

BLOCK: I

Unit 1: History of Indian English Literature (Beginnings)

Unit 2: History of Indian English Literature (Early Twentieth Century)

Unit 3: History of Indian English Literature (Post-Independence Period)

Unit 4: Contemporary Voices in Indian Writing

UNIT- 1

History of Indian English Literature: Beginnings

Unit Structure:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Brief History of the Colonial Encounter
- 1.4 Beginnings of Indian Writing in English
- 1.5 Important Writers and Major Trends
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 Reference and Suggested Readings

1.1 Objectives:

This unit aims to make you aware of the complex history that lies behind the very discipline in which you are working to gain a master's degree – English literary study in India, and how it came to be. In one sense, this is not a purely 'literary' history as the impulses creating this discipline in India were explicitly 'non-literary'. Within the space of a few pages we cannot go over all the events and social currents that make up this 'history'. Our unit therefore proposes to help you to

- *read* critically Indian Writing in English,
- *recover* the themes that animate this writing,
- *explore* the scope of this area of literary studies.

1.2 Introduction:

We have already gained, from the paragraph above, the range of ideas that are clustered together within the label 'Indian Writing in English'. We normally tend to accept without question the spread of English education in India and to think of English literary study as an extension of this phenomenon. However, as we look more closely at the way in which English Literature was introduced in our educational institutions, it becomes

clear that the subject always had a privileged position under colonialism. Indeed, for the colonial structures, English literary study was a powerful and apt tool for the consolidation of colonial authority in India. You will find it of particular interest to know that contrary to our familiar identification of ‘literature’ (in the English context, especially) with secular humanist movements, in the Indian context English literary study had an almost opposite role to play in keeping with missionary activity.

Some of this we have compiled below for your understanding. We should point out to you here that the study of Indian Writing in English necessarily embroils us in postcolonial theories. That is natural, given that the colonial stretch of Indian history brings up questions of power, domination, cultural inequalities, cultural conflicts, and therefore the status of Indian Writing in English in general. It is for this reason that the sequence of historical events from the end of the eighteenth century till the present is of such great importance. Below, you will find a brief glimpse of this troubled history.

Stop to Consider:

The term “Indian English literature”- From “Commonwealth” to “Indo-Anglian”

Indian English literature is generally defined as literature written originally in English by Indian authors by birth, ancestry or nationality. Indian English literature is both an Indian literature and a variation of English literature. Indians have started writing in English for communicating with one another and the outside world using English in an Indian way. The term ‘Indian English’ literature is also known as ‘Indo-Anglian’ literature or Indian writing in English. Anglo - Indian literature – the writings of the British or other Western authors regarding India cannot be a part of Indian English literature. Similarly literature in Indian languages translated into English cannot also become a part of Indian English literature unless they are not creative translations by concern authors themselves. Indian writing in English is greatly influenced by the writings in England and the Indians have had their own “Romantics”, “Victorian”, “Georgians” and “Modernists”. However, Indian English literature has contributed to the field of world writing in English in its own way.

1.3 Brief History of the Colonial Encounter:

If we look closely at the history of English in India, we will find that it actually came here to our country before the East India Company did. The earliest instance of an Indian writing in English is Din Muhammad, who migrated to England in 1784 and whose *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* appeared in 1794. It was not a great literary success but it was indeed subscribed to by a number of the elite in Cork, Ireland, where he lived.

The English language actually came to India twenty years before the East India Company came into existence. A Roman Catholic, Father Thomas Stephens came to India to escape persecution in Elizabethan England, around 1578. There were other merchants and traders (John Newbury, Ralph Fitch, William Leedes, James Story) who came to India, too. Ralph Fitch's account of India which appeared in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* in 1599 is comprehensive. Both Stephens and Fitch are representative cases of the missionary and the merchant who first gave rise to what we think of as Indian literature in English.

English really came into circulation on Indian soil around 1660 when the factories of the East India Company along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts began to prosper. You should remember that in 1660, Charles II who had been restored to the throne sanctioned the East India Company with several powers as part of which it could exercise jurisdiction over all the English subjects in the factories and to make war or peace on native Indians. The interaction between the Englishmen on Indian soil and native residents was naturally regulated by practical needs such as the zone of employment in which the Company got its work done with the help of Indian assistants. This created a class of dubashis (or those who were bilingual, familiar with both local languages and English, or French, or Dutch, or Portuguese). This was more common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the time of small European trade centres. Through the fact of Indians working in European trading companies and conversely, Europeans working for Indian rulers, the linguistic transmission began to take place.

1.4 Beginnings of Indian writing in English:

The East India Company, which came to India for trade, gradually became the administrator of the country. Therefore, the company had to maintain offices for this purpose. As it was a costly affair to bring clerks for the office of the company from England, they decided to train some Indian people for the minor jobs of the company and established schools and colleges for this purpose. It was the Charter Act of 1813, which imposed an official responsibility upon the Company to educate Indian natives.

Gauri Viswanathan writes (in *Masks of Conquest*) that the English Parliament, fearing that a commercial company – the East India Company – should assume political importance, looked for a cause to interfere with its workings. This sought-for reason came only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century when Parliament undertook to take “a serious and active interest in Indian political affairs” (27). A visible cause for this turn of parliamentary interest was the moral depravity of those employed by the Company. What it gave rise to was a concern to safeguard the Indian natives “against the wrongs and oppressions of British subjects resident in Bengal” (27). You should remember that the East India Company, by 1757, had already established itself as the virtual ruler of Bengal. This stage of colonial consolidation of power (enmeshed as it was with a more benign concern for Indian culture), led to what has been called the “Orientalist” phase of colonial rule. “Orientalism was adopted as an official policy partly out of expediency and caution and partly out of an emergent political sense that an efficient Indian administration rested on an understanding of “Indian culture” (28). However, as Viswanathan also reminds us, the real concerns behind Orientalism were far from scholarly. They, in fact, point to the infusion of “the worlds of scholarship and politics” (29).

Orientalism came into conflict with a body of thought called ‘Anglicism’. This really means that there were those then who thought that the promotion of indigenous Indian languages and literatures in native education would lead to undesirable consequences. Warren Hastings was succeeded by Lord Cornwallis (1786 – 1793) as governor-general who thought that “the official indulgence toward Oriental forms of social

organization, especially government, was directly responsible for the lax morals of the Company servants. . . To Cornwallis, the abuse of power was the most serious of evils afflicting the East India Company, not only jeopardizing the British hold over India but, worse still, dividing the English nation on the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise” (30).

Cornwallis’ successors were shrewd enough to see that support for Orientalism would help to preserve the feudal character of British colonial administration. Briefly, however, there were various compelling reasons for the promotion of native Indian culture and learning although there were also opposing reasons for carrying out such reforms as would bring Indians closer into the circle of western influences. This was related to the compulsions of British rule which was moving towards the greater consolidation of power. Partly as a result of these diverse negotiations by the British of the Indian situation, the Charter Act of 1813 opened up India to missionary activity which allowed scope for missionaries to carry out the reforms they thought were necessary in relation to native morals. What we should note is that English education was intricately linked with the British government’s policies of exerting and reinforcing its power and domination over India.

SAQ:

How would you describe the circumstances in which Indian writing came into existence? (100 words)

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The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy revealed the close involvement of Englishmen like James Harington, J.P.Larkins, W.W.Martin, John C.Sutherland, Henry Shakespear, Holt Mackenzie, Horace Wilson, Andrew Stirling, William B.Bayley, Henry Prinsep, Nathaniel Halhed, and John Tytler, with Indian political and cultural life. This was during the period from 1805 to 1820. Horace Wilson was probably the best known of the group. Wilson was secretary to the Committee of Public Instruction and in this capacity he advocated various reforms in the Indian curriculum

to bring in the teaching of European science and English literature along with the Oriental languages. In this controversy the most prominent were people like Macaulay, Charles Trevelyan and Alexander Duff. The controversy itself was triggered off by the General Council of Public Instruction in Calcutta proposing to withdraw financial support to Oriental learning in favour of promoting the study of English and literature (101).

According to the Charter Act of 1813, a sum of not less than one lakh rupees was to be kept aside for the improvement of native education, although there were no definite instructions in the Act regarding how the amount of one lakh should be spent. As Viswanathan continues, “The policy in the years immediately following the Charter Act was to establish institutions devoted to the teaching of Oriental languages and literature”. But this policy was not without its problems – “For as the British swiftly learned, to their dismay, it was impossible to promote Orientalism without exposing the Hindus and Muslims to the religious and moral tenets of their respective faiths—a situation that was clearly not tenable with the stated goal of “moral and intellectual improvement” (37).

How does this story connect with that of English education in India? The introduction of English literature in India came as the solution to the “tension between increasing involvement in Indian education and enforced noninterference in religion”. A clause within the Charter Act itself, mentioned the “revival and improvement of literature”. The term, “literature”, having been left vague, came to be later interpreted by Thomas Babington Macaulay (about twenty years later) as Western literature. In the wake of Macaulay’s well-known ‘Minute’ of 1835, William Bentinck, the Governor-General, adopted the English Education Act under which the teaching of English was taken out of “the Sanskrit College and the Madrassa and confined to institutions devoted to studies entirely conducted in English” (41). William Bentinck, on 7 March 1835, declared that “the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone”.

K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar narrates that from 1835 onwards came a period of 'Anglicization' which also found eager support among Indians as it held out the apparent promise of "new life, opened new vistas of knowledge". In 1854, Sir Charles Wood's (a member of the Select Committee of the British Parliament in 1852-53) despatch to Lord Dalhousie (then Governor-general) took note of the problems arising out of this new situation. Today, Sir Charles Wood is remembered for the spread of English education in India, but his despatch was guided by colonial concerns and acknowledged the need to create a class of people who would "emulate us in the development of the vast resources of their country, . . . secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the product of British labour" (*Masks of Conquest* 146).

During the twenty years between 1835 and 1855 – the period of Macaulay's 'Minute', the English Education Act of Bentinck and Wood's Dispensations – the number of English-speaking persons increased which contributed to the emergence of Indian English literature. Iyengar gives interesting details:

"It is said that even in 1834-5, 32,000 English books sold in India as against 13,000 in Hindi, Hindustani and Bengali, and 1,500 in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. The vogue for English books increased, and the demand came even more from the Indian than the Englishman in India" (28).

Gauri Viswanathan sums up the significance of these policy moves in relation to education in India: "The English Education Act of 1835, proposed by Governor-General William Bentinck on Macaulay's advice, made English the medium of instruction in Indian education. But . . . Bentinck's resolution was not as revolutionary in the introduction of a new language (the English language was already being taught in India even before 1835) as in endorsing a new function and purpose for English instruction in the dissemination of moral and religious values. In withdrawing funds from support of Oriental studies in favor of English,

the act dramatically reversed England's commitment to a non-partisan, eclectic policy. Administrators preceding Bentinck, including Minto, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Charles Metcalf, Thomas Munro, and John Malcom, had instinctively advocated a classical approach to the study of language and literature as an end in itself, resisting both Utilitarian and missionary pressures to enlist literary as a medium of modern knowledge and as a source of religious instruction, respectively. With the Charter Act, the conflict between commitments to active intervention and neutrality pressed into existence a new discipline – English literature” (44).

Christianity first dug its deepest roots in South India. Missionary centres of education sprang up alongside Hindu or Native Schools and colleges. (KRSI41) Rabindranath Tagore's father, Maharshi Debendranath, implored Hindu parents to send their children to native schools and not the missionary schools. But western education carried the mass of popular support: “It was the ‘open sesame’ to knowledge, freedom, power; it cut the old bonds of convention and tradition; it let in light into the old dark rooms of an obscurantist faith; and it made a new world and a new life possible for its beneficiaries.” Surendranath Banerjea's words explain this cultural transformation:

“Our fathers, the first fruits of English education, were violently pro-British. They could see no flaw in the civilization or culture of the West. They were charmed by its novelty and its strangeness. The enfranchisement of the individual, the substitution of the right of private judgment in the place of traditional authority, the exaltation of duty over custom, all came with the force and suddenness of a revelation to an Oriental people who knew no more binding obligation than the mandate of immemorial usage and venerable tradition.”

Such a description catches the impulses behind the social acceptance of new ways of conducting the business of life. The prejudices derived through Hindu traditions, the old superstitions, all became targets of cultural change. This was the core of the process subsequently understood as ‘Westernization’.

Stop to Consider:

Literary ferment in India:

K.R.S. Iyengar calls the years from 1835 to 1855 the “phoenix-hour that bred Indo-Anglian literature”. The imposition of English-centred education in India led to “the literary renaissance in India.” “The study of English literature stimulated literary creation in Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, and the other languages, and some of the greatest writers of the last 100 years have been men and women educated in English, even if they didn’t seek creative expression through English; and . . . some have been unrepentant bilingualists, writing in two languages, English and their mother tongue, with equal facility, and if necessary translating their English into their mother tongue or their Bengali or Marathi or Tamil into English. The filiations between the modern Indian literatures (including Indo-Anglian literature) and English literature have been close, and the links have been renewed” (30).

The eminent critic, Meenakshi Mukherjee, gives some important insights into this phenomenon in her book, *The Perishable Empire*, as regards the writing of novels in English after 1835. To what extent English had already made inroads into the thoughts of Indian writers can only be gauged by taking into account how such individuals were using the colonial language for diverse purposes. You will find it interesting to read her chapter, “Nation, Novel, Language” in the book named above.

1.5 Important Writers and Major Trends:

Raja Rammohan Roy is generally considered to be “the morning star of the Indian renaissance”. Indian writing in English in India is a manifestation of the new creative urge in India which is referred to as the literary ‘Renaissance’ in India. In terms of imparting western education and bringing a literary Renaissance to India, Raja Rammohan Roy played a very significant role. His ‘Letter on English Education’ (of 11 December 1823) is almost equated with being a manifesto of the Indian Renaissance. Well educated, and proficient in many languages, he wrote extensively in Bengali, Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit and English. He was the first Indian master of English prose who wrote and spoke forceful English long

before Macaulay's minute was published. Roy wrote almost thirty essays in English on various subjects. "A Defense of Hindu Theism" (1817) is regarded as the first significant piece of writing in English by an Indian. For his iconoclastic views, he suffered expulsion from his parental home at the age of sixteen, although he was restored to his father's favour in 1794, and took to service with the East India Company in 1804. Most of his writings were on religious, social, historical and political subjects. In the field of journalism, he edited periodicals in English, Bengali and the Persian languages. His writings included articles on religion (Hinduism and Christianity) as well as politics. His contribution as a social reformer is also remarkable. He was concerned with the sad plight of women in orthodox Hindu society and raised his voice of protest against it and various other superstitious beliefs and customs existing in Indian society.

Stop to Consider:

Rammohun Roy's writings:

You can read about Rammohun Roy's writings in any standard literary history. However, some of these are especially notable: his political writing as contained in the two "Petitions Against the Press Regulations" (1823) and the 'Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India' (1832). Such examples show the extent to which Roy was prepared to oppose British policies. About thirty-two essays by him are on various subjects. His compilation "Precepts of Jesus" (1820-21) is remarkable for his knowledge of the scriptures in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

He is recognised as probably the first Indian master of English prose. He created a valuable impression of himself on leaders of English opinion in his final sojourn in England in 1831-33. Significantly, he started the practice of Indian leaders writing their autobiographies with his own brief, commissioned sketch which was published in the Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette.

His Social Reform:

K.R.S.Iyengar remarks that "Rammohan, although he could be named as the first of the Indian masters of English prose, was great in so many fields that he belongs to Indian history more than to mere Indo-Anglian literary history" (33). His reform activities began

around the time he left the service of the Company and returned to Calcutta. In the period 1823-33, Rammohan Roy undertook reforms within a religious direction which ultimately led to the setting up of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. This Samaj is important in the history of Indian culture in the 19th century.

You should find out about the social reforms carried out by reformers like Keshub Chunder Sen (1838 – 1884) and Dayanand Saraswati (1824 – 1883) who founded the Arya Samaj, Kashinath Trimbak Telang (1850 – 1893) and Mahadev Givnd Ranade (1842 – 1901). K. R. S. Iyengar points to the obvious differences between such leaders and the ‘Derozio men’ in terms of their final goals. Other figures include Dadabhai Naoroji (1825 – 1917), and Phirozeshah Mehta (1845 – 1915).

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) known as ‘the Grand Old Man of India’ also contributed to the field of Indian English prose through his numerous speeches on various matters which have been collected in ‘Essay, Speeches, Addresses and Writings’ (1887) and Speeches and Writings (1961). Known as ‘Rishi Ranade’ Mahadev Govinda Ranade (1842-1901) was a patriot, a social and religious reformer and an influential thinker of the 19th century Indian intellectual scenario. Religious and Social Reforms (1902), Miscellaneous Writings (1915) and The Wisdom of Modern Rishi (1942) are three collection of his speeches and writings which were published posthumously.

As Iyengar points out, despite the many reformist organisations which came into existence at this time (the Brahmo Samaj, Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant’s Theosophical Society, the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj) nothing could turn back the tide of the challenge of the ‘West’ and it is in this context that we have to place the significance of figures like Ramakrishna. The Ramakrishna Mission was established by Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna’s chief disciple, a movement that undertook spiritual and humanitarian enterprises.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) was important in expressing a viewpoint which we can, today, identify as the moment of the cultural turmoil caused by the increasing ‘westernisation’ that took place with the prolonged presence of the British in India. He was fired by the revolutionary principles of Romantic poetry and with his influence on his friends – the ‘Derozio men’ – gave voice to feelings of iconoclasm brought about through the cultural encounter with western values. Into this mental space stepped the missionaries who were thus enabled to carry on their mission of proselytisation. The new converts to Christianity thus became deployed western values in challenging older forms of Hindu orthodoxy. “The Babu became anglicized overnight in name, dress, manners, speech; in Professor Radhakrishnan’s words, the Babu’s voice now became an echo, his life a quotation, his soul a brain, and his free spirit a slave to things”. . . The new education took long and rapid strides in Western and South India, and Christianity made deep inroads into the former preserves of Hinduism...” (Iyenger 41).

Derozio was the first Indian poet to write notable verse in English. The history of Indian English poetry in the early period started with him. He was a teacher of English literature in Hindu college. A poet as well as a teacher of poetry, Derozio had deep love for the world of Nature. In his short poetic career he published two volumes of poetry, *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jangheera: a metrical tale and other poems* (1828). As a poet, he was influenced by the English Romantics like Byron, and Scott besides others, and his shorter poems bear witness to this influence. The satirical poems and long narrative poems also clearly indicate his special affinity with Byron. Another noteworthy feature of Derozio’s poetry is its burning nationalistic zeal which gets reflected in poems like “To India - My Native land”, and “The Harp of India”. He is also a pioneer in the use of Indian myth and legend, imagery and diction in poetry.

Kashiprasad Ghosh, who was a poet of pure Indian blood, published a volume of verse entitled *The Shair or Minstrel and other poems* in 1830, three years after Derozio signalled the birth of Indian English poetry. He was one of the first Indians to publish a regular volume of

English verse. **Michael Madhusudan Dutt**, the epoch-making writer in Bengali also wrote verse in English like Derozio. M.M.Dutt was also influenced by the English Romantics. His long narrative poem *The Captive Ladie* (1849) reveals the influence of the English Romantics, especially Byron. *Vision of the Past* (1849) is another long poem in English by him dealing with the Christian theme of temptation, fall and redemption of Man.

However, it was the writer **Toru Dutt** (1856-77) with whom Indian English poetry really developed from imitation to authenticity. The third and youngest child of Govin Chunder Dutt, Toru Lata, born a Hindu, was baptized along with the other members of the family in 1862. She was educated in France and England which enabled her to translate French lyrics - one hundred and sixty-five in all, by about a hundred different French poets - into English. The translated poems were published under the title *A Sheaf Gleaned in the French Fields* (1876) which was the first collection of her poems. Her second collection of poems, *Ancient Ballads & Legends of Hindustan* (1882) was published posthumously. The poems in this collection show her rootedness in the soil of Hindu thought and tradition as well as her attempt to interpret the spirit of the East to the West. The ballads of this collection are replete with Indian myths and legends and show her understanding of the spirit underlying them like Derozio. She was also a Romantic at heart and (like many Romantic poets) she died of tuberculosis when she was 21 years. But she was not a conscious imitator of the English romantics like Derozio and her other predecessors. Her poetry bears the witness of her basic originality and she never attempted to anglicize her 'Oriental' themes. She is an objective poet who avoids conscious comments. She describes events, scenes and persons clearly without over-elaboration. She is a narrative poet of rare charm. 'Savitri', one of the narrative poems by Toru Dutt, reveals her skill in wonderful narration. Her poetry also reveals a keen sensitiveness to nature, specially to colour and her powerful observation of the world of nature, specially the trees and flowers. The elements of story-telling, romantic longing for the past are also noticeable in her poetry.

Toru Dutt is described by her father in a sonnet: “Puny and elf-like, with dishevelled tresses/Self-willed and shy”. Many aspects of her personal history (the family transfer to France and then to England, for instance) and her private, intimate personality provide interesting reading. A French novel she wrote – *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Arvers* - was published posthumously by her father, Govin Chunder, in 1879. The reception it was given in Paris testifies to the rare talent that Toru Dutt had been endowed with. A sonnet with which she ended the volume, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, begins with the lines –

“The flowers look loveliest in their native soil
And their kindred branches; plucked, they fade
And lose the colours Nature on them laid . . .”

Ramesh Chunder Dutt, (1848-1909) a cousin of Toru Dutt’s, was an Indian civil service official who took voluntary retirement in order to devote himself to scholarly and creative writing. He translated the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata into English along with selections from the Rig Veda, the Upanishads and other important texts. His *Ways Of Ancient India* (1894) is a collection of his verse translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics into English.

SAQ:

(1) Why, do you think, did Indian writers find it almost natural to turn to English Romantic poetry? Do you think the assessment made by M.K.Naik is apt? (60 + 30 words)

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(2) How would you judge the significance of translations into English of texts in Indian languages? (70 words)

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Manmohan Ghosh (1869-1924) was the elder brother of Aurobindo Ghosh. He was taken to England by his parents, along with his other

brothers, where he had his early education at Manchester and London. English became his first language; it became his mother tongue. But he had to return to India, despite his unwillingness to do so. Returning to India, he felt alien in his surroundings. Unlike Toru Dutt and Sir Aurobindo Ghosh, Manmohan found no inspiration in Indian life and culture. Therefore, he continued the tradition of nineteenth-century English poetry in his work. His poetry includes themes and images which are Western and universal. His sense of exile, loneliness, love for solitude and intense sorrow caused by his wife's death deepens the meditative mood of his poetry. In 1890, came *Primavera* which is a collection of poems by Manmohan, Stephen Phillips, Arthus Cripps and Binyon. *Love Songs and Elegies* is a collection of poems by Manmohan which was published during his own life-time (1898). His short lyrical poems were published posthumously in 1926 under the title *Songs of life and death*. Manmohan had a strong inclination towards Greek literature, Greek art and Greek mythology as well as an intense passion for the world of nature and beauty. However, hovering between two worlds – the one of England, and the other of India – he could not fulfill the early promise of *Primavera*.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), a younger brother of Manmohan Ghosh, is a unique figure in the history of Indian English poetry. He had a multitalented personality combining poet, a revolutionary, a thinker, a writer, a playwright, and a sage. Like his brother Manmohan, he was also educated in England. In 1893, Aurobindo returned to India, Aurobindo discovered his roots in Indian culture and thought which inspired his poetry. During his long poetic career, spreading from 1880 to 1900, Aurobindo tried his hand at different kinds of verse such as lyric, narrative, philosophical and epic. The influence of Milton, Keats, Shakespeare and Tennyson is noticeable in his poetical works. His *Songs to Myrtilla* appeared in 1895 which was followed next year by his narrative poem *Urvashi*. His early short poems are mostly minor verse celebrating familiar poetic themes of love, sorrow, and death in a typically romantic style. But his later poetry is mystical and meditative expressing his originality. Sir Aurobindo's later poetry includes *Six Poems* (1984), *Poems* (1941), *Last Poems* (1952). *Savitri: A Legend and a symbol* is a major epic poem by him dealing with the well-known legend of Prince Satyavan and Savitri, his devoted wife who rescued Satyavan from death.

The poem remains a landmark in the history of Indian English poetry. Both Manmohan Ghosh and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh started writing poetry in the nineteenth century and continued it to the early twentieth century.

The beginning of Indian English fiction is attributed to the publication of *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) in English by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who became the first Indian novelist in English. It was followed by Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* in 1876, and Toru Dutt's *Bianca* in 1878, which were also written in English. Romesh Chunder Dutt, whose verse has already been considered, translated two of his own Bengali novels into English namely *The Slave Girl of Agra* and *The Lake of Palms*. Although the real beginning of Indian English fiction took place in the 19th century, its real development was seen in the early twentieth when the Indian English novel was deeply influenced by the Gandhian movement of Indian English fiction will be discussed in the second unit.

Check Your Progress:

1. Comment on the 'Romantic' features of Derozio's poetry.
2. Discuss Toru Dutt as a narrative poet writing across Indian and European cultures.
3. Elaborate on the 'Indian' themes in Manmohan Ghose's poetry.
4. Discuss the 'mysticism' attributed to the poetry of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

1.6 Summing Up:

In this unit you have come to know how to react to the history of Indian writing in English. Set in the period of British Colonialism and 'Orientalism', the history of Indian English literature provides scope for a meticulous understanding of the reasons behind the development of what we call the Indian Writing in general. Issues implicitly discussed in this unit include the ideas like-the British possession of India, the spread of the English language, the colonial education policies and the role of English literature, the responses of the nationalist social reformers and its impact on Indian English literature in its early phase.

1.7 References and Suggested Readings:

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UNIT- 2

History of Indian English Literature (Early Twentieth Century)

Unit Structure:

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Nation, Language, Aesthetics
- 2.4 Indian English Prose of the early twentieth century
- 2.5 Indian English Poetry of the Early Twentieth Century
- 2.6 Other Major Categories of Indian Writing in English
 - 2.6.1 Indian English Fiction
 - 2.6.2 Indian English Drama
 - 2.6.3 Short Story
- 2.7 Summing Up
- 2.8 Reference and Suggested Readings

2.1 Objectives:

The purpose of this unit is to enable you to get an overall picture of the background of Indian Writing in English. By the end of this unit you should be able to

- *sketch* the outlines of the development of Indian Writing in English,
- *identify* the issues that have provided the themes of this canon,
- *trace* connections between the writing itself and the larger history,
- *describe* or narrate the body of writing called Indian English Literature.

2.2 Introduction:

M.K.Naik in his book *A History of Indian English Literature* sums up the salient features of this segment of the history of Indian English Literature history. There was the great Revolt (now also referred to as

the First War of Indian Independence); Indian attitudes towards British presence; the entanglement of aesthetic sensibility with political circumstances. We can take various positions on this stretch of time within which Indian English literature took its shape – either politically, or anthropologically, or as literary historians, to name only a few. As students, we can find much of great interest here because it relates so closely to our own lives at this point of time. But, as V. Dharwadkar points out, we should remember that literature and its cultures usually exist at the crossroads of various historical influences. However, Indian writing in English and similar literatures face a unique complexity. This complexity arises from the dual connection between literature and language, and between language and its speakers. When a community writes, shares, and enjoys literature in a language that is not historically its own, the process of creating literary works and tracing their history becomes more intricate.

You would surely find it interesting to read the account of the changes and the debates in the Indian education system given by G. Viswanathan. Several questions come to mind as we read her account: why was the introduction of English literature so important to the colonial enterprise? What does it show of our acceptance of this discipline as a part of our own intellectual training? Could it have been otherwise? Most of all, can literary activity ever be differentiated from political agendas? You will note that English literary studies were introduced in India ahead of their inclusion in educational curricula in England. Schools in Britain began to teach English literature only in 1871 whereas in India the demand for the adoption of English literary study comes as early as 1816, in the setting up of the Hindu College.

Some of the thinking that lay behind English literary study in colonial India can be grasped by looking at the “Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain” written by an official of the East India Company in 1792, Charles Grant. Grant realised the importance of morality or cultural superiority in the reinforcing of British hold over Indian subjects. It was later felt by succeeding British officials that moral education of Indians was as important as material

control. It began thus to be seen by such administrators that English literary study was a useful tool of carrying forward of religious ideals through this educational means. This happened most clearly in the case of [86] the committee comprising Alexander Duff (missionary), Charles Trevelyan (administrator), and W. H. Pearce who undertook to select and prescribe particular literary texts for Indian libraries and schools. What happened was almost “fortuitous” because the colonial administration faced difficulties in keeping apart the religious and the secular aspects of the British presence in the country. It is revealing to note that English literary texts (Shakespeare, Addison, Bacon, Locke, for example) were found to be infused with religious elements. Thus what had been proposed by Charles Grant (to undertake the moral education of Indians) became possible through the adoption of the study of English literary texts. In this manner English literary study was definitely instrumental in the teaching of the tenets of Christianity in India.

English literary study in India also had other uses for the colonial administration: the training of administrators. With this aim in sight, Lord Hardinge, governor-general from 1844 – 1848, declared that Indians who distinguished themselves in European literature would be preferred for public office.

The end of the great Revolt of 1857 and the declaration of peace on 8th July, 1858, brought an end to the activities of the East India Company in India. During the period from 1857 to 1947, the Indian spirit underwent a radical transformation from a sense of inferiority and frustration to a newly aroused self-confidence and self-awareness. It was the period when India rediscovered her identity as well as learnt from the West to Indian English literature also. This period witnessed a remarkable development. We have already discussed a little the important writers and major trends of Indian English literature in the first unit starting from the very beginning to the end of the 19th century. In this unit, we will cover the early 20th century of Indian English literature which includes the period from 1900 to 1947. But at the same time it is also notable there were some writers who started writing in the 19th century and continued it to the early 20th century.

2.3 Nation, Language, Aesthetics:

The East India Company lost its hold over the Indian subcontinent with the proclamation of peace on 8 July 1858 at the end of the Great Revolt. On 1 January 1874, the Company was formally dissolved. There were now radical changes in relations between Indians and the British. Among the great changes that were visible now came the spread of ideas from a generation which had received its higher education. A common language now spread among the people – English – even as, interestingly, the vast network of the Indian railways also began to expand over the subcontinent. The culture of print had by now grown in the bigger cities. A period of religious, social, and political reform now began similar to 1828 when Raja Rammohun Roy had first established the Brahmo Samaj. After his death, this movement was further propagated by Keshub Chunder Sen while similar organisations like the Prarthana Samaj were set up by M.G.Ranade and R.G.Bhandarkar in 1867 in Bombay. Swami Dayanand Saraswati set up the Arya Samaj in 1875 in the cultural turn towards an earlier, purer form of Hinduism. Another kind of support to this wave of revivalism came from the Theosophical Society founded in New York by Madame H.P.Blavatsky, Col. H.S.Olcott, W.O.Judge besides others. This movement moved its base to India in 1878 but it was an eclectic creed combining the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Egyptian thought, early Christianity, the teachings of Plato and Pythagoras.

Swami Vivekanand, following the teachings of his leader, Swami Ramakrishna, led the movement that brought back life to ancient Hindu thought. This movement has come to be better known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Among the Muslims the climate of resurgence led to the establishment of the Anglo-Arabic College at Aligarh in 1875 by Syed Ahmed Khan. This later became the Aligarh Muslim University. Even earlier, Abdul Latif had founded in 1863 the Mohammedan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta. The National Mohammedan Association had been started in 1878 by Ameer Ali.

At the political level change came in the form of the founding of the British India Association in 1839, the founding of the Bengal British India Society in 1843, and the British Indian Association of Calcutta in 1851. In 1876, Surendranath Banerjea founded the Indian Association

“which was intended to be the centre of an All-India movement based on the ‘conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini’” (Naik 33). The Indian National Congress, following upon various protests against the Arms Act, the Vernacular Press Act, the Ilbert Bill and for the lowering of the age limit for entry into the civil services, came into existence in 1885 with the support of liberal Englishmen like A.O.Hume, Sir William Wedderburn and Sir David Yule. Political events of that time both in India (as the sense of resentment caused by the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon) and elsewhere in the world (the fall of Russia to Japan in 1905, revolutionary movements in China and Turkey, the Persian liberal movement) helped to reinforce the strength of the Congress. With World War I came the increasing realization that British imperialism can be validly challenged, a challenge probably made possible with the force of American democracy, according to Percival Spear. As M.K.Naik observes, the turn towards more positive attitudes in this period made possible a more confident mode of writing.

In his *Dimensions of Indian English Literature*, M.K.Naik emphasises that after the Revolt of 1857 there was a perceptible change in the way writers wrote. In poetry, for instance, it the period saw the “high noon of Indian English romanticism”. This was clear in the poetry of Toru Dutt and Sarojin Naidu, masterpieces like “Gitanjali” (Tagore) and “Savitri” (Sri Aurobindo). Naik’s comments are useful to note:

“It was an inevitable product of the post-Revolt age, when the awakening ushered in by Rammohun Roy in the earlier phase had become a vigorous revival of the Indian spirit. The rise of the new Indian intelligentsia, the spread of movements of religious and social reform and the commencement of organized political activity with the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 led to a re-discovery of the Indian identity. It was a time of hope and expectation, of the birth of a national consciousness, of a new-found strength to accept the challenge of the present and overcome it, and of a feeling that one stood on the threshold of tremendous possibilities. The spirit of an age like this finds its natural expression in a predominantly romantic art, as the story of Elizabethan literature shows. The poetry of Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu could not therefore but be romantic if it had to express

the ethos of their age. It was not a product of the mere aping of the available British masters who happened to be romantics; it was at its best the voice of the contemporary Indian Time-spirit. True, it did not always ‘speak out, loud and bold’, but when it did so, it was an utterance authentically Indo-English.” (5)

SAQ:

How does the question of ‘Indianness’ or ‘identity’ and ‘authenticity’ become a part of the problem of the history of Indian English literature? (80 words)

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2.4 Indian English Prose of the Early Twentieth Century:

The rediscovery of the Indian past and a strong awareness of the current problems of India influenced the prose writings of this period. The Indian Renaissance of the 19th century produced different kinds of prose writings like religions, historical, cultural and political which were continued in the early twentieth century also. The prose writers of the 19th century including Rammohan Roy, M.G. Ranade, K.T. Telang, Vivekananda, and others were worthily followed by others during the last part of the 19th century and the early part of the twentieth century. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, A.K. Coomaraswamy, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jadunath Sarkar and Radhakrishna are some of the distinguished prose-writers of this period. Some of these writers started writing in the 19th century and continued it to the early 20th century while some others started writing in the early 20th century and continued it to the post-independence period.

Some names that stand out in the field of prose-writing are: Dadabhai Naoraji (1825-1917), the “The Grand Old Man of India”; Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901); Kashinath Trimbeck Telang (1850-1893);

Pherozezshah Merwanjee Mehta (1845-1915) and Sir Dinsha Edulji Wacha (1844-1936); Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), “Lokamanya Tilak”; Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915); Kristo Das Pal (1834-84); Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94); Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909); and Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925). In this mass of detail, we can observe that major impulses behind the literary output in prose by the figures we have named here, as well as their contemporaries, were “the re-discovery of the Indian past and a strong awareness of the problems of the day” (Naik 89-90). All the names we survey above lay claim to the English language through their mastery over it combined with the acute consciousness of Indian history and culture and the simultaneous resistance to British administrative and economic policies. The generation belonged mostly to the Presidency towns of Bombay and Calcutta and this is to be seen more in the case which was the birth-place of the Indian National Congress.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, better known as “Lokamanya”, was a mathematician, a scholar and a researcher, who contributed to Indian English prose writing as in *The Orion : Researcher into the Antiquity of the Vedas* (1893) and *The Arctic Home of the Vedas* (1903) are two books written by him. His English speeches were collected in *Writings and Speeches* (1922).

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1916), the younger contemporary of Tilak and the disciple of Ranade, also contributed to Indian English prose through his various speeches which have been collected in *Speeches* (1908-1916) and *Speeches and Writings: 3 Vols*, (1962). His prodigious memory, careful preparation, balanced and fair presentation, reasonable argument made him a famous speaker who was highly praised by Lord Curzon after his death.

Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925) was one of the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress. He was acclaimed as the most powerful orator in English of this period, who delivered numerous speeches on various contemporary issues. His autobiography *A Nation in Making : Being the reminiscences of fifty years of public life* (1925) is more public than a private document tracing the growth of the Indian National movement.

According to Naik, the “most noteworthy prose of the period” came from the trio in Bengal-Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Rabindranath Tagore is the most outstanding figure of modern Bengali literature who wrote primarily in Bengali, but had a mastery over English also. He was a versatile genius whose achievements were many-sided. His active literary career spread over a period of 60 years in which he produced numerous lyrics, poetic plays, social plays, short stories, essays, autobiographical fragments, novels, and letters. Tagore’s career as a writer of English prose began many years after he had established a name in his mother tongue. His prose writings in English establish him as an internationalist and a humanist spreading the gospel of universal harmony between Man and Man, Man and Nature and Man and the Divine, Tagore wrote prose both in English and Bengali. His prose writings in Bengali had been translated in English by others and hence they cannot be considered as a part of Indian English prose. However, his prose writings in English were delivered as lectures. *Sadhana* (1913) was the earliest collection of his lectures delivered at Harvard University which reveals his philosophical views. *Personality* (1917) and *Nationalism* (1917) are his other two collections of speeches. *Personality* includes various subjects including the relationship between Man and Art, Man and Woman, Man and Nature and Man and God. In *Nationalism*, Tagore makes a distinction between society and nation and denounces western imperialism. His ten lectures collected in *Creative Unity* (1922) analyses the East-West relationship. *The Religion of Man* (1930) is a collection of his lectures delivered at Andhra University in 1937 which deals with issues like the basic duality of man’s nature, the essential unity of all religions, and related themes.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh contributed to Indian English prose producing a considerable number of prose writings on religion, metaphysical, social, political, cultural subjects and so on. His earliest prose writings were a series of nine essays published in *Induprakash* under the caption ‘New Lamps for Old’, the publication of a revolutionary brand of politics. He was followed by a series of articles on the art of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee showing his attempt at literary criticism. In 1905, Aurobindo wrote *Bhavani Mandir*—a handbook for revolutionaries dedicated to the service of Goddess Bhavani. His unsigned articles in *Bandemataram* dealt with current politics.

In 1909, Aurobindo started a new weekly *Karmayogin* in which he published essays dealing with science, philosophy, religion, literature etc. In 1914 Sir Aurobindo launched a monthly philosophical journal dedicated to the revelation of an integral view of life and existence. The various series of essays published in the journal which were re-issued in book-form were *The Life Divine* (1939-40), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919), *The Human Cycle* (1949), *The Future Poetry* (1953), *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1953), *The Renaissance in India* (1920), *Heraclitus* (1941) and so on. The last of Aurobindo's prose writing was *The Supramental Manifestation* comprising eight essays. *The Future Poetry* is the collection of Aurobindo's essays on literary criticism in *Arya*.

Swami Vivekananda's oratorical brilliance which came into sparkling display in 1893 at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, earned for him the American sobriquet of "the Hindu hurricane" dedicated to spreading the message of India's Hinduism through the Western world. His speeches and lectures are contained in the *Complete Works*.

There were many prominent names from the south of the country like **Sir Subramania Iyer** (1842-1924) who was also known as the "grand old man of South India". Of these names one of the best remembered is V.S.Srinivasa Sastri, one of the Southern Moderate leaders.

V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946) contributed to Indian English prose mainly through his biographical writings. He was a disciple of G.K. Gokhale and was known as 'the silver-tongued orator of the Empire'. His biographical writings include – *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta* (1945), *My Master Gokhale* (1946) and *Thumb-nail Sketches* (1946). Sastri's *Lectures on Ramayana* delivered in 1944 have been included in his *Speeches and Writings*, Vol. II. Naik considers Sastri as a biographer of much import who declared: "Let our sense of human values be robust. Let us be to our children in the pages of biography and autobiography no better and no worse than they see us in everyday life."

Sarojini Naidu, mainly famous for her poetical work, was also one of the most notable orators whose speeches have been collected in *Speeches and Writings* (1919).

A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) is another Indo-Sinhalese writer of Indian English prose whose principal works include – *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908), *Essays in National Idealism* (1909), *Art and Swadeshi* (1911), *Introduction to Indian Art* (1913), *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916), *A New Approach to the Vedas* (1933), *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1933) to name only a few. Among his many articles are some like “Some Pali Words”, “Symbolism of Archery”, “Indian Coins”, and “Sati”.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) who was a humanist, a man of religion, nationalist and a patriot influenced the language and literature of his period, both directly through his writings in English and Gujrati and indirectly through the movements aroused by his revolutionary thoughts and practices. However, his English writings fall into three periods – London period, the South African period and the Indian period. The London period (1888-91) includes – the *London Diary* which is chronicles his sojourn in London, and is in addition to ten brief essays, and *Guide to London* dealing with his own experience in London. The South African period (1893-1951) establishes Gandhi as a journalist, disputationist and author. His writings of this period include ‘An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa’ (1895), ‘The Indian Franchise’ (1895), and ‘Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa (1896). During this period Gandhi launched a journal called *The Indian Opinion* which was published both in Gujrati and English.

Hind Swaraj is Gandhi’s first major work expressing the Gandhian doctrine of soul-force, passive resistance, and non-violence. It was originally written in Gujarati which was later translated into English with the title *Indian Home Rule* by Gandhi himself. In the Indian period (1915-48), Gandhi ran two well-known journals namely *Young India* (1919-32) and *Harijan* (1933-48). His writings of this period appeared in these two journals since, most of these writings were originally written in Gujarati and later translated into English by others, therefore, legitimately they cannot be considered as a part of Indian English

Literature. His autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* was also originally written in Gujarati. But at the same time he delivered many historic speeches, published several articles and letters in English during this period.

When we study Gandhi's contributions towards Indian writing in English, we have to keep this fact firmly in view that he was first and foremost a reformer and that he was primarily interested in the practice of politics, and social reform. He did not consider himself to be an erudite scholar or a brilliant thinker capable of giving sharp new insights. He declared: "I have presented no new principles, but tried to restate old principles". The values that he formulated as principles of practice were adopted both within the country and abroad. He had also judged for himself that "What I have done will endure, not what I have said or written". He saw the purpose of his writings as the propagation of his ideas. His singular, unique world-view, however, ensured that his writing be coloured by a strong sense of individualism. In line with this, you will find his writing characterised by a simple, direct clarity, a "transparent and energetic style" without any rhetorical ornamentation. As Naik sums up – "Gandhi's place among modern Indian English prose writers is as distinctive as his role in the life of modern India has been."

Stop to Consider:

"The Gandhian Whirlwind"

Again, we must take note of what Meenakshi Mukherjee points out: "No discussion of Indo-Anglian fiction dealing with the independence movement would be complete without an assessment of the function of Mahatma Gandhi in these novels. The most potent force behind the whole movement, the Mahatama is a recurring presence in these novels, and he is used in different ways to suit the design of each writer. He has been treated variously as an idea, a myth, a symbol, a tangible reality, and a benevolent human being. In a few novels he appears in person, in most others his is an invisible presence." (*The Twice Born Fiction* 66)

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) the first Prime Minister of India, was also a prolific writer of Indian English prose. His writings, like Gandhi's, have to be seen as extensions of his public career as a nationalist whose life was devoted to the movement for India's independence from British colonial rule. His first book, *Soviet Russia* (1928) is a collection of sixteen articles delineating his impressions of Russia, *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* (1934) is a collection of thirty one letters written by him to his ten years old daughter. *Glimpses of World History* (1934) also consists of letters written by him to his daughter from prison during 1930-33. *An Autobiography* (1936) is a unique creation of Nehru presenting a vivid picture of both the man and his milieu. The autobiography is also a living account of the eventful course of Indian history. The *Discovery of India* (1946) is a vision of the past seen through the eyes of Nehru. Moreover, he has contributed numerous speeches, essays, letters and press-statements to Indian English prose. Undoubtedly, he is one of the most outstanding figures of Indian English prose.

Nationalist leaders who contributed to the struggle against colonial rule expressed set down in English many of the debates and thoughts that they were involved in. Among those who were associated with Gandhi's struggle and whose works have been compiled are included figures like Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950), Pattabhi Sitramayya (1880-1959), Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963), K.M.Munshi ((1887-1971), J.B.Kripalani (1888-1982), A.K.Azad (1888-1958), J.C.Kumarappa (1892-1952), R.R.Diwakar, Morarji Desai, G.Ramachandran, and U.R.Debdhar. Subhash Chandra Bose (1897-1945) who was a prominent Congress leader who rebelled against Gandhism, also contributed to Indian English prose writing extensively on political, economic and religious subjects.

The retrospective glance at Indian political history was another theme of Indian prose in English. In the field of historical prose, Jadunath Sarkar contributed a lot with his *The History of Aurangzeb* (Vols. I – V, 1912-24), *Shivaji and His Times* (1919) and *The Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Vols. I –IV, 1932-50). Besides, Sarkar's contribution, there were some other notable contributions made by H.C. Ray Chaudhari, S.N. Sen, K.M. Pannikar among so many other writers.

Sarvepally Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was a leading figure of religious and philosophical prose in the twentieth century. He was a teacher of philosophy who became the President of India later on. *The Reign of Religion in contemporary Philosophy* (1920) was his first major work examining western philosophical thought. *The Hindu View of Life* (1926) is a forceful defense of Hinduism as a way of life. His early writings include – *The Philosophy of Rabindra Nath Tagore* (1918), *East and West in Religion* (1933), and *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (1939). His later works include – *Religion and Society* (1947), *The Principal Upanishads* (1953), and *Religion in a Changing World* (1967). Like Vivekananda, he also achieved recognition in the West and for interpreting Indian philosophy and thought to the west.

Apart from the religious, historical and philosophical prose contributed by the makers of Indian English prose, biographies, autobiographies, travel books, essays on art and criticism also contributed to the bulk of Indian English writing. You can read the account by M.K.Naik for a summary idea of these categories of writing. It may be of help to read the books on your own since we cannot find any sustained discussion of them.

Check Your Progress:

1. Recount the impulses behind development of Indian English Prose in the early twentieth century.
2. Whose names are prominent among the early twentieth-century writers of Indian English prose? What were the themes that they generally focused on?
3. What are Gandhi's thoughts on colonial rule, Western civilization, and Indian culture?

2.5 Indian English Poetry of the Early Twentieth Century:

You have already seen that among the Indians who have made a substantial contribution to Indian English poetry, the names of Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya may be mentioned.

In the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore we see the work of one of the versatile geniuses of his age who played the role of a poet, dramatist, novelist, painter, short story writer, educationist, nationalist and internationalist, and philosopher, during his long literary career. He wrote poetry primarily in Bengali which he himself, and others, later translated into English. *The Child* (1931) is the only poem which he wrote in English. God, Nature, Love, Life and Death, and the Child are some recurring themes of his lyrics. Tagore's *Gitanjali*, which is considered as a masterpiece of Indian English poetry, was published in England with an introduction by W.B. Yeats. It is made up of more than a hundred pieces strung together by a unifying theme of the devotional quest expressed through a variety of forms. The *Gitanjali* was followed by *The Gardener* (1913), *The Crescent Moon* (1913), *Fruit Gatherings* (1916), and *The Fugitive* (1921). Some of these works were translated into English by Tagore himself and others were written originally in English by him. In the year 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. His poetry in English is essentially lyrical in quality and its most significant feature is the one to be pointed out by Naik: that he wrote primarily in Bengali and except for *The Child* and few other verse epigrams, his work in English consisted of the creative translations he did of his own verses. The other point to be noted about Tagore is his ambivalence towards his own English verse. His reputation in the English-speaking world is discoloured by having "swung to the two opposite extremes of temporary adulation and unthinking condemnation". With this sad histories are entangled the names of W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound. All these factors, as Naik points out, make the assessment of Tagore as an Indian English poet extremely difficult.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), like Tagore and Aurobindo, was more than a mere poet. However, it was as an English poet that Sarojini Naidu first drew the attention of the Indian public. But in the course of time she came to occupy some of the highest positions in the public life of India. Her career as a poetess began with the publication of *The Golden Threshold*. It was followed by *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). *The Sceptred Flute* (1946) and *Feather of the Dawn* (1961) are two other collections of poems by her. Her poetry was essentially lyrical which had been strongly influenced by British

romanticism. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, her younger brother, was also a prolific poet whose volume of work was far greater than Sarojini's. He published numerous volumes of verse among which *The Magic Tree* (1922), *Poems and Plays* (1927) and *Spring in Winter* (1955) are more significant.

Apart from the poet mentioned above, there were number academicians who also published several collections of Indian English poetry. For example, G.K. Chettur (1898-1936) published five collections of verse including *Sounds and Images* (1921) *The Temple Tank and Other poems* (1932), *The Shadow of God* (1934). V.N. Bhushan published eight verse collections in English including *Silhouettes*, *Moon Beans*, *Flute Tunes* and so on. There were many other writers of this category whose contributions are also noteworthy. You may find it interesting to read, in this category, the poems of Joseph Furtado, Raj Lakshi Debi, Jitendra Mohun Tagore, T.Ramakrishna, Nizamat Jung, A.M.Modi, Ananda Acharya, Roby Dutta, R.B.Paymaster, P.Seshadri, A.F.Khabardar, N.V.Thadani, and M.B.Pithawalla.

The poetry of this period was religions, mystical, philosophical, reflective on the one hand and romantic on the other hand. But at the same time it was divorced from contemporary problems and reality unlike the poetry of the post-independence period.

Check Your Progress:

1. Outline the major changes in Indian poetry after the Great Revolt of 1857.
2. Enumerate the various English poetic influences on Indian poets writing in English in the early twentieth-century.

2.6 Other Major Categories of Indian Writing in English:

2.6.1 Indian English Fiction:

Although the beginning of the Indian English novel was with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864, its real development was seen in the 20th century. The Gandhian

movement for freedom influenced the Indian English novels of the early part of this century. Of the Indian writers of English fiction who came into prominence during this period, **K.S. Venkataramani** (1891-1951) was one of the earliest novelist of the period. The influence of Gandhian thought is quite evident in his first two novels namely *Murugan*, *The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, The Patriot*. A.S.Panchakapekasa Ayyar wrote historical novels in which he enlivened ancient Indian history. *Baladitya* (1930) and *Three Men of Destiny* are such two novels by him. Another novelist of this period was **Krishnaswamy Nagarajun** whose *Athawar House* and *Chronicles of Kedaram* are two novels reflecting the changing aspects of the contemporary society.

The most significant contribution to Indian English fiction was made by the appearance of **Mulk Raj Anand**, **R. K. Narayan** and **Raja Rao** on the scene. The fiction of Mulk Raj Anand was influenced by his experience of the European tradition as well as the Indian past. His first five novels appeared in the following sequence: *The Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939) and *Across the Black Water* (1940). In his novels the portrayal of Indian social life comes with a sense of sympathy for the down-trodden. For example, in his first novel '*Untouchable* (1935), he describes the story of a young sweeper, Bakka, who represents a whole class of social outcasts and the exploited poor. Similarly, his second novel *Coolie* also deals with the story of Munoo who lives a life of poverty, exploitation and starvation. His other novels include – *The Sword and the Sickie*, *The Big Heart*, *Private Life of an Indian Prince* etc. A concern for the social problems of the Indian Society and an attempt to eradicate the social evils are noticeable in his writings. Anand's later works belonged to the post-independence period.

R.K.Narayan published his first novel *Swami and Friends* in 1935 which is an Indianised version of Richmal Crompton's 'William' novels. It was followed by his other two novels namely *The Bachelor of Arts* (1936) and *The Dark Room* (1938). *The Bachelor of Arts* deals with the story of Chandran, a sensitive youth caught in a conflict between the western ideas of love and marriage and his traditional social set up in which he lives. *The Dark Room* is a tale of silent suffering undergone

by Savitri – a traditional, middle class Hindu wife. *The English Teacher* (1946) was the last novel by Narayan written before independence like Anand, he also continued his writings in the post-independence period. His art achieved its maturity in the post-independence period with the appearance of novels like *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962) *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) and *The Painter of Signs* (1976). Narayan's fiction is imbedded with a sense of place. Most of his novels have their setting in an imaginary town named Malgudi. Therefore, his novels are generally described as the 'Malgudi novels'. In his novels he depicted the conditions of life which he experienced around him with any feelings of indignation. He gave much importance of character-portrayal who has created many memorable characters like Swami, Sampath, Margayya etc. A blend of humour, irony, sympathy, quite realism and fantasy can be perceived in his novels.

Raja Rao was the youngest of the Trio (Anand, Naryan and Rao himself) whom we can not consider as a prolific novelist. He has written only four novels of which *Kanthapura* (1938) was the first one. The novel presents a vivid, realistic and graphic picture of the Gandhian freedom struggle movement of 1930 and its impact on the Indian masses. The whole story of the novel is narrated by an old grandmother named Achakka. The foreword or preface, added to this novel, has become a critical document revealing the novelist's views on style, the art of story telling and the use of English by the Indians. However, it was the best novel written by Raja Rao as well as the only novel written before independence. This other three novels include – *The Serpent and The Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) and *Comrade Kirillov* (1976). Raja Rao's most significant contribution to the Indian English fiction is his development of a suitable medium for expressing essentially Indian sensibility by using English in an Indianised way.

Apart from these three major novelists of this period, there were some other novelists such as Ahmed Ali, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, and D.F. Karaka among others who also contributed to the history Indian English fiction in their own ways.

Check Your Progress:

1. Critically examine the impact of 'Gandhian Movement' on Indian English fictions produced in the early 20th century.
2. Assess the contribution of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and RK Narayan to the field of Indian English fiction.
3. Comment on R.K. Narayan's use of irony in his novels.

2.6.2 Indian English Drama:

The beginning of Indian English drama dates from 1831 when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote the first Indian English play *The Persecuted or Dramatic scenes of the present state of Hindu Society*. It was a social play depicting the conflict between Indian orthodoxy and the new ideas which came from the west.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the poet, translated his play *Ratnavali* (1958) and *Sermista* (1859), originally written in Bengali, into English. He also wrote a play in English 'Is This Called Civilization?' in 1871. Indian English drama made a humble beginning in the 19th century Bengal but could not make much headway in the local setting. More prevalent were plays in local languages and where plays in English were likely to succeed were ones by foreign authors. Since actual performance could not feed a dramatic tradition, early Indian English drama was closet drama.

The most significant contribution to the Indian English drama of this period is made by Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. Of the verse plays written by Sri Aurobindo, two belong to his student days in London and show the fascination the Elizabethan drama held out for him. Sri Aurobindo's plays reveal his knowledge of and his fascination for a wide variety of periods and locales, from ancient Greece to many foreign lands such Spain, Iraq, Syria, Norway, India, and Britain. His poetic plays have not been considered to be best suited to the stage. He wrote a total of eleven verse-dramas of which five are complete and six are incomplete. The five complete plays by Aurobindo include – *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Rodogune*, *Eric* and *Vasavadatta* of which four are comedies and *Rodogune* being a tragedy. All the five plays are

full-length five act plays in blank verse. The influence of Elizabeth drama was strong on him. He was also given us a few unlimited plays namely, *The Maid in the Mill*, *The House of Brut*, *The Witch of Ilni*, and *Prince of Eduri*.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote almost more than forty plays of all kinds including social comedies, allegorical plays, and symbolic plays and so on. Among those that he himself translated into English, Tagore's plays include – *Chitra* (1913), *The Cycle of Spring* (1917), *Red Oleanders* (1924), and *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (1917). All these plays were translated into English by Tagore himself even though critical acclaim for these has been reluctant. Moreover, his plays as a whole, have failed to be successful on stage because of being too symbolic and lyrical. Naik notes that Tagore made extensive textual changes while translating his verse plays into English so much so that they are virtually re-done in prose. *Sanyasi*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Chitra*, *Malini*, *Sacrifice*, *Natir Puja*, and *Red Oleanders* are labelled as 'thesis' plays by Naik. *The King and the Queen*, *Kacha and Devayani*, *Karna and Kunti*, and *The Mother's Prayer* are categorised as 'psychological' dramas.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya was more eminent as a poet than as a dramatist. His first play is *Abu Hassan* (1918). The most significant social plays of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya have been included in *Five Plays* (1937). The plays of this collection reveal the playwright's socialist sympathies. Sympathy for the exploited, revolt against the evils of imperialism, are among the themes of his plays. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar describes his plays as 'manifestoes of the new realism'. But these plays were failures owing to the failure of characterization.

The history of early Indian English drama in Bombay was primarily limited to staging performances of visiting European theatre companies. In Madras, the situation was more productive and centred on the Madras Dramatic Society founded in 1875. This was followed by the Oriental Drama Club founded in 1882 and The Sarasa Vinodini Sabha founded by Krishnamachary of Bellary in 1890. In this period the most productive dramatist was **V.V.Srinivasa Aiyangar** (1871-1954).

Another playwright **T.P. Kailasam** has also occupied a secure place in the history of Indian English drama. His English plays include – *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna or The Brahmin's Curse* (1946), *Keechaka* (1949). Despite his long stay in England, he was not indifferent to the ancient cultural heritage of India. The Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* provided the plots for his plays. His plays reveal his conscious attempt to idealise the characters of his epics. As he himself was a performing artist, he plays show a greater stage sense than the plays of Tagore and Aurobindo, A.S.Panchapakesa Ayyar was another prolific writer who wrote almost half a dozen plays on various themes. *In the Clutch of the Devil* (1926) was his first play. *Sita's Choice and other plays* (1935) and *The Slave of Ideas and Other Plays* (1941) were two collections of his plays. *The Trial of science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942) was the last play by Ayyar. All his plays deal with contemporary problems and situations and they are written with a reformist zeal.

Bharati Sarabai is another eminent dramatist of the pre-independence period. She wrote plays under the influence of Gandhian thoughts and ideas. Her two plays – *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952) reflect the influence of Gandhi on his writings. *The Well of People* has dramatic strengths which make it a memorable and significant contribution to the development of Indian English drama in this period.

Apart from the important playwrights mentioned in the above account, there were many other minor playwrights who also tried their hand at drama, though with no recognizable success.

SAQ:

What could have been, in your opinion, the main impediments to the development of drama in English in India? (80 words)

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2.6.3 Short Story:

The history of Indian English short story began with the publication of *Realities of Indian Life : Stories collected from the Criminal Reports of India* by S.C. Dutta and *The Times of Yore : Tales from Indian History* by S.C. Dutta and S.M. Tagore in 1885. But the real development of the Indian English story, like the Indian English novel, took place in the early twentieth century or the Gandhian age.

At the beginning of this century **Cornelia Sorabji**, a Parsi lady educated in Britain, published her four collections of short-stories. They include – *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Subabies : Studies in the Child Life of India* (1904), *Between the Twilights : Being Studies of Indian Women by one of themselves* (1908) and *Indian Tales of the Great ones among Men, Women and Bird People* (1916).

T.L. Natesan is another notable short-story writer of this period who wrote under the pen-name, “Shankar Ram”. *The Children of Kaveri* (1926) and *Creatures All* (1933) are two collections of his short stories most dealing with the rustic life in Tamil Nadu. A.S.P. Ayyar, the playwright and the novelist, also published three collections of stories namely, *Indian After Dinner Stories* (1927), *Sense in Sex and Other Stories* (1929) and *The Finger of Destiny and other Stories* (1932). The short stories also, like his plays, reflect his concern for social reform. Manjeri Isveran is another productive short-story writer of this period who authored *The Naked Shingles* (1941), *Siva Ratri* (1943), *Angry Dust* (1944), *Fancy Tales* (1947) and many more short stories. Her stories are filled with fantasy and supernatural elements.

The most significant contribution to the Indian English short story was made by the three major novelists of this period, namely, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Mulk Raj Anand has published seven collections of short stories including *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories* (1944), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959) and so on. His short stories are wide-ranging in mood and tone with a strong sense of social awareness inherent in them. R.K. Narayan started writing short stories almost a decade after Mulk Raj Anand wrote *Cyclone and other Stories* (1943), *Dodu and other Stories* (1943) and *Malgudi Days*

(1943) are his three collections of short stories written before independence. Like his novels, his short stories are also filled with irony and humour. Raja Rao has also published a dozen stories which have been collected in *The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories* (1947) and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978).

2.7 Summing Up:

The history of Indian Writing in English during the period after the Great Revolt displays some characteristics different from what was typical of the writing in the earlier period. We have given you here a brief sketch of what shape this writing took. Unless you add to this sketch your own reading of the actual works themselves, the outline narrative must appear very abstract. From the earlier unit you have learnt that Indians took up the colonisers' language from a very early moment of the cultural encounter. By the time of the Great Revolt and its aftermath this cultural transaction became heavily burdened with political conflict. We cannot thus study Indo-Anglian literature without a clear awareness of the political events that gave to this literature its characteristic colours.

2.8 References and Suggested Readings:

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UNIT- 3

History of Indian English Literature: Post-Independence Period

Unit Structure:

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 New Possibilities
- 3.4 The New Phase in Indian English Writing
- 3.5 Indian English poetry in the Post-Independence period
- 3.6 The Rise of the Indian English Novel
- 3.7 Mapping Modern Times:
 - 3.7.1 Indian English Drama in the Post-Independence Period
 - 3.7.2 Indian English Prose in the Post-Independence Period
 - 3.7.3 Indian English Short Story in the Post-Independence Period
- 3.8 Summing Up
- 3.9 References and Suggested Readings

3.1 Objectives:

This unit brings to you the third part of our short literary history of Indian English literature. As before, we cover the ground in much the same way as we have done by observing all the important milestones on the journey. By the end of the unit you should be able to

- *sum up* this history in brief terms,
- *name* the important figures who gave it shape,
- *describe* the relations among the different elements of this history.

3.2 Introduction:

A new period of Indian life started with the achievement of independence by India on 15th August 1947. Many challenges and changes occurred in different spheres of Indian life. For example, in the political sphere,

the most traumatic transformation was the partition between India and Pakistan. For various the economic sphere, also, many developments came into view including the implementation of Five-Year Plans, the opening of large industrial projects in the public sector, community-development projects and the nationalization of Life Insurance and the banks, multi-purpose river projects, agrarian reforms, and so forth.

Boundaries of states were re-drawn on a linguistic basis in 1956. In the social sphere, traditional social inequalities and superstition were sought to be eradicated by means of progressive measures such as the Untouchability Offences Act of 1955, The Hindu Code Bill, etc. Moreover several schemes were launched to look into various issues related to social development. Consequently, there were some social gains as the rise in national literacy rates by 75% between 1951 and 1971.

SAQ:

Enumerate the various legislative measures that were introduced to give the new Indian nation a polity different from the preceding colonial set-up. (80 words)

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3.3 New Possibilities:

The growth and continuity of Indian English literature remained intact in the post-independence period with an increased number of readers in English. There were many factors which contributed to this growth. For example, the English journals in India encouraged the publication of Indian English verse and fiction during the early years of Independence. The Illustrated Weekly of India, and Quest, belong to this category. Besides, the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award started covering Indian English literature from the year 1960, which also became a source of inspiration for the writers of Indian English literature. The achievement of a national identity in the Post-Independence period, provided the Indian English writers with greater self-confidence.

We can understand the situation for the Indian writer in this period with the help of what Prof. Meenakshi Mukherjee says: “The independence movement in India was not merely a political struggle but an all-pervasive emotional experience for all Indians in the nineteen-twenties and ‘thirties. No Indian writer, writing in those decades or writing about them, could avoid reflecting the upsurge in his work. Thus many of the English novels written in India in the twentieth century also deal with this national experience, either directly as theme or indirectly as significant public background to a personal narrative. This was an experience that was national in nature. It traversed boundaries of language and community and, since Indo-Anglian novels aim at a pan-Indian readership, this unifying experience has served to establish Indo-Anglian writing as an integral part of Indian literature”(*The Twice Born Fiction* 34).

3.4 The New Phase in Indian English Writing:

There have been some comparisons of the Indian nationalist movement, its climax, and its aftermath with the situations following upon the French Revolution and its Napoleonic after-phase in France, and the American Civil War and the subsequent changes in the United States of America. While the national differences are too crucial to be easily passed over, we can describe what happened in India in terms of what it meant - “it certainly demanded of all Indians a radically new approach to life. It was an emotional as well as an ideological experience spread over a much longer period of time than any nationalist revolution in world history” (*The Twice Born Fiction* 35).

The political decision to retain Indian membership of the British Commonwealth meant the continuity of the cultural trends already in place through the colonial era. For Indian English Literature this meant the institution of the Sahitya Academy awards for English writing in the year 1960. The period after the achievement of political independence from colonial rule, in 1947, brought gains for the Indian English writer in affirming the sense of identity, the capacity for self-scrutiny, and the widening of his/her vision. There was a growth in the readership and even though the

role of English in post-Independence India was sought to be circumscribed in various ways, the recognition that English is a world-language further led to greater study of English language and literature.

SAQ:

What new themes emerged as the preoccupation of Indian writers of English after 1947? (60 words)

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3.5 Indian English Poetry in the Post-Independence Period:

The poetry of this period is remarkable for its experimentation and clear presentation of contemporary Indian reality and consciousness. But at the same time, the continuation of Indian English Romantic tradition was also noticeable in the works of the poets belonging to the school of Aurobindo and many other poets. However, by the fifties, the new poetry imbued with a sense of protest, made its appearance in the world of Indian English poetry. The organization of the ‘writers workshop’ in Calcutta in 1958 by P. Lal and his associates, soon became an effective forum contributing to the growth of new poetry or modernist poetry.

The first of the new poets to publish a collection was **Nizzim Ezekiel** whose first volume of poetry *A Time to Change* appeared in 1952. It was followed by his other collections namely *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965) and *Hymns in Darkness* (1976). Being the first major Indo-English poet of the post-Independence period, he was become a living legend in his life-time and modern Indian poetry in English is very much indebted to him. He is of Bene-Israel origin which makes him a natural outsider in the Indian scene. But he tries to connect himself with contemporary India and regards himself essentially as an Indian poet writing in English. His poetry embraces a wide range of themes including life in the city, sexuality, the problems of marriage, poverty, search for identity, parody

of the Indian colloquial English idiom, and a shift towards morality and alienation. Nizzim Ezekiel is known as a city poet as the city of Bombay occupies a very significant position in his poetry. The city, Bombay, becomes the 'locale' of most of his poems indicating his sense of belonging to this city. Here, Bombay has become a symbol for any modern city submerged by ugliness, inhumanity and wickedness. The dehumanizing influence of the city on human beings gets reflected in some of his poems such as 'A Morning Walk,' and 'Urban'. One of his famous poems 'Background Casually' reveals his commitment to India and to Bombay as well his cultural and social alienation for having a Jewish origin. The 'Very Indian Poem in Indian English' 'The Truth About the Floods' and 'The Railway Clerk' show the many-levelled functioning of irony in Ezekiel's poetry. The superstitions and folk-beliefs are found reflected in poems like 'The Visitor', 'Night of the Scorpion' and 'Cow'. He frankly writes about sex and human body in 'At Hotel' expressing the sexual motives of men. In 'A Woman observed', Ezekiel gives a graphical depiction of the sexuality of a pregnant woman. Marriage is another dominant theme of Ezekiel's poetry. Being a critical observer of marital life, Ezekiel deals with the various problems of marital life in poems like 'Marriage' and 'To a Certain Lady'. It is with Nissim Ezekiel, that postcolonial poetry came into existence which starts representing the voice of the urbanized, western educated Indians.

Dom Moraes was the first 'new' poet to win recognition in England. He was the son of Frank Moraes, the well-known Indian journalist. Dom Moraes adopted British citizenship in 1961 after living in England for many years. From his childhood, he was passionately interested in writing poetry. Dom Moraes has published many volumes of poetry which include – *A Beginning* (1957), *Poems* 1960), *John Nobody* (1968), *Collected Poems* (1969), besides others. He had a very troubled and insecure childhood and adolescence which finds expression in his poetry. That is why his poetry is considered as highly personal and has a confessional tone. The poetry of Dylan Thomas influenced him deeply. Loneliness and insecurity are two recurrent themes of his poetry.

SAQ:

How does the poetry of this period reflect both a sense of continuity and the sense of change ? (80 words)

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Purushottam Lal, the organizing spirit behind the organization of Writers' Workshop in Calcutta in 1958, has been a pioneer and a popularizer of the new poetry. He has published many collections of verse which include *The Parrot's Death and Other Poems* (1960), "*Change!*" *They Said* (1966), *Draupadi and Jayadratha and Other Poems* (1967), *The Man of Dharma and the Rasa of Silence* (1974), and *Calcutta: A Long Poem*. He is a lyrical and a romantic poet, who is at the same time, careful to avoid romantic excess. Like the poetry of Don Moraes and Nissim Ezekiel, Lal's poetry also conveys a confessional note.

Adil Jussawalla is another new poet who has also made a significant contribution to the Indian English poetry of post-independence period. *Land's End* (1962) is his first collection of verse which contains poems written in England and some parts of Europe. *Missing Person* is his another collection of poems which was published in 1974. Like Dom Moraes, Jussawalla also spent more than a dozen years in England. But, unlike Dom Moraes, he decided to return to India and his poetry reflects his conscious involvement with the Indian ethos.

A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993), an Indian expatriate in USA is another outstanding poet of the post-independence period. Born in India, he went to the University of Chicago in 1962 where he was a professor of Dravidian linguistics. He enjoyed teaching there and unlike Jussawalla, did not choose to return to India. Living in USA Ramanujan looked back to his past life in India for the themes of his poetry.

Ramanujan's poetry is a combination of his 'outer' and his 'inner' forms. The 'outer' forms of his poetry include — "linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirt years in India, my

frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kannada, Tamil, the classics and Folklore give my substance, my ‘inner’ forms, images, symbols.” The ‘inner forms’ of his poetry include thus his first thirty years’ experience in India, his preoccupations with Kannada and Tamil, etc. Thus his poetry can be said to express an ‘Indian’ sensibility encouraged by his ‘American’ experiences. His poetic output is very thin containing only two volumes namely *The Striders and Relations*. But what he has written in these two volumes is remarkable for their inherent poetic worth. In most of his poems, his themes centre round the family, relations, insects and Tamil traditions.

Another modern Indian English poet is **Keki. N. Daruwalla** (1937-) who has enriched the field of Indian English poetry in a variety of ways. He was a police officer by profession and the very fact influenced his poetry. His poetry is dominated by the images of violence, disease, fire, corruption, etc. Daruwalla’s poetical works include – *Under Orion* (1970), *Apparition in April* (1971), *Crossing of Rivers* (1976), *Winter Poems* (1980), *The Keeper of the Road* (1982). In 1984, he was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for *The Keeper of Road*. A sense of concern for the socio-political conditions of India gets expressed in his poetry. Landscape occupies a dominant place in Daruwalla’s poetry covering the vast countryside of North India with its widespread network of rivers, hills, plains, and so on. His poetry also deals with the theme of love and sex. A celebration of love and sex is found in his poetry. However, it is his excellence in the realistic, vivid and striking use of imaginary which gives him a unique position in the world of Indian English poetry.

Jayanta Mahapatra (1928 -2023) is the first Indian English poet to win the Sahitya Academy Award for his book of verse *Relationship* in 1981. Mahapatra started his career as a poet at the age of forty for which he is called ‘a late bloomer’ in the world of Indian English poetry. *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* is Mahapatra’s first volume of poems containing forty-nine poems on a wide variety of themes. His other poetical works include – *Swayamvara and Other Poems* (1971), *A Rain of Rites* (1976), *Waiting* (1979), *The False Start* (1980), *Life Sings* (1983), and *Dispossessed Nests* (1986). His personal experience

influenced his poetry. Mahapatra's poetry is remarkable for its exploration and vivid portrayal of the Orissa landscape. The physical landscape of Orissa represents the deeper levels of Indian consciousness and psyche which have been shaped by India's cultural and religious past. Alienation, rootlessness and emptiness in modern existence, human relationships, love, sexuality, prostitution, poverty and socio-political reality of contemporary India form the subject matter of his poetry. Like the poetry of Keki N. Daruwalla, Mahapatra's poetry is also filled with realistic images and symbols.

Arun Kolatkar (1932 -2004) is a bilingual poet writing both in English and in his mother tongue Marathi. He wrote many short poems in English some of which still remain uncollected. His long poem, *Jejuri*, was published in 1970 which won the Commonwealth Poetry prize. The poem contains thirty-one short sections describing a visit to Jejuri, a famous temple near Pune.

One of the most leading figures of the new school of poetry is **Kamala Das**. She is a bilingual poet like Arun Kolatkar, who writes both in her native Malayalam and English with equal mastery. She has published three books of verse in English – *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old playhouse and other poems* (1973). Her poetry is an expression of her feminine sensibility, its exploitation, its suppression in a male-dominated society. Her frustrations want of love and sufferings as a woman and wife are frankly portrayed in most of her poems. Therefore, her poetry is called confessional and autobiographical to a great extent. Love and sex, rebellion against the conventions and restraints of society, loneliness and incompleteness, disease and decay are some of the recurrent themes of her poetry. The images and symbols of her poems are drawn from the familiar and the commonplace and they are suggestive of her own personal experience.

Apart from the above mentioned writers of Indian English poetry, **P. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel, A.K. Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Shiv K. Kumar, Monika Verma, Mary Erulkar, Eunice de Souza** and many others have contributed to the enrichment of Indian English poetry in the Post-Independence period.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss the poetic technique with which Nissim Ezekiel as a 'city poet' highlights the theme of modern 'isolation'.
2. A.K. Ramanujan's poetry is the product of the combination between his 'outer forms' and 'inner forms'. How does the poet achieve this combination?
3. Describe the poetic response to Indian nationalism around 1947 in terms of theme and technique.
4. Comment on the 'confessional' tone in the poetry of Kamala Das.

3.6 The Rise of the Indian English Novel:

Indian English fiction in the post-independence period continues to retain the honour and popularity which it had achieved during the Gandhian age. Many novelists of the pre-independence period such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and many others have continued their writing in the post-independence also. These novelists, at the same time, become a source of inspiration for the upcoming novelists of this period. The prominent figures of Indian English novel who started their career after independence are **Bhabani Bhattacharya**, **Manohar Malgonkar** and **Kushwant Singh**. These novelists made their appearance during the nineteen fifties and the early sixties. **Chaman Nahal** and **Arun Joshi** are two other outstanding figures of Indian English novel making their appearance in the late sixties and the seventies. Moreover, a group of women novelists emerged in the post-independence period which includes the prominent figures such as **Ruth Praver Jhabvala**, **Kamala Markandaya**, **Nayantara Sahgal** and **Anita Desai**.

Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-), a social realist of this period, made a significant contribution to the world Indian English fiction of the post-independence period. In his theory and practice of fiction-writing, Bhattacharya shares a close affinity with Mulk Raj Anand. Like Anand, he also believes that a novel must have a social purpose. *So Many Hungers* (1947) is his first novel. Later novels include *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He who Rides a Tiger* (1952), *A Goddess Named Gold*

(1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978). Among these novels, *Shadow from Ladakh* was selected for the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award in 1967. His fiction has been translated into many European languages.

Manohar Malgonkar (1913-) is another eminent novelist of this period who believes that the main purpose of art is to provide pure entertainment. His novels present a limited view of human life and nature. Malgonkar started his novelistic career with *Distant Drum* in 1960 which depicts a story of army life. *The Princes* (1963), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and *The Devil's Wind* (1972) are some of the novels authored by him. The male characters occupy a dominant position in his novels while the women characters appear to be nothing more than the objects of masculine pleasure.

Khushwant Singh's (1918 -2014) first novel was *Train to Pakistan* (1956) depicted the impact of Partition on a small village on the Indo-Pakistan border. His other novel namely *I shall not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) presents an ironic picture to the freedom struggle movement. *The Company of Women* (1999) and *Delhi* (1992) are two new novels by him. Delhi seems to be a chronicle covering more than eight hundred years in the life of the city Delhi. *The Company of Women* deals with the story of Mohan, the protagonist and his adulterous relationships with eight women.

Besides Bhabani Bhattacharya, Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh, there were **S. Menon Marath**, **Balachandra Rajan**, **S.N. Ghose**, **G.V. Desani** and **K.A. Abbas**, whose contributions to the Indian English fiction of early post-independence period are also remarkable. Sudhindra Nath Ghose (1899-1965) is the remarkable case of an Indian writer whose work was not discovered until recently on account of misinterpretation by early reviewers. His main work consists of a tetralogy (*And Gazelles Leaping* (1949), *Cradle of the Clouds* (1951), *The Vermilion Boat* (1953), and *The Flame of the Forest* (1955).

Arun Joshi and Chaman Nahal's novelistic output made its appearance in the late sixties and the seventies. Joshi wrote three novels namely *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strong Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) and

the Apprentice (1974). The theme of alienation in its different aspects is predominant in his novels. He wrote two more novels before his untimely death in 1993. These two novels are – *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) and *The City and the River* (1990). *The Last Labyrinth* won Sahitya Academy Award in 1982. In this novel also Joshi seems to be preoccupied with his common theme of alienation. As a novelist, Joshi is seriously interested in the existential dilemmas faced by man in the modern world.

Chaman Nahal started his novelistic career with *My True Faces* in 1973. His most outstanding creation *Azadi* appeared in 1975 which was one of the most prominent novels of Partition. The same novel won the Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1977. His other novels include – *Into Another Dawn* (1977), *The English Queen* (1979), *The Crown and Loincloth* (1981), *The Salt of Life* (1990) and *The Triumph of the Tricolor*.

A significant development in the literary world of post-independence period is the appearance of a group of new novelists and their new fiction. Born and brought up in the post-colonial world, the new novelists have established their fame by winning several major literary awards, prizes and distinctions in the international level. The writers of this new fiction do not feel self-conscious in handling the English language unlike the older Indian novelists such as Anand, Raja Rao R.K. Narayan and many others. The new novels are more globalised in comparison to the novels produced by the older novelists.

The first of the new novelists to appear in the scene was Salman Rushdie. His best novel *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981. It is the story of Saleem Sinai which is narrated in first person by Saleem himself. Here, Saleem, who was born on the midnight of 15th August, 1947, the time and year of the birth of modern Indian nation, becomes the representative of the new born Indian nation. *Grimus* (1975), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) are some other famous novels authored by him.

Vikram Seth also contributed to the spread of this new fiction by producing novels on social realism. *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and *An Equal Music* (1999) are two best known novels by him. His *The Golden Gate*

(1986) is a novel in verse set in contemporary American society. The entire novel is in the sonnet form. *Rohinton Mistry*, who lives in Canada, is the author of the award winning novel *Such a long Journey* (1991). In his novels the Parsi character plays a dominant role. *A Fine Balance* (1995) is another of his novels dealing with the theme of hope and despair.

Amitav Ghosh, one of the most outstanding figure of Indian English fiction, has written many novels such as *Circle of Reason* (1986), *In an Antique Land* (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000) etc. His novels stand as testimony to his versatility. For example, in *The Shadow Lines*, the novelist that divide people and nation causing a lot of misery among human beings, while his another different one dealing with the imaginative reconstruction of history.

Another notable development in the history world of post-independence period is the emergence a number of women novelists. **Ruth Praver Jhabvala** (1927 -2013), one of the leading figures of Indian English fiction by women has produced many novels such as *To whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *The Householder* (1960), *A New Dominion* (1973), *Heat and Dust* (1975), *Poet and Dancer* (1993) and so on. But there is a problem regarding whether Jhabvala can legitimately be considered as an Indian English writer. Naik observes that “She herself has declared that she should not be considered an ‘Indian writer’ but ‘as one of those European writers who have written about India’ . Born in Germany and educated in England, she got married to an Indian and lived in India for many years. The novel which she wrote during her stay in India clearly reveals her preoccupation with Indian social life. But she herself refuses to be considered as an Indian writer. In 1975, she left India for good and went to the USA. In her recent works she makes use of her American experience, but at the same time her preoccupation with India continues to be dominant.

Kamala Markandaya (Purnaiah Taylor, 1924 -2004) is an expatriate who has been living in England for a number of years. Her novels deal with a wide variety of themes that include – the East-West encounter, different roles played by women in society and so on. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) is her first novel which deals with the story of Rukmani, a rustic

woman, and her hard peasant life. *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *Possession* (1963), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *The Cofferd Dams* (1969) are some other novels by her. She has produced only one novel after 1980, namely *Pleasure City* in 1982. It is one of her best novels dealing with the cultural confrontation between tradition and modernity. *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) is her longest novel, which is an attempt at historical fiction, being a chronicle of three generations of the princely family of Devapur.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927-) is generally associated with political fiction, politics being one of her major concerns – inevitable, given that she is the daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit, and the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru. Her first novel, *A Time to be Happy* (1958), seems to be a chronicle dealing with two north Indian families during the last phases of the Indian freedom struggle movement as well as with the advent of Independence. *The Time of Morning* (1968), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) and *A Situation in Delhi* (1977) are three novels by her dealing with different political matters. *The Day in Shadow* is another novel by her which was inspired by personal experience. Here the plot deals with a broken marriage. *Rich Like Us* (1985) is Sahgal's best novel which was written towards the later part of her career. The novel presents a satirical picture of India in 1975 to 1976, the time of the declaration of National Emergency by Indira Gandhi, *Plans for Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988) are two latest novels by her.

Anita Desai (1937-), in contrast with Nayantara Sahgal, appears to be more interested in the interior landscape of the mind. In her novels she explores the disturbed psyche of the modern Indian women and also tries to strike a balance between their instinctual needs and intellectual aspirations. One of her major themes is the existential predicament of an individual which she portrays through incompatible couples, for example the very union between sensitive wives and ill-matched husbands. Her first novel *Cry, The Peacock*, was published in 1963. The novel depicts the story of Maya, the chief protagonist, who fails to establish an effective communication with her husband Gautam. Gautam's indifference to her sensitive nature creates a deep sense of loneliness in her, finally making her hysteric. Her other novels include –

Voices in the City (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where shall we go this Summer* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear hight of Day* (1980), *Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baymartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995) and *Fasting Feasting* (1999). In most of her novels, the narrative is woman-centred. But in *In Custody* she has switched from a woman-centred to a male-centred narrative, a poorly paid lecturer in a provincial town. *Fasting Feasting* is her latest novel which was nominated for the Booker Prize in 1999 in which she tries to recapture the family life of two different cultures. The novel is in two parts – one dealing with Indian life and the other with life in the United States of America.

Another outstanding figure of Indian English fiction by women in the post-independence period is **Shashi Deshpande**. She has already written eight novels, six collections of short stories and four children's books. Her novels emerge from her rootedness in middle class Indian society and avoid mentioning about the events like partition, Emergency etc. *The Dark Holds No Terror* is her first novel. The heroine of the novel is a mother who finds no happiness with her husband and children. *If I Die Today* (1982) and *Come up and Be Dead* (1983) are two novels by her which have the elements of detective fiction. *That Long Silence* (1988) is her fifth novel which was selected for the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award. Through the narrator Jaya, the novelist portrays the hollowness, boredom of modern Indian life as well as the silence imposed on women by many factors. *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Building Vine* (1993), *Small Remedies* (2000) are some other novels authored by her. In most of her novels the narrative is women-centred like in the novels of Anita Desai. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life which is portrayed through the use of stream of conscious technique and other devices. Her novels are woman oriented depicting the meaning of being a woman in modern Indian society.

Apart from the novelists mentioned above, there are many other distinguished novelists (both men and women) such as **Arundhati Roy**, **Anita Nair**, **Namita Gokhale**, **Gita Mehta**, **Allan Sealy**, **Shashi**

Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and so on. The contribution of these novelists to the world of Indian English fiction in the post-independence period is also equally noteworthy.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss the progressive stages in the development of the Indo-anglian novel.
2. Define the 'new' elements in Indo-Anglian fiction after 1947.
3. Discuss the contribution of the women novelists to the field of Indian English fiction in the post-independence period. Highlight their main concerns.

3.7 Mapping Modern Times:

3.7.1 Indian English Drama in the Post-Independence Period:

Indian English drama began with the appearance of **Krishna Mohan Banerji's** *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindu Society* in 1831. Despite its old origins, it is yet to establish itself as a popular genre.

Indian drama in English did not receive much inspiration even after 1947. The constraints upon drama in English as part of Indian literature are peculiar to the form itself. The growing interest abroad in Indian English literature led to some works by Asif Currimbhoy, Partap Sharma, and Gurcharan Das which were successfully staged in Europe and the U.S. but this did not lead to the foundation of an Indian English drama. The tradition of poetic drama of the Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailasam school continued with variations brought in by Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani and Lakhan Deb.

Asif Currimbhoy, Gurucharan Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Girish Karnad, Pratap Sharma, Gieve Patel, Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabhan are some of the leading figures of Indian English drama. These playwrights writing in English do so under various limitations and with a tension as they have to fulfil the demands of both Indian and foreign

audiences. Their plays are rarely performed on stage as the performance comes out as a failure in most cases due to the lack of audience's support and appreciation.

Asif Currimbhoy (1928-1994) has produced almost two dozen plays of which *The Tourist Mecca* (1959) is the earliest one. His plays fall under various categories: history, politics, social and economic problems, the East-West encounter, psychological conflicts, religion, philosophy and art are some of the themes of his plays. Currimbhoy's dramatic output includes – *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *The Doldrums* (1960), *The Hungry Ones* (1965, 1977), *The Clock* (1959) among others. His plays are representative of Indian life with all its predilections, delusions and fantasies. An inter-play between realism and fantasy is evident in plays.

Gurucharan Das is another playwright of post-independence India. His *Larin Sahib* (1970) is a successful play dealing with a historical theme. Nissim Ezekiel's, the famous Indian English poet of the post-independence, plays in English includes *Three Plays* (1969) and *Song of Deprivation* (1969).

Girish Karnad (1938-2019), an actor, a film producer and a director, is one of the most prolific writers of Indian English drama. Being associated with the "Theatre of Roots" movement, Karnad has made a concentrated effort to go back to the Indian tradition and recreate it in the contemporary context. *Tughlaq* (1972) and *Hayavadana* (1975) are two plays by him written in the early part of his career. Karnad depicts the contradictions in the character of Tughlaq who was at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and godless etc. His play, *Hayavadana*, is a bold experiment in the use of folk motifs. *Naga-Mandala* (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1993) and the *Fire and the Rain* (1998) are three other plays translated by the playwrights himself into English. In *Naga-Mandala*, the playwright depicts the story of Rani who suffers from isolation, loneliness in the company of her husband Appanna who neglects her and locks her up in the house. In *Tale-Danda*, Karnad deals with the crisis in the life Basavanna, the great

social reformer of the 12th century Karnataka. Here too the theme is historical like Tughlaq. In *The Fire and the Rain*, the novelist draws upon a story from the Mahavarata. The ‘Fire’ in the title of the play is suggestive of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, violence etc. while the ‘rain’ symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness, etc..

Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian playwright to win the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998 for his *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. Like Karnad, he is also a director and a filmmaker. He is also the founder of Playpen, a performing arts group dedicated to promoting plays written originally in English and translations from regional languages into English. In most of his plays the unseen and the unheard is heard. But as a playwright, he always remains non-judgmental. He only implies, never sermonizes. *Final Solution and Other Plays* include four full-length plays, namely, *Where There’s A Will*, *Dance like a Man*, *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Final Solutions*. The Indian joint-family and its impact on the individual, the sad plight of woman in Indian society, homosexuality, communalism, conflict between tradition and modernity, child’s sexual abuse, incest, are some of the themes handled by him. His plays reveal his preoccupation with social and political realities in contemporary India. *Seven Steps around the Fire* and *Thirty Days in September* are two other plays written by him.

SAQ:

How do different Indian English dramatists resolve the problem of regional differences? (90 words)

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Manjula Padmanabhan’s play, *Harvest* (1998), won the first prize in the first Onassis International Cultural competition. The play explores the issue of trade – trade of human organs in which ‘Om’, a character of the play sells his organs to a Multi-national Company in exchange for a luxurious life style. Her recent play, *Knights Out*, is based on a real incident of gang-rape that took place in a compound amidst a middle-class community

in Santa Cruz, Bombay in 1982. The play exposes the presence of crime in society, where acts of sexual violence occur frequently and no one comes to help the victim, and where people's individual interests predominate over their social and moral responsibility. The play reveals her conscious understanding of the plight of woman in society.

The two plays by **Dina Mehta**, namely, *Brides are not for Burning* (1993) and *Getting Away with Murder* (2000) also deal with the plight of women in contemporary Indian society. Apart from the playwrights discussed above there are many other playwrights like **Uma Paramar Waran, Poile Sengupta, Gieve Patel**, etc., whose contribution to the growth of Indian English drama is also significant.

Check Your Progress:

1. Analyse the line of growth of Indian English drama and try to account for its impeded development.
2. Discuss Karnad's use of 'Myth' and 'History' in his plays taking into consideration its relevance in the contemporary content.
3. How do the contemporary Indian English playwrights react to the plight of women in Indian society?

3.7.2 Indian English Prose in the Post-Independence Period:

Indian English prose in the pre-independence period was essentially political in character but with the attainment of Independence a fresh thinking developed covering many areas. A large number of autobiographies, biographies, historical and religious writings and travelogue appeared written by bureaucrats and other public servants.

One of the eminent writers of Indian English prose in the post-independence period is **Nirad C. Choudhury**. He has written almost ten books, all of which have received critical attention and appreciation from the reader. *Defence of India or Nationalization of Indian Army* (1935) was his first literary effort which is a study of military organization in British India. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) is one of his best books revealing the basic ideas that have shaped his

individualistic world-view. The book gives an account of Chaudhuri's childhood and student days till 1921. His other book, *Thy Hand! Great Anarch* (1987) is an account of the decline and end of British rule in India. His *A Passage to England* (1959) was the product of his short visit to England in 1955. *The Continent of Circe: An Essay on the People of India* (1966), *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (1976) are some other non-fictional prose works produced by Chaudhuri. His biography of Max Muller, *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of Friedrich Max Muller* (1974) won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975. This was his first attempt at biographical writing. The style of his prose is almost Victorian and he uses quotations in French, Latin, etc., in his work. However, his prose-writings reveal his wide reading and knowledge.

- **Autobiography:** Apart from *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, a number of auto-biographies have been published during this period. R.K. Narayan, of the members of the 'big three' wrote *My Days* (1975) and *My Dateless Diary* (1960). Mulk Raj Anand's *Pilali sahib : The Story of a childhood under the Raj* (1985) was published as the first part of an autobiographical series, although no subsequent volume has come out yet. Ruskin Bond's *Scenes from a writer's life: A memoir* (1977) and *The Lamp is lit: Leaves from a Journal* (1998) are two autobiographical works written in the same lucid style as his short stories. Dom Moraes, the poet, has published two autobiographical works namely *Never at Home* (1992) and *My Son's Father* (1971). P. Lal, best known for his poetic translations of the Sanskrit classics, has published his autobiographical book *Lessons* in 1991. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, published her autobiography entitled *The Scope of Happiness: A personal Memoir* in 1979. Manjula Padmanabhan, the contemporary Indian English playwright, has published *Getting There* in 2000 which is a semi-autobiographical work. Shobha De narrates some incidents from her personal life in *Selective Memory: Stories from My Life* (1998). Apart from those writers mentioned above, there are many autobiographical works produced by numerous persons of different fields.

• **Biography:** Numerous biographical works have been produced in the post-independence period. Among them S. Gopal's *Jawaharlal Nehru* (Vol. I & II) won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1976. *Radhakrishna : A Biography* is another remarkable work by him which was published in 1989.

Another eminent biographer of this period is **Rajmohan Gandhi**. His biographical writings include *Rajaji : A Life* (1997), *Patel : A Life* (1990), *The Good Boatman : A Portrait of Gandhi* (1995), *Eight Lives : A Study of Hindu Muslim Encounter* (1986) etc.

Raja Rao has published a biography named *The Great Indian Way : A life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1998). Dom Moraes has written *Mrs. Gandhi* (1980) on Indira Gandhi with a beautiful narrative style. Moreover, Nayantara Sahgal, Khushwant Singh and K.A. Abbas had published books on Mrs Gandhi before 1980. The industrialist Jamnalal Bajaj is the subject-matter of Mulk Raj Anand's *Homage to Jamnalal : A Pictorial Biography* (1989). Ved Mehta's *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (1978), Manohar Malgonkar's *The Man who killed Gandhi* (1978), K.R. Srinivas Iyengar's *Sri Aurobindo : A Biography and a History* (2 vol.s, 1972), and *On the Mother* (1978), Padmini Sen-Gupta's *Sarojini Naidu* (1965), are some other notable biographical works produced after independence.

• **Travel-writing:** Apart from the biographical and autobiographical works, letters, travel literature, personal essays, religious and philosophical writings and history criticism contribute to the world of Indian English prose. Among letters, Nehru's *Letters from a Father to a Daughter*, Anand's *Old Myth and New Myth: Letters from Mulk Raj Anand to KVS Murti* (1991) and *Anand to Atma: Letters of Mulk Raj Anand to Atma Ram* (1994), Shobha De's *Speed Post : Letters to My Children About Living, Loving, Caring and Coping with the World* (1999) are some of the notable literary works of this period.

The significant part of travel-literature in the post-independence period consists of the contribution made by eminent novelists like Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Allan Sealy and Amitav Ghosh. Seth's *From Heaven Lake : Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983), Rushdie's *The*

Jaguar Smile : A Nicaraguan Journey (1986), Allan Sealy's *From Yukon to Yucatan : A Western Journey* (1994) and Amitav Ghosh's *Dancing in Cambodia, at Large in Burma* (1998) are some of the outstanding creations in the field of travel writing. The personal essay is a very popular form of prose writing which is generally published in newspapers and journals. The eminent novelist, R.K. Narayan has produced many personal essays which reveal his keen observation of life in Indian society. In the field of religious and philosophical prose, the most remarkable contribution is made by J. Krishnamurti, one of the greatest philosophical minds of the 20th century. His philosophical writings include – *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), *Freedom from the known* (1969), *Life Ahead* (1963) among others.

• **Literary criticism:** In the field of literary criticism, *Encyclopedia of Indian Literature* published by Sahitya Academy in six volumes, *Modern Indian Literature: An Anthology* edited by K.M. George are some of the remarkable works. Besides, many critical works on postcolonial studies and Women's Studies have appeared of which *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context* edited by Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and English Rule in India* by Gauri Viswanathan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender Culture and Post Colonialism* by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan are some particular examples.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss the contribution of Nirad C. Chaudhury to Indian English prose in the post-independence period.
2. What are the various forms of prose writing that have achieved popularity in the post-independence period? Elaborate.

3.7.3 Indian English Short Story in the Post-Independence Period:

The writing of the short story in the post-independence has continued to be a by-product of novel writing in Indian English literature from its beginnings. Apart from the Indian English novelist there are also a few poets who have contributed to the growth of the Indian English short story.

The most notable contribution to the field of the short story is made by the 'big three' namely Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. They started writing in the early twentieth century and have continued their writing to the latter part of the century. As we have already talked about their short story collections in the earlier unit, in this unit we will discuss the works of other short-story writers which had not been discussed earlier.

One of the outstanding figures of this genre is B. Bhattacharya who has published two collections of short stories namely *Indian Cavalcade* (1948) and *Steel Hawk* (1968). *Indian Cavalcade* is a re-telling of some striking incidents from Indian History while *Steel Hawk* contains a few stories of psychological interest.

Khushwant Singh is the author of four volumes of short stories namely *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1957), *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971). Later on, he has included all these volumes together in *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh* (1989). Manohar Malgonkar has produced many volumes of short story which include *A Toast in Warm Wine* (1977). *Four Graves and Other Stories* (1990) is his recent collection of short stories.

Ruskin Bond has published a number of short-story collections including *Neighbour's wife and other Stories* (1966), *My First Love and Other Stories* (1968), *The Maneater of Manjari* (1972) and so on. Pets, animals, orphans, old man and lonely women, orphans, beggars and all kinds of have-nots form the subject-matter of his stories.

K.N. Daruwalla, the poet, has published his first volume of short stories, namely, *The Sword and the Abyss* in 1979. Seventeen years later he has published another volume, namely, *The Minister for Permanent Unrest and other stories* (1996). 'The Potting of the White' is one of his best short stories dealing with the subject of race-relations during colonial days.

Jayanta Mahapatra has published his first collection of short stories, namely, *The Green Gardener and Other Stories* in 1997. The eighteen stories of the volume deal mostly with middle-class life in Indian society.

Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha* (1987) is one of the most remarkable short-story collections of recent times.

Among the women short story writers of the older generation, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Anita Desai are the only major ones to publish their short stories in book form. Jhabvala's short-story volumes include *Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other stories* (1964), *A Stronger Climate* (1969), *An Experience of India* (1972) and so on. Anita Desai's first volume of short stories is *Games at Twilight and other Stories* (1978) which achieved a great success. She published her second volume entitled *Diamond Dust* in 2000. 'Winterscape' is the best story in the relationship between a young American girl and her Indian mother-in-law.

Shashi Deshpande's short-story collections include *The Legacy and other Stories* (1971), *The Miracle and other Stories* (1986), *It was the Nightingale* (1986), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993). Most of her short stories reveal the plight of woman in Indian society. Like Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta's short stories also the life of woman in Indian society. Like Shashi Deshpande Dina Mehta's short stories also the life of woman in Indian Society. *The Other woman and Other Stories* (1981) and *Miss Menon did not Believe in Magic and Other Stories* (1994) are two volumes of short stories by her.

Manjula Padmanabhan, the playwright and cartoonist, is another outstanding figure short story writing in the post-independence period. *Hot Death Cold Soup* (1996) is her first collection of short stories. She has published another collection of ten short stories, *Kleptomania in* 2004. Many of her short stories are about the problems of communication between human beings, the difficulties of overcoming cultural barriers, gender, etc.

Moreover, the Indian immigrant women such as **Suniti Namjoshi**, **Bharati Mukherjee**, **Jhumpa Lahiri** and many other writers have produced numerous collections of short stories in the recent times. Apart from the short story writers mentioned above there are many other writers

like Monoj Das, Kamala Das, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie, Amit Chaudhury, and others whose contribution is also equally remarkable.

Check Your Progress:

1. Consider the growth of short story in the post independence period with special reference to the works of its major practitioners.
2. 'Plight of woman in Indian society' is one of the major concerns of Shashi Deshpande and Dina Mehta's short stories. Discuss.

3.8 Summing Up:

You have, by now, obtained a fair sketch of the main categories of Indian Writing in English. You have surely realised that the field is complex and fraught with issues related to the political history of the English language, the status of the Indian writer both during the colonial situation as well as after 1947. The themes that have animated this writing have only been mentioned. You have to explore these on your own with reading of the works themselves. The problem of 'Indianness' will definitely remain in your mind as an unresolved question. Perhaps the resolution will spring from a new situation such as we are immersed in today.

3.9 References and Suggested Readings:

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UNIT- 4

Contemporary Voices In Indian Writing

Unit Structure:

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Contemporary Indian Writing
 - 4.3.1 The question of domain and contemporaneity
 - 4.3.2 The impact of commercial literature
 - 4.3.3 The politics of language
- 4.4 Dominant Contemporary Voices
 - 4.4.1 Salman Rushdie
 - 4.4.2 Amitav Ghosh
 - 4.4.3 Arundhati Roy
 - 4.4.4 Vikram Seth
 - 4.4.5 Rohinton Mistry
 - 4.4.6 Sashi Tharoor
 - 4.4.7 Jhumpa Lahiri
 - 4.4.8 Kiran Desai
 - 4.4.9 Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
 - 4.4.10 Devdutt Pattanaik
- 4.5 Other Important Writers
- 4.6 Contemporary Indian English Poets
- 4.7 Regional Voices
- 4.8 Voices from the Northeast
- 4.9 Popular Fiction Writers
- 4.10 Summing Up
- 4.11 References and Suggested Readings

4.1 Objectives:

This unit will seek to–

- *explore* the domain of Indian Writing in English, the creation of the literary canon and the idea of contemporaneity,
- *situate* newer genres and commercial literature within the greater literary tradition,
- *acquaint* ourselves with some of the dominant contemporary voices of Indian writings,
- *examine* the major concerns and themes of contemporary Indian writings.

4.2 Introduction:

The genre of Indian English Literature (IEL), also referred to as Indian Writings in English (IWE), constitute a literary tradition which encapsulates the rich tapestry of the diverse cultures, histories, and identities of this nation. From the pioneering voices of the colonial era to the contemporary narratives that span the globe, the genre has expanded significantly and garnered much international visibility and acclaim. The limitation set by the use of just the English language is being eroded with the acceptance of translated works within the greater literary tradition. What was once considered to be a genre of the privileged class has evolved into a more welcoming avatar, mostly due to the works of contemporary writers. Issues and concepts which were usually relegated to the margins are also steadily being brought into the mainstream literary fold.

The canon has evolved, yes, but the question remains: has its nature changed? There still seems to be a distinctive focus on literary texts- works accepted to have high literary value and international acclaim. Works categorised as commercial, including those from newer genres, are still trivialised by literary critics. And what of the controversies? Critics have consistently questioned the authenticity of representing the vast and varied Indian experience through a language associated with the colonial legacy. Then again, there are extensive debates over linguistic purity, cultural appropriation, and the alleged commodification of exoticized narratives.

These concerns continue to challenge the legitimacy of Indian Writing in English within the broader literary discourse.

While these challenges persist, there have been significant inroads through the works of contemporary voices which explore linguistic hybridity, cultural representation, and their global significance. This unit will discuss some of these contemporary voices in Indian Writing and their works along with the concerns associated with the genre.

4.3 Contemporary Indian Writing :

4.3.1 The question of domain and contemporaneity:

In our quest to explore and understand contemporary voices in Indian Writings in English, we come across two basic questions. What constitutes the genre of IWE? And how do we define what is contemporary? The first question is about the domain of IWE- about the writers and the works which forms its corpus. The second is concerned with differences- the shift in ideology, themes and technique which distinguishes an earlier tradition from a newer one. Our studies in this course so far have shown that in this literary tradition only a certain kind of work receives proper academic attention. The major works of this genre till the 1970s mostly seem to follow a distinctive nationalistic ideology voiced by upper class male writers. Meenakshi Mukherjee's book *The Twice Born Fiction*, first published in 1971, discusses pertinent issues related to nation, gender, power, and identity as represented in works of that time.

Much have changed since then in the last few decades. The newer narratives in IWE emphasise on the proliferation of diverse voices, including those from marginalised communities, women, and the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Identity is explored in a globalised world with urban themes and postmodern realities. There is great experimentation in terms of style and narrative techniques, and celebration of linguistic hybridity and regional influences. Authors like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh and Jhumpa Lahiri immediately come to mind when we think about such works. It is these aspects and these voices which characterise contemporary IWE.

Although we now have an idea of what counts as contemporary, the question of domain remains. An underlying characteristic of both the contemporary and earlier generation of works seem to be its high literary quality. They often have a larger than Indian presence, especially the contemporary works, and receive tremendous recognition at the international stage. They are circulated extensively in Anglo-American markets and enjoy wide critical attention and cultural currency. They also receive prizes and accolades both at the national and international level. Therefore, it is not surprising that these works, written in English, often end up as part of the IWE literary canon. So, can we safely conclude that the domain of IWE is limited to such texts which have been written in English and are generally accepted to have high literary value?

Definitely not. As pointed out in the introduction, the genre has expanded to include translations from regional languages as well. The socio-cultural contexts of regional writings, with their unique sensibilities and nuances, form an integral part of the Indian identity. Ignoring those in favour of works in English can only ever represent a small part of the larger cultural tradition. That is why this syllabus, like many contemporary university syllabuses of Indian English Literature, explores the translated works of writers like Mohan Rakesh, Mahasweta Devi and U.R. Ananthamurthy as well, along with works of writers like A.K. Ramanujan, Aijaz Ahmed and Amitabh Ghosh. Of late, we have seen adjustments in existing frameworks to include writers, who would usually be at the margins, in the mainstream corpus of Indian Writings in English. For example, north-eastern writers like Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, and Easterine Kire and Dalit writers like Namdeo Dhasal and Bama, are also being actively studied and researched in English departments all over the country. Moving ahead, it would perhaps be better and more inclusive to simply understand this genre as Indian Writings, instead of in specific terms like IEL or IWE.

This, however, leads us to an interesting point: the idea of being an Indian. Who is this Indian writer? Someone like R.K. Narayan who lived in India from birth till death? Or maybe someone like Raja Rao, who was born in India but lived abroad during his most successful literary phase? Or is it someone like Salman Rushdie who was born in India, but lives abroad and does not have an Indian passport? Can it be someone

like Ruth Pravar Jhabvala who is Indian by marriage and not by birth or ethnicity, but one who has worked extensively here? Or maybe someone like Jhumpa Lahiri, who was born to immigrant Indian parents, writes about similar topics but identifies as American? This is why categorising this genre in terms of “Indian” can be problematic. It’s a very tricky area and there is no fixed definition. However, as per convention, everything dealing with Indian subjects, themes and contexts created by writers with some form of connection to India are generally considered within this category.

4.3.2 The impact of commercial literature:

While creating this tentative framework to understand and explore contemporary Indian Writings, we seem to have skipped over a very dominant and influential genre of literature in India. You might have been wondering where Chetan Bhagat fits in all of this? He is after all, one of the most prominent contemporary writers writing in English. Bhagat is part of a separate category termed as commercial literature or popular market literature- characterised by its massive book sales and fan following. The interest of such works is mostly internal or domestic, focussing on representing everyday realities of the contemporary generations. However, they are rarely taken seriously by the academia, if at all. In his 2015 text, *Consumable Texts in Contemporary India*, Suman Gupta draws a distinction between literary and commercial fiction. He describes literary fiction as the respectable face of Indian Literature in English abroad and commercial fiction as the gossipy café of Indian Writing in English at home. Upcoming sub-genres like detective fiction, science fiction and fantasy, campus novels, graphic novels, chicklit and romances are usually clumped into the same category.

But why are they not taken seriously if they are so widely read? It is, in fact, an informal tradition in some colleges and universities to warn off new students about the pitfalls of reading too much commercial fiction, especially writers like Chetan Bhagat and Durjoy Datta. The reason behind it is the conceived lack of literary value in such works, a perspective

which has much merit. Most academics and critics still doubt the overall literary achievements of such writers. Even the audience consuming such works are not seen as accomplished readers, and not considered to be fit to give value judgement on a literary work. However, the influence of such works cannot be denied, and their existence cannot be ignored.

In an essay titled “Indian Commercial Fiction in English, the Publishing Industry and Youth Culture” (2012), Suman Gupta elaborates on how to approach this kind of writing. Gupta notes that such works need to be looked at from a larger perspective of literary and publishing history which would provide us a new way to examine it. The growing readership and its implications could also be a potential point of entry into further studies. It could be a new way of looking inwards at the middle-class youth, India’s growing affluence and presence in the globalised world, and the strengthening sense of national and local identity. Such a perspective could also provide a new framework which is not dominated by the jaded postcolonial one we have been using so far.

Commercial fiction, whether we want it or not, is here to stay. And even though they have a local grounding, they include a sense of global awareness as well. Maybe the way forward could involve looking at the audience and their reception and the modes of publication if not the text itself. This is something that we need to contemplate about. As representatives of this particular kind of fiction, the works of Chetan Bhagat, Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi will be discussed briefly later.

Stop to Consider

As you read the unit, think about the following points:

- What is it that determines the literary quality of a text? Are there any established parameters to check literariness? Would it not limit its scope?
- Do you think any literary institution should have the authority to judge what has literary value and what does not?
- Is it perhaps our unwillingness to accept something new, a different formula, which prevents us from considering the value of newer works?

4.3.3 The politics of language:

Whenever one talks of literature, there is always a concern for its language. Why do writers write in any particular language? Is it just because they are more comfortable in it? The Marathi writer Kiran Nagarkar chose not to limit himself to just one language and wrote English novels like *Ravan and Eddie* (1994) and *Cuckold* (1997), for which he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2000. It is well understood that works and authors awarded by our National Academy of Letters play a significant role in building the literary canon. And while *Cuckold* is considered to be one of his best works, the Marathi literary establishment saw his switch from Marathi to English as a kind of betrayal. The acceptance of his works within that community declined, as if by switching to the English language, he suddenly lost all of his literary credibility.

This was not the case for Vikram Seth, whose translation of *A Suitable Boy* (1993) into Hindi was immediately accepted within the fold of the Hindi establishment. Was it because of Seth's acceptance that the Hindi translation captured an essence that he himself was unable to render? The inherent concern about authenticity rears its head whenever representation of the multifaceted Indian culture and tradition in English comes up. Rashmi Sadana discusses these issues in her 2007 essay "A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience: Questions of Authenticity and the Politics of Translation." She argues that postcolonial English has less to do with the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised and much to do with internal language politics and competing nationalisms. She mentions that it is ideology and not authenticity that is at stake, since issues of class, caste and privilege are all associated with language. Writing in English has significant benefits. It is the language of government bureaucracy and higher education and allows for a global reach. It also serves as a language of integration amongst the different linguistic groups in India.

Sadana also discusses concerns related to translation. What are the moralities associated with it? What are the fundamental rights of the translator? Can they modify the text as required by the audience reading it? Asking people why they choose to write in a particular language have become a rather dated question now. Amidst questions of authenticity and ideology and the underlying language politics, it has become difficult to determine what is ethically right.

Stop to Consider

- Did you know that English also became a tool to oppose the hegemonic power of Hindi in southern India? But how?
- Many Dalit writers consider English to be a language of liberation. Do you have any idea why?
- What role does the Sahitya Akademi play in determining the value of any work?

Whatever has been discussed in this unit so far seeks to acquaint the reader with the contemporary realities of Indian Writings. Keeping these ideas in mind will be beneficial as we explore some of the major contemporary authors and their works in the next section. A huge chunk of IWE is dominated by fiction and that is what we shall mostly focus on it. It is essential to understand that this SLM alone cannot teach you everything about IWE. Covering all the writers, poets and dramatists within this genre is neither possible nor the purpose of this unit. This unit only seeks to make you familiar with the genre and some of the major voices to pique further interest in Indian Writings.

SAQ

1. How are contemporary Indian Voices distinct from those of the past? Substantiate your answer with examples. (in 100 words)

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2. Comment critically on the politics of language concerning Indian Literature.(in 100 words)

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4.4 Dominant Contemporary Voices:

4.4.1 Salman Rushdie (b.1947):

One of the most influential contemporary authors of the world, Salman Rushdie is popularly known for his magnum opus Midnight’s Children

(1981), for which he won the Booker Prize that year. Spanning novels, essays, and children's literature, Rushdie's oeuvre is a rich tapestry of themes, techniques, and ideologies that reflect a profound engagement with cultural, political, and historical currents. In *Midnight's Children*, he weaves a narrative that encapsulates the tumultuous history of post-independence India through the lens of Saleem Sinai, a protagonist born at the precise moment when India gains independence in 1947. The novel has garnered widespread acclaim, with critics celebrating its narrative complexity, thematic depth, and Rushdie's masterful use of magical realism. The book won numerous awards and became a bestseller.

Rushdie is an audacious writer whose works usually confront and challenge prevailing norms and conventions. He explored the dichotomies of the East and the West and the clash of civilizations along with the issue of religious orthodoxy. It was his satirical novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which led him to be mired in controversies. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran, saw the novel as an advertisement of apostasy and issued a fatwa to kill Rushdie. In the decades that followed, he received multiple death threats and faced several assassination attempts. It was in the shadow of this overlying threat that Rushdie penned his fifth novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), a phantasmagorical and allegorical tale about the power of stories over silence and the dangers of storytelling. Although a children's novel, it beautifully explores the problem of censorship through a surreal narrative, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. Rushdie was knighted in 2007 for his contribution to literature.

Salman Rushdie's work in postcolonial themes, Diaspora studies, and cultural examinations have a distinctly global element to it. Nevertheless, it is grounded in his experiences in India and sheds light on many socio-cultural and geo-political concerns of the Indian sub-continent.

Stop to Consider:

Magic Realism:

Magic realism is a narrative technique where dreamlike and fantastic elements, even those derived from myths or fairy tales, are incorporated into ordinary events and details grounded in reality, in a seemingly nonchalant manner. The term was originally used to refer to the work of German surrealist painters in the 1920s and was later used to describe the works of writers like Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Amado, Isabel Allende and of course, Salman Rushie.

4.4.2 Amitav Ghosh (b.1956):

Known for his thought-provoking and richly textured works, Amitav Ghosh is one of the most prominent contemporary Indian authors. He received the Sahitya Akademi award for his 1988 novel *The Shadow Lines*, which discusses notions of nationalism and political freedom while exploring a complex web of ideas dealing with borders, both physical and metaphorical, and memory. Set against the backdrop of several historical events like World War II, the partition of India and the communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta, Ghosh skilfully weaves together the lives of characters from India and England, examining how political borders and historical events shape individual identities. The narrative unfolds through the perspective of an unnamed narrator, offering a kaleidoscopic view of events that span continents and generations.

Amitav Ghosh's meticulously researched and intricate storytelling explores a complex array of cultural, historical and environmental themes. His works *The Glass Palace* (2000) and *The Ibis Trilogy* (2008-2015) shows his deft weaving of historical events with compelling narratives which not only provides a nuanced understanding of such events but also sheds light on their lasting repercussions in our contemporary world.

It is, however, his exploration of pressing environmental issues and its connection to humanity which has become most pertinent in these contemporary times. In *The Hungry Tides* (2004), he journeys into the Sundarbans and unravels the intricate relationship between nature and

human existence. He examines the role of literature in confronting the challenges of climate change in his non-fiction book, *The Great Derangement* (2016), and calls for a more prominent place for ecological concerns in literature.

Ghosh has also written the science fiction novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), which won the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1997. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2007 and in 2008, he became the first Indian writer in English to win the Jnanpith award, India's highest literary honour.

SAQ

Mention some of the Works by Amitabh Ghosh. (60 words)

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4.4.3 Arundhati Roy (b.1961):

Arundhati Roy is a prominent writer and activist widely known for her Booker Prize winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). Known for her distinctive style, bold themes and unapologetic critical engagement, Roy has made a significant impact on contemporary literature and socio-political discourse. Her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, was praised for its exploration of complex social issues and the beautifully portrayed nuances of caste, family, and forbidden love. The intricate and non-linear narrative structure adds to the appeal of her work. Since its publication, Roy has produced a few non-fiction works and spent most of her time in socio-political activism.

Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), weaves a multitude of characters and storylines which reflect the diversity and complexity of modern India while exploring the lives of the marginalised and oppressed communities. The novel addresses issues faced by the transgender community, discrimination based on caste and religious tensions spanning across different locations of India over time. Roy skilfully incorporates historical events and political realities, including the situation in Kashmir, and intertwines the personal with the political.

Roy's political activism has attracted much controversy and has drawn the ire of the Indian government, especially due to her rigid anti-nuclear stance and her support for Kashmir separatism. She was even charged with sedition for the latter. Roy is an environmentalist and has also campaigned actively against big hydroelectric dam projects in India. She is a critic of neo-imperialism and vehemently opposed US foreign policy and their military invasion of Afghanistan. Her prominent non-fiction works include *The End of Imagination* (1998), *The Cost of Living* (1999), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (2010), *Kashmir: The Case for Freedom* (2011) and *My Seditious Heart* (2019), among others.

4.4.4 Vikram Seth (b.1952):

A versatile novelist and poet, Vikram Seth rose into prominence with his novel, *A Suitable Boy* (1993). Set in post-independence India, the sprawling narrative delves into the intricacies of familial and societal expectations, and the complex interplay between tradition and modernity. Seth examines the socio-political system and religious strife of that time and juxtaposes it with the themes of love, identity, and familial relationships. His treatment of the narrative offers a delicate balance between the personal and the societal. A sequel titled *A Suitable Girl* was announced in 2009 but is yet to be published. His 1999 novel *An Equal Music*, a love story of professional musicians, was well received as well.

It was Seth's first novel, *The Golden Gate* (1986), which brought him the Sahitya Akademi Award for English. Written in verse, he utilises the sonnet form to tell a contemporary love story set in San Francisco. Although his mastery of language and imagery was evident in his very first poetry collection, *Mappings* (1980), it becomes much more polished by the time *The Golden Gate* was published. His fluid and lyrical verses augment the vivid and sensory imagery of his works. Vikram Seth is the recipient of Padma Shri and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, among other awards.

4.4.5 Rohinton Mistry (b.1952):

Rohinton Mistry is known for his lucid prose and his insightful portrayal of the human condition. His focus mostly revolves around the Parsi

community that he left behind when he emigrated to Canada. As such, there is a deep sense of nostalgia in his works. However, he meshes it well with the domestic socio-cultural issues of the time, producing works with a fine sense of balance.

He has written three novels, all of which have been awarded multiple times, and has a few short story collections. His first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), delves into the Parsi community's struggles in Bombay against the backdrop of the India Pakistan war of 1971. The tale of Gustad Noble, a protagonist haunted by the spectres of the 1962 Indo-China War, struggling to keep his family afloat in a different state of crisis is at once deeply personal and political. His second novel, *A Fine Balance* (1995), is set in Bombay during the period of Emergency and often lauded for its examination of the political scenario and its impact on the lives of the characters. This third novel, *Family Matters* (2002), is also set in Bombay and follows the story of Nariman Vakeel, an old Parsi widower with Parkinson's disease who had to take up residence with his daughter's family and how the chain of events spell doom for the family. The juxtaposition of the personal with the political and the blurring of lines is a recurrent theme.

Mistry's nuanced portrayal of culture and contemporary politics, and the clash between tradition and modernity is unique. But what truly sets him apart is perhaps his bleak outlook and the pervasive sense of despair that abound his works. While taxing for his readers, it aptly reflects the harsh realities faced by his characters. His portrayals always strive for authenticity and provide unique insight to the human experience. Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) is a critically appreciated short story collection.

Check Your Progress:

1. How different are Vikram Seth and Rohinton Mistry as writers?
2. How has their personal life informed their works?

4.4.6 Sashi Tharoor (b.1956):

Sashi Tharoor is a prominent author, politician and former diplomat who is most popularly known for his intellectual commentary and his

impressive vocabulary of English words. Although his storytelling is intricate and his prose eloquent, his works face criticism for their complexity and occasional verbosity. His fiction and non-fiction often explore the complexities of Indian history, society and its politics. Tharoor's debut novel, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is a satirical reinterpretation of the *Mahabharata* set against the backdrop of modern Indian politics. It is an ambitious work which blends mythology with contemporary politics.

An Era of Darkness (2016), a work of non-fiction won the Sahitya Akademi award in 2019. The book explores the depredations of the British Empire in India and narrates how the colonial occupation brought a once vibrant and powerful region to poverty and despair. He rigorously challenges the conventional narrative about the supposed benefits of British rule in the colonies. It is based on a speech that Tharoor made in 2015 at the Oxford Union debate on the topic "Does Britain owe reparations to its former colonies?" His convincing narrative and flowing speech immediately went viral over the web, and it was expanded further into a book. His 2018 book *Why I Am a Hindu* simplifies the complex narratives of Hinduism for the general audience and presents why its pluralism is much needed. Tharoor's intention behind writing the book was to distinguish the strand of Hindu nationalism from Hinduism and he has succeeded in doing so while writing about his own identification within the religious tradition. He is also the author of *The Paradoxical Prime Minister: Narendra Modi and His India* (2018), which while presenting a different perspective does seem to be influenced by his own political ideology.

Tharoor, for all his persistent political engagement, remains one of the most influential authors of our time.

4.4.7 Jhumpa Lahiri (b.1967):

Jhumpa Lahiri's work is characterised by her poignant exploration of immigrant experiences, cultural identity, and the complexities of familial relationships. Her literary career began with the short-story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*, which received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. The nine stories within the collection delve into the lives of

Indian and Indian American characters as they navigate the challenges associated with migration: assimilation, isolation, and the search for cultural belonging. Her simple yet evocative prose with its emotional depth and nuanced characterizations is reminiscent of both her Indian heritage and American upbringing.

The Namesake (2003), her debut novel, explores similar themes. The novel traces the life of Gogol Ganguli, an Indian American young man caught between the expectations of his traditional Bengali parents and the allure of American culture. In 2006, the novel was adapted for a film directed by Mira Nair. Lahiri's fiction carries a distinct autobiographical trait, drawing upon her own experiences and those of her acquaintances. Her second novel *The Lowland* (2013), traces the narrative of two brothers separated by political unrest and personal choices. In her succeeding works like *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), her focus shifted from the first generational concerns of immigrants to the much more assimilated second and third generations.

Although beautifully narrated, the recurring themes of the immigrant experience and cultural displacement limits the diversity of her oeuvre. In a bid for linguistic experimentation, Lahiri's memoir, *In Other Words*, was first written in Italian and then self-translated to English.

4.4.8 Kiran Desai (b.1971):

A novelist best known for *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) which won her the Man Booker Prize, Kiran Desai is one of the most important contemporary Indian authors. Daughter of Sahitya Akademi winner and noted author Anita Desai, her works explore themes of identity, alienation, and the consequences of socio-political upheavals. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai grapples with the effects of post-colonialism and the loss of identity, the concepts of justice and morality, the consequences of globalisation and migration, and the prevalent racial and socio-economic inequality in India. The novel is set in the mid-1980s in the backdrop of Nepalese insurgency and centres around the lives of a retired Judge and his granddaughter Sai, and parallelly follows the narrative of Biju, their cook's son, who struggles to find his own footing in New York as an illegal immigrant. Her visuals are striking and involves

seamless integration of the beautiful with the dark and horrific. And while the overall tone of the novel is dark, she does introduce occasional doses of comedy as well.

Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) is much livelier and fast paced. Set in the village of Shahkot, the narrative follows the exploits of Sampath Chawla who, fed up with his life, gives up his job at the post office and begins to live in a guava tree. Armed with the knowledge he had pilfered from various letters while working at the post office, he sets himself up as a guru and a holy man. The novel might seem like a fabulous tale filled with rich depictions and interesting characters but at its core, it is a commentary on the theme of commercialism and the absurdity of hero-worship. Desai won the Betty Trask Award for the novel.

The vivid portrayal of Indian contexts, issues and scenarios mingled with issues brought by migration and globalisation forms the crux of her works and cements her place within the canon of Indian writers. Desai is also the youngest female recipient of the Man Booker prize.

4.4.9 Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (b.1956):

Known for her captivating storytelling and exploration of themes such as identity, culture, and women's experiences, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the author of novels such as *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of my Heart* (1999), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), and *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019). Born in Kolkata, India, Divakaruni moved to the United States in the late 1970s to pursue higher education. Her unique perspective as an immigrant has greatly influenced her writing, making her a prominent voice in contemporary literature.

Divakaruni's works span across various genres, including novels, short stories, poetry, and children's literature. The novel *Sister of my Heart* delves into the complexities of female relationships and the power of sisterhood. Divakaruni's writing often incorporates elements of magical realism, infusing her stories with a touch of the fantastical. Her novel, *The Palace of Illusions*, is a retelling of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, from the perspective of Draupadi, the epic's central female character.

Through this reimagining, Divakaruni brings a fresh feminist perspective to a well-known mythological tale.

Divakaruni's writing has garnered critical acclaim and numerous awards, including the American Book Award and the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award. Her works have been translated into multiple languages and have gained a wide readership around the world. Her writing has been described as “faithful” yet “striking” by reviewers on various occasions.

Beyond her literary achievements, Divakaruni is also a dedicated advocate for social justice and women's empowerment. She uses her platform to address issues such as domestic violence, immigration, and cultural identity, further amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. In addition to her novels, Divakaruni has also published several collections of short stories, such as *Arranged Marriage: Stories* (1995) and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001). These collections explore the lives of Indian women, both in India and the diaspora, shedding light on their struggles, triumphs, and the complexities of their relationships.

4.4.10 Devdutt Pattanaik :

Devdutt Pattanaik is an author, mythologist, and speaker known for his profound interpretations of Indian mythology. With his extensive knowledge and unique storytelling ability, he has made the complex world of mythology accessible and relatable to a wide audience. One of the most distinctive aspects of Pattanaik's work is his ability to seamlessly bridge the gap between ancient mythology and contemporary life. He has authored numerous books that explore various aspects of Hindu mythology, including *My Gita* (2015), *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana* (2013), *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata* (2010), and *The Pregnant King* (2008).

Although Pattanaik's work has received widespread acclaim both in India and internationally, his interpretations have also received severe backlash. His critics view him as a pop-mythologist who has done irreparable damage to the way in which many contemporary Indians see their own culture heritage. The basis of this debate is mostly centred on his lack of expertise in Sanskrit, which led to dependence on

erroneous English translations and transliterations, and his comparison of the past with a yardstick of the present. But regardless of that particular truth, his contribution to the resurgence of interest in Indian mythology is unquestionable.

4.5 Other important writers:

A discussion of important Indian voices is potentially never ending. Some other contemporary voices include:

Mukul Kesavan, a historian, author and teacher known for his critical commentary on a wide range of topics. His novel *Looking Through Glass* (1995), analyses identity within the discourse of Indian nationalism, and explores themes of secularism and fundamentalism amid concerns of embodiment and agency. He teaches Social History at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi.

Amit Chaudhuri, a prolific writer, poet, literary critic and literary activist who has eight published novels and multiple collections of short stories, poetry and non-fiction. He is also a singer and music plays an important role in his works, as seen in his second novel *Afternoon raag* (1993). In 2002, he received the Sahitya Akademi award for his novel *A New World*. Chaudhuri teaches Creative Writing at Ashoka University.

Aravind Adiga, an author, and journalist known for his novel, *The White Tiger* (2008), for which he won the Man Booker Prize. The novel critiques the class disparities, corruption, and social injustices prevalent in contemporary India within the context of a globalised world. His other novels include *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011) and *Selection Day* (2016).

Mahesh Dattani, a director, actor and playwright known for plays like *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Final Solutions* (1993), *Seven Steps around the Fire* (1998), etc. He was the first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi (in 1998) for his book *Final Solutions and Other Plays* (1994). The works focus upon issues of patriarchy, communalism and the marginalised sections of our society among other things.

4.6 Contemporary Indian English Poets:

Indian English Writing is dominated by fiction, and it hasn't been easy for poetry to create a niche of its own, especially with the clichés surrounding its authenticity and originality. But it is still flourishing and has become a rich vibrant scene of creativity and new explorations. There has been a considerable addition by the contemporary poets to the poetic tradition set by poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das and Sarojini Naidu, and even to the one set by stalwarts like Agha Shahid Ali, Keki Daruwalla, Adil Jussawalla and Jayanta Mahapatra. The very idea of finding differences to calculate the significance of a poet is not something that Arundhati Subramaniam, one of the prominent contemporary poets, is keen on. She mentions that such actions give rise to a 'hashtag' approach which reduces poetry to simple and easy labels while doing injustice to both the past and the present writers (Subramaniam 4). Arundhati Subramaniam's poetry is critically acclaimed and discusses multiple issues and themes, including those of unbelonging, identity, love, vulnerability, uncertainty and even spirituality. She has published five collections of poetry, of which *When God is a Traveller* won her the Sahitya Akademi in 2020.

However, the realm of contemporary Indian poetry is vast and cannot be fully explored within the scope of this unit. Poets representative of our contemporary times include CP Surendran, Vijay Namvisan, Mamang Dai, Meena Kandasamy, Chandramohan Satyanathan, Mona Zote, Robin Ngangom, Desmond Kharmawphlang, EV Ramakrishnan, Ranjit Hoskote and Tishani Doshi among others.

Stop to Consider

- Can one still do justice to a poet after comparisons with other poets?
- Each poet brings to the tradition his/her own culture, thus expanding its reaches continuously.

4.7 Regional Voices:

There have been many distinct voices from the vibrant and diverse regional literary traditions of India. Some of them will be discussed below.

Bama (b.1958)

Hailing from a marginalized Dalit community, Bama Faustina Soosairaj's writing is deeply rooted in her own experiences and the experiences of her community. Better known as Bama, Soosairaj vividly portrays the harsh realities of caste-based oppression, discrimination, and social inequality that Dalits face on a daily basis. Through her powerful narratives, she sheds light on the systemic injustices and challenges that Dalits encounter in various aspects of their lives, including education, employment, and social interactions.

One of Bama's most notable works is her autobiography, *Karukku*, which was published in 1992. This groundbreaking book became a significant milestone in Dalit literature, as it was one of the first autobiographies written by a Dalit woman. It delves into Bama's personal journey of self-discovery, her struggles with caste discrimination, and her eventual embrace of her Dalit identity. The book received critical acclaim for its raw honesty and unflinching portrayal of the Dalit experience.

Bama's other notable works include *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002), both of which along with her collections of short stories continue to explore themes of caste discrimination and social inequality. Her writing has received numerous awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, which is one of the highest literary honors in India. Bama's writings are significant not just because of her lived experiences as a Dalit person but as a Dalit woman, a perspective of dual systemic suppression.

Ambai (b.1944)

Born C. S. Lakshmi, Ambai has made significant contributions to literature, particularly in the realm of women's writing. Her works explore themes of gender, identity, and social issues, offering a unique perspective on the experiences of women in Indian society. Her writing style is characterized by its lyrical and introspective nature, and often delves into the complexities of human emotions and relationships, providing readers with a deep understanding of the human condition. Through her stories, Ambai challenges traditional gender roles and sheds light on the often-overlooked experiences of women.

Ambai's contributions to literature have been widely recognized and celebrated. She has received numerous awards and accolades for her work, including the prestigious Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honors. Her writings have been translated into several languages, allowing her work to reach a wider audience and make a global impact. Her notable works include her collection of short stories titled *A Purple Sea* (1992), *In A Forest, A Deer* (2006) and *A Meeting on the Andheri Overbridge* (2016).

Girish Karnad (1938-2019)

A Kannada actor and playwright, Girish Karnad is renowned for his works such as *Hayavadana* (1971), *Tughlaq* (1964) and *Nagamandala* (1988). Famous for his presence in the stage, on television as well as the big screens of Bollywood, few people connect the stoic actor to the award-winning playwright of such genius works. His works generally challenge societal conceptions of the normal and "abnormal", along with norms of caste, creed, and gender. Karnad has received the Padma Bhushan (1992), the Sahitya Academy award (1994) as well as the Jnanpith Award (1998) for his works, amongst many other accolades.

Namdeo Dhasal (1949-2014)

Namdeo Dhasal was a prominent Indian poet, writer, and activist known for his powerful and provocative works that challenged social and political norms. Dhasal grew up in a marginalized community and experienced firsthand the struggles and injustices faced by the lower castes in India. He co-founded the Dalit Panther movement in the 1970s, which aimed to fight against caste-based discrimination and advocate for the rights of the Dalit community. His poetry often reflected the pain, anger, and resilience of the marginalized, giving voice to their experiences and exposing the deep-rooted inequalities in society.

His debut poetry collection, *Golpitha*, published in 1972, was a groundbreaking work that brought attention to the harsh realities of life in the red-light district of Mumbai. His subsequent collections, such as *Moorkh Mhataryane* and *Khel*, continued to explore themes of caste, poverty, sexuality, and political resistance. Dhasal's activism and poetry

were deeply intertwined, as he believed in using his words to bring about social change and empower the oppressed.

Throughout his career, Dhasal received numerous accolades for his work, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of India's highest literary honors. His poetry has been translated into several languages and continues to inspire and resonate with readers across the world.

Perumal Murugan (b.1966)

Perumal Murugan is a renowned Indian author who hails from Tamil Nadu. Murugan's writing style is characterized by its raw and evocative portrayal of rural life and its inhabitants. He often explores themes of caste, gender, and societal norms, shedding light on the complexities and challenges faced by individuals living in rural communities. His stories are known for their vivid descriptions and nuanced characterizations, offering readers a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people.

One of Murugan's most celebrated works is his novel *One Part Woman* (2010), originally published in Tamil as *Madhorubhagan*. This novel explores the sensitive topic of infertility and the societal pressures faced by a couple in a rural setting. His other translated works include *Rising Heat* (1991), *Current Show* (1993) and *Seasons of the Palm* (2000).

In addition to his novels, Murugan has also written poetry and short stories. His poetry often reflects his deep connection to nature and his observations of the human condition. His short stories, on the other hand, offer glimpses into the lives of various individuals, capturing their struggles, dreams, and aspirations. Murugan's works have received widespread recognition and have been translated into several languages, allowing his stories to reach a wider audience. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of India's most prestigious literary honours.

Beyond his literary achievements, Murugan has also been actively involved in promoting Tamil literature and culture. He has served as a professor of Tamil literature and has been instrumental in nurturing young writers and encouraging them to explore diverse themes and perspectives.

4.8 Voices from the Northeast:

Situating writers from the Northeast within this unit in a separate segment allows us to truly understand the multicultural ethos of India. Although commonly perceived to be mostly homogenous, the eight states in the region host a multitude of languages, a variety of cultures and people from many distinctive racial origins. Patricia Mukhim's 2005 essay, "Where is this North-east?", although a little dated, explores the realities of this region and provides some much-needed insight into the issues of the region. A small segment like this cannot possibly justify the entire corpus of writings from the Northeast and only seeks to provide some insight into the voices of this region. As such, we shall briefly look at the contributions of Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao and Mamoni Raisom Goswami.

Mamang Dai (b.1957)

Mamang Dai hails from Arunachal Pradesh and has made significant contributions to literature, particularly in the genres of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Her works often explore themes of identity, culture, and the natural world, offering readers a unique perspective on the rich cultural heritage of Northeast India. Characterized by its lyrical and evocative language, her language skillfully weaves together elements of folklore, mythology, and personal experiences to create narratives that are both captivating and thought-provoking. Her poetry reflects a deep connection to nature, often drawing inspiration from the scenic landscapes of Arunachal Pradesh.

One of Mamang Dai's notable works is her novel *The Black Hill* published in 2002. Set in the backdrop of the Himalayas, the novel tells the story of a young man's journey to discover his roots and confront the complexities of his cultural identity. Some of her other works include *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), *Hambereelai's Loom* (2014) and *Escaping the Land* (2021).

She has received several awards for her work, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of India's most prestigious literary honors. Her writings have been translated into multiple languages, allowing her stories to reach a wider audience and create cross-cultural dialogues. In addition to her fiction writing, Mamang Dai has also been actively involved in promoting the cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh. She has worked

as a journalist documenting the lives and stories of the indigenous tribes of the region. Her non-fiction works shed light on the unique traditions, rituals, and oral histories of these communities, preserving their cultural legacy for future generations.

Temsula Ao (1945-2022)

Temsula Ao was an acclaimed writer, poet, and ethnographer hailing from Nagaland. Recognized for her significant contributions to contemporary literature and tribal studies, Ao's writings often explore the themes of identity, gender, and culture, predominantly focusing on the lives and experiences of the Naga people. Deeply rooted in her own heritage, her works provide valuable insights into the indigenous beliefs, traditions, and struggles of her community.

Her most notable work is the novel *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, published in 2005. The book garnered critical acclaim for its vivid depiction of the emotional turmoil faced by the Naga community. Apart from her works of fiction, Temsula Ao also delved into ethnography, documenting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Naga tribes. She authored *Songs That Tell* in 2008, a collection of Ao folk songs translated into English, highlighting the significance of oral traditions in storytelling.

In recognition of her literary contributions, Temsula Ao received numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013, one of India's highest literary honors. She also served as a professor at North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, Meghalaya.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami (1942-2011)

Popularly known as Mamoni Raisom Goswami, Dr. Indira Goswami is recognized as one of the most influential literary figures of Assam. Her writing career spanned over five decades, during which she authored numerous novels, short stories, poems, and essays. Her works often explored themes of social justice, women's rights, and the cultural and political landscape of Assam.

One of her most acclaimed novels is *The Moth Eaten Howdah of a Tusker* (1988) which delves into the lives of upper-class widows and highlights their struggles and aspirations in the wake of various turn-of-the-century changes. Some of her other works included *The Rusted Sword* (1980), *The Man from Chinnamasta* (2005) and *The Bronze Sword of Thengphakhri Tehsildar* (2009).

In recognition of her literary contributions, Goswami was honored with the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Jnanpith Award (the highest literary award in India), and the Padma Shri, one of the highest civilian awards in the country. These accolades not only celebrated her literary achievements but also acknowledged her role as a cultural ambassador for Assam.

Check Your Progress

1. Analyse the differences in style and content of the writers writing in English and in the regional languages.
2. Comment critically on the topic of authenticity of representation in Indian Writings.

4.9 Popular Fiction Writers:

Chetan Bhagat (1974)

Chetan Bhagat completely changed the way commercial literature is perceived in India. Before his arrival, there was no distinctive body of works in this section of literature and publishers were wary of investing in it. Now, it has evolved into a blooming business of bestsellers. His debut novel, *Five Point Someone* (2004) propelled him into the spotlight and became a bestseller. The book, set in the backdrop of the Indian education system, struck a chord with young readers, capturing their struggles and aspirations. Bhagat's subsequent novels, including *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2006), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), and *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009) further

solidified his position as a popular writer. These books tackled a range of issues, from love and relationships to social dynamics and cultural differences.

Amish Tripathi (1974)

Amish Tripathi is known for his novels that blend mythology, history, and philosophy. He gained significant recognition for his fictional reimagining of Indian mythological tales. His debut novel *The Immortals of Meluha* released in 2010, marked the first book in the *Shiva Trilogy*. This trilogy, including *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013) reimagines the story of Lord Shiva as a mortal, exploring his journey and his impact on ancient society. Building on the success of the *Shiva Trilogy*, Tripathi continued to captivate readers with his *Ram Chandra Series* which launched with its first novel in 2015.

Ashwin Sanghi (1969)

Ashwin Sanghi is known for his gripping and thought-provoking novels that blend history, mythology, thriller elements and is often hailed as the "Dan Brown of India." His debut novel, *The Rozabal Line* (2007) introduced readers to his distinctive writing style. Sanghi continued to capture readers' attention with his subsequent novels, including *Chanakya's Chant* (2010), *The Krishna Key* (2012) and *The Sialkot Saga* (2016) among others. These books delve into different periods of history, exploring the lives of legendary figures, unravelling ancient mysteries, and posing profound questions about the nature of power, fate, and human consciousness.

Check Your Progress:

1. Analyse the primary concerns of contemporary Indian writings and substantiate your answer with examples.
2. Analyse the importance of international recognition for the creation of a literary canon.

3. Do you think that regional voices have been sufficiently explored in translations? Why are such works necessary within the greater literary tradition of IWE?
4. How do contemporary Indian authors treat environmental concerns? Elaborate with apt examples.
5. Trace the evolution of contemporary Indian Voices with apt examples.
6. Create your own literary canon and substantiate it with critical reasoning.

4.10 Summing Up:

The corpus of contemporary Indian Writings in English is vast and concerned with a host of issues and themes which carries a significant contemporary relevance. Many works which were sidelined before are now being accommodated within the mainstream. However, the spotlight is still mostly on the writers with international exposure. Did it ever strike you, based on whatever you have read in this unit and your own research, that a good chunk of the mainstream contemporary writers live either abroad or alternately in India? What does that tell you?

While regional languages potentially have a greater chance of expressing the ethos of India due to a direct connection to it, English performs the role adequately as well. Acknowledging concerns of authenticity now, after over seventy years of post-colonial usage, will only limit our own oeuvre. There is a need to further explore and translate regional works into English and to welcome marginalised voices. Only by being inclusive can we truly present the Indian experience in this literary tradition.

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