sexuality. In his poem, "I sing the body electric," the poet speaks of the inseparability of body and soul. He gives importance to procreation and the human body. The "Calamus" poems published in 1860 deal frankly with sexual themes, "manly attachment," and the desire for companionship. The poems also express Whitman's self-doubt:

I perceive I have not really understood anything, not a single object, and that no man ever can.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What themes do we find in "Song of Myself"?

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10.3 WHITMAN'S MYTHOLOGY

Whitman is a myth-maker. His myths are based on science and technology. There were three great achievements of engineering in his life-time: the Atlantic cable, the Suez canal and the Union Pacific Railroad. We find Whitman's emotional responses to these. These feats are for connecting people, bringing them together, and uniting them. Whitman is interested in unity, fusion, bonding. These words appear often in his poem. The Brooklyn Ferry is a symbol and unifying force. In Whitman's own words, *Leaves of Grass* "has mainly been the outcropping of my own emotional and other personal nature - an attempt, from first to last, to put a person, a human being (myself in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century in America) freely, fully and truly on record. ("A Backward Glance"). The Civil War is a great divide in American history; similarly, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* heralds a revolution in American poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

What is the basis of Whitman's mythology?

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10.4 NEW ELEMENTS IN WHITMAN'S POETRY

What is new in Whitman's poetry? He uses many conventional poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, repetition, and inverse word order. In his free verse, he ignores conventional poetic diction. He freely borrowed words from the most uncommon sources like foreign languages, science, opera, carpentry, and everyday speech of ordinary Americans. You will find examples of these in the poems which we are going to study. He is bold in using sexual images freely. His mentor, Emerson, was embarrassed by such images, but Whitman sees the same principle of life throbbing in man and nature.

His poetry is new in subject matter, in the themes he chooses. He wants realistic themes. Realism in his time included science and democracy. These major concerns of modern life cannot be ignored in modern poetry. The contemporary reality, is used as a means to point to the infinite and the eternal. In his advocacy of making up a contemporary mythology, Whitman is simply reminding us that other poets before him did draw upon their contemporary mythology. Didn't Homer make use of Greek mythology? Didn't Shakespeare use the feudal structure of British society in his time?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. What are the technical innovations in Whitman's poetry?

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10.4.1 Role of the Poet

In Whitman's view, the poet plays a memorable role in a nation's life. The poet is: "the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is equalizer of his age and land.... he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking." More than these, the poet is "a seer... he is individual... he is complete in himself" ("By Blue Ontario's Shore"). The poet is a prophet; he is a priest. In "Passage to India", the priest becomes Christ. The poet, by serving art, serves God too. So the poet functions like a priest.

Whitman seemed to believe that the poet is only an agent of an outpouring from an external or divine source. This is somewhat like Wordsworth's statement that poetry is a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." What appears to the casual reader as the "wildest abandon," in Whitman is actually "controlled" by the "true artist." The subject matter of poetry, in his view, must be taken from common and concrete things. He insists on "sensuous objects" for composing poetry. Thus he anticipates the imagists of a later generation.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What role does Whitman assign to a poet?

.....

.....

10.4.2 Role of the Reader

Whitman's views on the role of the reader are strikingly contemporary. He assigns an active role for the reader. He says: "a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works of the very finest class, and especially for highest poems, is the sole course open to these States.... The process of reading is not a half sleep, but, in the highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay — the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or framework." Whitman is quite candid about the effort required by the reader in understanding a poem: "I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought - there to pursue your own flight" (Preface 1855). The reader re-creates the poem for himself.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What does Whitman expect the reader to do?

.....

.....

10.4.3 Whitman's influence

Whitman influenced several generations of poets. T.S.Eliot, Ezra Pound, D.H.Lawrence, the imagists and the Beat poets acknowledged their debt to him. Thomas Mann called *Leaves*

of *Grass* "a great, important, indeed holy gift." William Carlos Williams was superlative in his praise: "a book as important as we are likely to see in the next thousand years." As Ezra Pound observes, Whitman "broke new wood," his successors have to carve it according to their own skill.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

Name the poets influenced by Whitman.

.....

.....

10.5 THREE GREAT POEMS OF WHITMAN

We will now discuss three important poems of Whitman to have a better understanding of Whitman's themes and techniques.

10.5.1 "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

Crossing Brooklyn--Ferry

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west-sun there half an hour high-I see you also face - to face.
Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious
You are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning
Home, are more curious to me than you suppose,
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to
Me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
The simple compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part
of the scheme,
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the
street and the passage over the river,
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn
to the south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will-see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the
ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place - distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many
generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,

Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift
Current, I stood yet was hurried.
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of
steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air-floating with motionless
wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong
shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the
sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,
the sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the laded cups, the frolic-some crests and
glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the granite storehouses
by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by the
barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighbouring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and
glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow light over the tops of
houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us ?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us ?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,

In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew, I should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre ?
Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting,
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
Was call'd by my highest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me
approaching or passing,
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their
flesh against me as I sat,
Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly,
yet never told them a word,
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing sleeping,
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.
Closer yet I approach you,
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in advance.
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me ?
Who knows but I am enjoying this ?
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you
cannot see me ?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan ?
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide ?
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated lighter ?
What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly
and loudly by my highest name as I approach ?
What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face ?
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you ?

We understand then do we not ?
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted ?
What the study could not teach-what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish'd,
is it not ?

9

Flow on, river ! flow with the flood-tide, and eb with the ebb-tide !
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves !

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women
 generations after me!
 Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
 Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!
 Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!
 Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!
 Gaze, loving and thriving eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!
 Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my highest name!
 Play old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!
 Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one makes it!
 Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you;

 Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current;
 Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air,
 Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all down-cast eyes have time to
 take it from you!
 Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head,
 in the sunlit water!
 Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sailed schooners,
 sloops, lighters!
 Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!
 Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at night
 fall cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses!
 Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,
 You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,
 About my body for me, and your body for you, hung our divinest aromas,
 Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers,
 Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,
 Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

 You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,
 We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward
 Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us,

 We use you and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within us,
 We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,
 You furnish your parts toward eternity,
 Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Analysis

The first of the poems which we take up for analysis is "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry".
 [Brooklyn is a part of New York city. The East River separates it from Manhattan. A ferry was
 used to cross the river to Manhattan until a suspension bridge was built in 1883].

The poem is divided into 9 sections. Here is a rough indication of the contents of these
 sections:

Sections 1 to 3. The setting (place, time and characters) is described: flood tide and ferry
 and masses of people on board. Crossing by ferry is a cyclical movement. The contrast between
 land and water between body and soul, and between life and death is set up. Life - death -
 rebirth is again a cyclical movement.

Sections 4-6 deal with the old knot of contrariety, the universality of emotions, and evil impulses.

Section 4 contrasts the past and the future.

Section 5 presents the interior life from emotions of Section 4. There is a movement from the
 emotional plane to the intellectual plane, to "questionings."

Section 6 speaks of the "bonds" linking the poet with others.

Sections 7-9 present a fusion of all the themes of the poem.

Section 7. the poet identifies himself with others.

Section 8. the poet asserts that he achieved fusion or interpenetration of poet and reader.

Section 9. recapitulates all the images through which identification (or fusion) is achieved.

There are four main themes in the poem:

1. The *tide* an image which stands for eternal flux of the universe.
2. "I" or the "self."
3. The *sunset* and the general *landscape* which includes Manhattan island.
4. The *other selves*: the passengers on the ferry and the unborn generations.

These themes are introduced in Section I. In Sections 2 to 4 the poet develops the idea that the self is sustained by experiencing the sensory images like "the glories strung like beads". Sharing these experiences links the self to other selves, including those of future generations. Section 3 lists a number of visual experiences. Whitman has gathered these experiences over many crossings and beaded them here. Section 5 speaks of the identity of self. Like the ferry floating in the river, the self is "forever held in solution." That "solution" is the universal flux. The identity is obtained through the body.

"That I was I knew was of my body and what I should be I knew I should be of my body."

Section 6 continues the list of things shared by the poet with the others. For instance, he shares many qualities with them. At the end of the section, the poet suggests that our lives are roles. We change roles as an actor does:

"Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

The last sections attempt to fuse all the themes and there is a high pitch of exaltation. In Section 8, the poet asserts that he achieved fusion or interpenetration with the reader:

"Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?"

Section 9 contains a number of imperatives (commands) to the universe. The experiences catalogued here are the "dumb, beautiful ministers" which we receive with "free sense at last."

We may now summarise the main ideas of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." The self is sustained by sensory experiences. Sharing these with others binds us to them. The body gives an identity to the self. But that is not a permanent identity. We are individuals, but we are also part of a larger scheme, part of the eternal flux.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

1. What is the main theme of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry?"

.....

.....

10.5.2 "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"

(SEA DRIFT)

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaves his bed wander'd
alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twinging and twisting as they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with tears.
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Talking of all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes.
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine ! Shine ! Shine !
Pour down your warmth, great sun !
While we bask, we two together,
Two together !
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,

Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow ! blow ! blow !
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's share;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother,

*Soothe ! soothe ! soothe !
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.
Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging -O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*

*Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love !
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon !
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow ?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate !
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land !
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back
Again if you only would.
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I took.*

*O rising stars !
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat !
Sound clearer through the atmosphere !
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols !
Solitary here, the night's carols !
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols !
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea
O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.*

*Hither my love !
Here I am! here !
With this just sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, dropping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart !
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy !
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me !
We two together no more.*

*The area sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outseting bard.*

*Demon or bird (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing ? or is it really to me ?*

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
 Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
 And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder
 and more sorrowful than yours,
 A thousand warbling echoes have started to life with me, never to die.
 O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,
 O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
 Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
 Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
 Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night.
 By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
 The messenger there arous'd; the fire, the sweet hell within,
 The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
 O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
 The word final, superior to all,
 Subtle, sent up — what is it? — I listen;
 Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
 Delaying not, hurrying not,
 Whisper'd me through the night, and very painfully before daybreak,
 Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
 And again death death, death, death,
 Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
 But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
 Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
 Death death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
 But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
 That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
 With the thousand responsive songs at random,
 My own songs awaked from that hour,
 And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
 The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
 That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
 (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments bending aside,)
 The sea whisper'd me.

Analysis

This is Whitman's most characteristic and autobiographical poem. It is a poem of affirmation. We may identify five symbolic themes in it: the cradle, the ocean, the mocking bird, the moon and "I". The poem is concerned with death.

The poet, "a chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter," sings a song of "reminiscence." The following is a rough outline of the poem:

Lines	1 - 22	Prologue
Lines	23 - 31	Setting of the incident.
		The characters (2 birds, eggs and I) are introduced,
Lines	32-41	Male bird's love-song to his mate
Lines	42 - 46	Death of the female bird.

- 47 - 52 I saw the solitary (male) bird
- 56 - 61 Sorrow of male bird described by the poet.
- 62 - 71 Comment of the poet. (He had heard the song)
- 72 - 130 Male bird's lament

Dead (female) bird sought in the waves

" " moon
 " " on the land
 " " among the stars

[The male bird's song is compared to the hissing of the ocean, which in turn, is like the poet's song.] Lines 131 - 144 Boy (Whitman) becomes aware of the nature of love and death. He understands his destiny as a poet.

- 145 - 158 The bird's song aroused the poetic fire in Whitman
- 159 - 160 Poet's appeal to the bird
- 161 - 165 Poet asks the sea if it is whispering
- 166 - 174 Sea whispers "death"
- 175 - 184 Awakening of poetic vision.

This poem is variously described as the "first extended meditation on death," and as an "introspective portrait of the artist as a young man." The rocking movement of the cradle underscores the eternal flux which we observed in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" also. The plethora of *-ing* forms also reinforces the rocking movement. The poem communicates its meaning through its technique in that the sound echoes the sense. The imagery used is related to the exposition of the bird's sorrow and the boy's awakening (epiphany):

It is indeed toward your mate you sing? Or is it really to me?

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,

Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake.

The poet acknowledges how the bird's aria and the sea's whispering of the delicious word death transformed him into a poet:

My own songs awaked from that hour,

And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
 The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
 That strong and delicious word.

This is a poem of recreated experience. The experience reveals the source of the mature man's poetic vision. As a boy, the poet had seen the two birds in love, the death of the female bird, and the anguish and lament of the male bird. This experience awakened the creative urge in the boy and he became a poet. As a grown-up man, he recalls from memory, the epiphany of his boyhood days. There are three stages in this recreation of experience. First the two mocking birds are in love. They sing of ideal love and happiness. In the second stage, the male bird sings a powerful lament over the death of his beloved. Here the male bird is the main character. In the third stage, the ocean assumes an important role. It sings its own song, but it is a barren song. The word "death" is heard repetitively in the ocean's song. Actually, the boy, the eye-witness, is the central character in the poem. The three stages of development listed above also illuminate the nature of life and death for the boy. In the first stage, the nature of fulfilled love is described:

*Singing all time, minding no time,
 While we too keep together.*

In the second stage, an insight into the lonesome love is given:

Solitary here, the night's carols!

Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!

The third stage unveils a spiritual fulfilment of lonesome love in death:

The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,

The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,

The aria's meaning.

The symbols used in the poem enrich the meaning. We have the song of the birds in love set off against the male bird's lament. The duality of the universe and the rhythm underlying the universe are stressed by pairing opposites: sun vs moon, day vs night, land vs sea. The state of bliss, of fulfilled love, and the togetherness of the two birds are associated with sun, day, and land. The separation of the pair, lonesome love and unfulfilled love are associated with the moon, night, and sea. One set of symbols in the poem stands for physical love, the body, and life. The second set of symbols stands for spiritual love, the soul and death. Underlying these symbolic associations is the strong suggestion that life and death, like day and night, are an inevitable part of the rhythmical nature of the universe. The sea is the cradle; its waves hit the shore without stopping. It is a "cradle endlessly rocking." The poem ends as it begins and has a cyclical structure. Life and death are not the beginning and end, but ceaseless activities. Death opens the gates to the spiritual life.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 9

1. What is the main theme of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking?"
-
-

10.5.3 "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd"

Memories of President Lincoln

1

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night - O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd - O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless - O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle — and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the seamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song,

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,)
If thou was not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately te violets peep'd
from the ground, spotting the gray debris,

Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown fields
uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coils,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs — where amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane and scared death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you.
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,

As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
 As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
 As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on,)
 As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept me from
 sleep.)
 As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full, you were of woe,
 As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
 As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black
 Of the night,
 As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
 Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
 O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
 I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
 But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
 The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
 And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
 And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?
 Sea-winds blown from east and west,
 Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till
 There on the pairies meeting,
 These and with these and the breath of my chant,
 Fill perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
 And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
 To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
 With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,
 With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun,
 burning, expanding the air,
 With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,
 In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind apple here and there,
 With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
 And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
 And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul-this land,
 My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides and the ships,
 The varied and ample land, the South and North in the light
 Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
 And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.
 Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
 The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
 The gentle soft-born measureless light,
 The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
 The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
 Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.
Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender !
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer,
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the
farmers preparing their crops,
In the large unconcious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the
voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching richness, and the fields all busy with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with a meals and
minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbblings throb'd, and the cities Pent-lo. then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death
Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure - entwining arms of cool-enfolding death,

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome ?

Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Loved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I purpose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.

15

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yonder through the smoke, and torn and bloody
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold my comrade's hands,

Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying son of my
 Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song
 As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
 Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting with joy,
 Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
 As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
 Passing I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
 I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
 From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
 O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
 Song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
 And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
 With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
 With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
 Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep,
 for the dead I loved so well,
 As the sweetest, wisest soul to all my days and lands - and this for his dear sake,
 Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
 There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

Analysis

This is considered the greatest elegy in American literature. It is written on the death of Abraham Lincoln which had a great impact on the national psyche of America. The Civil War affected Whitman very badly. He was an eye-witness to the horrors of this mechanised war. How could he reconcile the deaths on the battlefield with his innate optimism? Can the United States remain a united nation? These questions bothered Whitman a good deal. The death of the President at the end of the Civil War seemed to convey to Whitman a message of great significance. It seemed to symbolise the deaths of all in this war. This feeling made Whitman enlarge the scope of this elegy not for Lincoln alone, but for all those who died in the war. (Lincoln was not mentioned by name in the poem).

Like the other poems of Whitman which we discussed, this poem also has a musical structure. The symbols which figure in this elegy are:

1. *Lilacs*: These flowers have a strong perfume and they are related to the mother image. They are also related to death. We may remember that Lincoln was assassinated in April, just the time when the lilacs bloom. Death and spring are suggestive of death and re-birth.
2. *The Star*: The "powerful western fallen star" stands for Lincoln. It was significant that a westerner (Lincoln was from Illinois) should save the union and sacrifice his life in saving the nation's integrity.
3. *The Bird*: The song-bird which appears in Section 4 is a surrogate for the poet himself. The bird is more fully developed as a symbol than the lilacs and the star.

The funeral procession of Lincoln's coffin from Washington to his native place, Springfield, Illinois, is described in Sections 5 and 6. There were moving scenes en route because almost every family had its own war dead. Section 5 evokes the images of grass, wheat and grain, thus assuming re-birth. Section 7 shows that the elegy is for all the war dead. Section 8 refers to the theme of the star, Section 9 to the bird. In Section 10, the poet gets ready to sing his own song. Sections 11 and 12 are a hymn to the nation. Re-birth as a theme recurs and it is linked to the sun. The bird re-appears in Section 13, but this time along with the star and the lilac. Section 14 reverts to the United States in the concept of its acceptance of death. Here, the

song-bird sings a carol to "lovely and soothing death." In this carol (printed in italics), death is depicted as both "the dark mother" and "the loving, floating ocean." These images occurring in the same place suggest the idea of a return to the womb.

In Section 15, the poet asserts:

They [the war dead] themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffered.

The concluding Section 16 synthesises all the themes. It transcends grief and ends on an affirmative note:

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 10

Explain the meaning of the main symbols in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

10.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the pioneering and revolutionary changes brought about by Whitman in American poetry. These include choice of themes, of vocabulary, of symbols, of syntax, etc. We discussed "Song of Myself." Then we analysed the three great poems of Whitman.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

"Song of Myself" is the first long poem in the collection called *Leaves of Grass*. It has an introduction, dramatic development, mystical release, expansion, return and conclusion. It has a musical structure. Critical themes are introduced, developed and related to one another and finally synthesised.

Check Your Progress 2

The themes covered by Song of Myself are Self, Nature, Death and America.

Check Your Progress 3

Whitman's mythology is based on science and technology. He expresses his interest in the great achievements of engineering that have helped to connect people. The words unity, fusion, bonding etc. appear often in his poem.

Check Your Progress 4

Some of the technical innovations in Walt Whitman's poetry are the free borrowing of words from uncommon sources like foreign languages, science, opera, carpentry and everyday speech of ordinary Americans. He also broadly uses sexual images as he believes the same principle of life throbs in man and nature.

Check Your Progress 5

He believes that the Poet is only an agent of an outpouring from an external or divine source. Like Wordsworth, Whitman believes that poetry is "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

Check Your Progress 6

Whitman expects the reader to play an active role. He or she must construct the poem, argument, history or metaphysical essay from the hints, clues, or framework given by the text.

Check Your Progress 7

The poets who were influenced by Whitman belong to different generations. T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, the Imagist poets and the Beat Poets acknowledge their debt to him.

Check Your Progress 8

The main theme of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is bonding and the relationship between individuals and a larger scheme. The ferry which bridges the river is a symbol of unity. The body gives an identity to the self but it is not a permanent identity. It is a part of the eternal flux.

Check Your Progress 9

In this poem the poet describes a recreated experience. The experience reveals the source of man's poetic vision. As a boy he had seen two birds in love. The death of the female bird and the lament and anguish of a male bird upon the loss of its mate, awakens the creative urge in the poet.

Check Your Progress 10

The main symbols in this poem are the lilacs, the star and the bird. The lilacs have a strong perfume which relate them to the mother image. They are also related to death. The star stands for Lincoln who was a westerner and had 'fallen', died to save his nation's integrity. The bird stands for the poet himself and therefore a more fully developed symbol.

10.8 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. What is Whitman's contribution to poetry?
2. Discuss 'death' as a recurring theme in Whitman's poetry.
3. Write a critical note on Whitman's use of symbols.

10.9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Miller, E.H. Walt Whitman's Poetry. New York: New York University Press, 1968.

Miller, J.E., Jr. A Critical Guide to "Leaves of Grass". Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957.

_____. (ed.) Complete Poetry and Selected Prose by Walt Whitman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959 (Riverside Editions).

Pearce, Roy Harvey (ed.) Whitman (Twentieth Century Views). Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

UNIT - 11 : EMILY DICKINSON

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
 - 11.1 Introduction
 - 11.2 Dickinson's Poetry
 - 11.3 Innovations
 - 11.3.1 Diction
 - 11.3.2 Syntax
 - 11.3.3 Punctuation
 - 11.3.4 Stanza Form
 - 11.4 Themes
 - 11.4.1 Nature
 - 11.4.2 Dread
 - 11.4.3 Death and Immortality
 - 11.4.4 Private Life
 - 11.5 Let Us Sum Up
 - 11.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
 - 11.7 Sample Examination Questions
 - 11.8 Recommended Books
-

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the contribution of Emily Dickinson to poetry
 - discuss her themes and techniques
 - analyse some of her poems
-

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Emily Dickinson's (1830 – 1856) poetry is largely based on her own life. She was unable to adjust herself to the world outside. She seems to have had problems with men. She had many personal eccentricities. It is said that she spoke to visitors from behind a screen. She led the life of a recluse. In one of her innumerable letters to the few friends she had, she wrote: "pardon my sanity in a world insane." It is evident from her poetry that she was under great emotional stress. Her eccentricities, loneliness and depression inform her poetry. They provide both form and content to her poems. Like Melville, she did not get recognition during her life time. Her originality, insights, and syntactic innovations have earned her a place alongside Walt Whitman.

11.2 DICKINSON'S POETRY

Dickinson wrote over 1,775 poems. Half of these are on trivial topics such as valentines, birthdays, and funerals. A good number of her other poems are unfinished or unsuccessful because they were written when her creative powers were at a low ebb. Her successful poems are remarkable for condensation of thought and language. She communicates profound truths through her images, paradoxes, irony and diction. The tone of her poems is conversational. She speaks as if she is confiding in us the distilled essence of her meditations. Her poems may be likened to letters, to personal and intimate communications. She was a tireless correspondent.

In fact one of her poems is a letter:

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me –
The simple News that Nature told –
With tender Majesty
Her message is committed
To Hands I cannot see –
For love of Her – Sweet – countrymen –
Judge tenderly – of Me

The intimate tone, spontaneity, and boldness of approach in this poem may be noted. We are not merely reading a poem or conversing with a genius, but experiencing something unique. The poems are short, the tone is usually the same, the form does not change much. Her best poems should be read several times with great concentration. She packs much thought and experience in a short space.

11.3 INNOVATIONS

Dickinson experimented with diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm, punctuation, etc., in a bold way.

11.3.1 Diction

Her vocabulary is precise and concise. She stated: "For several years, my Lexicon was my only creation." Words from many sources—law, geometry, engineering, church, religion – are chosen to suit her needs. Commonplace words are put in new contexts to make them yield new connotations. The word, "news," in the poem cited above is one example. It suggests the morning paper, but in this context, it conveys a broader idea. She also interchanges parts of speech:

Kingdoms like the orchard
Flit russetly away

'Russetly' is an adverb formed from the noun. This kind of usage is uncommon. Elsewhere she uses 'ancienter' as a comparative form which is her coinage. Other technical names from botany are corolla and calyx. In another poem legal terms like heir, statute, equity and larceny appear. Magnitude, axis and wheel from other sciences are used in other poems.

11.3.2 Syntax

Dickinson uses a condensed language or clipped syntax. Often her poetic lines are like telegrams where we dispense with unnecessary words. In the poem, "A bird came down the walk," she writes:

And then he drank a dew
From convenient grass

Such condensation presents us a vividness of imagery. Another example may be found in the same poem when she writes:

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam

Or, observe the broken syntax of the following stanza:

Angels – twice descending
Reimbursed my store –

Burglar! Banker – Father!
I am poor once more!

11.3.3 Punctuation

Emily Dickinson's punctuation is also eccentric. The dash appears frequently in her poems for periods, commas, colons, and semicolons. The dash is also used for emphasis; it is used to indicate a break in thought. Some of these uses of the dash may be observed in:

Much Madness is divinest Sense –
To a discerning Eye –
Much Sense – the starkest Madness –
‘T is the Majority
In this, as All, prevail –
Assent – and you are sane –
Demur – you’re straightway dangerous –
And handled with a chain –

While at the end of the first line, we would not use any punctuation, at the end of the second line, we would use a semicolon. In the third line, we would use a period at the end and no dashes at all. We would write a comma after ‘prevail’ in the fifth line, commas after ‘Assent,’ ‘sane,’ ‘demur’ and ‘dangerous’. In Dickinson's method of punctuation, a dash serves the purpose of a colon, a comma, a semicolon, or a period. It also indicates an abrupt change in thought or tone. In the same poem you may have noticed the poet's use of capitals frequently. That is again typical of her.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. Illustrate Dickinson's diction and syntax.

.....

.....

2. What were the purposes served by the dash in Dickinson's punctuation?

.....

.....

11.3.4 Stanza Form

Emily Dickinson has a fascination for the hymn stanza with just four lines. There are three or four stresses, (iambic trimetre, or tetrameter). The rhyme comes at the end of the second and fourth lines. You will notice these prosodic features in the poems cited above. Occasionally the poet tries a six-line stanza, but the four-line stanza is more common. With this self-imposed restriction, she does a marvelous job. She experiments with rhythm, rhyme, choice of words, and syntax to squeeze intense feelings and rare insights into a limited space. To achieve her aim, she alters the metre, coins her own words, changes parts of speech, uses “slant” rhyme. (Slant rhyme is also known as “imperfect” or “partial” rhyme. Pearl and ‘alcohol’ is an example). Her words are chosen with great care, so that they carry the full impact of her images, insights and ironic contrasts. Generally, her poems have just two or three quatrains, that is, eight or twelve lines.

11.4 THEMES

Her themes are based on her experience in a New England church. They deal with ideas of God, salvation, damnation, prayer, heaven and hell. In her narrow world, small creatures such as fly, spider, bee, robin, butterfly, loom large.

The cricket sang,
And set the sun,
And workmen finished, one by one,
Their seam the day upon.

The low grass loaded with dew,
The twilight stood as strangers do
With hat in hand, polite and new,
To stay as if, or go.

A vastness, as a neighbour, came, –
A wisdom without face or name,
A peace, as hemispheres at home, –
And so the night became.

The onset of night is evoked by very ordinary things: cricket, workman, stranger, etc. Also, you will observe the homely image of strangers politely waiting with hat in hand to stay or go. Twilight was like the waiting strangers. From the small and humble things of the first stanza we are introduced to a 'vastness' in the third stanza. The vastness is wisdom which cannot be identified by name or face. In the first stanza, the sunsets, in the second twilight appears, in the third, night comes. The poet frequently uses the transitions of light in many of her poems:

Presentiment is the long shadow on the lawn
Indicative that suns godown;
The notice to the startled grass
That darkness is about to pass.

Note the use of 'long shadow', 'suns godown', and 'darkness.' This short poem is the poet's definition of 'presentiment.' Many of Dickinson's poems are just definitions. Donald Barlow Stauffer observes: "Her poems are all attempts at definition, and many of her poems begin with definitions of abstract nouns, presentiment, experiment, prayer, fame, crisis, grief, remorse, publication, faith. But the definitions are extremely personal and even idiosyncratic." These definitions may be called her distillations. She sees the poet's role as one of distilling. She compares the poet to a press which squeezes the essence from the rose petals.

Essential oils – are wrung –
The Attar from the Rose
Be not expressed by Suns – alone –
It is the gift of Screws –

The General Rose – decay –
But this – in Lady's Drawer
Make Summer – When the Lady lie
In Ceaseless Rosemary.

Nature is reduced to an essence by the press. The poet also works to distil nature to an essence. But the method is through indirection.

Some of her poems are like riddles:

His Bill and Anger is
His Head, a cap and Frill
He laboureth at every Tree
A Worm, His utmost goal.

The answer to this riddles is, of course, a bird. A variation of the riddle is an epigram, a short and witty expression:

Tell all the truth but tell it slant
Or
Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What are the main themes of Dickinson?

.....
.....

11.4.1 Nature

One of her themes is nature, but she does not have a consistent attitude to it. Sometimes she appears to have been inspired, like a transcendentalist, by nature. In one of her poems, she says:

Inebriate of Air-am I-
And Debauchee of Dew -
Reeling - thro endless days -
From inns of Molten Blue -

She gets drunk on draughts of air and dew. The drunkenness is of a transcendental kind, and the debauchery is spiritual. The images of "inns", "vats," and "tankards" are placed in line 8. They are disparate images yoked together as in metaphysical poetry. "Molten Blue" refers to the clear summery sky. "Inns of Molten Blue" are difficult to imagine. In a way, she seems to be voicing Emerson's views. In his essay, "The Poet," Emerson wrote: "Poetry is not 'Devil's wine', but 'God's wine'.... The poet's habit of living should be set on a key so low that the common influence should delight him. His cheerfulness should be the orbit of the sunlight; the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he be tipsy with water." Dickinson speaks of her affinity to, even necessity of, air and dew to reach a higher plane of consciousness. On other occasions, she does not stress such a dependent relationship with nature.

But nature is a stranger yet;
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house,
Nor simplified her ghost.

To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her, knew her less
The nearer her they get.

Here she talks of the 'haunted house' of nature and the 'ghost' of nature. These are by no means pleasant and spiritual experiences. The second stanza refers to the inscrutable aspect of nature. The closer one approaches nature the less one knows her.

Now read another poem which explains Dickinson's attitude to nature. It is also an example of her impish humour:

A Bird came down from the Walk –
He did not know I saw –
He bit an Angeworm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass –
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass –

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all around –
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought –
He stirred his Velvet Head

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home –

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam –
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
Leap, splashless as they swim.

This poem reminds us of Thoreau's descriptions of nature which he observed in the Walden Woods. The bird bites a worm into two and eats it, but there is no adverse comment on this. The bird "ate the fellow, raw". The suggestion is that the bird didn't cook the worm before eating. But how can a bird cook it? Therein lies Dickinson's humour. Clipped syntax may be noticed in:

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass

In the last stanza, this condensation of language makes the images vivid:

Then oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,

Another poem, "A narrow fellow in the grass," is remarkable for its conversational tone;

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides;
You may have met him, -- did you not?
His notice sudden is.

This poem also appears like another description of Thoreau, but the last line makes a stunning impact on us:

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

The poem is about a snake crawling in the grass, but the word snake (or any of its synonyms) is not mentioned even once in the poem. But the blood-curdling or bone-cutting fear that the sudden sight of a snake is brought out in the last line.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

What is Dickinson's attitude to Nature?

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11.4.2 Dread

Actually, the poet dreads nature:

I dreaded that first Robin so.

In several poems dealing with nature, she expressed an intense pain. Contact with nature leads to fear of suffering which makes her pour out her fear. Whatever may be her theme, she seems to endure or overcome suffering. Her Calvinist background seems to have influenced her thinking on pain as a source of strength:

A *Wounded* Deer – leaps highest

I've heard the Hunter tell –

'T is but the Ecstasy of *death* –

And then the Brake is still!

The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!

The *trampled* steel that springs!

A cheek is always redder

Just where the Hectic stings!

Mirth is the Mail or Anguish –

In which it Cautious Arm,

Lest anybody spy the blood

And "you're hurt" exclaim!

Suffering causes fear and fear makes one despair. For her, living is a painful experience. Dying is even more painful.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

Illustrate the use of pain as a poetic theme in Dickinson.

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11.4.3 Death and Immortality

She wrote a number of poems on immortality. But her view of immortality is not the conventional Christian view. She says frankly:

I don't like Paradise

Because it's Sunday- all the time—

She mocks at the Church services and rituals.

Some keep the Sabbath going to church —
 I keep it, staying at Home —
 With a Bobolink for a Chorister —
 And an Orchard for a Dome —
 Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice —
 I just wear my Wings—
 And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
 Our little Sexton sings.
 God preaches, a noted Clergyman —
 And the sermon is never long
 So instead of getting to Heaven, at last —
 I'm going, all along.

She states her preference to observe Sabbath by staying home, listening to the songbird (bobolink) in an orchard. Instead of wearing the white robes (surplice), she would wear her wings; instead of tolling the church bell, the sexton (church employee) would sing. Here bobolink is the sexton. God preaches a short sermon, unlike the long-winding sermons in a church. These unconventional and unchristian activities may not take her to heaven, but she is happy here and now.

Immortality is a hopeful means of escaping pain in this world, pain has an educational value which enables us to perceive future pain.

Pain — has Element of Blank —
 It cannot recollect
 When it begun — or if there were
 A day when it was not —

It has no Future — but itself —
 Its Infinite contain
 Its past, enlightened to perceive
 New Periods of Pain.

The key word in this poem is “enlightened”, pain enlightens us to see “new periods of pain.” Death is a recurring favourite theme of Dickinson. There is a short, beautiful poem:

Death is a Dialogue between
 The Spirit and the Dust.
 “Dissolve,” says Death — The Spirit, “Sir,
 I have another Trust”-
 Death doubts it — Argues from the Ground —
 The Spirit turns away
 Just laying off, for evidence
 An Overcoat of Clay.

The poet asserts the immortality of the spirit which refuses to dissolve and turns away discharging dust. Read the following poem:

Because I could not stop for Death-
 He kindly stopped for me-
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
 And Immortality.
 We slowly drove — He knew no haste
 And I put away

My labor and my leisure too,
 For His Civility –
 We passed the school, where children strove
 At Recess – in the Ring –
 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
 We passed the Setting Sun –
 Or rather – He passed Us –
 The Dews drew quivering and chill –
 For only Gossamer, my Gown –
 My Tippet – only Tulle
 We paused before a House that seemed
 A Swelling of the Ground –
 The Roof was scarcely visible –
 The Cornice – in the Ground –
 Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
 Feels shorter than the Day
 I first surmised the Horses' Heads
 Were toward Eternity –

This poem contains Dickinson's characteristic blending of the exalted and the homely. The visit of Death is narrated like an outing of a house-wife. The key-word in this poem is "civility" in the second stanza. Death is likened to a gentleman caller with refined manners. The "gazing grain" in the third stanza is a transferred epithet. The poet is gazing at the grain, not the grain. The poet uses the travel motif indicating a journey to Death, the passage from time to eternity. Words like "Immortality" (first stanza), "setting sun" (second stanza), and "eternity" (last stanza) underscore the idea of death. The horses' heads pointed toward eternity. It is a journey without return. We are taken aback when we realize the horrible truth that we are about to die.

Allen Tate considers this poem one of the greatest in the English language: "Every image is precise and, moreover, not merely beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. The third stanza especially shows Miss Dickinson's power to fuse, into a single order of perception, a heterogeneous series: the children, the grain, and the setting sun (time) have the same degree of credibility; the first subtly preparing for the last... The terror of death is objectified through this figure of the genteel driver, who is made ironically to serve the end of Immortality. This is the heart of the poem: she has presented a typical Christian theme in its final irresolution, without making any final statements about it... Miss Dickinson is probably the only Anglo-American poet of her century whose work exhibits the perfect literary situation – in which is possible the fusion of sensibility and thought."

Another famous poem on the theme of death and immortality is given below:

My life closed twice before its close;
 It yet remains to see
 If immortality unveil
 A third event to me,
 So huge, so hopeless to conceive
 As these that twice befell.
 Parting is all we know of heaven,
 And all we need of hell.

The poem is rather intriguing. The poet uses paradoxes which are not easy to explain. The following interpretations are possible:

- 1) The speaker in the poem is not sure of a life after death, in heaven or hell. The paradox is that the speaker's life closed twice before its actual end.
- 2) The speaker is not sure whether the life after death will be as great (huge) an event as the two past events of her life. If this is the poet's intended meaning, then the suggestion is that death (or immortality) may not be as huge as the other two events of her life-time.
- 3) The poem might imply that separation from the beloved is both heaven and hell.

This poem is a typical example of compactness, paradox, ambiguity. These features enrich her meaning.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What is Dickinson's attitude to death?

11.4.4 Private Life

Another recurring theme in Dickinson poetry is private life. "I'm nobody! Who are you?" shows the poet's dislike for public life. It depicts a public figure, like a frog, croaking his name to an "admiring bog," that is, the general public. Public figures in the nineteenth century in America were pompous, more so than now. In another poem, "The soul selects her own society," the poet affirms private life. It again reminds us of Thoreau in the reference to "divine majority," a majority made up of just one person only, if that person is right. In the second stanza, there is a typical blending of the sublime and the homely in the image of the emperor kneeling on the mat. The word, "unmoved," is used twice at the beginning of the first and third lines of the second stanza. First, it refers to 'she,' the lady being courted; next it refers to the emperor who refuses to be dissuaded from his suit. The word, 'stone,' in the last line might suggest a tombstone. The gates of the soul's attention are closed as tight as a tomb. Stone also suggests something petrified in the poet herself: (She is "unmoved"). The position of the word 'stone,' at the end conveys a sense of frustration. Note that the rhymes in the second stanza, 'gate' and 'mat', are approximate or slant rhymes.

Now read the poem and discover for yourself the points made above:

The Soul selects her own Society –
 Then – shuts the Door –
 To her divine Majority –
 Present no more –
 Unmoved – she notes the Chariots – pausing –
 At her low Gate –
 Unmoved – an Emperor be kneeling
 Upon her Mat –
 I've known her – from an ample nation –
 Choose One –
 Then – close the Valves of her attention –
 Like Stone –

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

What do we learn about Dickinson's private life from her poetry?

11.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied the several original features of Emily Dickinson's poetry. We discussed some of her major themes including, nature, dread, immortality and death, and private life. We analysed some of the well-known poems focusing on both themes and techniques.

11.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Dickinson's diction is precise and she uses words from many sources such as law, geometry, engineering, church and religion. She gives new meanings to commonplace words besides coining her own words like 'russetly', 'ancienter' etc. Dickinson uses clipped syntax which is like telegraphic language.
2. A dash in Dickinson's poems serves the functions of a colon, a comma, a semicolon, a period or full stop.

Check Your Progress 2

Dickinson's main themes are ideas of God, salvation, damnation, prayer, heaven and hell, all of which are based on her experience in a New English Church.

Check Your Progress 3

Dickinson's attitude to Nature is ambivalent. Sometimes she appears to have been inspired by Nature like a transcendentalist and other times she appears to be despaired, an instance of which can be noticed in "that those who know her (Nature), know her less. The nearer her they get."

Check Your Progress 4

For Dickinson, contact with nature leads to fear of suffering which makes her pour out her fear. We notice the use of pain as poetic theme in many of her poems dealing with nature.

Check Your Progress 5

The poems on the theme of death and immortality reveal that Dickinson is happy here and now in her un-Christian activities like observing Sabbath at home, listening to a Bobolink as against a chorister etc. although they would not take her to heaven. She also views death as a means of escaping pain. She also welcomes death as it is inevitable in one's life. She is not sure of a life after death in heaven or hell.

Check Your Progress 6

Dickinson dislikes public life. She seems to have been frustrated with the society which is full of hypocrites.

11.7 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Emily Dickinson's treatment of nature in her poetry.
2. Critically examine Dickinson's attitude to death and immortality.
3. Comment on Dickinson's diction, syntax, punctuation, stanza and rhyme.

11.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Anderson, Charles R. Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway to Surprise. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960.

Emily Dickinson. Selected with an introduction and notes by John Malcolm Brinnin. (The Laurel Poetry Series). New York: Dell, 1960.

Pickard, J. Emily Dickinson: An Introduction and Interpretation. New York: Holt, 1967.

Sewall, Richard B. (Ed.) Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

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UNIT - 12 : EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY POETRY : WALLACE STEVENS AND ROBERT FROST

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- describe the poetry of Wallace Stevens and of Robert Frost.
- discuss their themes and techniques
- analyse some of their poems
- assess their contribution to American poetry

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to give you an idea of the important trends in American poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. We have selected two major representative poets: Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost. We shall devote the first part of this unit to Stevens and the second to Frost.

12.2 WALLACE STEVENS

poetry in his spare time. His activity as a poet was not known to many. For its technical virtuosity in language and form, his poetry vied for a place along side T.S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's. His first book of poems *Harmonium* was published in 1923 and heralded a revolution in American poetry. In the beginning, it was believed that he was an Imagist, but later it was realized that he was exploring the artistic and philosophical meaning of poetry. His volumes of poetry include *Ideas of Order* (1935), *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1937), *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* (1942) and *The Auroras of Autumn* (1950). A collection of his essays and lectures, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and Imagination* was published in 1951. He was an intellectual elitist and wrote for a very limited audience.

12.2.1 The Themes

Harmonium included poems with long and playful titles such as "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" and "The Man whose Pharynx was Bad". These poems contain bizarre images, far-fetched allusions, words which are uncommon and difficult to pronounce (ex: *Diaphanes*, *pendentives*). The tone is elegant with a touch of self-mockery. Stevens seems to be playing the roles of a comedian, a dandy and an aesthete. These roles are essential for his idea of the poet as a master of ceremonies. Donald Barlow Stauffer calls the poems in *Harmonium* a circus and Stevens the ringmaster. The ringmaster performs feats and the ordinary things of day-to-day life are transformed into miracles by the power of his art. We shall study four poems in this unit.

12.2.1.1 "Sunday Morning"

SUNDAY MORNING

I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice,
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a calm darkens among water-lights.
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings
Seem things in some procession of the dead,
Winding across wide water, without sound,
The day is like wide water, without sound,
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
What is divinity if it can come
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
In any balm or beauty of the earth,
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow,
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued

Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet the roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.
These are the measures destined for the soul.

III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave
Large-mannered motions to his mythic mind,
He moved among us, as a muttering king,
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,
With heaven, brought such requital to desire
The very hinds discerned it, in a star,
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
The sky will be much friendlier than now,
A part of labor and a part of pain,
And next in glory to enduring love,
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,
Before they fly, rest the reality
Of misty fields by their sweet questionings;
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then is paradise?"
There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure
Like her remembrance of a awakened birds,
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped
By the consummation of the swallow's wings

V

She says, "But in contentment, I still feel
The need of some imperishable bliss,"
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams
And our desires, Although she strews the leaves
Of sure obliteration on our paths,
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
Whispered a little out of tenderness,
She makes the willow shiver in the sun
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet,
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

VI

Is there no change of death in paradise ?
Does ripe fruit never fall ? Or do the boughs
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,
With rivers like our own that seek for seas
They never find, the same receding shores
That never touch with inarticulate pang ?
Why set the pear upon those river-banks
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum ?
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,
The silken weavings of our afternoons,
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes !
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,
Within whose burning bosom we devise
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,
Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source.
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
Out of their blood, returning to the sky,
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,
That choir among themselves long afterward.
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn.
And whence they came and whither they shall go
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

VII

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay,"
We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Analysis

Some of his poem's are profound meditations. "Sunday Morning", is perhaps Stevens's greatest poem. It is a meditation in blank verse on the problem of belief. It deals with the ultimate question of the meaning of human existence. It is in the form of a dialogue between two

characters, a man and a woman. This dialogue leads to a rejection of the traditional Christian belief. It doubts the existence of a life after death. In Stevens's view, poetry is the supreme fiction, the ultimate reality. It is a superb depiction of a certain attitude to man, nature and God.

Now let us analyse the poem stanza by stanza

Stanza I. It is Sunday morning. The lady relaxes at breakfast. She feels free like a parrot. She thinks of Christ's sacrifice on the cross ('the holy hush of ancient sacrifice'). The 'old catastrophe' is the crucifixion. 'Palestine' 'blood' and 'sepulchre' are words which evoke memories of Christianity in the lady's mind.

Stanza II. The beauty and bounty of earth, and the comforts here are in no way less than those in heaven. Then why should she show respect to heaven? What is divinity if it comes in silent shadows? She should find divinity within herself in such things as rain, snow, forest blooms. The songs are destined for her enjoyment. What is the point in worshipping a dead God?

Stanza III: Gods are created by human imagination. God is made progressively human by the mingling of human blood (of Virgin Mary) and the divine blood of God, resulting in the birth of Jesus. If human imagination can create gods, it can transform earth into a paradise. That is, in 'enduring love' that we can discover happiness. The word, 'blue,' at the end of this stanza is significant. In Stevens's colour symbolism, 'blue,' stands for imagination.

Stanza IV. The beauty of the earthly things (birds, fields, etc) is superior to that of a traditional heaven. It may not be permanent, but it is here, in our experience right now. The beauty of 'April's green' and the memory of awakened birds are more permanent than the traditional underworlds described in organized religion.

Stanza V. The lady says that an earthly paradise is only transient. The man argues that an "imperishable bliss" is possible in a transient world. The awareness of the certainty of death makes us enjoy beauty more fully. Our senses are sharpened with the knowledge of inevitable death. Therefore our enjoyment becomes valuable. In this sense "death is the mother of beauty" (line 3).

Stanza VI. Paradise offers an unchanging panorama (the ripe fruits don't fall). In a heavenly paradise where things don't perish; it is dull and monotonous. Death is the mother of beauty. Death leads to new life, new forms, creativity.

Stanza VII. The earthly paradise offers sun (the 'savage source'), windy lake, trees echoing hills, people sang a song celebrating earthly paradise. 'Dew' in the last line according to the poet himself, stands for the meaninglessness of life.

Stanza VIII. The lady learns that the tomb in Palestine represents the death of Jesus. It is not a symbol of resurrection. There was no resurrection. Our paradise is here and now. Here, deer walk on mountains, quail whistle, sweet berries ripen, flocks of pigeons fly back to their nests in the darkness. The world is chaotic. Imagination alone imposes order on it. There is neither life nor paradise beyond our world.

Stevens describes "Sunday Morning" as a 'pagan poem.' Its sensuous images, sound and rhythm provide a rich experience. The speaker in this poem is a hedonist who argues in favour of worldly pleasures and pains since there is no life after death. He is a strong believer in the earthly religion. This poem is seminal for the entire range of Stevens's poetry. Stevens writes: "the essence of poetry is change and the essence of change is that it gives pleasure."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Explain the statement "Death is the mother of beauty."

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12.2.1.2 "Peter Quince at the Clavier"

Peter Quince at the Clavier

1

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the selfsame sounds
On my spirit make a music, too

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna.

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders watching, felt.

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

2

In the green water, clear and warm,
Susanna lay,
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings,
She sighed,
For so much melody,

Upon the bank, she stood
In the cool
Of spent emotions,
She felt, among the leaves,

3

The dew,
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,
Still quavering,
The winds were like her maids,
On timid feet,
Fetching her woven scarves,
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand
Muted the night,
She turned
A cymbal crashed,
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried
Against the elders by her side:

And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind —
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal,

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing,
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of winter, done repenting,
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now, in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Analysis

Many of the ideas, even words, of "Sunday Morning" re-appear in another early poem, "Peter Quince at the Clavier." Peter Quince is a carpenter. He participates in an interlude being presented before Duke Theseus and his Duchess Hippolyta on their wedding night in Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Peter Quince is presenting a musical piece on a clavier, a keyboard musical instrument, on that occasion. The four parts in the poem are therefore like the four parts of a symphony: sonata, exposition, development of the theme, recapitulation and a final coda.

The first three parts tell the story of Susanna a beautiful and virtuous lady mentioned in *The Apocrypha*. The name means 'lily' in Hebrew. She was the wife of Joakim. She was falsely accused of infidelity by two elders and judges who unsuccessfully tried to seek sexual favours from her. They accost her when she was bathing in green waters. When she was about

to be put to death for her infidelity, a righteous young man, Daniel, exposes the elders and saves Susanna. The elders are punished for their false accusations by death.

The theme is contained in Part IV. Beauty is transient and so its enjoyment becomes poignant. This point is made in "Sunday Morning" also. The poet examines the relationship between art and beauty. Art in this poem is represented by music (Peter Quince playing on the clavier); beauty is represented by Susanna. Art celebrates beauty and this poem tells the story of a beautiful woman, Susanna. Beauty and art are interdependent. Peter Quince's music (art) is immortal, Susanna's beauty may wither and vanish. Art immortalizes beauty which is otherwise transient.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What is the relationship between art and beauty ?

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Analysis

Now let us look at another poem, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream".

12.2.1.3 "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,
The muscular one, and bid him whip
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress
As they are used to wear, and let the boys
Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.
Let be be finale of seem.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet

On which she embroidered fantails once
And spread it so as to cover her face.
If her horny feet protrude, they come
To show how cold she is, and dumb.
Let the lamp affix its beam.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Analysis

The title sounds unusual, if not incongruous. But that is one of the ring master's feats. Stevens sets up a contrast between earthly pleasures such as cigars, curds, flowers, ice-cream, etc, and death. The first stanza deals with the worldly luxuries and the second with death. A poor woman's death and the funeral or *wake* (night spent beside a dead person's body before it is buried) may have been the occasion for this poem. Life continues the happy mood for its survival, but it does not mean any disrespect for the dead.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

Explain the contrasts set up in this poem.

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12.2.1.4 "Anecdote of the Jar"

anecdote of the jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Analysis

"Anecdote of the Jar" is another short poem which, in a way, epitomizes Stevens's view of the role of art in society. The speaker in this poem places a round jar on the top of a hill in Tennessee. The hill is surrounded by wilderness and presents a picture of chaos. The placing of the jar, a product of artistic imagination, imposes some order on the surrounding disorder. The commanding position occupied by the work of art (the jar) transforms the entire scene as nothing else does in the state of Tennessee. This poem is also built on the principle of contrast between an attractive shapely work of human imagination and a wild, disorderly, misshapen hill. Thus imagination can create order out of disorder.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

What does the jar on the hill signify?

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12.2.2 The Role of the Poet

Although Stevens belongs to the world of business, his poetry has hardly any trace of it. His profession and poetry are separate. He thinks of the poet as a person living in an ivory tower, and one who can get "an exceptional view of the public dump and the advertising signs." The poet stays above the dump, the disorder, but he is all the time aware of the dump down below. The poet in the ivory tower surveying the chaos around him and the shapely jar on a hill-top are symbolic of creating order out of chaos and wilderness.

In the modern age, the belief in religion and God is vanishing. In such a situation, poetry
138 can step in and act as a redemptive force. He says: "after one has abandoned a belief in God,

poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption." From the ivory tower, the poet commands a view of reality which is unique. That is reality. The poet's imagination transmutes that reality. "As the reason destroys, the poet must create." In a way, the poet works against reason. Poetry, for Stevens, is "Supreme Fiction." The poet embroiders French flowers on an old black dress. Embellishment and imaginative creation are noticed in another important poem of Stevens, "The Man with the Blue Guitar":

Poetry

Exceeding music must take the place
Of empty heaven and its hymns.

Ourselves in poetry must take their place,
Even in the chattering of your guitar.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

What, according to Stevens, is the role of the poet in the modern world?

12.2.3 Colour Symbolism

The use of the colour, "blue," in this poem is symbolic. Stevens learnt a good deal from the French symbolist poets. 'Blue' refers to imagination approaching "Supreme Fiction;" "Green" is used to refer to natural things, unchanged by imagination:

They said, 'you have a blue guitar
You do not play things as they are'.

The man replied, 'Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar'.

And they said then, 'But play, you must,
A tune beyond us...'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

Explain the colour symbolism in Stevens's poetry.

12.2.4 The two Realities

There is a great difference between bare reality and poetic reality. Bare reality is transformed by metaphor, images, and analogy. The end-product of this process of transformation is poetic reality; Stevens's poetry is an elaboration of the interplay between factual reality and poetic reality. He sums up: "poetry is the subject of the poem".

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

What are the two realities? How are they related?

12.2.5 Music and Other Arts

Besides the colour symbolism, there are images of music and musical terms in Stevens's poetry. We have already noticed it in titles such as "Peter Quince at the Clavier". This poem is structured like a symphony. Music, whether of birds or of humans, transports us to a different world. Besides music, the other fine arts like painting, are often referred to. Stevens's poems create a harmony which is readily understood by our senses. Harmony is the major aim of Stevens. Imagination brings about perfect harmony between factual reality and poetic reality.

12.2.6 Stevens's Achievement

Let us sum up Stevens's achievement as a poet. He invokes the comic, the strange, the bizarre; he experiments with style, attempts frenchified elegance in poetic diction, uses exotic images, unusual sounds, curious analogies and mysterious titles. He grapples with the problem of the relationship of reality and imagination. He believes that art and imagination can impose order on a chaotic world. In his view, true harmony is achieved through a transformation of factual reality into poetic reality. Poetry for him is a 'missal', a book of prayers. It is verily a substitute for religion in the modern world which has lost faith.

12.3 ROBERT FROST

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) is a different sort of poet. His vocabulary and syntax are much simpler. His allusions and images refer to ordinary life. His themes and settings relate mostly to New England. He adopts a conversational tone and offers aphoristic wisdom in his poems. One example of his aphorisms is "Good fences make good neighbours", which appears in "Mending Wall." Nature is a source of analogy and symbol for him. His favourite verse-forms are dramatic monologue and dialogue.

Frost says that his poems are a "momentary stay against confusion." In an important essay, "The Figure a Poem Makes," he writes that a poem "begins in delight and ends in wisdom." This seems to be similar to the classical view that poetry has a dual function: To delight and to instruct. In his own words, his poems are "a clarification of life." These "clarifications" are sometimes distilled into memorable aphorisms, at other times they are scattered in his poems. These clarifications, amorphous as they are, make up for the absence of a coherent philosophy in Robert Frost. These clarifications give him comfort and strength in an impersonal and indifferent universe. Frost's "lover's quarrel with the world" is thus an enlightening and enlivening experience.

Frost's first book of poems is *A Boy's Will* (1913). The others are: *North of Boston* (1914) *Mountain Interval* (1916), *New Hampshire* (1923), *West-Running Brook* (1928), *A Further Range* (1936), *A Witness Tree* (1942), *Steeple Bush* (1947) and *In the Clearing* (1962).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 8

Explain Frost's statement, "A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom."

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12.3.1 The Themes

The poems in *A Boy's Will* are focused on New England. They are simple in language and refreshing in narration. *North of Boston* establishes New England as the setting and the subject of Frost's poems. He called this collection the "book of people." The poems in this book are dramatic monologues or narratives told by various New England characters. Many of these

people express their loneliness and sorrow. Several other characters reconcile themselves to the "diminished" possibilities of life for them. Commonplace observations and experiences are rendered into memorable verse. Thus, home is defined as "something you somehow haven't to deserve" in "The Death of the Hired man." "The Mountain" describes an old man who has lived at the foot of the mountain for a lifetime and lacked the curiosity or ambition to go to the top of it. Routine chores wear out a house-keeper both physically and emotionally in "A Servant of Servants." The landscape moulds the people's character. Lack of economic opportunities to better their lives makes them silent sufferers. These poems show a world largely untouched by industrial development and what that meant to the people of the region.

12.3.2 The Techniques

Frost uses blank verse. The four-line stanza (quatrain) or the sonnet (the fourteen-line lyric) are his favourite forms. He sees endless opportunities to produce the dramatic tones of meaning within the restrictions of a rigid metre. He uses blank verse or quatrains for a leisurely, colloquial exchange.

A typical Frost poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom. "Mending Wall" begins with a description of two adjacent farms, one of pine, the other of apple. The farmers argue about mending a wall separating their farms. The argument of the apple farmer that walls separate people is ideally sound:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.

But the pine farmer is more practical and insists: "Good fences make good neighbors." He has a valid point. This wisdom is revealed gradually. Wisdom is discovered from experience. "Birches" is an example where the poet discovers:

Earth is the right place for love;
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

Frost believes that poetry derives from common speech. New England speech rhythms and simple diction are used in his poetry. The dramatic monologues reproduce with amazing faithfulness the speech and the sentiments of the people. "Birches" is a fine example.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 9

List some features of Frost's poems.

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12.3.3 Nature

Frost draws his images from nature which he observed carefully in all its moods and seasons. His interest in nature for images and analogies is a continuation of the tradition built by his predecessors, Bryant, Whittier and Thoreau. But he does not look upon nature as sacred like Bryant; he does not, like Thoreau, attribute spiritual qualities to nature; he does not become nostalgic like Whittier over nature's gifts. Nature is ambivalent to him. A variety of emotions are roused on different occasions by nature: like the West-Running Brook, it indicates a retrograde movement; it causes baseless fear as in "Storm Fear"; it appears to be intolerant of human intrusion. In the "Birthplace", a mountain seems to drive away people and keep only the trees near it.

Robert Frost loves the beauty of nature and communicates that beauty to us through his descriptions. But we are left with a feeling that man is helplessly alone in an indifferent universe. Frost brings to our attention the terrible things of human life. He is a realist both in his descriptions

of nature and the lessons he draws from nature in its various aspects and moods. His primary interest is in stating the truth and in expressing his insights forcefully.

12.3.4 "Home Burial"

HOME BURIAL

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs,
Before she saw him. She was starting down,
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.
She took a doubtful step and then undid it
To raise herself and look again. He spoke
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see
From up there always-for I want to know."
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,
And her face changed from terrified to dull.
He said to gain time: "What is it you see,"
Mounting until she cowered under him.
'I will find out now-you must tell me, dear,'
She, in her place, refused him any help
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.
But at last he murmured, 'Oh,' and again, 'Oh.'

'What is it-what?' she said.

'Just that I see,'

'You don't,' she challenged. 'Tell me what it is,'

'The wonder is I didn't see at once.

I never noticed it from here before.

I must be wonted to it-that's the reason.

The little graveyard where my people are!

So small the window frames the whole of it.

Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?

There are three stones of slate and one of marble,

Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight

On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.

But I understand: it is not the stones.

But the child's mound—

'Don't don't, don't, don't,' she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm
That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;

And turned on him with such a daunting look,

He said twice over before he knew himself:

'Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?'

'Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!

I must get out of here, I must get air.

I don't know rightly whether any man can,'

'Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.

Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs.'

He sat and fixed his chin between his fists,

'There's something I should like to ask you, dear.'

'You don't know how to ask it.'

'Help me, then.'

Her fingers moved the check for all reply.

'My words are nearly always an offence.
 I don't know how to speak of anything
 So as to please you. But I might be taught
 I should suppose, I can't say I see how.
 A man must partly give up being a man
 With women folk. We could have some arrangement
 By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off
 Anything special you're a-mind to name,
 Though I don't like such things' twixt those that love.
 Two that don't love can't live together without them.
 But two that do can't live together with them.
 She moved the latch a little, 'Don't-don't go.
 Don't carry it to someone else this time.
 Tell me about it if it's something human.
 Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
 Unlike other folks as your standing there
 Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.
 I do think, though, you overdo it a little,
 What was it brought you up to think it the thing
 To take your mother-loss of a first child
 So inconsolably-in the face of love.
 You'd think his memory might be satisfied—
 'There you go sneering now!'

'I'm not, I'm not!
 You make me angry. I'll come down to you.
 God, what a woman! And it's come to this,
 A man can't speak of his own child that's dead.
 'You can't because you don't know how to speak.
 If you had any feelings, you that dug
 With your own hand-how could you?—his little grave;
 I saw you from that very window there,
 Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
 Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
 And roll back down the mound beside the hold,
 I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you,
 And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs
 To look again, and still your spade kept lifting,
 Then you came in, I heard your rumbling voice
 Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,
 But I went near to see with my own eyes.
 You could sit there with the stains on your shoes
 Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave
 And talk about your everyday concerns.
 You had stood the spade up against the wall
 Outside there in the entry, for I saw it.'

'I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed,
 I'm cursed, God, if I don't believe I'm cursed.'

'I can repeat the very words you were saying.
 'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
 Will rot the best birch fence a man can build,
 Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
 What had how long it takes a birch to rot.

To do with what was in the darkened parlour.
 You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go
 With anyone to death, comes so far short
 They might as well not try to go at all.
 No, from the time when one is sick to death,
 One is alone, and he dies more alone.
 Friends make pretence of following to the grave,
 But before one is in it, their minds are turned
 And making the best of their way back to life
 And living people, and things they understand,
 But the world's evil. I won't have grief so
 If I can change it, Oh, I won't, I won't!

'There, you have said it all and you feel better.
 You won't go now, You're crying. Close the door.

The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.
 Amy! There's someone coming down the road!

'You-oh, you think the talk is all. I must go-
 Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you-

'If-you-do!' She was opening the door wider.
 'Where do you mean to go?' First tell me that.
 I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will*-'

Analysis

Let us analyse a few of Frost's poems to get a better understanding of his poetry. "Home Burial" is a remarkable poem in which the unusual and the familiar are blended skillfully. The speech of everyday is used. A husband and wife face a difficult situation. It is the burial of their child by the husband. The grave is seen by the woman from the window. The man has a stoic, matter-of-fact attitude to the whole incident while the woman is overcome with grief. The woman cannot understand the unemotional attitude of the man to the burial of their own child. The man pleads with her not to carry her sorrow to someone else. The woman is unable to reconcile how a man could talk about "everyday concerns" even before he washed off the stains of the fresh earth from his own baby's grave. The woman thinks the man's talk is improper. The world pretends to care for the dead, but it really does not. It goes about its work as usual. The woman wants someone who could share her grief and sympathise with her. As she tries to run out of the house, the man says that he would go after her and bring her back.

This poem illustrates Frost's method. He merely gives a few details and snatches of conversation between the man and his wife. But these little bits suggest a lot more. A part stands for the whole in the figure of speech known as synecdoche. Through a few samples Frost tells a good deal. Frost confessed his preference for the synecdoche as a mode of poetic communication.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 10

Illustrate Frost's use of synecdoche.

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12.3.5 "After Apple-picking"

After Apple-Picking

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still.
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three Apples
I didn't pick upon some bough,
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples; I am drowsing off,
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass,
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take,
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear,
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking; I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired,
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is,
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

Analysis

This is another realistic poem which enchants us. It deals with the agricultural chore of picking apples. It focuses on the anxieties, hard work and the pleasures of collecting a harvest. On the surface that is the meaning of the poem. But there are deeper layers of meaning. It begins with a realistic description of a ladder pointing upwards through an apple tree. The

deeper meaning is hinted when it is stated that the ladder is pointing heaven-ward. The raising and harvesting of apples follows a cyclical annual pattern as does the cycle of seasons. The annual activities of the apple-farmer also follow a cyclical pattern. After a day's hard work he goes to sleep, he dreams. Autumn is the harvesting season, winter is the season for sleep. Man's own cycle of life, death and rebirth follows a similar cyclical pattern.

Another noteworthy feature in this poem is the predominant sensory imagery. There is visual imagery: "Ladder sticking through a tree" is an example. There is imagery of smell in "the scent of apples." Tactile imagery is exemplified in "My instep arch not only keeps the ache." The auditory image is in "The rumbling sound." This poem reminds us of John Keats's "Ode to Autumn" which also celebrates the same season of harvest and which is packed with sensory imagery. From the world of reality to a world of sleep and thence to dreams, Frost's poem has a dream-like quality about it.

12.3.6 "Birches"

BIRCHES

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them,
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust —
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves;
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows —
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone,
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully

With the same pains you use to fill a cup
 Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
 Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
 Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
 So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
 And so I dream of going back to be.
 It's when I'm weary of considerations,
 And life is too much like a pathless wood
 Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
 Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
 From a twig's having lashed across it open.
 I'd like to get away from earth a while
 And then come back to it and begin over,
 May no fate willfully misunderstand me
 And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
 Not to return. Earth's the right place for love;
 I don't know where it's likely to go better,
 I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
 And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
 Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
 But dipped its top and set me down again.
 That would be good both going and coming back,
 One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Analysis

This is a very successful poem of Frost. It recalls the pastime of New England children in swinging over the birch trees. The first part, lines 1 to 41, is descriptive. The second part is reflective.

Swinging does not bend the birches, but ice storms do. The ice on the trees forms into glassy crystals and when the sun warms up the crystal shells drop down. They resemble broken pieces of glass. The weight of ice on the trees bends them, but it does not break them. Some of the trees may remain bent. They resemble girls who bend on their knees to dry their hair. A village boy, who cannot afford to play baseball like his urban counterpart, would swing on the birches in summer and winter. One by one, all the trees are bent through his swinging. Then there is description of the act of swinging (lines 32 to 40). The poet was also a swinger of the birches in his younger days. When he is tired or worried by the cares and anxieties of life, he would like to swing from the earth and come back to it because "Earth's the right place for love". One would like to swing from earth towards heaven, but a return to earth is necessary. The advantage of a swinger of the birches is that he can come to earth which is a proper place for love.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 11

Comment on the imagery in the poem, "Birches."

12.3.7 "Stopping by woods on a snowy evening"

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Analysis

This is a short poem of four quatrains. It appears to be a descriptive poem. On the surface it is just that. Homely images and minor details give the poem a realistic flavour. The vocabulary used is the simplest, mostly monosyllabic (one syllable words). Apart from its realistic description, it is a deeply reflective poem. It carries profound meaning, though its description is simple. The last lines remind the speaker (and by implication the reader) of the promises to be kept and obligations to be met.

Apparently it describes a simple journey to the woods which are being filled with snow. The speaker enjoys watching this beautiful scene on a winter evening. Even his horse would think it odd to stop there where there is no sign of human habitation and it is very dark. While the speaker is deeply absorbed in the beauty of nature, his horse shakes his harness bells to make sure that the speaker did not make a mistake in stopping there. Only the wind and snow flakes are making noise as they sweep down. The speaker can spend any length of time just watching the beautiful snow-filled woods and forget the rest of the world. But he cannot abandon his promises. He has to fulfill his obligations before he can sleep (die). The journey to the woods on horseback is the journey of life. He has a long way to go before he can rest finally. His responsibilities beckon him.

12.3.8 Frost's Achievement

The use of the scenery, the people and the speech of a small region of the United States made Frost get a label as a "regional" poet. His descriptions may be regional, his speech rhythms local and his vocabulary limited. But he discovers universal truths and voices them in memorable phrases in almost every poem. Wisdom comes distilled from experience and processed by insight. The term, "regionalist", need not have a pejorative connotation in Frost's case. He is a regionalist in the best sense of the term. His regional slant has a universal appeal.

12.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the contribution of two major representative poets of the first half of the twentieth century to poetry. We considered the themes, techniques, verse-forms, imagery, views on poetry of Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost. We also analysed four poems of each of these poets for a better understanding of their concerns and achievements.

12.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - 1

The statement refers to the argument that the certainty of death makes us enjoy beauty more fully. Our senses are sharpened with the knowledge of inevitable death.

Check Your Progress - 2

According to the poet art and beauty are interdependent. Art makes beauty immortal. Otherwise it is transient. By celebrating beauty, art immortalizes it.

Check Your Progress - 3

In "The Emperor of Ice Creams" the poet contrasts earthly pleasures such as cigars, curds, flowers and ice cream with death.

Check Your Progress - 4

The jar on the hill signifies a work of art, the product of the artistic imagination which can even create order out of disorder.

Check Your Progress - 5

Stevens believes that the poet commands a view of reality that is unique. This imagination and artistic work raise him above other humanity so that in the modern world, he can redeem life.

Check Your Progress - 6

Colour plays a significant role in the poems of Stevens. For him it is a symbol, for instance 'blue' stands for the imagination and green refers to natural things unchanged by imagination.

Check Your Progress - 7

The two realities are factual reality and poetic reality. The transformation of factual reality by the use of images, metaphors and analogies creates poetic reality.

Check Your Progress - 8

Frost says that poetry has a dual function to delight and then to instruct so it begins with pleasure for the reader but ends in imparting wisdom.

Check Your Progress - 9

Some of the features of Frost's poems are he uses blank verse and creates dramatic tones of meaning within the restrictions of the rigid metre. He uses blank verse for a leisurely, colloquial exchange. His themes are drawn from nature and delight and instruct the reader.

Check Your Progress - 10

Synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part stands for the whole. Frost uses this technique quite often to convey a lot of meaning by the use of a few images or bits of details.

Check Your Progress - 11

Frost creates a beautiful picture to capture a favourite pastime of New England children swinging on birch trees. The bent trees look like girls on their knees to dry their hair. By his descriptions Frost evokes vivid word pictures.

12.6 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Wallace Stevens's statement, "Death is the mother of beauty," with reference to any two of his poems.
2. Explain Stevens's views on the role of the poet and poetry in modern society.
3. Estimate the achievement of Stevens as a poet.
4. What are the chief themes of Frost?
5. Illustrate Frost's use of the synecdoche as a poetic technique.
6. Write a note on Frost's attitude to nature.
7. Do you agree with the view that Frost was a regionalist. Justify your view with reasonable arguments.

12.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

A. For Wallace Stevens

Selected Poems by Wallace Stevens. Ed. Samuel French Morse. New York: Vintage, 1959.

Boroff, Marie. Ed. Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Litz, A. Walton. Introspective Voyager: The Poetic Development of Wallace Stevens. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Pearce, Roy Harrey, et al. Ed. The Act of the Mind: Essays on the Poetry of Wallace Stevens. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

B. For Robert Frost

Selected Poems of Robert Frost With an introduction by Robert Graves. New York: Holt 1963.

Cox, James M. Ed. Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Gerber, Philip. Robert Frost. New York: Twayne, 1966.

Thompson, Lawrence. Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost. New York: Holt, 1942.

UNIT - 13 : CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Theodore Roethke
 - 13.2.1 Roethke's Poetry
 - 13.2.2 Some Poems of Roethke Analysed
- 13.3 Robert Lowell
 - 13.3.1 Some Poems of Lowell Analysed
 - 13.3.2 Lowell's Achievement
- 13.4 Allen Ginsberg
 - 13.4.1 Analysis of a Poem of Ginsberg
 - 13.4.2 Ginsberg's Achievement
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Answers to check your progress
- 13.7 Sample Examination Questions
- 13.8 Recommended Books.

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- describe the important trends in American poetry after World War II
- discuss the poetry of a few major poets of the last fifty years
- assess the contribution of these poets to American poetry

13.1 INTRODUCTION

After World War II, American poetry underwent many significant changes in content, style and technique. The reasons for these changes may be found in the political and other events sweeping over America. The U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (1962 – 73) has had a great effect on American society. During the same period the Civil Rights Movement gathered momentum and stirred the conscience of the Americans. Lack of credibility of the government, the forced resignation of President Nixon for his disgraceful conduct, and the rising level of inflation had all contributed to unsettling the American society.

In poetry there were two groups; one was attempting to preserve the tradition. This group is represented by John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Yvor Winters. The second group favoured the poetry of process and improvisation. Louis Zukofsky, Kenneth Rexroth, and others belong to this group. In a broad sense, it is a re-play of the opposition between classicism and romanticism. T.S. Eliot represented the traditional or the classical tendencies. W.B. Yeats, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens and W.H. Auden were on his side. These tendencies were challenged vigorously by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Thus there is a general shift of poetic sensibility. New Criticism held the view that poetry is public discourse, that it should have logical organization and that it should stick to metrical patterns. *Understanding Poetry* (1938) co-authored by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren influenced the direction of literary studies for nearly three decades. By 1973, Brooks and Warren moved away from their position and conceded the importance of the milieu and the moment to literary studies.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed many revolts in American poetry. Robert Lowell and John Berryman turned away from the style of the 1950s. There was a confessional movement initiated by Lowell and followed by W.D. Snodgrass, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath. The Beat Generation in San Francisco caught public attention through its unconventional and unabashed approach to poetry. Charles Olson led another revolt in the arts in Black Mountain College. W.S. Merwin and his friends of the existential persuasion turned their back on the current poetic conventions. Spanish surrealism influenced Robert Bly and James Wright in Minnesota. They sought fundamental truths by looking into their own psyches. Yet another group based in New York – Frank O'Hara and others – drew inspiration from French surrealism and action painting. They brought "solipsistic aestheticism" to American poetry. These tendencies in contemporary American poetry have led to a "balkanization" with warring groups rooting for their own particular aesthetic and denouncing the others as the literary establishment.

We have selected three poets of this period for our study. They are: Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell, and Allen Ginsberg. We shall discuss some of the better known poems of each of these poets to obtain some idea of the currents of contemporary poetry in America.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

Name the main tendencies in American poetry after World War II.

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13.2 THEODORE ROETHKE

Theodore Roethke (1908 – 1963) one of the finest poets of the twentieth century, died at the height of his creative powers. He won recognition for his poetry during his life-time. The lakes, streams, woods and farmlands of his native place, Saginaw, Michigan, made a deep impact on him. He developed some kind of reverence for nature. Roethke's father was a florist. His greenhouse offered to the young Roethke a paradoxical world of life and death, of beauty and grotesqueness, of growth and decay. The floral world of his father inspired Roethke and provided a rich source of imagery.

13.2.1 Roethke's Poetry

Roethke's poems may be divided into two groups: (1) poems which are traditional in form, rational in theme, and ironic in tone; (2) poems which use free forms and which show Whitman's and Emerson's influence. T.S. Eliot also influenced him in formal and technical matters. Whatever the influences, Roethke's individuality is revealed in his poems. He searches for identity by going back to his childhood, by exploring the depths of consciousness. Here he finds several forms of life—plants and animals— but they have no capacity to think. This world is irrational and animistic. The poet yearns to return to a world of feeling. Roethke said once: "A man goes far to find out what he is." The function of poetry in his view is "to extend consciousness as far, as deeply, as particularly as it can." Through his poems, he attempts to return to his boyhood, and to recapture the smells of his father's nursery. A return to boyhood, albeit in imagination, is a return to a state of happiness. The titles of his poems such as "Cuttings", "Root Cellar", "Transplanting," and "Flower Dump" show the extent of the influence of the greenhouse, its colours, smells and touch. The greenhouse in Roethke's poetic world, stands "for the whole of life, a womb, a heaven-on-earth." There is an innocent pleasure in watching things grow, in

touching the leaves and flowers, in smelling the fragrance. The greenhouse is very much a school for the study of life for Roethke:

I study the lives on a leaf.

This study enables the poet to experience birth, growth, decay, and rebirth. From the dark, subterranean, wet and slimy world, he emerges into a world of light and tidiness. The poet attempts through his poetry to integrate a fragmented self with the life principle inherent in nature. In "Root Cellar" the poet writes:

Nothing would give up life:

Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.

A "primordial life-urge" informs much of Roethke's poetry. His comprehensive view includes *all* living things, including the subhuman. This is not so much a naïve as a primitive attitude: animistic, maybe. Why not? Everything that lives is holy.

Roethke uses a series of loosely linked poems as a sort of sequence, as a means of registering his meditations. For him sensation is more important than thought: "Being, not doing, is my first joy" and "We think by feeling."

Towards the end of his career, Roethke thinks of death and attempts a complex interaction between love, death, dancing and sensuality. He develops this in his tribute to W.B. Yeats in "The Dying Man" (1958). Roethke's recurring meditations on the theme of death are rather ambivalent. He is afraid of it and yet he wants to embrace it. He would be satisfied with the mind's identification with God, but the mind should be free from the feat of death. Only then can the dichotomy between matter and mind be reconciled through a mystical experience.

Whitman, Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens have influenced Roethke in various ways. But he develops an experience in his own way. Towards the end of his life he moves towards acceptance of death:

I am reconciled by death, thought of my death,
The dry scent of a dying garden in September,
The wind fanning the ash of a low fire.
What I love is near at hand,
Always, in earth and air.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

What is the importance of the greenhouse to Roethke's poetry?

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13.2.2 Some Poems Analysed

Let us now study two of Roethke's poems, "The Waking" and "The Right Thing." Read the following poem.

THE WAKING

I wake to sleep and taking my waking slow,
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.
We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
 Of those so close beside me, which are you
 God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly
 And learn by going where I have to go.
 Light takes the Tree: but who can tell us how?
 The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair,
 I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
 Great Nature has another thing to do
 To you and me; so take the lively air,
 And, lovely, learn by going where to go.
 This shaking keep me steady. I should know
 What falls away is always. And is near.
 I wake to sleep and take my waking slow.
 I learn by going where I have to go.

The speaker in this poem is a leaf. A leaf tells its story. It is swayed by the wind and learns to obey. Trees and leaves can only feel, but not think. Their sense of touch may be sharp. The leaf dances and the sound of the dance (the rustling of the leaf) can be heard. Apparently there is a second speaker, another leaf, in line 7. The second leaf also has identical feelings and responses as the first. Light shines on the tree. The humble worm can climb up a complex stair. But the leaf wakes in order to sleep, so even the waking can be slow. Nature bestows air on all the leaves. So they should take the life-giving air. They should be prepared to go wherever they are carried. The shaking of the leaf by the wind, paradoxically, keeps it steady. Leaves fall down all the time. The leaf learns by going wherever it should.

The leaves seem to be discussing the ways of learning. One way is to go wherever one is asked to. Another way is to feel, rather than think. Enjoy the gifts of nature like light and the lively air.

Let us now read another poem of Roethke:

The Right Thing

Let others probe the mystery if they can.
 Time – harried prisoners of *shall* and *will* –
 The right thing happens to the happy man.
 The bird flies out, the bird flies back again,
 The hill becomes the valley, and is still;
 Let others delve that mystery if they can.
 God bless the roots! – Body and soul are one!
 The small become the great, the great the small;
 The right thing happens to the happy man.
 Child of dark, he can outleap the sun,
 His being single, and that being all;
 The right thing happens to the happy man.
 Or if he sits still, a solid figure when
 The self-destructive shake the common wall;
 Takes to himself what mystery he can,
 And praising change as the slow night comes on,
 Wills what he would, surrendering his will
 Till mystery is no more; No more he can.
 The right thing happens to the happy man.

This poem is a criticism of a rational attitude; it pleads for an instinctive and simple life.

a long time. Those who are not worried about such things but enjoy life will see that the right things happen to them. There is happiness in watching the birds fly and the stillness of the valleys. Those who attempt to reason such enjoyable sights try to solve the mystery. Roots shoot up and sprout instinctively. Body and soul are inseparable. By enjoying life, small things may become great and vice versa. The happy man is the recipient of appropriate reward. The happy man can shine better than the sun even if he is in darkness. He may be alone, but a happy attitude does not make him feel lonely. A happy man may sit still and be quite solid (or stable) whereas the rationalist may bring destruction on himself in trying to unravel the mystery. The happy man takes things in his stride and does not presume or attempt to unravel mysteries. The speaker opposes the arid, intellectual life of the rationalists. The poem is a testament of Roetheke's faith in a life of sensations rather than of thoughts like John Keats.

13.3 ROBERT LOWELL

Robert Lowell (1917-1977) is a different sort of poet. He is a poet who espoused several public causes. The "downward glide," the decline in values and morals, and the vulgarity of public life are denounced by him. He was influenced by the fugitive poets, John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, whose formalism impressed him. His aim was to preserve the traditional values. His poems are elegiac in tone for personal and larger losses. At the same time they record his anger and anguish. His early poem, "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," is an elegy to Warren Winslow, his cousin, who died during World War II. It is an emotional account which considers interpersonal relationships and the bond between man and God. Starting with a lament for his personal loss, the poem's scope is enlarged to bring in other contemporary issues. In *The Mills of Kavanaughs* (1951), Lowell uses Catholic symbolism and classical myths. Here too the focus is on the decline in moral values. Death and insanity figure prominently. But *Life Studies* (1959) shows that Lowell abandons a good deal of the earlier symbolism and formal structures. This type of poetry is described as "confessional poetry". Other important volumes of his poetry are: *Imitations* (1961) and *For the Union Dead* (1964). The last three volumes ensure an honourable place for Lowell in American poetry. *Life Studies* begins a new direction in his poetry. By focusing on the revelation of the self, the volume begins the new genre of confessional poetry. Two major developments may be noticed in Lowell's poetry: (1) The search for the impersonal, and (2) the open expression of self-revelation. Lowell's poetry displays technical mastery and elegance. In describing the transience of life, and in depicting death, the poet has won his title to fame.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. Name two recurring themes in Lowell's poetry

13.3.1 Some Poems of Lowell Analysed

Let us now study two well-known poems of Lowell to understand his concerns and achievement. Read the following poems;

Skunk Hour (For Elizabeth Bishop)

Nautilus Island's hermit
heiress still lives through winter in her Spartan Cottage;
her sheep still graze above the sea.

Her son's a bishop. Her farmer
is first selectman in our village;
she's in her dotage.

Thirsting for
the hierarchic privacy
of Queen Victoria's century,
she buys up all
the eyesores facing her shore,
and lets them fall.

The season's ill –
We've lost our summer millionaire,
Who seemed to leap from an L.L.Bean
catalogue. His nine-knot yawl
was auctioned off to lobstermen.
A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.

And now our fairy
decorator brightens his stop for all;
his fishnet's filled with orange cork,
orange, his cobbler's bench and awl;
there is no money in his work,
he'd rather marry.

One dark night
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull;
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town...
My mind's not right.

A car radio bleats,
'Love, O Careless Love...' I hear
my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
as if my hand were at its throat....
I myself am hell;
nobody's here –

only skunks, that search
in the moonlight for a bite to eat.
they march on their soles up Main Street,
white stripes, moonstruck eyes' red fire
under the chalk-dry and spar spire
of the Trinitarian Church.

I stand on top
of our back steps and breathe the rich air –
a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail.
She jabs her wedge-head in a cup
of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
and will not scare.

This poem appears at the end of *Life Studies*. The poet is attempting to secure release imaginatively from his despair and depression. He hopes to find order by exploring himself and finding the inward agony. The uneven length of the lines, the jagged rhythms and the diction are suitable to the theme of this poem.

The setting of the poem is a small, decaying town on the seacoast of Maine. An old lady lives through winter in her small cottage. She is alone and withdraws into the Victorian age, into a dying New England tradition. The millionaire went away to a warmer place. His sailboat was sold. In autumn, the shop in the village was decorated, but there was no business.

The speaker drove in an old car to the top of the hill. He watched for cars with lovers inside. They were making love just on the edge of the graveyard. Thus love and death are related in the unstable mind of the speaker. ("My mind's not right"). The place is desolate except for the skunks which search for food. In his strained mental condition, the speaker imagines that skunks resemble the residents of the sea-side resort. The skunks are quixotic. The last two stanzas are amusing and disgusting. "They will not scare," the poet won't "scare" them either, breathing the "rich air". They show how the poet can master his experience and avoid despair ("I myself am hell") by creating poetry out of his experience.

Now let us read another important poem of Lowell.

For the Union Dead

"Relinquant Omnia Servare Rem Publicam"

The old South Boston Aquarium stands
in a Sahara of snow now. It's broken windows are boarded
The bronze weather vane cod has lost half its scales.
The airy tanks are dry.

Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;
my hand tingled
to burst the bubbles
drifting from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish.

My hand draws back. I often sigh still
for the dark downward and vegetating kingdom
of the fish and reptile. One morning last March,
I pressed against the new barbed and galvanized

fence on the Boston Common. Behind their cage,
yellow dinosaur steam shovels were grunting
as they cropped up tons of mush and grass
to gouge their underworld garage.

Parking spaces luxuriate like civic
sandpiles in the heart of Boston.
A girdle of orange, Puritan-pumpkin colored girders
braces the tingling Statehouse.

Shaking over the excavations, as it faces Colonel Shaw
and his bell-checked Negro infantry
on St. Gaudens' shaking Civil War relief,
propped by a plank splint against the garage's earthquake.

Two months after marching through Boston,
half the regiment was dead;
at the dedication,

William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe.
Their monument sticks like a fish bone
in the city's throat.
Its Colonel is as lean
as a compass-needle.

He has an angry wrenlike vigilance,
a greyhound's gentle tautness;
he seems to wince at pleasure,
and suffocate for privacy.

He is out of bounds now. He rejoices in man's lovely,
peculiar power to choose life and die –
when he leads his black soldiers to death,
he cannot bend his back.

On a thousand small town New England greens,
the old white churches hold their air
of sparse, sincere rebellion; frayed flags
quilt the graveyards of the Grand Army of the Republic.
The stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier
grow slimmer and younger each year –
wasp-waisted they doze over muskets
and muse through their sideburns...

Shaw's father wanted no monument
except the ditch,
where his son's body was thrown
and lost with his "niggers."

The ditch is nearer.
There are no statues for the last war here;
on Boylston street, a commercial photograph
shows Hiroshima boiling
over a Mosler safe, the "Rock of Ages"
that survived the blast. Space is nearer.
When I crouch to my television set,
the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like balloons.

Colonel Shaw
is riding on the bubble,
he waits
for the blessed break.

The Aquarium is gone. Everywhere,
giant finned cars nose forward like fish;
a savage servility
slides by on grease.

The first five stanzas of this poem describe the setting. It is the Boston Common and the Statehouse. Opposite that building is a statue of Colonel Shaw, Commander of a Negro regiment during the Civil War. The sculpture was done by St. Gaudens. The monument was erected to commemorate the heroism and death of the Negro soldiers. William James who gave the oration on the occasion of the dedication of the monument said that he could almost hear the breathing of the Negro soldiers as they marched. The event is fresh in public memory and the sculpture is life-like. Then there is a description of the figure of Colonel Shaw in stanzas VII and VIII. The Colonel and his soldiers have chosen to die. When they die the national flag flutters over their graves, the stone monuments of the unknown soldier of the Union. Shaw's father did not want any monument for his son, but only the ditch where Shaw and his soldiers were killed and buried in a common grave. But there are no statues or monuments for those who died in World War II in Boston. There is, however, a photograph of the horror of a Hiroshima burning on a street advertising a Mosler safe in Boston, a symbol of materialist religion. Only "the Rock of Ages" is a mute survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima. As a contrast, the TV screen shows the pale

faces of Negro School children. Col Shaw is still honoured and respected. The juxtaposition of the heroism of the Negro regiment in the Civil War and the civil rights movement of 1963 brings out the irony. A hundred years after the abolition of slavery, the Blacks had to fight still for civil rights. The Aquarium (see opening lines) in South Boston is replaced by a car park. Instead of live fish swimming in water, we have only cars gliding along the roads like fish. The punch line of the poem comes at the end. A "savage servility" moves along smoothly. Lowell was a conscientious objector to war. He could not reconcile himself to the loss of life and destruction which every war brings. He laments the servility of the soldiers and the people to the prosecutors of war. The Latin epigraph to the poem says: "They gave up everything to serve the republic." The republic in turn made people servile which is an irony. Lowell is critical of the futility and drift of modern society. If Colonel Shaw's statue commemorates the heroism of the Negro regiment, Lowell's poem, "For the Union Dead", is a monument to contemporary history which is marked by shameless servility.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. What is the theme of "Skunk Hour"?

13.3.2 Lowell's Achievement

Lowell assimilated history to his own sensibility better than any poet of his generation. He was also unique in realizing the need to go beyond historical reality. He boldly attacked the "riotous" secular culture in many poems. The inheritance of the Puritans for all their piety is tainted by the blood of the Native American and greed. Lowell wanted to regain for poetry the territory it has surrendered to the novel, that is, the depiction of reality. Telling the undisguised truth became his obligation. That was also a therapy for his mental illness. He also faces "the kingdom of the mad" and dramatizes his own insanity in poems such as "Man and Wife".

Life Studies is considered an important landmark in the development of American poetry since World War II. Lowell broke away from established rhythms and forms in this anthology. His personality became the center of his poetry. His own experience is the seed of his poetry which spirals outward. He presents the bare facts without any argument, explicit or implicit. The reader can draw his own inference. He used both the traditional iambic pentameter and W.C. Williams's free verse. If Lowell's poetry is "confessional", it is not simply personal and autobiographical. Lowell puts his "confessions" in a wider public context and appeals to a larger audience.

13.4 ALLEN GINSBERG

Allen Ginsberg (1926 – 1997) became the powerful voice of the alienated Americans of the post World War II generation. He was influenced primarily by Walt Whitman and William Blake. His poetic lines are much freer than Whitman's; his hallucinations are more frenzied than Blake's. He characterized his generation as: "I saw the minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix angelhead hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection..."

Ginsberg led a vigorous protest against the official culture of the United States. His public readings of his poetry given in many parts of the world made a great impact on the audiences across the globe. He became one of the most widely known American poets of the twentieth century. His fame rests chiefly on *Howl and Other Poems* (1956).

During 1948 – 49 he began to have mystical visions of William Blake. Subsequently he was in a mental hospital for eight months for psychiatric treatment.

He was the leader of the "Beat Generation" or "Beat poets." The term, "Beat Generation," was coined by Jack Kerouac who became a novelist of repute. It has the connotation of "beat down" and "beatitude." It is difficult to define the Beat attitude. But a few features are easily identifiable. It is based on hallucinations produced by drugs or jazz. Another feature is a sense of wonder at trivial things. It also includes worship of sex and the orgasm, Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism. It is opposed to any form of tyranny. It represented an anti-establishment culture. Those who rebelled against received values are called beatniks. Their personal appearance (long hair, sandals, squalor) marked them off as non-conformists. The "Beat" revolution originated and flourished largely in the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the Beat poets revitalized poetry and provided new directions to it.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

Explain the term "Beat poets".

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13.4.1 Analysis of a Poem of Ginsberg

Let us read the following poem:

AMERICA

America I've given you all and now I'm nothing.
America two dollars and twenty-seven cents January 17, 1956.
I can't stand my own mind.
America when will we end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.
I don't feel good don't bother me.
I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind.
America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?
America why are your libraries full of tears?
America when will you send your eggs to India?
I'm sick of your insane demands.
When can I go to the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?
America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.
Your machinery is too much for me.
You made me want to be a saint.
There must be some other way to settle this argument.
Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's sinister.
Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?
I'm trying to come to the point.
I refuse to give up my obsession.
America stop pushing I know what I'm doing.
America the plum blossoms are falling.
I haven't read the newspapers for months,
everyday somebody goes on trial for murder.
America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies.
America I used to be a communist when I was a kid
I'm not sorry.