

# READING PROSE AND FICTION

BA (ENGLISH)

BENG 403(E)

Third Year



**RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY**

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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## About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.



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# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

## Reading Prose and Fiction

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Syllabi	Mapping in Book
<b>Unit I- Prose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- George Orwell - The Prevention of Literature</li><li>- J.L. Nehru - Homage to Gandhi</li><li>- N.C. Chaudhuri - Money and the Englishman</li></ul>	<b>Unit 1: Prose (Pages 3-17)</b>
<b>Unit II- Novel - I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- R.K. Narayan - The Guide</li></ul>	<b>Unit 2: Novel - I: R.K. Narayan (Pages 19-80)</b>
<b>Unit III- Novel - II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Jane Austen - Pride and Prejudice</li><li>- Desai - Fire on the Mountain</li></ul>	<b>Unit 3: Novel - II: Austen and Desai (Pages 81-107)</b>
<b>Unit IV- Short Stories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Edgar Allan Poe - The Cask of Amontillado</li><li>- Virginia Woolf - The Duchess and the Jeweller</li><li>- K. Mansfield - The Fly</li><li>- R K Narayan - The Trail of the Green Blazer</li></ul>	<b>Unit 4: Short Stories (Pages 109-144)</b>
<b>Unit V- Practical Criticism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Appreciation of an unseen prose passage.</li></ul>	<b>Unit 5: Practical Criticism: Appreciation of Unseen Prose Passages (Pages 145-171)</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

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Prose is the most fundamental form of written language. It applies common grammatical structure and a natural flow of speech. Its simplicity and loosely defined arrangement enhances its usage in spoken dialogues, factual discourse as well as contemporary and imaginary writing. Fiction on the other hand is the most popular form of literature present in today's world. It is any narrative that deals with events that are not factual, but rather imaginary. It is often applied to theatrical and musical work.

The content of this book *Reading Prose and Fiction* is divided into five units. It will discuss some of the prominent writers in prose and fiction such as, George Orwell, R.K. Narayan, Jane Austen, Anita Desai, Virginia Woolf, and many more.

The book has been written in the self-instructional mode wherein each unit begins with the Objectives of the topic, followed by an Introduction to the unit before going on to the presentation of the detailed content in a simple and structured format. Check Your Progress questions are provided at regular intervals to test the student's understanding of the topics. A Summary and a set of Self-Assessment Questions are provided at the end of each unit. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions have also been provided which would help the students assess their progress.

## NOTES



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# UNIT 1 PROSE

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## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 George Orwell: About the Author
  - 1.2.1 The Prevention of Literature: Critical Appreciation
- 1.3 J.L. Nehru: About the Author
  - 1.3.1 Homage to Gandhi: Critical Appreciation
- 1.4 N.C. Chaudhuri: About the Author
  - 1.4.1 Money and the Englishman: Critical Appreciation
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Key Terms
- 1.7 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 1.8 Questions and Exercises
- 1.9 Further Reading

## NOTES

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Literature as a term is used to describe written or spoken material. It consists of anything from creative writing to technical or scientific works, but the term is most commonly used while referring to works of the creative imagination, including fiction, drama, prose, etc.

Prose is the most basic form of written language, applying common grammatical structure and natural flow of speech rather than rhythmic structure. Its simplicity and loosely defined arrangement has led to its usage in the majority of spoken dialogues, factual discourse as well as contemporary and imaginary writing. There are many prose forms. Novels, short stories, and works of criticism are kinds of prose. Other examples include comedy, drama, fable, fiction, folk tale, hagiography, legend, literature, myth, narrative, saga, science fiction, story, articles, newspaper, journals, essays, travelogues and speeches. Each form of prose has its own style and has to be dealt with in its own particular way. Travel writing is also one form of prose. Through this, we get a first-hand account of the travels of the writer, the places he has visited, and the experiences he has encountered. Speech is vocal communication with the purpose of conveying something. In this unit, you will get acquainted with three prose writings of famous writers, i.e., George Orwell, J.L. Nehru and N.C. Chaudhuri.

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## 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse George Orwell as an essayist
- Analyse Orwell’s ‘The Prevention of Literature’
- Describe the life and works of Jawaharlal Nehru
- Critically analyse ‘Homage to Gandhi’
- Examine N.C. Chaudhuri ‘Money and the Englishman’

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## 1.2 GEORGE ORWELL: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### NOTES

The effects of the Second World War are clearly visible in the literature of that period, reflecting the spirit of revolt and the feeling of distrust. Established literary figures like Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh and George Orwell rightfully satirized the socio-political insecurity and instability among the masses by depicting the feeling of futility, gloom and despair.



*Fig. 1.1 George Orwell*

George Orwell was born on 25 June 1903 in Bihar, India. His father Richard Walmseley Blair named him Eric Arthur Blair, the name which he forsook for his pen name George Orwell. His childhood was not a happy one as he did not have pleasant memories of his parents. Even his school life at St. Cyprian's was very miserable and lonely. He won a scholarship to Eton despite his depression at school.

For some time, he worked as an assistant to the District Superintendent of Police in the capital of upper Burma and then resigned and returned to England in 1927. He worked at various positions and also participated in the Spanish Civil War. After the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945, he became very famous and financially prosperous for the first time in his life. Another famous work *Nineteen Eighty Four* was published in 1949. However, he did not live long enough to enjoy his popularity and succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis in 1950, at the age of 46.

### List of Works

The following is the list of the prominent works of George Orwell.

#### Novels

- 1934 – *Burmese Days*
- 1935 – *A Clergyman's Daughter*
- 1936 – *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*
- 1939 – *Coming Up for Air*
- 1945 – *Animal Farm*
- 1949 – *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

**Non-fiction**

- 1933 – *Down and Out in Paris and London*
- 1937 – *The Road to Wigan Pier*
- 1938 – *Homage to Catalonia*

**NOTES****1.2.1 The Prevention of Literature: Critical Appreciation**

‘The Prevention of Literature’ is an essay printed in 1946 by the English essayist and writer George Orwell. The essay deals with the freedom of thought and expression; especially in an atmosphere where the intellectuals were not speaking against the communism of the Soviet Union. Orwell noted that intellectual liberty in England was under attack from three sources, i.e., totalitarians, monopolies (radio, films, etc.), and bureaucracies. By bureaucracies, he meant particularly the Ministry of Information and the British Council, which employed writers, while assuming that the writers could have their opinions dictated to them. The main focus of Orwell’s essay was on the intellectuals who should be strong in their defence of individual integrity, but who were not speaking out. Orwell stated that the left-wing authors and academicians were turning a blind eye towards all the events which would project the Soviet Union in a derogatory manner. The left-wing intellectuals had accepted a kind of self-censorship to preserve their ideologies before the need for objective truth.

**Summary of the Essay**

Orwell starts his essay by recalling a meeting of the PEN Club, which was held in defence of the press, where the speakers were mostly concerned with the issues of obscenity and in presenting the matter that praises the Soviet Russia. In a footnote of his essay, Orwell acknowledges that maybe he has picked a bad day, but this provides an opportunity for Orwell to discuss about the issue of freedom of thought and the enemies of intellectual liberty. He mentioned the enemies of freedom of thought in England to be the monopoly of radio, control of the press in a few hands, bureaucracy and the unwillingness of the public to buy books. At the same time, Orwell was extremely worried about the freedom of the writers being weak and their failure to defend this dominance. The main issue was the right to report contemporary events truthfully. According to him, a decade ago, it was necessary to defend freedom against Catholics and Conservatives, however, now it is necessary to defend it against Communists who claim that there is ‘no doubt about the poisonous effect of the Russian mythos on English intellectual life’.

Orwell mentioned the Spanish Civil War, the Ukrainian famine and Poland as topics which have been ignored by pro-soviet authors because of the existing orthodoxy. Orwell stated that prose literature was unable to grow under totalitarianism, just as it was unable to grow under the oppressive religious culture of the Middle Ages. However, under totalitarianism the doctrines are unstable, which means that the lies always have to be changed to keep up with a continual re-writing of the past.

Orwell stated that poetry can survive under totalitarianism for several reasons, whereas the prose writers have lost their power by the destruction of intellectual liberty. In the essay, he has tried to speculate the state of literature in times to come. According to him, the totalitarianism prevailing in the society will not provide enough encouragement to the literature. Moreover, he observed that people were willing to spend time and money on various other sources of recreation, but were reluctant to do the same for

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literature. In the essay, he has condemned the Russophile intellectuals as they were not worried about the state of literature and adopted a completely uninterested approach in order to maintain their privileges under the dictatorial situations. Orwell strongly believed that in the absence of freedom of thoughts, literature will not be able to survive or flourish. He also blamed the intellects for the state of the literature as they were themselves driving it to such a situation.

**Extracts from the Essay**

In our age the idea of intellectual liberty is under attack from two directions. On the one side are its theoretical enemies, the apologists of totalitarianism, and on the other its immediate, practical enemies, monopoly and bureaucracy. Any writer or journalist who wants to retain his integrity finds himself thwarted by the general drift of society rather than by active persecution.

The journalist is unfree, and is conscious of unfreedom, when he is forced to write lies or suppress what seems to him important news: the imaginative writer is unfree when he has to falsify his subjective feelings, which from his point of view are facts. He may distort and caricature reality in order to make his meaning clearer, but he cannot misrepresent the scenery of his own mind.

Political writing in our time consists almost entirely of prefabricated phrases bolted together like the pieces of a child's Meccano set. It is the unavoidable result of self-censorship. To write in plain vigorous language one has to think fearlessly, and if one thinks fearlessly one cannot be politically orthodox.

**Responses towards Orwell's Essay**

There were many authors who responded towards Orwell's views about the state of literature. Randall Swingler, a communist poet, reacted to the essay by giving his views in his article that 'The Right to Free Expression' in Polemic 5. Swingler agreed with Orwell, as he also felt that an author needs to take a strong stand against all situations or persons where the freedom of an intellect is at threat. He agrees with Orwell's views on the way dictatorships in Soviet Union tried to implement policies to curb cultural freedom. In spite of his agreement with the essay, he felt that due to the high degree of 'intellectual swashbucklery', it was difficult to completely respond to the essay. Swingler felt that Orwell had made several claims in the essay which he was unable to provide enough evidence and they seemed more like sweeping statement and uncorroborated declarations. This response by Swingler was not taken well by Orwell and he considered it to be a mocking personal attack on himself. Orwell began to socially avoid Swingler for the response he presented about the essay.

Orwell's essay was reviewed by Christopher Sykes; in fact, Sykes even studied his other works and finally established that his essays were very good and made a lot of sense, but at the same time they seemed to be slightly exaggerated and all his views were not supported with facts. He stated his views in following words; 'They contain much admirable sense, but they contain too some over-stated views, and some prophecies as doubtful as those of John Burnham.'

**Critical Analysis**

During the period of World War II, Orwell began to start feeling about the prevailing censorship and he started to express his feelings through his writings. Orwell was able to identify the sources for the censorship and openly spoke about them in his essay 'The

Prevention of Literature'. To a large extent, he blamed the intellectuals of the time as they were allowing the Ministry of Information and the British Council, who provided monetary aid to writers so that they could make them write in their favour. He felt that the left-wing authors and intellectuals were allowing self-censorship and were willingly preserving ideologies which were hindering the flourishing of the literature.

Orwell has always been very worried about the contents of political writing. He had commented about the state of writing in his essay 'Politics and the English Language', which was published in 1946. Orwell felt that the language of politics had extremely depreciated and it only contained weasel words which acted as a camouflage and undermined the true extent of the happenings. The language used in the texts was able to hide the real meaning of the actions and the dealings. False statements were considered to be the true and brutal acts like murder were also presented in a positive manner.

The essay 'The Prevention of Literature' was a reaction to all the indecencies which were taking place at that time. The essay has been described as one of Orwell's most expressive deliveries and his attempt to assert decorousness. While attending the PEN meeting, Orwell was upset at the prevailing situation because he felt that it was permitted to talk or print texts related to sexual context, but the same liberty did not apply to political situations. He felt that this clearly points towards lying low attitude adopted by the intellectuals of the contemporary society who were not concerned about the suppression of their freedom of thought. Orwell could not fathom this behaviour, hence he openly criticised the state of affairs through his essay and completely blames intellectuals and calls them weak. Orwell sets high standards for himself and felt that writing should be done in simple language and fearlessly. He stated his views in the following words; 'To write in plain, vigorous language one has to think fearlessly, and if one thinks fearlessly one cannot be politically orthodox.' His standards are clear from his subsequent works where he took full care so that the 'Prevention of Literature' could be prevented. The freedom of thought is visible in his books like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*.

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### 1.3 J.L. NEHRU: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Nehru was born to Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani at Allahabad in India. He was the first of three children to the couple. His father being a barrister was actively engaged in the Indian independence movement. He had also served as the President of Indian National Congress, twice.

Nehru received most of his primary education at home from several tutors and governess. At the age of sixteen, Nehru was enrolled at the Harrow School in England after which he got admission at the Trinity College, Cambridge where he earned his honours degree in natural science. He was highly influenced by the writings of Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.M. Keynes and G.M. Trevelyan who shaped much of his political and economic thinking.

After attaining his graduate degree, Nehru relocated to London in 1910 and enrolled himself at the Inns of Court School of Law where he studied law for two years. After completing his bar examination, he was offered to be admitted to the English bar, but Nehru returned to his homeland in 1912 and started practicing law as a barrister at the Allahabad High Court and gradually, he involved himself in Indian politics.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. List the various kinds of prose.
2. When was George Orwell born?
3. List some of the prominent novels of George Orwell.

**NOTES**

*Fig. 1.2 Jawaharlal Nehru*

### **Nehru's contribution to India's freedom struggle**

At the time when Nehru joined Indian National Congress, he was not happy with its functioning as it was dominated by the English knowing upper class elite, yet he participated in the civil rights campaign initiated by Gandhi. Nehru condemned the Indian Civil Service for its support of British policies radically. He was not happy with the slow progression of the nationalist movement, so he joined his hands with aggressive nationalist leaders who were demanding Home Rule for Indians. He argued for self-government and a status of Dominion within the British Empire as enjoyed by Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand. In 1916, Nehru met Gandhi for the first time and nobody knew that this relationship would turn for the lifetime of the both. Under Gandhi's tutelage, Nehru was raised to the position of General Secretary of the Congress. Nehru not only contributed to national movement of India, but also gave the freedom struggle an international outlook in 1927 when, he attended the congress of oppressed nationalities in Brussels in Belgium.

Nehru appealed for complete independence, but he was objected to by Gandhi who proposed a dominion status for India in two years' time frame. When Gandhi's plea was rejected, and so was Nehru's presidency over the Lahore session in 1928, Nehru demanded for complete independence. This resolution made him the most significant leaders of the independence movement. Due to his participation in the salt Satyagraha, he was put into prison with a large number of nationalists. During the World War II, Nehru demanded for full assurance for India's independence and also the share of power and responsibility in the central government, but the British did not oblige. In 1947, as India enjoyed the British departure from the Indian soil, it also suffered the pain of partition as the British had decided to divide the country into two-India and Pakistan.

### **Nehru's contribution to the country as a Prime Minister**

Nehru was appointed the head of the interim government. Though he opposed the partition of India initially, due to Jinnah's powerful opposition, communal violence and political disorder, he was forced to accept this decision. Pakistan was formed on 14 August 1947 and Nehru became the Prime Minister of India. Nehru propelled India towards technological advancements and innovations. He also professed equality for all, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. He brought many radical changes in domestic, international and social policies. Nehru established several industries and also advocated for a mixed



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economy where the government controlled public sector co-existed with the private sector. He was passionate about education. He believed that only education can bring reformation in young India. Under his administration, he established many higher institutes for learning including All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and the National Institutes of Technology (NIT). He brought free and compulsory education to all children in his five year plan. Nehru also laid the stepping stone for the foundation of National Defense Academy, India. He realized the importance of defence and tried to equip the nation with the best modern equipment. Thus, Nehru toiled hard for the fast growth and development of India.

### Jawaharlal Nehru as a Prose Writer

Nehru was not only a chief Indian spokesman for political affairs, but also a great thinker and writer of India. Next only to Gandhi, his writings and speeches have brought a new shape of things to be followed in the years to come. In his writings, his mind ranges over all human problems with equal interest. An avid reader, he inspires the youth of India to be proud of their national heritage along with the rational points of the scientific temper.

Nehru's contribution is immense to Indo-English literature. He has enriched the store of Indian writing in English through voluminous works like *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1930), *Glimpses of World -History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936), 'India and the World' (1936), *The Unity of India* (1941), *The Discovery of India* (1946) and *A Bunch of Old Letters* (1958).

As an Indo-English writer and as a politician, Nehru had chosen a vast area for his works. The crux of his writing comes from the freedom struggles of India. Hence, he came across several people with their different languages throughout India, more especially the languages of Northern India. The following words from *The Discovery of India* like shikar, the satyagraha sabha, khilafat committee, moulvis, ulema, charkha, kuttagar, lathi charges, bania, to quote a few indeed, show his deliberate liking for the use of Indianised lexis items. Sometimes this code switching from English to Hindustani root words like 'Bramanisation' and 'Sahib log', develops a new syntax of sentence-formation. At time, he quotes the entire sentence in original form in order to emphasize his point. However, his language as a prose writer is simple and easy to grasp in spite of its complex structure. He has a wonderful mastery of language which provides a concrete shape to his prose writing.

### Nehru as a Democrat

Jawaharlal Nehru was no Caesar, despite his obvious imperiousness. 'We want no Caesars' he said, when dictators were fashionable in Europe and many were fascinated by Hitler's or Mussolini's dazzling conquests of power. He had been a democrat for a long time before he took to the practice of parliamentary democracy. Nehru had watched with amusement and indifference, the burlesque of the Council entry programme of his father and others. He was an agitator and a soldier in the livery of freedom. He could not think of democracy without transfer of power and the sensation of real self-government.

For him, freedom of the people came first, freedom to shape their freedom as they liked, and they were not an abstraction. He thought of them as millions and millions of individuals, each with his individuality, each master of his fate; in spite of the exhilaration

he felt before crowds, he did not think of them in mass or as groups. The ardent spirit with which he threw himself into the freedom struggle and the many battles he fought for civil liberties were a part of his passion for individual liberty, as a condition of national freedom.

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Jawaharlal Nehru made no secret that he enjoyed power, not for itself, but because it enabled him to make some history. Power does not rise from a vacuum, from adventurism or from the magic of personality. To be real, it must be a part of social power. He derived his power, not from the electorate, not even from Parliament, but from the appeal to the mass mind which he achieved as a part of the social processes which Gandhi had released and he accelerated. He achieved leadership through rational means. However, he was a democrat by faith and self-discipline and was no less successful than Gandhi, because he was always prepared to take his chances in the inner party struggles of the Congress party.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first to articulate the idea of a Constituent Assembly long before such an assembly was set up under the Cabinet Mission scheme. A Constituent Assembly had for him the implications of a revolution; and in spite of the limitations under which the Constituent Assembly met and the intransigence of the Muslim League, he sought to endow it with revolutionary temper, and when freedom was not yet in sight, he sought to make it the instrument of revolution, not merely political but social and economic. He could see that it was not enough to have a constitution, a concept of territorial integrity, and armed forces to defend it.

The basis of the Constituent Assembly was the sovereignty of the people, and it was something more than a phrase for him. His speech on the 'Objectives Resolution' was one of the greatest he ever made, not only eloquent in words, but inspiring in its amplitude and depth. India was to be an Independent Sovereign Republic, wherein all the power and authority of the republic, its constituent parts and organs of the government were derived from the people. Justice, social, economic and political, was to be guaranteed; there was to be equality of status and of opportunity; freedom of thought and expression and other freedoms were enumerated.

Despite his legal training, Nehru's mind was not legalistic and he did not profess to be learned in law, even in constitutional law, but he left his impress on constitution making, and even he could not make it as simple, easy and short as he would have liked. He thought much about its content and made provision for the future. The constitution had to be given the flesh and blood of an economic base, if it was not to be a paper constitution; it must serve the needs of the people, if it is not to be treated as a scrap of paper; and it must work, if it was not to break up. The problem was to make a nation from a confused, distraught people, and Jawaharlal Nehru sought to fit all problems into the framework of national unity. India was still a land of many races and religions and languages, and the diversity of its composite culture did not disturb Jawaharlal Nehru. He rather welcomed it as he understood the long drama of the past, of an India changing, but with a continuity of tradition, and he also understood the transitional nature of the present and the unfolding of the future. The concept of a monolithic state in the name of oneness of culture was not acceptable to him, and he rejected the imposition of any majority culture. Behind the forms of democracy which the country was adopting, he saw the spirit of it in all its complex yet simple processes.

Nehru treated the Parliament with deference and respect because he believed in the virtues of parliamentary democracy, in the value of good precedents, and in the laying down and carrying out of policies with the consent of the people or their

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representatives. It was not easy, for with vast reserves of illiteracy the country had started with adult suffrage. However, he knew that there was no other way. With many limitations, he enabled three general elections to become an impressive demonstration of the working of the world's largest democracy. After all, any democracy, whatever the forms and the rules, is government by deliberation, and it demands capacity for debate, and he taught this lesson ceaselessly. Democracy must ensure good government; it must allow criticism and correction; it means balances and checks.

He had, however, no new fanciful notions about democracy. To him the content was more important than the form. He sometimes suggested reform and thought aloud about better methods. However as a democrat, he waited for a consensus to develop. He did not think of a party less democracy; he rather thought that a party system would help principled working. Among his feats was the way he preserved the strength of the Congress and used it as a mighty instrument of his purposes.

The democracy which developed under Jawaharlal Nehru was not Jeffersonian or Jacksonian democracy or even the slavery-free democracy of Lincoln. It was a twentieth century democracy based on social and economic equality, trying to develop the temper of peace and prepared to undertake an industrial and technological revolution. The democratic process cannot be free unless it is freed from the grip of vested interests. Parliamentary democracy in this sense was Jawaharlal Nehru's dream. Whatever its failures, whatever the setbacks whatever the variations that are possible, he largely fulfilled that dream.

### 1.3.1 Homage to Gandhi: Critical Appreciation

The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru made a speech to the entire nation after the assassination of Gandhi on All India Radio. He gave an extempore speech and it was very emotional. Nehru started the speech by saying, 'The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. He feels very helpless and says that he has no appropriate words to help them overcome their grief. In a state of grief, Nehru feels it is important to realise the threats from communalism and he warns the people about it. He urges them to stay united and peaceful, as he feels that this will be the best way to pay homage to Gandhi as he sacrificed his life so that India could be united and be free from violence. All through, Nehru equates Gandhi to an everlasting inspiration, foreseeing that the path he showed will guide people in times to come.

'That light will be seen . . . the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.'

In the speech, Nehru feels that just praising Gandhi about his greatness and kind-heartedness would not be the correct homage to him. According to him, his vacuum will always remain in lives of all Indians. In his speech, he stated that:

'A glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet, he would not have us feel this way. After all, that glory that we saw for all these years, that man with the divine fire, changed us also— and such as we are, we have been moulded by him during these years; and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened and made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so if we praise him, our words seem rather small and if we praise him, to some extent we also praise ourselves. Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire

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managed in his life-time to become enshrined in millions and millions of hearts so that all of us became somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree. He spread out in this way all over India not in palaces only, or in select places or in assemblies but in every hamlet and hut of the lowly and those who suffer. He lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages.'

Nehru felt that such great people can be praised by following the path that they showed. He stated that just words of praise will not be enough and adequate, but if the people remain united, worked hard and worked towards developing the country that will actually be true homage as his sacrifice will not go waste.

Nehru called this phase as a period of darkness, which will soon pass, if the people continued to follow the principles of Gandhi.

'All we know is that there was a glory and that it is no more; all we know is that for the moment there is darkness, not so dark certainly because when we look into our hearts we still find the living flame which he lighted there. And if those living flames exist, there will not be darkness in this land and we shall be able, with our effort, remembering him and following his path, to illumine this land again, small as we are, but still with the fire that he instilled into us.'

Nehru felt that Gandhi was one of the greatest symbol of the country who will be remembered in future as well.

'The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later, that light will be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate past, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.'

Nehru felt that building monuments in the name of Gandhi were not required as he lived in the hearts of the people and they were going to remember him without a physically made structure.

**Critical Analysis**

Nehru's work was considered as a superior illustration of oration. The speech was well appreciated not only because of the content, but also the usage of language. The book contains totality in its paragraphs and themes. It contains a poetic selection of terms which enhance the theme and give a meaningful image to the content. Nehru has adopted a very peaceful style of writing which gives a very soothing effect to the situation. He takes care to be sensitive about the grief of the people, but at the same time does not fail to inform them about the continuing threat of communalism and the only way to stop it will be to remain united.

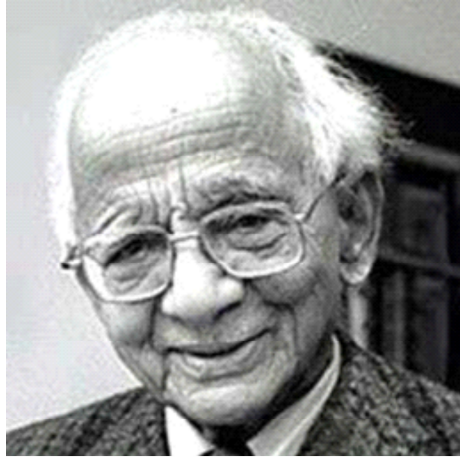
**Check Your Progress**

4. Whose writings influenced Jawaharlal Nehru's thinking?
5. What propelled Nehru to become a highly significant leader of the Indian freedom struggle movement?

**1.4 N.C. CHAUDHURI: ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

One of the most famous writers of English in India, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, was born in Kishoreganj (now a part of Bangladesh) in 1897 and was educated in Kolkata. He started his career as a clerk in the Indian Army, but later was able to obtain the job of secretary to the freedom fighter Sarat Chandra Bose, the older brother of Subhas Chandra Bose. Chaudhuri went on to contribute articles to popular magazines and became a renowned author in English and Bengali. Chaudhuri also worked as a journalist and

editor and was the political commentator for the All India Radio for some time. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975 for his biography on Max Müller.



*Fig. 1.3 N.C. Chaudhuri*

Along with his many achievements, Nirad Chaudhuri was also an extremely polarizing figure. He was accused of being anti-Muslim and supporting the ideology of Hindu extremism. In this regard, he made some inflammatory statements after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. However, his most well-known controversy was regarding his most famous book called *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. The book courted controversy in newly independent India because of its dedication which stated:

“To the memory of the British Empire in India,  
Which conferred subjecthood upon us,  
But withheld citizenship.  
To which yet every one of us threw out the challenge:  
‘Civis Britannicus sum’  
Because all that was good and living within us  
Was made, shaped and quickened  
By the same British rule.”

The dedication infuriated many Indians and Chaudhuri was accused of praising the British over India. The ensuing controversy resulted in him being thrown out of government service, deprived of his pension and being blacklisted as a writer in India. Chaudhuri himself denied that he had praised the British Empire, explaining that the dedication was written in a mock imperial rhetoric style which he used to condemn the British for not treating Indians as equals. Along with this controversy, he was also accused by the family of Subhas Chandra Bose of having leaked information to the British regarding the whereabouts of Sarat Chandra Bose, leading to his arrest.

After the controversy over *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Chaudhuri moved to England where he received enormous literary success, receiving the Duff Cooper Memorial Award, the only Indian to have received the prize. Chaudhuri was awarded the title of the Commander of Order of the British Empire from Queen Elizabeth II in 1992. He died in 1999 at the age of 101 in Oxfordshire.

## NOTES

### 1.4.1 Money and the Englishman: Critical Appreciation

#### NOTES

Like all his other works, the essay 'Money and the Englishman', also features the west. In this essay Nirad Chaudhuri has tried to understand the attitude of the people of England towards money. He felt that money played a very essential role in every society and people living in that society. According to him, people could sacrifice most of their passions, except money as it was essential for the survival. The author was not able to judge the attachment of Englishmen towards money as there were no direct indicatives. Hence, he felt that he would have to find some indirect method for investigating their attachment. In England, the money mindedness was not visible through their religious or social attitude as it is in India. Indians worship goddess Lakshmi who is the symbol of wealth. Most households in India have a place which is meant for worship. Chaudhuri was not able to locate any such area in homes of the British. In the essay, he clearly specifies that with all this he is not trying to assert religious attitudes of the people of the east and the west, but actually just trying to understand their outlook towards such an important aspect of life.

Chaudhuri also mentions that people in England are very prompt in paying their dues irrespective of their financial status, whereas in India the rich are more reluctant to pay their dues even though they have more resources. He has stated in the essay that 'everybody was not only expected to pay his dues promptly and regularly, but also, generally speaking did so. In our society the willingness to pay decreases as the capacity to pay increases'. Another aspect about money, which makes him excited is that the banks and shops are considerably more tolerant and trustful in matters of money.

The author is amazed by the honesty he witnesses in the economic and money-making matters. He has called this as a virtuous quality. Nonetheless, the people of England restrain from any type of money-talk. Whereas this is not the case in India; people freely talk about money. On a lighter note, the author stated that in India money-making is as open as love-making in West. The people in England consider it impolite to talk about money related issues or nature of business publically; people who indulge in such conversation are considered to be capitalists, who get pleasure only in discussing financial matters. The author realises that talking about money in the West is considered as a negative aspect of the English personality. The economic world is essentially divided into two groups—one group believes in saving money and the other group consists of people who enjoy spending money. One group consists of penny pincher and the other of the compulsive shopper. He has stated from producing point of '...love for money in order to be enjoyed must be restricted'. The sight is changed when it comes to expenditure—'On this side there was as much assertiveness as there was secrecy on the other.' The author identifies spending to be the optimistic need of the people in West and saving as a remedial measure.

Through the essay, Chaudhuri tries to offer an understanding about the attitude of the people of England and of Indians when it comes to money. He feels that people of India like to hoard money, whereas English people spend money in a systematic and strategic style. In India, money is one and the same as enticement, passion and anxiety. The author also talks about the assortment and lavishness of merchandise in shops in England and he feels that a person who has no clue about his requirements will go crazy while shopping. The essay mentions that a hierarchy can be seen in the shopping pattern of the English people as they shop according to their financial status. He mentions that people belonging to the middle-class will not be at ease if they had to shop in Bond-Street and would prefer to go to Cambridge, where the things in the shop will suit their

pockets and they will not experience awkwardness. The author has further elaborated that even the shop assistants are well-dressed in shops at Bond-Street.

The author being a tourist is able to experience both the shopping experiences to the fullest and he states in the essay that ‘I can hardly say how it gladdened the heart of a spendthrift in both principle and...my means...to find myself in a country in which spending was respectable. I liked the English people for their devotion to spending—that’s the way the money goes.’ The essay gives a detailed view about the financial matters of the west and mentions about the experiences of the author during his stay. He realises that the English people live very stylishly and are constantly striving for a better standard of life. He has stated that ‘the best use of money is to spend it on the good things of life.’ He also comments at the end that this philosophy about money is not adopted by the Indians as they are constantly busy in saving money rather than spending it on good things in life.

## NOTES

### 1.5 SUMMARY

- George Orwell was born on 25 June 1903 in Bihar, India. His father Richard Walmseley Blair named him Eric Arthur Blair, the name which he forsook for his pen name George Orwell.
- He worked at various positions and also participated in the Spanish Civil War. After the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945, he became very famous and financially prosperous for the first time in his life.
- ‘The Prevention of Literature’ is an essay printed in 1946 by the English essayist and writer George Orwell.
- The essay deals with the freedom of thought and expression; especially in an atmosphere where the intellectuals were not speaking against the communism of the Soviet Union.
- The essay ‘The Prevention of Literature’ was a reaction to all the indecencies which were taking place at that time. The essay has been described as one of Orwell’s most expressive deliveries and his attempt to assert decorousness.
- Nehru was born to Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani at Allahabad in India. He was the first of three children to the couple.
- As an Indo-English writer and as a politician, Nehru had chosen a vast area for his works. The crux of his writing comes from the freedom struggles of India.
- Jawaharlal Nehru was the first to articulate the idea of a Constituent Assembly long before such an assembly was set up under the Cabinet Mission scheme.
- The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru made a speech to the entire nation after the assassination of Gandhi on All India Radio.
- Nehru’s work was considered as a superior illustration of oration. The speech was well appreciated not only because of the content, but also the usage of language, the book contains totality in its paragraphs and themes.
- One of the most famous writers of English in India, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, was born in Kishoreganj (now a part of Bangladesh) in 1897 and was educated in Kolkata.
- After the controversy over *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Chaudhuri moved to England where he received enormous literary success,

#### Check Your Progress

6. When was Nirad C. Chaudhuri born?
7. When did Nirad C. Chaudhuri receive the Sahitya Akademi Award?

## NOTES

receiving the Duff Cooper Memorial Award, the only Indian to have received the prize.

- Like all his other works, the essay ‘Money and the Englishman’, also features the west. In this essay Nirad Chaudhuri has tried to understand the attitude of the people of England towards money.
- Through the essay, Chaudhuri tries to offer an understanding about the attitude of the people of England and of Indians when it comes to money.

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## 1.6 KEY TERMS

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- **Bar examination:** A bar examination is a test intended to determine whether a candidate is qualified to practice law in a given jurisdiction.
- **Communalism:** Communalism usually refers to a system that integrates communal ownership and federations of highly localized independent communities.
- **Extempore:** An extempore speech is an impromptu speech which the candidate is required to make on a topic given then and there.

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## 1.7 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. Novels, short stories, and works of criticism are kinds of prose. Other examples include comedy, drama, fable, fiction, folk tale, hagiography, legend, literature, myth, narrative, saga, science fiction, story, articles, newspaper, journals, essays, travelogues and speeches.
2. George Orwell was born on 25 June 1903 in Bihar, India.
3. The following is the list of the prominent novels of George Orwell.
  - 1934 – *Burmese Days*
  - 1935 – *A Clergyman’s Daughter*
  - 1936 – *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*
  - 1939 – *Coming Up for Air*
  - 1945 – *Animal Farm*
  - 1949 – *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
4. Jawaharlal Nehru was highly influenced by the writings of Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.M. Keynes and G.M. Trevelyan who shaped much of his political and economic thinking.
5. Nehru’s demand for total independence after the Lahore session in 1928 propelled Nehru to become a highly significant leader of the Indian freedom struggle movement.
6. Nirad C. Chaudhuri was born in Kishoreganj (now a part of Bangladesh) in 1897.
7. Nirad C. Chaudhuri received his Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975 for his biography on Max Müller.



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## 1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on the life and works of Jawaharlal Nehru.
2. What are Orwell's political views in his essay 'The Prevention of Literature'?
3. Write a critical summary of 'Homage to Gandhi'.
4. Write a short note on the life of Nirad C. Chaudhuri.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the merits and demerits of George Orwell as an essayist.
2. Explain the purpose of politics and the English language.
3. How does Nehru react to Gandhi's death and how does he finally reconcile himself to it? Discuss.
4. Critically analyse the speech 'Homage to Gandhi' by J. L. Nehru.

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## 1.9 FURTHER READING

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- Panda, H. 1997. *Selections from Modern Prose*. Hyderabad: Universities Press (India) Private Ltd.
- Liebler Naomi Conn. 2006. *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*. London: Routledge.
- Hudson, W.H. 2006. *Introduction to the Study of Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Pvt Ltd.

### NOTES



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## UNIT 2 NOVEL - I: R.K. NARAYAN

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### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 R.K Narayan: About the Author
- 2.3 Social Aspects of Indian Society in the Novel
- 2.4 Major Themes
- 2.5 Major Characters in *The Guide*
- 2.6 Narayan's Technique of Writing
- 2.7 Critical Appreciation of the Novel
  - 2.7.1 Brief Overview of Other Works by R.K. Narayan
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Key Terms
- 2.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.11 Questions and Exercises
- 2.12 Further Reading

### NOTES

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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit discusses R.K Narayan's novel *The Guide*.

R.K. Narayan is one of the most famous and widely read Indian authors of the twentieth century. His literary pursuits are evident of the mundane joys of ordinary life and are known to be full of humour and compassion. He was born in Madras (present-day Chennai) on 10 October, 1906. Narayan's father was a provincial headmaster and due to his transferable job, Narayan spent his initial years with his maternal grandmother Parvathi at Madras. It was during this time that he studied at the Lutheran Mission School and the CRC High School. Once his father was appointed the headmaster of Maharaja High School in Mysore, Narayan moved back with his parents and went on to complete his graduation from the University of Mysore.

In the year 1935, Narayan began his writing career with *Swami and Friends*. It has been observed that not only *Swami and Friends* but most of his works are set in the backdrop of a fictional town called Malgudi. Not only has the Indian culture been described intricately in Narayan's writings, but it also possesses a uniqueness of its own. He was a gifted author who immaculately described the simplicity of olden days and how people tried to cope with the changing world.

Some of R.K. Narayan's famous works include *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *Malgudi Days* (1982), and *The Grandmother's Tale* (1993). *The Guide* is another remarkable achievement of his career. This novel not only won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958, but was later adapted into a movie and a Broadway play. *The Guide* reflects the tragicomic aspect of the modern Indian penchant for half-baked philosophy. Other notable works include an autobiography which was published in 1974 titled *My Days* and a shortened English prose version of the Mahabharata in 1972.

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R.K. Narayan was bestowed with many honours and awards during his writing career which spanned over six decades. Besides being nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1989, Narayan won the Padma Vibhushan, one of India's highest civilian awards, in 1964. He also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958 for *The Guide*. In 1980, the Royal Society of Literature honoured Narayan with the AC Benson Medal and in 1982 he was made an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Apart from these awards, Narayan was conferred honorary doctorates by the University of Mysore, Delhi University and the University of Leeds.

R.K. Narayan is a renowned author who is credited with introducing Indian culture to the rest of the world and is regarded as one of India's greatest English language novelists. Though Narayan's work has been often criticized for being too simple in prose and diction, he has managed to gain international visibility based on his highly-localized novels that are usually set in the fictional Mysorean village of Malgudi—the single most endearing 'character' created by Narayan.

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### 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe Narayan's development as a writer
- Discuss Narayan's role as an Indian English novelist
- Explain the social context of the novel
- Identify the major characters of the novel
- Analyse the concept of emancipation of woman in *The Guide*
- Explain Narayan's theory of karma and moksha in relation to *The Guide*

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### 2.2 R.K NARAYAN: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Let us begin by discussing R.K Narayan's life and works.

Among the Indian writers in English, R.K. Narayan has a special place in Indian history. As a novelist, he maintained India's essence in all his works rather than adopting traditional western style. Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan was born on 10 October 1906 to R. V. Krishnaswami Iyer and Gnanambal at Puraswalkam, Madras. It was a congested, noisy and dusty downtown locality. The large family of Iyers included many uncles, brothers, sisters and cousins. Narayan himself was the third of eighteen children of his parents. The household included grandmothers and grandfathers on both mother's and father's side besides grand uncles and aunts. This was because of the practice of intermarriage between the sister's and brother's children. Narayan himself was looked after more by his maternal grandmother addressed as Ammani, rather than by his own mother. His grandmother was a great influence on his life. She affectionately called him Kunjappa, a name that he was called by among his family. She took on the responsibility of educating him, teaching him arithmetic, mythology, classical Indian music and Sanskrit. English was the language spoken in their house. According to R.K. Laxman, Narayan's youngest brother, grammatical errors the siblings made were not looked upon too kindly. During his stay with his grandmother, Narayan attended many schools including the Lutheran Mission School in Purasawalkam, the C.R.C. High School, and the Christian College High School. Reading was a passion for Narayan and his early reading included

the works of Dickens, Wodehouse, Arthur Conan Doyle and Thomas Hardy. At the age of twelve, Narayan took part in a pro-independence march. His act was frowned upon by his uncle. The family was not inclined towards politics as they regarded all governments as wicked.

### Narayan's Education

Narayan studied at his father's school and disappointed his family's emerging middle-class aspirations as he failed his first attempt to qualify for the graduate course in Arts.

When his father was transferred to the Maharajah's Collegiate High School, Mysore, Narayan too shifted there to be with his family. Narayan delighted in the well-stocked library at the school as well as his father's own and intensified his reading habit. It was at this time that he started writing as well. After a failed attempt at the university entrance exam, he spent a year at home just reading and writing. He cleared the exam in 1926 and joined the Maharaja College of Mysore. A formal education did not seem to suit him as he took four years to complete his graduation, a year more than normal. He would have pursued an MA degree but was dissuaded by a friend who was convinced this would kill his interest in literature. Instead, he took to teaching in a school but walked out when he was asked by the headmaster to act as a stand-in for the physical training instructor. With this experience came the realization that, for him, writing was the only career. He then made up his mind to stay at home and concentrate on writing novels. His first published work was a book review of *Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England*. In the meantime, he never faltered in his resolve to write for a living; he also tried to make ends meet by freelance journalism and keeping odd jobs. He kept on writing and submitting stories for newspapers and magazines.

### Narayan's Career

The completion of his first novel did not bear immediate fruition as, for Narayan, it was not easy to find either a publisher or a reading audience. In 1933, while on vacation at his sister's house, Narayan met and fell in love with a fifteen year old girl Rajam, who lived nearby. Astrologically and financially they were mismatched but with great difficulty Narayan managed to obtain parental approval and married her. Subsequent to this, Narayan joined a paper called *The Justice* as a reporter. His strict rebellion against the caste-difference in India, especially between a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin, was displayed in this newspaper which was dedicated to the rights of non-Brahmins. As part of his job, he was exposed to a variety of people and various causes. Earlier, Narayan had sent the manuscript of a novel to a friend at Oxford, who showed it to Graham Greene. It was this first novel, '*Swami and Friends*', which brought him into contact with Graham Greene. The first novel of Narayan was published again in 1935 under Greene's care in England. Greene also advised Narayan to shorten his name to enable it to be easier for the English-speaking readers. In his first novel, he attempted to be a realist and used his own experiences in the form of a story. Though it elicited favourable reviews, sales figures did not go up. The Indian publishing industry in the 1930s and beginning of the 1940s was not very well organized. There were not many readers of Indian fiction in English. This meant small or non-existent means to support oneself as a writer.

In 1931, after trying to interest all available publishers in his short stories and after trying to find a job in the newspaper *The Hindu* as a trainee reporter, he had a book review and short story published in *The Indian Review*. In 1933, *Punch* published his short satirical article, 'How to Write an Indian Novel.' In 1934 and 1935, he worked as the Mysore reporter for *The Justice*, the official organ of the non-Brahmin movement.

## NOTES

## NOTES

Towards the end of the 1930s, Narayan started to contribute regularly with short stories and other pieces to *The Hindu*. This paper published many of his short stories and essays. During the latter half of the 1980s, Narayan's work was published in the magazine, *Frontline*. These included some essays, short stories, and three novels in a serial form. During the middle of his literary graph, Narayan had a fruitful association with *The Illustrated Weekly* and *The Times of India*. R.K. Laxman, India's greatest cartoonist and the writer's youngest brother, was also deeply associated with these periodicals.

Narayan did not have a bright academic career and after unsuccessfully trying to become a railway officer and bank official, he gave up. He also had a brief stint as a teacher, which too did not meet with much success. He gave up his gloomy living quarters and went home. As Narayan was struggling with a writing career, he couldn't contribute financially to household expenses. The lot fell on his elder brother who literally had to burn the midnight oil to keep the family going. Narayan stayed at home, typing the script of a play on a noisy typewriter, while his father, along with others, were certain that he was wasting his time trying to make a living as a writer.

His next novel was *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) which is a picture of his own college life and experiences. In this book, Narayan described how marriages in India are finalized based on horoscopes and how a wife bears all animosities of her husband in the social contract of marriage. A different publisher on the recommendation of Greene published it. Soon '*The Dark Room*' (1938) was published which dealt with the theme of domestic disharmony. In his third book, he wrote about a dominating husband whose wife was a victim of his oppression. Narayan's first three books dealt with socially accepted practices. In 1937 after his father's death, he accepted a commission from the Government of Mysore, which was a proposal to write a book to promote tourism in the state.

### **Narayan as a Successful Writer**

Narayan is unusual among Indian authors writing in English in that he has stayed contentedly in his home country venturing abroad only rarely. He rarely addresses political issues or tries to explore the cutting edge of fiction. He is a traditional teller of tales, a creator of realist fiction which is often gentle, humorous and warm rather than hard hitting or profound. William Walsh regards him as one of the most distinguished novelists, writing in English in the Commonwealth. He regards his style as an original blend of Western method and Eastern material, and he succeeded in the way that only a talent of the finest kind could, in making Indian sensibility wholly at home in English art.

As is the case with many successful people, Narayan did not find instant success in his literary career. His life was one of struggle. He had to eke his living out of the paltry sum he got by writing stories and essays for various newspapers. His luck changed when his first story based on Malgudi titled *Swami and Friends*, was read by Graham Greene. With Greene's financial help it was published in England. This was a turning point for Narayan and his career took an upward swing after that. His writings delighted millions around the world. In all, he wrote twenty-nine novels, all based on Malgudi, and numerous short stories. His novel, *The Guide*, won him the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award (given first time ever to a book in English).

Narayan's wife, Rajam, died of typhoid in 1939. Narayan mourned her deeply and was in distress for a long time. Their daughter, Hemalatha, was only three years old at that time. This tragedy affected his life considerably. It also formed the base for his

next novel, *The English Teacher*. Like the first two books, this is also largely autobiographical, and is part of an unintentional trilogy with *Swami and Friends* and the *Bachelor of Arts*. Narayan has acknowledged that *The English Teacher* was almost entirely an autobiography, with different names for the characters and the change of setting in Malgudi. He also explains that the emotions expressed in the book reflected his own at the time of Rajam's death.

*Malgudi Days*, his first collection of short stories, was published in November 1942. *The English Teacher* was published in 1945. In the interim period, due to the war, Narayan was cut off from England. During this time, he started his own publishing company and named it Indian Thought Publications. This company still thrives today and is managed by his granddaughter. His literary career picked up rapidly and he was read right from New York to Moscow. With popularity came money and in 1948, Narayan was now able to commence construction of his own house on the outskirts of Mysore. The house was completed in 1953.

### As a Great Artist

Narayan is the great artist who has achieved greatness by recognizing the limitations of his range, and keeping within them. Like Jane Austen, he achieved greatness by working on his, 'two inches of ivory'. He knew only one particular region most intimately, and he rarely went out of it. He himself belonged to the middle class, intimately knew only this class, and so draws his characters from this class alone. He studied men in relation to each other and not in relation to God, or religion or politics, because such relationships were outside his range. Contemporary Indian politics rarely entered his novels. Gandhi and his freedom movement were introduced only in one of his novels, *Waiting for the Mahatma* and the result was rather unfortunate. Further, his range was limited by his comic vision, and so only such aspects of life were selected as were susceptible to comic treatment. It is for this reason that the passions, 'the stormy sisterhood', are eschewed and attention is confined to the surface reality of life. There is no probing of the subconscious or the unconscious. Narayan does not soar high because such soaring is incompatible with the comic mode. His problem is to give the reader a picture which strikes him as typical of everyday reality. For this, he depends on attraction. He, therefore, excludes from his picture such aspects of reality as not susceptible to comic treatment. His picture of life is always true to facts but to those facts only at which a reasonable being can be expected to react. He is also careful to survey his subject matter from an angle from which its comic aspects are most prominently visible.

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, better known as V.S. Naipaul, a Trinidadian-born British writer of Indo-Trinidadian descent, currently resident in Wiltshire, called Narayan 'the Gandhi of modern Indian literature'. Oral literature in the vernacular languages of India is of great antiquity, but it was not until about the 16th century that an extensive written literature appeared for his mystical, community-oriented themes. If Raja Rao is termed as a novelist of metaphysics, Narayan is often applauded as a painter of vivid Malgudi, a microcosm of Indian social milieu. He has always been claimed as a novelist par excellence in matters of social criticism of India. However, little has been written on how Narayan incorporates the most profound of Indian thoughts, philosophies and spiritualism in general and theory of *Karma* in particular, in his novels. In an interview, R.K. Narayan says: 'To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots - both in religion and family. I have these things'.

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## Narayan's Place in Indian English Literature

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R.K. Narayan is considered one of the three best Indian authors writing in English; the other two are Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. Narayan's fiction contains a unique blend of Indian mysticism and English form. He narrates tales in a traditional way. His fiction is realistic and this comes across as gently humorous rather than being too philosophical. The fictional town of Malgudi is the setting for most of Narayan's stories. The people there are simple and humble, and represent the middle class. Narayan was not a devout Hindu, and has accused Westerners of wrongly supposing that all Indians are deeply spiritual beings. However, he did have deeply spiritual experiences after the death of his young wife.

His perfect objectivity is to be contrasted with the partiality of Mulk Raj Anand for the underdog of society, whose propagandist and spokesperson he is in every one of his novels. That is why his novels have grown dated, while those of Narayan's have a perennial freshness about them. They have the universal appeal of all great art. He is to be contrasted with Anand in another way also. His novels are not disfigured by any such literal translations of regional words and idiomatic expressions, of the coarse and the vulgar, as many pages of Anand. Narayan's work remains not only an object of study in the academy, but also a source of delight for readers across the English-speaking world and in translation to several languages. Besides, Narayan and Raja Rao, having mastered the language and the technique of the craft of novelist writing, have uniquely deployed their particular genius. Raja Rao, who wrote in the symbolist tradition of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and E.M. Forster, used the large and overflowing symbols in his works. On the other hand, Narayan is generally recognized as the master of comic, portraying life and characters of Malgudi with subtle humour and delightful laughter.

The most remarkable fact about Narayan was that once he came up with his fictional South Indian town, Malgudi, he stayed with it for life. All his inventiveness and philosophical resources were invested in this small town, now familiar to millions of people in and outside India through his short stories and novels, not to mention TV series, and films. Graham Greene's famous line: 'Without Narayan I wouldn't know what it is like to be an Indian' has shaped virtually all criticism, either providing elements that concur to his role in approximating India to the western readership of questioning the basis for his realism and avoidance of overt politics.

### Narayan's Death

During his final years, Narayan spent quality time with N. Ram, the publisher of *Hindu*, discussing about various significant topics. However, he was admitted to hospital in May 2001. A short while before he was to be put on a ventilator, he had intended to start writing his next novel. It was to be a story about a grandfather. Being very choosy about the notebooks he used, he asked N. Ram to get him one. But his health deteriorated and he could not commence his new novel. He died on 13 May 2001 in Chennai at the age of ninety-four.

When *The Guide* was published in 1958 by Methuen in London and by Viking Press in New York, Narayan was already a fairly well-known writer in India, England and the United States. His previous novels, *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952) and *The Printer of Malgudi* (1957) had gained him a faithful reading audience.



## Narayan—A Voice of Great Distinction

Narayan is a penetrating analyst of human passions and human motives—the springs of human action—and this makes him a great critic of human conduct. Human relationships—relationships within the family circle and relationships centering around sex and money—are his ever-recurring themes. According to Narayan, wisdom is not gained through meditation or by spiritual contemplation, but by going through the experiences that life has to offer. The law of life is unavoidable. The law comes into operation the moment we detach ourselves from our mother's womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. We are blinded by our attachments. Every attachment creates a delusion and we are carried away by it.

Narayan also strongly believed in the life which was lived in correlation with tradition and philosophy, and deviation from it brought suffering and dissatisfaction. The human relationships presented by Narayan in his novels have originated from Indian tradition and philosophy. As William Walsh points out, 'The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates, and his novels are remarkable for able subtlety and conviction with which family relationships are treated'—that of son and parents and brother and brother in *The Bachelor of Arts*, of husband and wife and father and daughter in *The English Teacher*, of father and son in *The Financial Expert*, and of grandmother and grandson in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The closeness of relationship between the adults and children, and the absence of watertight compartments between the worlds of the two, constitute the basis of these novels. However, the action is developed through the conflict between the ego-centricity of an individual member and the family's claim on him.

Narayan's presentation of characters and their relationships with one another achieve a philosophic overtone. He presents the characters in the light of the most contemplated universal theory of *Karma* as devised by The Bhagvad Gita, a Hindu epic. Narayan's characters achieve a synthesis of flesh and spirit through the philosophic interpretation of their own mundane activities.

### R.K. Narayan: A Comparative Analysis

The literary achievements of R.K. Narayan have been a matter of great research. Many have compared his work to different writers. For instance, amongst his contemporaries, Narayan was one of the first Indians to have his work published outside India with the exception of Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie. Before we analyse and compare Narayan's work, it would be apt to describe the unique features of his writing style. His writing was considered to be simple and unpretentious with a dash of humour. Narayan mainly focussed on ordinary people and his writings usually remind the reader of people who are a part of their daily life, such as the next-door neighbour, cousins, friends, postman, etc. It was this focus on ordinary people that the readers are able to relate to the story as it unfolds. Narayan had a very different approach from his contemporaries and was able to give a detailed version of the Indian society without making changes in his characteristics or the simplicity of his subject. His writings seem to be devoid of the current trends in fiction writing and therefore are unique in its own sense. Narayan's work is said to have gentle Tamil overtones and he also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose. Critics who have evaluated Narayan's work consider it to be descriptive and less analytical. They point out that his objective style is rooted in a detached spirit which provides a more authentic and realistic narration. His experience

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of life coupled with his attitude provided a unique blend of characters and actions, thus creating a connection with the readers. The reference of Malgudi, a fictional town in his writings has been described as a stereotypical small town, where the basic norms of tradition and superstition still apply.

### Comparative Analysis of R.K. Narayan's work

**Anton Chekhov:** He was of Russian physician, dramatist and author and is considered one of the greatest short story writers of his time. Chekhov was a practicing doctor throughout his literary career. In the initial stages of his literary career, Chekhov wrote merely for financial gains and it was not until his creativity and literary ambition took a hold of him that he began to produce quality work. Chekhov is known to have made some formal innovations in the evolution of modern short story writing. His works represents the stream-of-consciousness technique which lacked the moral bearings of a traditional story structure, which is sometimes difficult for the readers to comprehend.

R.K. Narayan has been considered the Indian Chekhov due to similarities in their writing styles which comes out in the simplicity, beauty and humour of tragic situations. Greene in an earlier introduction in *The Bachelor of Arts* somewhat underscores the bittersweet flavour of Narayan's humour when he comments that 'Sadness and humour in the later books go hand in hand like twins, as they do in the comedies of Chekhov.' In support of Greene's view, William Walsh gives a similar response as he says, 'Narayan's novels are comedies of sadness, calling up the name of Chekhov rather than anything in English literature as Graham Greene pointed out.' The stark difference comes out in the form of comprehension as Chekhov's writings were sometimes difficult for the readers to understand, however readers could easily relate to Narayan's work as his stories were based on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people.

**Ruth Praver Jhabvala:** She was born to Jewish parents in Germany in 1927. Her family immigrated to Britain to escape the Nazi regime. She later married an Indian Parsi in 1951, and settled in Delhi. It was here that she started her literary career, writing mostly about her new life in India. Jhabvala's writings were considered to be of high quality and she penned numerous novels, such as *To Whom She Will* (1955), *Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1957), *The Householder* (1960) and *Get Ready for the Battle* (1962). With the Merchant-Ivory Productions, she penned numerous hits like *The Householder*, *Shakespeare Wallah*, *Heat and Dust*, etc.

Jhabvala and Narayan have very different themes and styles running through their novels. Though Jhabvala was born in Germany, yet both authors wrote about India. However, Jhabvala based most of her characters as individuals deciding between western life and tradition Indian lifestyle whereas Narayan based most of his stories in a fictitious town called Malgudi with his experience in life running as the central theme. Their distinct themes are evident in their novels. For instance, In *The Interview*, Jhabvala tells the story of man who is trying to decide whether he really wants a job that pays well but is boring and strict. Similarly, Narayan in the short story *A Horse and Two Goats*, describes an old man from the village Malgudi who is poor. While sitting on the pedestal of a statue of a horse, the old man, meets a foreign tourist who wants to buy the statue and tries to negotiate with the old man. But due to miscommunication the old man thought that the tourist wanted to buy his two goats.

**Nikolai Gogol:** He was a Ukrainian-born Russian dramatist and novelist. Gogol's writings are considered to be influenced by surrealism. Another characteristic of Gogol's writings was his impressionist vision of people and reality. He was well-read and well-

travelled and this is evident from his books. His literary achievements make him one of the preeminent figures of the natural school of Russian literary realism. Some of his well-known works 'The Portrait', 'The Carriage', 'The Overcoat', *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* and *Taras Bulba*.

The only similarity in Narayan's work and Gogol's work is the factor of realism. Anthony West of *The New Yorker* considered Narayan's writings to be of the realism variety of Nikolai Gogol. Another similarity is seen in their writings is their experience in life which they have subtly placed in their works. For instance, Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* is influenced by his Ukrainian upbringing, whereas, Narayan's work is very reflective of his South Indian roots. Since they were a century apart, their viewpoint and perception on the mundane occurrences in life differ to a great extent.

**William Faulkner:** He was an American writer and a Nobel Prize laureate who worked in different fields of media as he wrote novels, short stories, play, poetry, essays and screenplays. Most of his stories are set in a fictional town Yoknapatawpha County, based on Lafayette County, where he spent most of his childhood. He is considered one of the most important writers of Southern literature in the United States with the likes of Tennessee Williams, Mark Twain, Harper Lee, and so on. According to some, Faulkner was known for his experimental style with meticulous attention to diction and cadence. The 'stream of consciousness' is evident in his writings along with the presence of emotional, complex and sometimes even grotesque characters like slaves, slave descendants working class, poor agrarian class, etc. Two of his works, *A Fable* (1954) and his last novel *The Reivers* (1962) won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

The most striking similarity between Narayan and Faulkner is the use of a fictional town-in Narayan's case Malgudi and the creation of Yoknapatawpha County in Faulkner's work. Faulkner's Southern American roots are evident in his writings as are Narayan's South Indian roots in his writings.

**Guy de Maupassant:** He was a famous 19th century French writer and was considered one of fathers of modern short story. He was born to a prosperous bourgeois family and lived with his mother after his parents separated. Maupassant's literary works were marked by objectivity, a highly-controlled style and to some extent by sheer comedy. Most of the times, his stories were built around simple episodes from day-to-day life which revealed the hidden sides of people.

Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri who compares Narayan to Guy de Maupassant says that both authors possessed the ability to compress the narrative without losing the general theme of the story. She also points that both Narayan and Maupassant have a common theme of middle-class life running through their stories. Their writings reflect their own experiences with life on the whole. Due to his ability to captivate readers, Jhumpa adds that Narayan provides the readers something novelists struggle to achieve in hundred or more pages, i.e., a complete insight to the lives of his characters. It is due to this reason that she also classifies Narayan in the same league as O. Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor.

**Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao:** Along with R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao complete the trilogy of leading figures of early Indian literature in the English language. M.K. Naik in the book *Critical Essays on R.K. Narayan's the Guide: with an introduction to Narayan's novel* says that Narayan is a novelist of individual man whereas Mulk Raj is the novelist of a social man and Raja Rao is a novelist of the metaphysical man. According to Naik, man's relationship with reality is the main theme running in Raja Rao's novel, while man's nexus with other men in an established social,

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economic and political order is the chief concern of Mulk Raj. However, Narayan's writings are primarily preoccupied with man's fillings of the life role assigned to him by tradition and environment. Though all of them deal with man and his surrounding, these authors differ in the treatment of their characters.

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### 2.3 SOCIAL ASPECTS OF INDIAN SOCIETY IN THE NOVEL

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Let us now discuss some of the social aspects of the Indian society as seen in *The Guide*.

#### Unforgettable Characters

Narayan has been repeatedly compared to Dickens and Chekhov. The comparison with Dickens stems from the creation of a vast gallery of unforgettable characters; with Chekhov for the structure of the stories. Interestingly, both these writers have often been accused of being sentimental. However, Narayan's works could hardly be described as sentimental. It is his ability to convey the idiosyncrasies of his characters that belonged to all walks of life that places him in the Dickensian tradition. The most characteristic feature of Narayan's literary world is that it comprises small-time cheats, street vendors, small businessmen and drifters, who together form a gallery of Indian characters. These are characters who are far from the stereotypes of extreme poverty or spiritual exoticism attached to the subcontinent.

Borderline figures like Raju in *The Guide*, for example, make the reader aware of this down-to-earth aspect of life that pervades his work. In most of his novels and short-stories, Narayan showed a special ability to make the rhythms and intricacies of South Indian life accessible to people of other cultures not only within India, but across the globe. Central to this achievement was the creation of Malgudi, the fictional South Indian town, full of ordinary men and women made memorable by his writing.

#### Indianness

The novel is an essentially Western art form, but Narayan has successfully used it to express Indian sensibilities. Narayan's works are a curious blend of Western method and Eastern material. Narayan's Indianness is seen in various ways. It is seen in his simple and traditional mode of narration, which is straightforward and chronological, even in *The Guide*, where part of the story is narrated by Raju and a part by the novelist. It is also seen in his exploitation of such Indian motifs as cobras, *devdasis*, Bharata Natyam, gurus, sadhus and swamis. It is also seen in the setting of the novel. Malgudi is a typical Indian town gradually and steadily transforming from a semi-agricultural town to a big city. This transformation is a symbolic one; representing the change that was taking place in India as a whole. Malgudi has its own distinct individuality. It is but a small representative of the Indian social system, the Indian way of life and also of the Indian values cherished and followed through the ages. The residents of Malgudi, despite their local trappings - are essentially human. Therefore, they are related to humanity. In this sense, Malgudi is everywhere.

Malgudi is a territory Narayan was fond of. Nobody has succeeded in identifying or locating it yet, although several attempts have been made to identify and locate it. More than one critic has regarded Malgudi as one of the characters in Narayan's novels.

#### Check Your Progress

1. What was R.K. Narayan's first published work?
2. When was *Malgudi Days* published?
3. List some of the prominent novels of R.K. Narayan.

It is essentially a lower middle-class town with its schools, temples, hotels, printing shops and the neighbouring Mempi Hills, with its usual beggars, conmen, confident tricksters, bogus sadhus and others. It is indeed, a microcosm of India, and not a regional town. William Walsh calls it, 'an image of India and a metaphor for everywhere else'.

In the words of A. Hariprasanna: 'Narayan creates his fictional world of Malgudi as an essentially Indian society or town. The Indianness and Indian sensibility pervaded the whole place. Narayan's Malgudi is also a microcosm of India. It grows and develops and expands and changes, and is full of humanity, drawing its sustenance from the human drama and is enacted in it.'

Indianness is seen in R.K. Narayan's stress on the family which is assigned a place of central importance in each of the novels. As William Walsh points out, 'The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates, and his novels are remarkable for able subtlety and conviction with which family-relationships are treated—that of son and parents and brother and brother in *The Bachelor of Arts*, of husband and wife and father and daughter in *The English Teacher*, of father and son in *The Financial Expert*, and of grandmother and grandson in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The closeness of relationship between the adults and children, and the absence of watertight compartments between the worlds of the two, constitute the basis of these novels. But the action is developed through the conflict between the egocentricity of an individual member and the family's claim on him.

Indianness is seen in the way Rosie, despite being in an unhappy marriage, tries to make up for her momentary infidelity by owning up to her mistakes and asking for pardon. The importance given to marriage in India is brought out in Rosie's relationship with Marco. The Indianness is seen in the way Raju's mother depends on her brother to put some sense into Raju. She does not mind her brother coming and scolding her son because in the absence of her husband, she gives him the respect due to an elder male. The Indianness is seen in the way Velan is eager to take advice from an unknown Swami because learned men or Swamis are considered highly respected in society. He laps up everything that Raju tells him ignoring the fact that he has served a sentence in prison. Indianness is seen in the fact that Marco is educated and progressive enough to marry Rosie who belongs to a family of Devadasis. However, he is still the true Indian male who cannot tolerate his wife pursuing dance or being unfaithful to him. He does not pardon his wife even though she confesses her mistake.

### **Indian Economy**

Narayan studies the Indian economic problem very clearly and thereby gives us several economic groups. While Marco and Rosie represent the well-to-do class, Gaffur and Joseph denote the low wage earner. In the character of Sait, the money-lender, we find a wealthy person, one who amasses and hoards wealth thriving upon the troubles of other persons. Then there are the rich lawyers, who make pots of money at the expense of the clients. This class is shown through the character of the star lawyer who represents Raju in the case instituted by Marco against him. Further, the whole episode in which Raju is taken to be the saint is set on the axis of economic life. The poverty of the masses gathering about the hero in the pillared-hall is shown threadbare. These people are so poor that they do not have the advantage of education and that invariably leads them to live a life of superstition and misery. Narayan, in one way, mocks at the prosperity of Raju by making him fall and deceive even his beloved Rosie.

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## Superstition

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There are several typical Indian scenes in *The Guide*. Raju goes to a *pyol* school; Rosie dances to the tune of a gourd flute imitating the movements of a king-cobra; the scene of a fasting swami brings thousands of superstitious visitors who believe that the fast will bring rains to the drought-infested region. They combine pilgrimage with a picnic. There are also typical Indian situations like the one between Raju and his mother on the question of his marriage, and the attempt of his uncle to bully and brow-beat the young man. Another such situation is the reluctant swami's phenomenal popularity when the decision of his fast to bring the rains is announced. All these scenes and situations build up the colour and atmosphere and evidence not only of the author's Indian sensibility but also his intimate knowledge of the life the middle class Indians lead.

The Indianness of Narayan is again seen in his treatment of the credulous and superstitious villagers of India. They believe in sadhus and any fraud can easily cheat them and make them worship him as a Guru or Mahatma. Raju is able to deceive them quite easily; they worship him, heap food and other offering upon him. They accept him as their spiritual guide and mentor. When there is drought and famine, their reaction is typically Indian. The continued absence of rains evokes fantastic speculations from the villagers. One villager wants to know if the 'rains fail' because, 'the movement of aeroplanes disturbs the clouds', while the other seeks to know if 'the atom bombs are responsible for the drying up of the clouds'. This reveals a peculiar aspect of Indian life, the remarkable co-existence of science and superstition, knowledge and ignorance, mythology and weather prediction. When cattle stop yielding milk and fail to drag the plough through the furrows, when sheep look scurvy and bony and when wells and earth dry up, the harmony of human relationships is acutely disturbed. 'They quarrelled over the water-hole for priorities, and there was fear, desperation and lamentation in their voices.' In all these matters, their responses are entirely Indian.

We also witness another instance of superstition when Rosie is referred to as the 'snake-woman' in the novel. Rosie's role as 'Mohini' in Raju's life is confirmed by her obsession with snakes. The role of snake-women as enchantresses is common in the Indian mind-frame. The conversation between Rosie and Raju's mother—a traditional Indian woman steeped in religious and folk beliefs—reinforces this notion:

'Everything was so good and quite - until you came in like a viper. . . . On the very day I heard him mention the 'serpent girl' my heart sank.'

### Simplicity of Rural Population

In *The Guide*, we have many references to rural India and the defects that characterize rural population. The rural population is simple and unsophisticated. Even a casual and commonplace remark by Raju is enough to make them wonder about his profound wisdom. Velan is a typical representative of rural India. The main cause of their sufferings is their illiteracy.

In India, a significant section is still influenced by the Western culture. Marco belongs to this section and is different from say an Indian businessman. His thoughts, attire, perspective and mind-set are different from that of the average middle class person or the average rural folk. To quote from the novel: 'He dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition—with his thick coloured glasses, thick jacket and a thick helmet over which perpetually stretched a green, sheeny, waterproof cover giving him the appearance of a space traveller.' Through Raju's father, Narayan presents the picture

of an Indian shopkeeper of low standing. This typical Indian businessman is uneducated and cannot give proper education to his children.

### **Illiteracy**

Narayan portrays the heart-rending plight of the illiterate and superstitious villagers of India who have blind faith in holy men and saints whom they worship. The villagers at Mangala consider a former convict, Raju, their mentor and guide and, they are convinced that if he fasts for them, they will be blessed with rains. They are agriculturists who entirely depend upon the rains for irrigating their fields. There can be no worse disaster for them than the failure of rains leading to drought and famine. Streams and rivers dry up, animals and people start dying for lack of water and food. Merchants start hoarding the essential commodities and later sell them at inflated prices, leading to clashes. Discontentment and resentment are the natural consequences of such a situation, this is followed by rioting. Not regarding the drought as a natural phenomenon, people turn to holy men who take recourse to penance, fasts and *yagnas* to propitiate the rain god. In all these respects, *The Guide* is a faithful and vivid picture of Indian life in both its theme and atmosphere.

Narayan never forgets to allot considerable space for discussing the eternal problem—the system of education in India. In *The Guide* we have references to the rural schools at two different places. First Raju gets his education at the hands of his poor schoolmaster who uses outdated methods. He says: ‘I had to go over the contours of the letters with my pencil endlessly until they become bloated and distorted beyond recognition.’ Next, under the guidance of Raju, the people of Mangala start a school. In the beginning, very few boys come to the school as it is a ‘crocodile place.’ Here Narayan delineates the unworthy schoolmaster with his characteristic bad manners very realistically.

### **The Fast that Transforms**

Raju, the inhuman monster, and an ex-convict, is readily accepted as a Swami, and when he undertakes the fast they hail him as their saviour. Their reaction to the fast itself is typically Indian. In India, every event and situation, even the grimmest, is turned into an occasion for feasting and merrymaking. They organize feasts to celebrate a death. As the person fasting is on the verge of death, a large crowd gathers on the banks of the river—women, children and men—and they eat, drink and make merry. The temples with their holy men present a strange sight in India. Indians, especially the rural folk, are so credulous that they take a man with a long beard to be a Sadhu and worship him intensely. Raju, the ex-convict, faces a similar problem. First, in order to make both ends meet, he feigns the role of a saint. But at the end, owing to the play of circumstances, Raju becomes a true saint by sacrificing his life for a noble cause. Even this transformation from pusillanimity to magnanimity is also not abrupt and unreal. Gradually, he develops a peculiar strength in him and begins to think: ‘if by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?’ Thus, he climbs the ladder, slowly, step by step; reaches the stage of a Mahatma and then sags down. Here, Narayan is evidently making use of the Indian myth of a sinner becoming a saint. Valmiki, Pundarika, Vemana and Bilvamangala are only a few well-known examples. Raju is an admirable version of the same Indian myth.

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## Order-Disorder-Order

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As mentioned earlier, Narayan renders Indian sensibilities in a western form. However, his Indianness is best seen in his theme. According to Indian belief, if custom, convention and traditional modes are violated there comes disorder and chaos. Any deviation from the traditional norms results in disorder. Order and normalcy are restored only when there is a return to the normal, which is also the traditional. The story of the novel is used to illustrate the rhythm of order-disorder-order. There is a lot of disorder in Raju's life when Rosie walks in. As a result of his involvement with a married woman, who is also a dancer, his mother leaves him and he is shunned by his Uncle and society. Though Raju and Rosie manage to amass wealth, they are unable to live in peace. Rosie pays for being unfaithful to her husband and Raju pays for getting involved with a married woman, for disrespecting his mother and for getting into bad company and habits. He ends up doing the unthinkable, gets arrested for forgery and spends two years in prison. He attains some peace only when he leads a simple life.

### Love, Sex and Marriage

Love, sex and marriage play a significant role in the life of any individual and so they are present in *The Guide* also. Like a drama, Raju's love also has a beginning, a middle and an end. In the beginning, Raju pines for the embrace of his beloved, Rosie. In the middle, his love looks intense for a time and then to a certain extent the motive of monetary gain prompts him to commit forgery—a terrible felony. That is almost the end of his love. Like a typical Indian, Narayan touches 'sex' and never goes deep into the psychology of sex like D. H. Lawrence. He only brings the lover and the beloved together and his job ends there. Regarding marriage, the novelist has taken a radical view of the subject. Rosie and Marco's marriage is flawed by incompatibility. Though both are artists in their own spheres, due to lack of understanding, this catastrophe takes place. Although, Marco's educated and progressive outlook is seen in the fact that he marries Rosie, his first love is his work. He seems to be keeping a wife only for his personal comfort. He is oblivious to her feelings, interests and desires and remains busy with his academic pursuits. The woman in Rosie is insulted and hence she reacts in this manner.

### Corruption

Narayan has depicted the problem of corruption which is so much a part of India. Even a school teacher is shown to be corrupt. Raju's father sends him to a *pyol* school so that his son's bad manners are eradicated but the teacher, an old man, is very abusive. The boys are unruly and make a lot of noise. Once, they even enter the master's kitchen and make fun of him. They are then forbidden to enter his house. The old teacher is paid one rupee per month for each boy. However, the boys frequently bring some eatables for him, and in this way, he is able to make both ends meet. At another point of time in the novel, Raju, due to his greed for money, forges Rosie's signature and violates the code of conduct for which he has to suffer a lot. His greed leads him to corruption. He spends Rosie's hard-earned money on gambling and drinking.

In order to save him from court, Rosie has to hire the services of a lawyer who is corrupt. He charges very high for Raju's case. The lawyer she engages to defend Raju has 'his own star-value' and is expensive 'His name spelt magic in all the court halls of this part of the country'; he has saved many hardened criminals and lawless hooligans by setting at nought the laboriously prepared case by the prosecution. He takes up Raju's case 'as a concession from one star to another—for Nalini's case' But he has to



be paid in cash for every court appearance and put up in the best hotel in Malgudi when he comes there to defend Raju. In his own way, he is an ‘adjournment lawyer’. He could split a case into minutes and demand as many days for microscopic examination. He would keep the court fidgeting without being able to rise for lunch, because he could talk without completing a sentence; he has a knack of telescoping sentence into sentence without pausing for breath. He arrives by the morning train and leaves by the evening one, and until that time, he neither moves off the court floor nor lets the case progress even an inch for the day—so that a judge has to wonder how the day has spent itself.

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## 2.4 MAJOR THEMES

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Let us now examine the major themes of the novel.

### Family Relationships

Narayan’s novels are studies in human relationships, particularly family relationships. Of relationships within the family, the father-son relationship is most frequently studied. In *The Guide*, Narayan has studied the relationship between Raju and his father. When Raju gets into bad company at the constructions site, his father is concerned and enrolls him in a school. On this issue, there is a clash of ideologies. Raju wants to study at the Albert Mission School. His father feels that in this school, Christianity is imposed on the students and they are forced to convert. So, against Raju’s wishes, he decides to send Raju to the pyol School. The headmaster of that school is a very abusive man and his language is no better than the labourers at the construction site. Soon Raju discontinues school and helps his father in running the stall at the Malgudi railway station. After his father’s death, Raju is left to manage the stall alone. He now also has to look after his widowed mother.

All goes well until Raju’s involvement with Rosie. When Rosie comes to live in his house, Raju’s mother is against keeping a woman who has left her husband. Raju disregards his mother’s feelings and ultimately she has to leave the house and go to live with her brother. Here, it can be seen that Raju gives more importance to Rosie than his old, widowed mother.

He is even ready to go against his uncle to whom his mother turns for advice and help in the absence of a senior male member in the family. In traditional Indian households, the children never went against the word of the father or anybody old enough to take the place of the father. Raju decides to stand up against anyone who opposed his relationship with Rosie.

As his art matured, Narayan’s study of human relationships became more complex and intricate. Such complex relationships which he explores, are those which centre around sex or money. These relationships are of particular importance in *The Financial Expert*, *The Guide*, *Man-Eater of Malgudi* and *The Sweet-Vendor*. In these novels money and sex appear in different guises, and are explored and studied from different angles. Excessive preoccupation with either money or sex is an aberration which results in discord and disharmony—in the disruption of normal family life, for instance—but peace and harmony ultimately return and normalcy is restored. This is so much so the case that the disruption of the accepted order and the ultimate restoration of normalcy may be said to be the central theme of the novels. In fact, Narayan is a penetrating analyst of human passions and human motives—the springs of human action—and this makes him a great critic of human conduct. Human relationships—relationships within

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

4. What is the most characteristic feature of Narayan’s literary world?
5. List some of the social aspects of Indian society that can be seen in *The Guide*.

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the family circle, and relationships centering round sex and money—are his ever-recurring themes, and we can learn from them how to establish right-relationships. Life must be accepted and lived, despite its many shortcomings, follies and foibles. This may be said to be the Narayan message, but it has to be gleaned by each reader according to the light that is in him.

Narayan's fictional characters have their mooring in Malgudi. This town of Malgudi is a traditional one visited by Lord Rama, Laxmana, Sita, Hanuman and Goddess Parvati – the mythical gods and goddesses to Buddha, Sankara and Gandhi – from the mythical to the real. According to P.S. Ramana, Narayan has studied a character first on the test of social order, i.e., in the context of his community, set up and social environment; secondly, he studies a character in relation to himself. An analysis of their life reiterates the claims of their foregrounding in Indian moral and social value system. Narayan's vision illuminates numerous significant themes, which are discussed in this unit as follows:

- The place of woman in a traditional society
- The moral limitations of a materialistic way of life
- The consequences of flouting accepted codes
- The psychological and ethical implications of some Hindu concepts as ascetic purification, *Yoga*, renunciation, non-attachment, *Maya* and the cyclic progressions of life and death
- The great Indian theory of *Karma* and the various paths of achieving *Moksha* or self-realization

### Rejection of Traditional Norms: Its Consequences

In *The Guide*, Narayan develops a theme touched in *The Bachelor of Arts*, that of a bogus sanyasi. Raju, a restless, attractive youngster, acts as a guide to the tourists who come to visit the Malgudi ruins. The corruption-by-outsiders theme is this time initiated by the tourists, Marco and his glamorous wife, the dancer Rosie. Raju's love for Rosie is delineated as a consuming obsessive passion, fundamentally destructive and terrible. We find that Raju comes into conflict with traditional morality as he seeks to realize his aspirations. The result is that the accepted order is disturbed, and there is chaos and disorder. He seduces Rosie and thus is guilty of immorality and corruption. When she comes to live with him, conventional morality is violated, and there is displeasure all around. The neighbours are annoyed, and his widowed mother is obliged to leave the home of her husband and go away with her brother. Raju does not attend to work, has to give up the railway stall and soon is in financial trouble. He is unable to pay his debts and has to face prosecution in the law courts. He is an egotist, an individualist, a self-seeker who exploits Rosie sexually and commercially. They earn fabulous amounts but he wastes it all in drinking, gambling and extravagant living. He is too possessive and centred and forges Rosie's signatures to get a box of jewellery. It is a criminal act, and it soon lands him in jail. It is a violation of ordinary norms of conduct, and his example shows that crime does not pay. We must not act as Raju acts, we must not be over-possessive, self-centred, extravagant or jealous. Thus, the violation of conventional norms creates chaos and disorder in his own life and in the life of his social environment.

In R.K. Narayan's novels, there is a rebellion in the characters who violate the social norms, but this rebellion is followed by a return, a renewal and a conformity to the social set-up. Violation of traditional norms leads to disruption, misery and unhappiness. In *The Guide*, Marco snaps his conjugal tie with Rosie when he comes to know of her intimacy with Raju. It is nothing short of infidelity. He says to her:

‘But you are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics.’

The traditional world of Malgudi has its own custom of arranged marriage which is settled by parents after negotiations and matching of horoscopes. In Indian society, marriage is looked upon as a sacrament and a spiritual union. It has been sanctified by society and sanctioned by tradition. Men and women living together as husband and wife outside wedlock are regarded as sinners and hence do not enjoy or receive any social acceptance or recognition. It is therefore sacrilegious to violate the sanctity of sex. Illicit relationship is considered to be a stigma on those who are engaged in this kind of relationship. In *The Guide*, Rosie, after separation from her husband, lives with Raju as his wife under the assumed name Nalini, without marrying him. Raju’s mother who is an orthodox woman is dead against her son’s way of life with Rosie. She says to Raju:

Why can’t she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these modern girls imagine.

She doesn’t want the tainted woman to stay in her house. It is a moral as well as social sin. But Raju has no regards for his mother’s sentiments. So she leaves the house forever. In course of time, Raju’s love for Rosie is replaced by love for money which leads him to forge her signature resulting in his arrest. Their relationship is finally severed. Thus, their romantic love not only causes miseries and sufferings to them but also to their families.

### **From Selfishness to Selflessness**

Raju’s evolution from a tour guide to a spiritual guide forms the central theme of the novel. The title of the novel, *The Guide*, has two implications. It brings out the two roles played by Raju. One, as a tourist guide, where he is impulsive, undisciplined and given to self-indulgence; and the other, after serving a sentence and converting to a holy man who thinks over life philosophically, is careful and self-disciplined. There are two stories in the novel. One is Raju’s relationship with Rosie and the other is his relationship with the villagers. In the opening scene, Raju is sitting by the temple talking to Velan, one of the villagers who mistakes him to be a holy man. The novel then moves back and forth with accounts of Raju’s life as a holy man told in third person, and Raju’s account to Velan of his previous career as a tour guide and lover, which is told in the first-person. Raju plays a dual role, that of a saint and a sinner. But it should be noted that he is at no point in the story a complete sinner, nor a complete saint. Raju’s character strikes a chord of sympathy in us. The title leads us to the question of who is the guide and how does he guide people. Raju is first a tour guide as he shows the interesting sights of Malgudi to people who come to visit the town. He also plays guide to Rosie as he is instrumental in helping her find a way to fulfil her dreams. We should not, however, mistake Raju as a political or moral guide who leads a community. All his actions are self-centred and while guiding people he keeps his interest in mind all the time.

It is now that spiritual regeneration takes place. Raju rises above his self. He recognizes the claims of humanity and learns to live and die for others. He may die, but his very death is his spiritual re-birth. Raju has matured, has achieved self-realization and self-fulfilment and has died into a new birth. His example shows that salvation and regeneration, the realization of one’s highest aspirations, comes not through self-seeking but through self-negation and self-effacement. One must learn to live and die for others, before really noble and worthwhile achievement becomes possible.

The major theme of transmigration of the human soul from the clutches of ‘maya’ or ordinary desires to attain ‘nirvana’ or self-realization is amply demonstrated by the

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author in the novel. Raju embarks on life's journey as a man who is self-centred and attracted only to material things. He is fascinated by the world of 'maya' and would do anything to achieve it. In the end, self-realization is achieved as he sacrifices his life for a moral duty which he believes is ordained for him from God.

### Emancipation of Women

Rosie is a complex character and Narayan uses her to talk about women liberation.

Rosie feels suffocated in her marriage and tries her utmost to emerge in her own right as a woman who is talented and artistically inclined. She is married to Marco, an archaeologist, whose only interest is the academic research he is pursuing. He has come to Malgudi to study some caves. He is busy in stone statues but does not value human relations. Rosie is not at all interested in the 'Cold, old stone walls' that so excite her husband. Rosie meets Raju, a local tourist guide and it is in his company that Rosie finds happiness and reasons to laugh and enjoy life. Rosie and Marco are incompatible; they never see eye-to-eye on any subject. Marco has no interest in Rosie's love for classical dance. It is Raju, who later encourages her to emerge from her shell and bring forth her talent.

According to Narasimaiah, she is the only character in the novel who changes and grows and recovers from folly as the novel progresses. To quote his own words, 'It is strange that Rosie is completely free from Narayan's ironic handling. Considering she was a highly educated woman—a Master of Arts—and a married woman at that, and in the Hindu society too, and considering, above all, that Narayan is operating within the framework of traditional Hindu society whose code of conduct he largely endorses, it is curious that Rosie's departure from that code invites no adverse comment. In all fairness to Rosie though, R.K. Narayan tries to show how the instincts of a faithful wife were not dead in her. Quickly realizing her mistake, a repentant Rosie tries to mend fences with Marco. 'I realized I had committed an enormous sin..... My mind was greatly troubled. I didn't want anything more in life than to make my peace with him. I did not want to dance. I felt lost...'

After studying Rosie's character, we can conclude that women have a fixed place in society. They have to be economically dependent on their husbands and silently tolerate the treatment meted out to them. This situation prevails in all levels of society in India. Such is the practice of gender inequality. As long as Rosie allowed herself to be confined within the walls of her husband's existence, she suffered silently. But when she emerged from its confines, she was able to prove her worth as a classical dancer. Though R.K. Narayan had to face controversy for dealing with an issue like extra marital relations, his attempt to portray emancipation and empowerment of women, through the character of Rosie, was indeed a brave effort.

Rosie is the one character in the novel who seems to offer a singular example of recovering from folly as the novel progresses. In fact, she has always been dignified, noble and the very picture of ideal womanhood in spite of her loss of chastity—there is enough atonement for it and that is what matters. And significantly, this has been achieved by as serious a treatment of the character as any novelist in the tragic mode may have done. This seems to be that of almost all the women characters of Narayan—they are not many, though, in all his novels taken together. But especially in the way he takes care to preserve Rosie from inner taint, Narayan seems to be affirming what has been hailed in the Indian tradition as the feminine principle in life—the primary process of a woman's life as it incorporates the rules and values of natural law.

## Crime Does Not Pay

Raju is an egotist, an individualist, a self-seeker who exploits Rosie both sexually and commercially. They earn fabulous amounts, but he wastes it all in drinking, gambling and extravagant living. He is too possessive and self-centred and forges Rosie's signatures to get a box of jewellery. It is a criminal act, and it soon lands him in jail. It is a violation of ordinary norms of conduct, and his example shows that crime does not pay. It is, as if, Raju were being held up as an example of the disorder which follows quick upon the heels of any violation of the accepted order.

Raju's self-confidence and nonchalance enable him to be quite comfortable in jail. But nemesis overtakes him soon after. He plays the role of a Swami, exploits the credulity of the simple people of Mangala who bring to him rich offerings of food. He lives on them as a parasite, and expects food from them even when they themselves are victims of famine and drought.

This is certainly inhuman and monstrous. He is a fraud who deceives himself as well as the people of Mangala. But he is soon caught in his own trap. He is compelled to undertake a fast to bring down the rains. It is during the course of his fast that Raju achieves a measure of self-awareness and identifies himself with the community at large: 'For the first time in his life, he was making an effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt a new strength to go through the ordeal.'

### Transition from Illusion to Reality

Does Raju finally manage to transform himself into a true 'swami'? Perhaps this passage suggests an answer:

The sky was clear. Having nothing else to do, he started counting the stars. He said to himself, 'I shall be rewarded for this profound service to humanity. People will say, "There is the man who knows the exact number of stars in the sky. If you have any trouble on that account consult him. He will be your night guide for the skies."' He told himself, 'the thing to do is to start from a corner and go on patch by patch. Never work from the top to the horizon, but always the other way.' He was evolving a theory. He started the count from above a fringe of the Palmyra trees on his left-hand side up the course of the river, over to the other side. 'One.... two.... fifty-five....' He suddenly realized that if he looked deeper a new cluster of stars came into view; by the time he assimilated it into his reckoning, he realized he had lost sight of his starting point and found himself entangled in hopeless figures. He felt exhausted.

This passage is very important as we see how slowly Raju progresses from a regular guide to someone who guides the progress of souls. The title of the story now assumes a far deeper meaning. The novel moves on from being the story of an ordinary guide known as 'Railway Raju', to the story of someone who has more significance. The above paragraph also shows Raju's transition from fantasy to actuality. In the act of counting the stars, or trying to assess what is intangible, Raju is trying to work out the vastness of life. For once in his life, Raju is thinking about something so deeply knowing that there is no material gain to be had from this. His life now goes beyond its personal limitations and encompasses a wider sphere.

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## Moksha/Freedom

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*The Guide*, in essence, is the story of a man's travels through the trials and tribulations of life. He goes through all the complexities life has to offer. He has to face various illusions before he can achieve universal truth. The concept of moksha, or freedom, then applies here.

According to the Hindu philosopher and theologian Shankara, existence is a struggle for the 'Atman' (the individual self) to become a 'Brahman' (the pure being). It is where the atman is prevented from reaching the ideal state of Brahman because of 'avidya' or ignorance, which drives us into the arms of maya (illusion) where we blindly seek our true self. Through the proper knowledge of Vedanta, however, the individual soul recognizes the limitless reality forever existing behind the cosmic veil of maya, realizes that its own true nature is identical with Brahman, and through this self-realization achieves moksha. This freedom is vast and knows no bounds and can eventually unify us with the cosmos.

### Class Difference

Narayan achieves the presentation of the social norms and class distinctions in *The Guide* mainly through the symbolism of Rosie's name. The non-traditional name is the marker of Rosie's social hybridity, through which the novelist gives a realistic and truthful representation of the social norms and prejudices in India. In this respect, Rosie's failure to give the name of her father locates her social identity as belonging to a family of devadasis—'I belonged to a family traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers... we are viewed as public women... we are not considered respectable, we are not considered civilized.' It may seem ironic that both Raju's mother and uncle seek to view Rosie in terms of social class:

Are you of our caste? No. Our class? No....After all, you are a dancing girl. We do not admit them in our families.

They judge her according to their social norms, instead of examining her individual merits. It is shocking that in their prejudice they completely ignore Rosie's other identity as an educated woman with an M.A in economics. Rosie's Westernised name and her association with the symbol of snake mark her social exclusion; Marco's satiric name and appearances also symbolizes his detachment from reality; and various other personality traits also symbolize a move from the time-honoured orthodox Hindu belief to a modern urbanized society. The use of symbolism, when combined with realism of the novel, unfolds a wide spectrum of walks of life in a modern society of India through Narayan's meticulous attentions to details of characterization.

### Theory of Karma

R.K. Narayan upholds the old traditional values of life prescribed by the ancient Indian culture and embodied in Indian epics 'Shastras', 'Puranas', myths and mythologies. He presents his concepts of traditionalism through the middle class life of Malgudi an imaginary small town in South India, which forms the background to all his novels. Narayan's novels show that success and happiness in life lie in the acceptance of the Shastras and the Vedic values. The main purpose of human life is suggested as a journey in quest of self-identity or emancipation from the miseries of life.

The theory of Karma is enunciated in the life of Raju the protagonist. According to Hinduism, it is a foregone conclusion that an individual lives and dies in accordance

with his karma and vasanas (impressions the personality has gathered from its own thoughts and actions of the past or previous lives). Desires and thoughts which spring forth from one's vasanas make it appear inevitable. John Updike observed in the *New Yorker*, 'As a Hindu, Narayan believes in reincarnation — a universe, infinite rebirths. . . He surveys his teeming scene from the perspective of this most ancient of practiced religions' (134).

The theory of karma holds the view that the present existence of an individual is the effect of the past and its future would be the effect of its present existence. Raju, in *The Guide*, attempts several possible explanations for the movement of events in his life. What he says with a painful self-awareness shows his faith is pre-ordained fate. 'It's written on the brow of some that they shall not be left alone. I am such one. . .', Rosie in *The Guide* believe in Karmic laws according to which everyone has to bear the consequence of his deeds. She thinks that she has led a religious life and she has not deliberately committed any sin. So she will not be punished in the other world. This should be her strong faith in the theory of 'karma'. When Raju in *The Guide* is arrested on charge of forgery, Rosie [Nalini] tells him 'I felt all along, you were not doing right things. This is 'karma' what can we do?' Joy and sorrow, reward and punishment are all the results of one's deeds done in the past. The 'karmas' of human beings influence, control and condition their lives. Every action good or bad has its reaction.

Narayan says that wisdom is gained by going through the experiences life has to offer. Meditation or spiritual reflection cannot be the cause of that wisdom. There is a law that life follows and this becomes operational the moment we are born. This law affects all our actions, whether we struggle or are miserable or try to avoid being hurt by it. Loneliness is the absolute truth. Attachments are our undoing. They affect our rational thinking. Raju tries not to let this law affect him. He holds great value to attachments, whether it is love for a woman or material comforts. In the end, however, realization strikes him and he gives up attachment or worldly comforts and finds that in doing so, he is a happier person.

The Bhagvad Gita and its *Karma* philosophy regard self-realization or enlightenment as the ultimate goal in a man's life, although the methods for the attainment of this goal may vary from man to man. Soul, i.e., Atman acquires unanimity with the Supreme Soul or Almighty who is *Paramatma* or God. *Moksha* is a state of moral and intellectual perfection transcending the distinction between good and evil, between doubt and faith, between being and non-being. This goal is attainable in present life as per the teachings, sayings of the Upanishads and *Jivan Mukti* or liberation. In the end, when the individual who has reached this stage, dissociates himself from physical accomplishments, he becomes *Brahman* itself; that is final release or *Videha – Mukti*.

Narayan has very artistically interwoven various thoughts of the Bhagwad Gita in his novels. He has presented the theory of renunciation, and liberation or *Moksha* in *The Guide*. Raju, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic *Charvaka* philosophy—an atheistic, materialistic and hedonistic thought, named after *Charu* or *Brhaspati*, which admits the existence of this world (*loka*) alone—guides and governs his life. He commits the crime of forging Rosie's signature and is accordingly punished and sent to the prison. His foul deeds pay him. He receives his ill fate as per his evil *Karma*. But landing into prison, he finds time for his moral and social transgression. The prison accrues to him an ideal opportunity to journey into the innermost regions of his soul and shake off his material and social illusions. Thereafter, evolution in the character of Raju is a ceaseless and ongoing process.

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## NOTES

Narayan's presentation of characters and their relationships with one another achieve a philosophic overtone. He presents the characters in the light of the most contemplated universal theory of *Karma* as devised by the Bhagwad Gita, a Hindu epic. Almost all Narayan's characters demonstrate the growing pains arising from the dissatisfaction with their mundane lives. Narayan's characters achieve a synthesis of flesh and spirit through the philosophic interpretation of their own mundane activities.

Life is full of twists and turns and one never knows what may happen. Raju's life takes an unexpected turn when, after his release from prison, he is forced to become a saint for the people of Mangala. This happens when he takes shelter in an old temple a little out of the town. Velan becomes his disciple. Raju keeps up the pretence of being a swami and speaks to the villagers on various issues. He talks to them about religion and tells them about teachings of the Ramayana. He talks to them of cleanliness. He even prescribes medicines and settles disputes and quarrels involving property. He sees to it that the school is reopened in the temple premises. He plays the role of the Swami to the best possible extent, but once again he is overtaken by the inexplicable eventualities.

When he tells Velan's brother to convey the message that he will not eat till they stop fighting over a minor matter of selling and buying, it is misinterpreted that he will not eat until it rains. This now becomes a turning point in Raju's life and events are not in his control anymore. He is expected to bring rain. People expect that his penance would appease the rain god and bring relief to the drought-stricken countryside. Raju tries to shake off this responsibility but is caught in a trap. Eventually, the fake swami turns into a real one.

It is in times like this that one realizes it is 'divinity that shapes our ends.' As said by Emerson in a memorable poem named Brahma, it is the 'One behind the many' that is responsible for one's life:

If the red slayer thinks he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep and pass and turn again.

The resolution to chase away the thoughts of food gives him 'a peculiar strength.' It further forges his thoughts towards keeping a genuine fast.

### Salvation

Raju, the swami, has been fasting for many days. On the twelfth day, he stands in the water with Velan's assistance. He feels very weak. He tells Velan that he hears 'rain in the hills'. Saying this, he falls down. Narayan leaves the reader to wonder at the significance of this. Does Raju really die or does he simply collapse due to weakness. Does it actually rain or is it his delusion. But the end is not important. What is important is that only when Raju gives up thinking about himself, that he becomes detached with worldly things. 'Maya' does not affect him anymore; he has no use for material pleasures. He has done something noble for a valid cause and by this he has achieved self-actualization. He is now well and truly a 'guide', albeit one of a far superior kind than before.

When the mirror of understanding is cleansed of the dust of desire, the life of pure consciousness is reflected on it. When all seems lost, light from heaven breaks, enriching our human life more than words can tell.



V. S. Naipaul in his book, *A Wounded Civilization*, remarks: 'Narayan's novels are less purely social comedies I had once taken them to be than religious books, at times religious fables, and intensively Hindu.'

### **Theme of Marital Disharmony**

The relationship between Rosie and her husband Marco in *The Guide* is strained because they live on different planes. Rosie is devoted to the art of dancing while Marco looks at it as mere 'street acrobatics'. He is obsessed with his archaeological surveys and studies. He is stern, self-centred and self-righteous. Rosie's longing for sharing of ideas and ambitions is dismissed by Marco as a foolish woman's sentiments. He is more interested in the carvings on the walls, stone figures and caves but neglects the throbbing, pulsating heart of his wife. Raju wonders how Marco could be uninterested in a woman like Rosie. He observes 'dead and decaying things seem to loosen his tongue and fire his imagination rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs'. The longing for companionship and communication brings her close to Raju. She is starved of affection and yearns for recognition and acknowledgement of her artistic talent. Her first obsession is dancing. Raja wins her by appreciating her art, by praising her talent and by encouraging her.

In spite of Marco's indifference and cold behaviour Rosie tries to be a dutiful wife. She becomes all the more solicitous towards her husband after her new intimacy with Raju. That she is pricked by guilty conscience is evident in her frequent mention of her duty to her husband.

For Marco, life is nothing but a serious intellectual pursuit. He fails to perceive Rosie's passionate attachment to the art of dancing. He is totally prosaic in his approach to life. This attitude of Marco has a stifling effect on Rosie. It is at this time that chance brings her the companionship of Raju.

In the Marco-Rosie relationship, one gets a feeling that Marco is not given fair treatment. It is either through the eyes of Rosie or Raju that the reader views and understands Marco. His creator did not give him an identity. It is Raju who nick names him Marco Polo. It is true that Marco fails to live up to Rosie's expectation and desires. But one wonders why Rosie should complain when she was neither forced to marry, nor tricked into giving up dancing.

### **Theme of Separation and Loneliness/Pattern of Order and Disorder**

Almost all Narayan's principle characters experience loneliness and alienation. This loneliness and alienation comes in their lives because they are dissatisfied with their lives. However, the period which they spend in loneliness and alienation is fruitful. Marco and Rosie in *The Guide* suffer from separation and loneliness which teach them to face the bitter truths of life. Raju, the guide denounces the material life and turns spiritual and introspective during his lonely hours in the jail. Narayan has projected the theme of separation in his novels in order to incorporate the philosophic vision of India. This vision has been preached by most of the Indian scriptures through the theory of self-realization.

Moreover, Narayan strongly believes in the life which is lived in correlation with tradition and philosophy and deviation from it brings suffering and dissatisfaction. The human relationships presented by Narayan in his novels have originated from Indian tradition and philosophy. The severing of relationships and the emotional trauma that follows is delicately and realistically handled in the novel. The novel manages to convey how delicate the husband-wife relationship is. The relationship between Marco and

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Rosie in *The Guide* is not based on traditional philosophic values as devised by Manu in Manu Smriti – devotion, submission, mutual respect and proper understanding. This couple does not share this kind of bond and therefore, their relationship does not become everlasting. Narayan presents the characters passing through a period of struggle and transition but towards the end, they attain a new vitality which provides them with a new interpretation of ordinary situations.

In his presentation of human relationship between two human beings, there is order in the beginning, an order that does not last. The order is replaced with chaos when his characters come in conflict with other characters in some unexpected situations and under certain circumstances. However, at the end they attain the life full of spiritual and mental peace as they learn a lesson that human and social values preached by Indian philosophy are mandatory for any human being to achieve salvation and self-realization. It is these values that help one to maintain his/her equilibrium in times of disorder, clash of motives and conflict.

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## 2.5 MAJOR CHARACTERS IN *THE GUIDE*

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Let us discuss some of the characters in R.K Narayan's novel *The Guide*.

Narayan is the creator of a whole picture-gallery of 'the immortals of literature'. A number of life-like memorable figures move in and out of his novels, and once we have been acquainted with them, we can never forget them. In his novels, he focusses on the instincts of people of from all classes and all walks of life. His characters indulge in various professions and are leading their lives in their simple and quaint ways.

### Raju

In *The Guide*, Raju is the central figure—a rogue and fraud who plays different roles, till, finally, he comes to be regarded as a Mahatma, and falls a martyr to his own ingenuity. Raju's career from a railway guide to a Mahatma brings out the truth of the statement that, 'Raju never did anything; things always happened to him. His entire career illustrates the drill of a passive character from one role to another'.

Raju has apparently nothing heroic about him. In fact, he is an anti-hero, a common man with just a tinge of the uncommon in him. He is a simple, very ordinary and not extraordinarily smart character. A transformed, shapeless character who easily picks up the suggestions of others; his personality is in fact a product of other people's convictions. He is extremely susceptible to the suggestions of others, and this plasticity of response determines his career and ultimate destiny. Raju's character is a mixture of many traits, some of which are even contradictory.

From a stall-keeper, Raju turns into a tourist guide. He is shrewd, intelligent and observant, and he soon acquires little bits of knowledge by reading the old magazines and books which he stocks, and by talking to the passengers who come to his stall. He is a fraud who does not know much about Malgudi and its environs, but he pretends to know everything. He never says 'no' to any customer. He freely changes and distorts facts to please the tourists. The result is that his fame spreads and he comes to be known as 'Railway Raju'. His self-confidence and nonchalance pay him rich dividends, and he never worries about the many distortions in which he has indulged and the untruths he has told. He deceives, lies and adopts crooked ways to fleece the unknowing tourists.

Raju would have remained a successful tourist guide all his life but for the arrival of Marco and Rosie in Malgudi. Raju is fascinated by 'the divine creature' that he

### Check Your Progress

6. List the significant themes of *The Guide*.
7. How has Narayan achieved the presentation of the social norms and class distinctions in *The Guide*?

perceives Rosie to be and wins her heart by his sympathy and consideration, as well as showing keen interest in her art. Both of them are born romancers and the novel celebrates the coming together of two similar temperaments.

Raju is a typical confident man of Indian tales; he betrays those who confide in him. Thus he seduces Rosie, even though Marco has great faith in him, is kind and generous to him, and leaves him to look after his wife as he pursues his archaeological studies. He does not hesitate to ruin the domestic life and happiness of a man who has confided in him, paid him handsomely and has treated him as a family member. It is his confidence, his nonchalance which enables him to win Rosie so very easily.

Raju is so despicable that he appears almost to be the antagonist of the novel until its concluding pages. Raju is arbitrarily cruel, hypocritical, and manipulative from his earliest recounted youth. He manipulates his father into taking him into town; he abuses a local cattle-boy for entering his private play-area; he lies to and takes advantage of tourists; he steals Rosie from Marco; he makes Rosie miserable, chasing away her friends, and becoming pretentious (even forging her signature on a legal document, rather than let her have any contact with Marco); finally, he takes advantage of the villagers in order to get food. These are hardly traits one would ascribe to a 'hero'. He displays greed and materialism matched only by narcissism and hypocrisy, so that he loses even his closest friends; only sudden money saves him, and he soon loses that as well.

In the third stage of his career, he becomes a convict, and even this role he performs with enthusiasm, becoming an ideal prisoner. This was the one act that Raju did voluntarily and deliberately, it did not happen to him. But Raju was bewildered that such a trivial action should bring down such frightful consequences on his head. When out of jail, we find him playing the role of a Swami or Mahatma. He plays this role to perfection, for basically there is not much difference between the role of a railway guide and that of a spiritual guide. The same eloquence, the same ability to make grand, mystifying statements, the air of knowingness, enables him to play his new role with such success. Although he is a fraud and a rogue in reality, he appears every inch a Mahatma. He sits on slab of stone as if it were a throne. Raju felt he was attaining the stature of a saint and later he felt he was growing wings.

Not once does he deliberately try to pass himself off for a holy man, but when he finds that people want to believe in his spiritual power, he cannot disappoint them. It is the public reposition of faith that compels him to act and die a holy man even though he had no inclination towards either option. Raju is both an Indian enigma and a key to the mystery and myth. Here a man has lesser claim to his privacy. He lives more for others and is guided by external considerations and compulsions and is defined in spite of his disinclination and indifference.

It is not clear to the reader whether it rains due to Raju's penance. Also, the change of heart that Raju undergoes has not been given much importance by Narayan. He makes it seem as if that is the least he could do to atone for his sins. He doesn't give more than a few lines to mention this. It is a moment of great disturbing beauty, in which we know something larger and more affecting than the working out of an individual destiny in an inhospitable world.

Why, then, does Raju almost fail to be the hero of *The Guide*? It seems impossible for any character such as Raju to redeem himself and earn our respect. In order to do so, he must display a fundamental change of heart regarding the villagers, and must take dramatic steps to prove his devotion to this new philosophy. We finally see these changes

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only eight pages before the end of the book. It is not, in fact, until the last page of the book that Raju displays the characteristic that confirms his heroism, courage.

*The Guide* has an element of the picaresque, but it is not a picaresque novel in which there is no such transformation and spiritual rebirth. Raju is redeemed by becoming a martyr for the sake of others; there is no such redemption in the ease of the picaro in a picaresque novel. The most interesting character in the novel, Raju is a hero who is not heroic, except at the very end. He is a mixture of good and bad qualities, but he is not a villain except, perhaps, in one instance when he forges Rosie's signature on a legal document sent to her by Marco. Raju is potentially a tragic figure and, given his character, there is perfect inevitability in what happens to him.

### Rosie

Rosie, in the novel, overshadows Raju whereas Raju remains the pivot for the whole part of the novel. Rosie is a very complex character. She is moody, impulsive and ambitious. These frail aspects of her character have been glossed over in the novel. It was because the character of Rosie was ahead of its times. To imagine a woman leave her uncaring and impotent husband and live with her lover in his house was impossible in the era of sixties. Though she has been represented as a rebellious woman, her rebellion has been justified in such a way that it finds consonance with the novel. To humanize her and get the sympathy of the viewers with her, Marco has been demonized. This is the reason why it is difficult to understand her in the novel but still easy to comprehend.

She is the heroine of the novel. She has a charming and fascinating personality. Raju falls in love with her at first sight and says, 'she was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made her only half visible as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice' Her arrival at Malgudi, with her husband Marco, plays havoc with the life and career of Raju, the popular Railway guide.

Born in a family of dancing girls, she knew who her mother was but not her father. She is given a college education and is an M.A. in Economics. She is flattered that a man like Marco should wish to marry her, and is devoted to him in spite of his impotence and priggishness. But her inherited feeling for dance cannot be suppressed, and when she gets a chance to perfect the art, she seizes it. Her giving way to Raju is understandable. She might have resisted her physical urge if her husband had been at least kind and considerate: but his inhuman coldness, Raju's evident admiration and the opportunity so conveniently provided by her husband, result in what seems a foregone conclusion. When that husband throws her out and she has no other place to go to, she comes to Raju. More than the attraction of sex is the desire to perfect her and realize herself fully in her God-given gift. She does not take long to achieve eminence. When Raju wants her to give performances she is not unwilling. But with fame come unceasing demands on her time and energy. She has to fall into a routine and go round and round like a bull yoked to an oil-crusher. Her weariness of it all is like that of any film star: She is being exploited but sticks it out.

It is through the character of Rosie in *The Guide*, that Narayan truly takes up and treats the concept of women's emancipation. Rosie attempts to break free of the restrictions that her husband has imposed on her. Her husband, an archaeologist, is busy with his research and exploration and has no value for living beings. Rosie's encounter with the enthusiastic tourist guide Raju, at Malgudi railway station proves to be the turning point of her life. Rosie and her husband, Marco are two very different individuals

and function on different planes. In the initial stage, he aggressively defies the wishes of his wife who desires to see a king-cobra. He snubs her. 'Don't expect me to go with you. I can't stand the sight of a snake-your interests are morbid.' On the other hand, Rosie has a distaste for 'Cold, old stone walls'. Marco was not interested at all in Rosie's talent of classical dance which was encouraged by Raju.

In all fairness to Rosie though, R.K. Narayan tries to show how the instincts of a faithful wife were not dead in her. When she finds that her husband has produced a masterpiece, she cuts out his picture from the *Illustrated Weekly* and puts it on her dressing mirror.

She is surprised by Raju's behaviour in the matter of the book, and later by the forgery. But she does not walk out on him. To get him out of the mess into which he has got, she dances day and night and is willing to go round like a parrot in a cage, or a performing monkey.

Raju exploits Rosie for his own advantage and narrow, selfish ends. He says: 'I had monopoly of her and nobody had anything to do with her ..... She was my property.' And a little later, ... 'I did not like to see her enjoy other people's company. I liked to keep her in a citadel.' Raju takes all the credit for her success, and is of the view that she would not be able to do without him. But he is soon disillusioned. She rises to new heights of popularity and stardom without him. He is amazed at her extraordinary vitality. He realizes that neither he nor her husband matters at all to her.

The rift is cemented when Raju is arrested for forging Rosie's signature on a legal document sent by Marco's solicitors over the custody of a jewellery box. Rosie is hurt. She promises to pawn the last of her possessions to defend Raju in court, but tells him categorically that she won't have to do anything with him after that. Rosie proves to be true to her word. She engages the best lawyer from Madras to defend Raju and has to undertake numerous dance engagements to pay the star lawyer. When Raju is sentenced to two years' imprisonment, she closes down the establishment at Malgudi and moves over to Madras, where Marco lives. But she will have nothing to do with him also. Her career is on the up swung, as Raju learns from newspaper reports that he reads in jail. He wonders how she can manage without him. But Rosie is managing her career on her own admirably because she has found her *métier* at last.

Rosie's behaviour is always dignified and noble despite her nightlong bickering behind the closed bedroom doors with Marco or altercations with Raju later when she cautions him not to discuss anything in the presence of servants. She doesn't react when Raju's boorish uncle shouts at her, calls her names and orders her to get out of the house where she has come, and is staying, uninvited. There is enough atonement for her adulterous liaison with Raju which is there primarily because he helps her realize her ambition of displaying her art in public. Rosie's delineation is in keeping with Narayan's delineation of female characters in general. Rosie may have succumbed to circumstances but she remains free from inward taint. That is why she makes such a complete and miraculous recovery, though the novelist, quite wisely, does not restore her to her earlier dubious marital status. Rosie is a strong minded woman who is unwilling to sacrifice her happiness or ambition for the sake of keeping up appearances and staying with an appalling husband.

According to Narasimaiah, 'she is the only character in the novel who changes and grows and recovers from folly as the novel progresses.' To quote his own words, 'It is strange that Rosie is completely free from Narayan's ironic handling. Considering she was a highly educated woman—a Master of Arts and a married Hindu woman at that

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time, it is surprising that Rosie's departure from that code invites no adverse comment from the novelist. In fact she has always been dignified, noble and a true picture of ideal womanhood. Despite losing her chastity, she confesses to her husband and tries to seek pardon. This is highlighted as the biggest virtue. And significantly, this has been achieved by as serious a treatment of the character as any novelist in the tragic mode may have done. He takes special care to protect the character of Rosie from being tainted internally. Narayan seems to be affirming what has been hailed in the tradition as the Feminine Principle in life.'

### Marco

Marco is one of those densely enigmatic characters, who frequently appear in Narayan's novels and are assigned minor roles. They are odd, eccentric characters, like knots in wood, who keep away from the mainstream of human life. Marco comes to Malgudi with his wife Rosie, and with 'water diviner's' instinct, Raju at once realizes that he is his permanent customer: He is dressed like a spaceman. We don't know his real name. Raju calls him Marco, for he looks like an 'eternal tourist'. Marco and Rosie are not able to pull on together, for in his zeal for, and devotion to, his archaeological studies, he takes no interest in his young fascinating wife. Raju thinks of Marco in relation to Rosie as 'a monkey's picking up a rose garland'. He is unable to understand Marco's obsessive interest in ancient relics, and says, 'Dead and decaying things seemed to unloosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs.'

He is bored with Marco's ruin collecting activities. Rosie, too doesn't like to see the 'cold, old stone walls'. She finds that her wealthy husband is more interested in books, papers, painting than in being a 'real, live husband'. When Marco decides to stay on to explore the cave painting more fully, Raju takes charge of Rosie and soon becomes her ardent lover. Analysing the causes of Marco's failure with Rosie, Raju says: 'Marco was just unpractical, an absolutely helpless man. All that he could do was to copy ancient things and write about them .... Perhaps he married out of a desire to have someone to care for his practical life, but unfortunately his choice was wrong—this girl herself was a dreamer if ever there was one.'

Marco has nothing in common with an average tourist as he doesn't wish to visit the traditional tourist spots in and around Malgudi. He has come there with a purpose to study and decipher carvings in temples and to visit the ancient caves near Mempi Hills. And he is single minded in the pursuit of his goal. In the same manner as his wife, Rosie is devoted to dance. They are a mismatch as they fiercely hate each other's hobby and this leads to frequent arguments and quarrels between the two. There are a few ugly scenes in the hotel at Malgudi and the guesthouse on Mempi Hills.

Marco's satirical name and the descriptions of his appearance are also symbolic in *The Guide*. 'Marco' is a name that Raju invents because the man's weird attire somehow reminds him of Marco Polo. Certainly, the name resembles the potential strangeness in him, and his appearance reinforces this: 'He dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition, with his thick coloured glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet, over which was perpetually stretched a green, shinny, water proof cover, giving him the appearance of a space-traveller.' This idiosyncratic outfit, so inappropriate for the hot climate of Malgudi, symbolizes his lack of connection with the reality and the emotions of this world, which ultimately explains his failure to understand Rosie. The presentation of Marco's desire to control every aspect of his environment seems to stem from his

distaste for the unpredictable vitality and wilfulness of living things: 'dead and decaying things seemed to... fire his imagination, rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs.' This obviously creates a symbolical contrast between him and Rosie—while Rosie is projected as a symbol of life, Marco is anti-life.

What takes Rosie away from Marco is his aversion to dance; he hates the very word, While Raju says, 'I could almost hear the ripple of water around it' when Rosie indicates the lotus with her fingers. Marco calls dance a monkey trick or street acrobatics. What interests Rosie irritates Marco and she confesses to Raju 'I could have preferred any kind of mother in law, if it has meant one real, live husband.'

According to C.D. Narasimaiah, 'Raju-Rosie relationship becomes credible and acceptable only because of the neglect Rosie suffers at the hands of her husband.'

Marco strikes us as uncommonly eccentric. For example, 'He would not part with an anna without a voucher, whereas if you gave him a slip of paper could probably get him to write off his entire fortune'. Stern, self-centred and self-righteous, Marco thinks he has acquired his wife's body and soul, and he thinks that his rights over his 'property' are unlimited. Dancing to him, is another form of prostitution, especially when Rosie belongs to a Devadasi family of temple girls who have no respect in society and are considered public property. One of the conditions of his marriage to Rosie was she would give up dancing, and now that she mentions it, he is furious; he accuses her of breaking the covenant of marriage. Her confession of infidelity stuns him and he stops talking to her. He fails to understand that a wife can be unfaithful to her husband even once and can still be in love with him. To Rosie's passionate appeal, 'I want to be with you. I want you to forget everything, I want you to forgive me.' He replies, 'Yes, I'm trying to forget even the earlier fact that I ever took a wife. I want to go out from here too—but I want to complete my work; and I am here for that. You are free to go and do what you please.' When he leaves for Madras he buys only one railway ticket, leaving Rosie behind in Malgudi to fend for herself.

Marco leaves for Madras, but even though he is physically not there in Malgudi, he seems to be an ominous, overhanging presence. Rosie never forgets him, 'for after all he is my husband', she tells Raju. She sees his picture in the *Illustrated Weekly* cuts it and places it on her dressing table. She wants to see his book but Raju has hidden it in his liquor cabinet. Rosie is grateful to him for letting her go, any other man in his place would have throttled her when he learnt of her adulterous liaison with Raju. This induces a feeling of insecurity in Raju. Yet Marco is full of honesty and integrity in his own way. In spite of the fact that Raju has insulted him and seduced his wife, he acknowledges Raju's help in his book; 'This author is obliged to acknowledge his debt to Sri Raju of Malgudi Railway Station for his help.'

He is scrupulous towards Rosie also as he tries to restore a box of jewellery to her. We have no reason to believe Raju (who forges Rosie's signature in the legal document and lands in jail on a forgery charge) that it is a plot to entrap Rosie and force her to return to him. Nor must we blame him for pressing his charge of forgery against Raju. It is not an instance of vindictiveness but a desire to let the man who has wronged him have his just deserts. Marco wishes to restore the box of jewellery to his wife and when he finds that her paramour is trying to grab it through fraud, he is perfectly justified in taking the measure that he takes. In this way, he has revenge on the man who has seduced his wife.

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8. Who is the central figure in the novel *The Guide*?
9. Name the minor character in *The Guide*.

## 2.6 NARAYAN'S TECHNIQUE OF WRITING

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The narration moves forward chronologically, each succeeding event being linked causally with the previous one. There is no looking backward or forward, no probing of the subconscious or even the unconscious as is the case with novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and others. As Paul Verghese points out, 'Narayan's is the most simple form of prose fiction—the story which records a succession of events. There is no *hiatus* between character and plot; both are inseparably knit together. The qualities the novelist attributes to these characters determine the action, and the action in turn progressively changes the characters and thus the story is carried forward to the end. In other words, as a good story-teller, Narayan sees to it that his story has a beginning, middle and an end. The end of his novel is a solution of the problem which sets the events moving; the end achieves that completeness towards which the action has been moving and beyond which the action cannot progress. This end very often consists either, in a balance of forces and counter-forces or in death or both.' However, *The Guide* is an exception in this respect. The narrative technique Narayan has followed in this novel is different from that of the other novels.

In the story *The Guide*, we see the narration moving back and forth, from the present to the past and again to the present. The story is told by two people; the narrator tells the story in its present context, and in the third person. Raju, the main character, tells his story in the first person. His narration takes the reader to the past. Cinematic elements like flashbacks and jump cuts have been extensively used.

Narayan deviates from the traditional mode of narration; part of the story is told by the author and part in the first person by the hero himself. This is certainly an improvement in Narayan's narrative technique; here however it is necessitated by the nature of the story. The novel begins with the release of Raju from prison. Whatever happens to Raju after his release is told by the narrator—the novelist; whereas whatever had happened to Raju before he was imprisoned is told in a series of flashbacks in Raju's own words, in the form of a confession to Velan who has come to think of him as a saint. Then Raju takes over the narrative chores and relates his progress from sweetmeat seller to jailbird to Velan. In between, the omniscient narrator punctuates Raju's narrative by showing him dealing with the villagers as a holy man.

*The Guide* divided into two parts, narrates Raju's childhood, love affair, imprisonment (first part) and growth into a swami (second part). Though the streams move simultaneously, the first part is set in Malgudi, Raju's past and the second part is set in Mangla, Raju's present. While Raju's past in Malgudi is narrated by Raju himself, his present in Mangla is narrated by the author. R.K. Narayan is a novelist of common people and common situations. His plot of *The Guide* is built of material and incidents that are neither extraordinary nor heroic. *The Guide* is a story of Raju's romance, his greed for money, his sin and repentance. It is also the story of everyman's growth from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from the railway guide to the spiritual guide.

### A Comprehensive Note on Flashback in the Novel

Raju frequently remembers his childhood when he has just been released from prison and stops to rest near an abandoned shrine. He remembers that his father ran a shop in a village where he also used to help him every day. A crowd of peasants and drivers of bullock wagons always gather in front of his shop. Every afternoon his father asks him to take charge of the shop and gives him all necessary instructions. Sitting at the shop



and selling peppermints is no trouble for Raju, but he does not like his father's habit of waking him up with the crowing of the cock and then teaching him alphabets and arithmetic. Sometimes, his father takes him to the town when he goes there to make his purchase. Raju is fascinated by the changing scene, men, women, children and carts moving around him, till he feels drowsy and goes to sleep. Through the first flashback we come to know about Raju's early life.

Raju also remembers the time when there is news of railway tracks and a railway train. There is great excitement and the main question being asked is the time it would take for the railway to arrive at Malgudi. Red earth is brought in a number of trucks, and soon a small mountain is raised in front of Raju's house. Raju spends most of his time playing, listening to the gossip of the labourers working on the truck, laughing at their jokes, and picking up their coarse vulgar abuses which they freely hurl at each other. One day, as he plays on the mound of earth, a boy, who is rearing his cows nearby, also comes there to play. Raju asks him to go away and shouts vulgar abuses. The boy complains to his father and repeats the exact words Raju has used. Raju's father becomes angry, and decides that he must go to school from the very next day.

Raju recalls his school days. He is sent not to the Albert Mission School, for his father believes that boys are converted to Christianity there, but to another school called Pyol School. All the classes have been held there at the same time and Raju belongs to the youngest and most elementary set. He has learnt the alphabets and numbers. But the teacher, an old man is a very abusive man. The boys make a lot of noise. Once they even enter the master's kitchen and make fun of him. They are forbidden to enter his house again. The old teacher is been paid one rupee per month for each boy. However, the boys frequently have been bringing some eatables for him, and in this way he has been able to make his both ends meet. Raju has proved himself to be an intelligent student after a year at this school; he makes sufficient progress to be admitted to the local Board High School. The old teacher himself leaves him there and blesses him. This act of his teacher surprises Raju.

Through flashback, Raju continues with the story of his past. The laying of the railway track is finally complete and a railway station is established at Malgudi. The coming of the railway train to Malgudi is a turning point in Raju's career. Raju's father is given a shop on the platform and Raju is asked to run this shop. After his father's sudden death, the burden of managing both the shops falls on Raju's shoulders. Raju comes into contact with the passengers, sits with them and learns things from them, gives them information and helps them. Gradually he becomes a famous tourist guide. The shop is then entrusted to a boy as Raju cannot spare enough time for the shop. Raju becomes very popular as a guide and soon comes to be known as 'Railway Raju'. Travellers visiting Malgudi would straightway ask for him as he is shrewd enough to give the right type of help to each tourist.

Now Raju remembers his first meeting with Rosie. She was not very glamorous, but she had a beautiful figure, beautifully fashioned eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky. Raju nicknamed her husband Marco because the man dresses in thick jacket and helmet as if undertaking an expedition like Marco Polo. Marco is a man of academic interest and he is deeply interested in research relating to the history of art and culture. Marco is more interested in his research than his wife or her needs, desires and wishes. Raju gets the opportunity of spending considerable time in the company of Rosie and excites her liking. Later, he pleases her by appreciating her beauty and her skill as a dancer. Raju comes into close contact with Rosie.

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Now Raju reminisces how he changes from a skilful tourist guide to an adept lover. Both fall in love with each other. Raju and Rosie fully enjoy the beauty and surroundings of Malgudi. They amuse each other; entertain each other and their days pass very smoothly. They pass one night together in the hotel and Rosie becomes Raju's mistress.

Raju once again starts thinking about his past life. Raju's encouragement motivates Rosie to discuss her dance performance with Marco. Rosie goes to Marco to seek permission for dancing and unconsciously confesses to Marco her relationship with Raju. Marco abandons Rosie and leaves for Madras.

Raju recollects the evening when Rosie comes back to him. He becomes very happy getting Rosie back. Raju's obsession with Rosie grows to such an extent that he loses his job, shop, gets into heavy debt, and falls in his mother's eyes too. She leaves him and the house as she cannot tolerate his living with a married woman who has been left by her husband.

Raju once again starts thinking about his past life. Rosie is a trained classical dancer and it is her ambition to carve a niche for herself in this field. She is encouraged by Raju to fulfil her dreams. She starts dancing again opposing Marco's wishes that she should not do so. Raju becomes her manager and she soon has a successful career as a professional dancer. She gets invited from all over the country to give dance performances. Rosie soon gains a name for herself and is extremely popular. She earns a lot of money which Raju squanders recklessly.

In order to keep control over Rosie, and out of greed, he even forges her signature. Marco has sent some documents for Rosie's signature. After signing the document, Rosie would be able to get a jewellery box which Marco has deposited in a bank. Raju forges the document and posts it back but does not tell Rosie about the document because he is afraid that she may be disturbed by Marco's thoughtfulness and would form a high opinion about her husband's honesty. But, unfortunately, for him Marco discovers the fraud, reports the matter to the police and Raju is arrested. He is sent to jail for two years for this crime.

The technique of telling the story through Raju's reminiscing makes interesting reading.

Readers are always waiting to know what may have happened. Their curiosity is aroused as they eagerly await the events that unfold. This also brings out Narayan's skill as a story teller.

Raju was a conman and could manoeuvre people to suit his needs. In the novel, he goes beyond limits and does something casually without thinking of the repercussions. Raju's working life starts when he looks after his father's shop at the railway station in Malgudi, a town that has become a popular tourist attraction. His ability to convey information in an interesting and convincing way make him take up the profession of a tourist guide. Rosie and her husband Marco, come to Malgudi and Raju meets them at the station. He is immediately attracted to Rosie who is a charming young woman, a sharp contrast to her surly husband. Rosie is obsessed with dancing and wants to take it up seriously but Marco does not endorse her interests. Rosie is prodded by Raju to go ahead and fulfil her desire so she does this at the cost of angering and losing her husband.

She, however, gains success as a dancer and has a huge fan following. All this she is able to achieve through Raju who becomes her stage manager. Raju assumes too

much significance and tries to control Rosie. Rosie resents this and their relationship becomes tense. Marco surfaces in their life and this leads Raju to commit a crime, that of forgery. He is sentenced to two years in prison while Rosie returns to Madras and continues with her dancing career. After his release from prison, Raju passes through a village and takes rest in the old temple on the outskirts. He is mistaken by the villagers to be a sadhu. As Raju is not keen to return to Malgudi, he settles in Mangala where he plays the role of spiritual guide to the people. They come to him with all sorts of problems which he attempts to solve. They start to trust and listen to him and soon he earns their respect and turns into a guru or god-like person for them. They bring him food and he is quite comfortable there.

All goes well till a drought affects the village. Raju's comments made in the midst of trying to resolve a fight, is taken to be a vow to keep a fast for 12 days in order to please the rain gods. Raju is caught in a trap and has to do what the villagers expect of him.

He starts believing in his role and feels that for the first time in his life he is doing something for the people, selflessly, out of humanity and not lust for money or any other material goods. As news of his fast spreads, people gather from all over the countryside to see the swami who is sacrificing his life for the sake of the villagers. His physical state deteriorates and finally, on the eleventh day, he collapses dreaming or visualizing the rain drops somewhere in the hills. The novel ends with a question still unanswered whether he dies and whether it actually rains.

The effect of this technique is to make the figure of the hero sharper and real than the other characters. Also, Raju in making the confession, characterizes himself by what he reports and how he reports it. The impression that the reader gets is that Raju's character develops because of certain events and the events in turn change his character till he finds himself a saint, fasting to induce rain for the drought-affected village in response to the expectations of a crowd of admirers and worshippers. In other words, character and action develop simultaneously and both influence each other. It is in this way that the complex personality of Raju is built up and made convincing and credible.

The interesting technique of narration Narayan has used in this novel keeps the curiosity of the readers alive, regarding both Raju's past and present. It makes the narrative, fresh, vigorous and interesting. As the past and present are cunningly jumbled, there is a constant impression of suspense and anticipation. The zig-zag narration gives piquancy to the novel without in any way confusing the reader. In this way, the past and the present are juxtaposed, and each illuminates the other. In short, the technique of narration the novelist has followed in *The Guide* is complex and original and unique in many ways.

R.K. Narayan, like another Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh, masterfully handled the complex flow of time through the flashbacks/ memory. The novel unfolds through flashbacks, then progresses occasionally in the present. His use of the flashbacks, which present the past events during the present events, bridge the gap between the past and present. In this way the flashbacks provide the background for the current narration. Moreover, from this back and forth movement of the plot the readers get an insight into the protagonist's motivation and personality. This makes the narration of the novel captivating to the reader. In this regard his *The Guide* can only be compared with Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, which was also narrated through a series of flashbacks/ from memory.

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## Comic Vision

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In Narayan's plot, there is a mixture of the comic and serious, the real and the fantastic. So is the case with *The Guide*. Narayan's vision is essentially comic. His comedies are comedies of sadness; he is the practitioner of the serious comedy, a very difficult art-form. He has achieved in his comedies what is generally achieved in the tragedies. The theme of his comedies is essentially tragic. A tragedy is concerned with inner illumination, with spiritual cleansing and regeneration. It results in a better apprehension of the mystery of life. All this Narayan does through his comedies, only the big comedies, are pitched in a lower key.

The hero is no exceptional individual, no man of high rank and social status, but like Raju, 'just ordinary, not so great,' and the comedies display his rather bumbling attempts at realizing his potential for greatness, and the spectacle of his struggle towards maturity is spiritually illuminating and morally uplifting. Thus emotionally, Narayan's serious comedies are as rewarding as a tragedy. In *The Guide*, we see Raju maturing before us by stages, over a length of time. His self-awareness is hard-earned but not in the way in which a tragic character earns it, self-wrung, self-strung. The cleansing takes place no doubt but not in the heroic strain. For the central character is a kind of anti-hero, Narayan's common man with potential for the uncommon.

Narayan has developed Raju's personality in an elaborative way in the long line of fake swamis and the third person narrative strand deflates Raju's phony sagacity with gentle mockery. The third person narrative also juxtaposes incongruities in order to ridicule Raju's pretensions. Raju appears as a comic opera figure in the narrator's account of the swami's musings. Raju recounts his rise and fall in the first person narrative which is marked by humour. He has a quick sense of absurd and laugh at himself. However, what endears him to readers who regard him as a lovable rogue when they are not sympathising with his vicissitudes, is Raju's own self-deprecating sense of humour.

### Imagery and Symbolism

Another technique Narayan uses is imagery and symbolism which is rooted in Indian culture, but has universal appeal. The animal imagery has been well used by Narayan when we see Rosie's role as 'Mohini' in Raju's life is confirmed by her obsession with snakes. The role of snake-women as enchantresses is common in the Indian mind-frame. Moreover, the conversation between Rosie and Raju's mother (a traditional Indian woman steeped in religious and folk beliefs) reinforces this notion:

'Everything was so good and quiet - until you came in like a viper. . . . On the very day I heard him mention the 'serpent girl' my heart sank.'

Moreover, the almost animal-like passion lurking within Rosie and Raju is symbolically projected when they are waiting in Peak House on the veranda to watch the animals come out. Narayan is very subtle in his use of language, giving freedom to the reader to read beyond the text:

'On the way she said to me (Raju), "Have you documents to see too?"

"No, no," I said, hesitating midway between my room and hers.

"Come along then. Surely you aren't going to leave me to the mercy of prowling beasts?"

Furthermore, at the end of the novel, Raju's counting of the stars or measuring the immeasurable is a symbolic portrayal of Raju trying to understand the enormity of life.

‘The sky was clear. Having nothing else to do, he started counting the stars. He said to himself, ‘I shall be rewarded for this profound service to humanity. People will say, ‘there is the man who knows the exact number of stars in the sky. If you have any trouble on that account, consult him. He will be your night guide for the skies.’

At the end of the story, where Raju is drowning, his eyes are fixed on the mountains as a brilliant sun rises and villagers look on. By juxtaposing the simple background of the Indian village at sunrise with the suicide scene, Narayan effectively communicates Raju’s death as an image of hope, consistent with the Indian belief in death and rebirth. Narayan’s has a gift of sketching pen pictures that bring scenes and characters vividly to life without taking recourse to ornate or excessive description. Narayan’s simplicity of language conceals a sophisticated level of art. Narayan handles language like an immensely flexible tool that effortlessly conveys both the specific as well as symbolic and the universal. The tone of *The Guide* is quiet and subdued.

Thus the use of flashback, common lifestyle, comedy, language and the double perspective—Raju’s and the novelist’s—make the novel fresh stimulating, provocative and interesting.

## 2.7 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE NOVEL

R. K. Narayan’s *The Guide* is often considered a realistic depiction of the Indian society at the time of independence. The novel incorporates symbolism as one of its major stylistic features: Raju, Rosie, Marco and various other characters are symbolically presented to give a vivid and realistic description of Indian society and its classes. R.K. Narayan upholds the old traditional values of life prescribed by the ancient Indian culture and embodied in the Indian epics, the shastras, puranas, myths and mythologies. He presents his concepts of traditionalism through the middle class life of Malgudi, an imaginary small town in South India, which forms the background to all his novels. Narayan’s novels show that success and happiness in life lie in the acceptance of the shastras and Vedic values. The main purpose of human life is suggested as a journey in search of self-identity or emancipation from the miseries of life. The main purpose of life is to know the purpose of life.

Raju, Rosie and Marco become symbols of India’s culture. While Marco’s aspirations seek their fulfilment in unearthing the buried treasures of the rich cultural past of India, Rosie seeks satisfaction in the creative channels of classical dancing in the midst of an ever-present live audience. Raju constantly dreams of an elusive future, until a time comes when he is committed to a definite future by undertaking a fast in the hope of bringing rain.

### Narayan’s Malgudi

Like Thomas Hardy’s Wessex, Narayan has created his own imaginary town of Malgudi, a city in South India. His short story collection, *Malgudi Days*, is set in this imaginary town full of lively, colourful people. His true to life characters are similar to Dickens’ characters. About how he thought of Malgudi, Narayan says that

‘Malgudi was an earth-shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Malgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station, which was a small platform with a banyan tree, a stationmaster, and two trains a day, one coming and one going. On

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

10. What is the tone of *The Guide*?
11. Mention any two narrative techniques that are used in *The Guide*?

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Vijayadasami I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: The train had just arrived in Malgudi Station.'

Narayan is a great regional novelist, but he is never parochial. It is against the backdrop of Malgudi scenes and sights that Narayan studies life's little ironies, which have always been the same in all corners of the world, in every age. His novels are tragic comedies of mischance and misdirection, studies in the human predicament which, essentially, has always been the same. From the particular, Narayan rises to the general, and intensity and universality are achieved by concentration. He has a way of making the reader believe whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere. Against the background of a single place, and amid the utter variety of human kind, the single individual engages with the one, universal problem: the effort not just to be, but to become, human.'

Many critics have speculated about the location of this imaginary town. According to Iyengar, it might be Lalgudi on the river Cauvery or Yadavgi in Mysore. Many take it to be Coimbatore which has many of the landmarks mentioned in Malgudi, like a river on one side and forests on the other. It also has the Mission School and College. But no one has been able to provide a definite answer because Narayan has not given any hint of its geographical location.

Narayan discusses some reasons why Malgudi can be a south Indian city in an interview:

'I must be absolutely certain about the psychology of the character I am writing about, and I must be equally sure of the background. I know the Tamil and Kannada speaking people most. I know their background. I know how their minds work and almost as if it is happening to me, I know exactly what will happen to them in certain circumstances. And I know how they will react.'

### Structure/Plot

The framework of a Narayan novel, as also of *the Guide*, is not mechanical or external. There are no thrills and sensations, no long lost heirs, no accidental discoveries. The action flows out of character, and also influences and moulds character. The hero is just ordinary, the common, the average, the great, but not so great, and the action illustrates his ordinariness as well as brings out his potentialities for greatness. Thus, Raju is just ordinary; the action flows out of his character, and shows his attainment of maturity. All the events are organized round this central theme and this imparts unity and coherence to the plot. There is nothing superfluous or external, every event that takes place has a bearing on the hero's character takes him a step forward towards maturity. There are also comic elements which provide dramatic relief, sustain interest, give additional emphasis on action, and also serve as a sort of subplot without, in reality, being one. As the events follow each other logically, and are causally linked together, the end is implicit in the beginning. In the beginning there is disorder, usually a conflict between traditional morality and individual aspiration and by the end, the conflict is resolved, either by death or by the acceptance of the existing order. All these remarks are applicable to *The Guide* and can easily be illustrated from the novel.

The action of the novel flows out in two streams or currents, and two threads have been knit into a single whole by the presence of Raju in both of them, and by an intricate pattern of parallelism and contrast. One stream flows in the legendary Malgudi with its rich tradition of classical dances offered by Rosie-Nalini and the breath-taking cave—paintings that Marco uses in his book, *The Cultural History of South India*. Another stream flows in the neighbouring town of Mangal, when the spiritual aspect of

Indian culture is presented through Raju's growth into a Swami. Raju's presence in both the strains indicates the close affinity between art and spirituality in India.

Growth and maturity of Raju is paralleled in the growth of Malgudi from a small town to a big city. There are no railways and no railway station in the beginning, but as Raju grows, Malgudi also grows. Raju plays on sand and gravel heaped for the construction of the station, and learns vulgar abuses from the labourers. The rails are laid and the station is built, and Malgudi is connected with the outside world. Raju also grows from a school boy into a railway stall keeper, and acquires bits of knowledge by reading magazines, newspapers and books which he stocks. As Malgudi grows, Raju also grows into 'Railway Raju', the popular tourist guide.

Further, as Raju is the creator of Nalini, the dancer, Velan is the creator of Raju, the swami and martyr. Further, just as Raju narrates to Velan the story of his past, Rosie narrates to Raju the story of her own experiences with Marco from the time Raju left her with Marco in the cave to the time she came to stay with Raju. While narrating this part of the story Raju allows Rosie to speak for herself in the same way as Narayan has allowed Raju to narrate the first part of his life that ended with his lock-up. This story within the story reminds one of the inset story of 'The Man on the Hill' in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. In this way, both Raju and Rosie present themselves as they wanted to be seen by their admirers, in the first case Raju and in the second case, Velan. Thus, we find a number of parallels used in the construction of plot.

The plot of the novel is made up of commonplace ordinary events. There is nothing extraordinary, thrilling or sensational either in character or event. But the interest of the readers is sustained by Narayan's humour, irony and wit which envelop the entire action from the beginning to the end. Irony and wit are woven into the very texture of Narayan's admirable prose. Narayan looks, with a merry twinkle in his eyes at the spectacle of Railway Raju as he moves through life, making ridiculous, absurd and bumbling attempts at maturity and self-fulfilment. This hilarious comedy, enacted against the backdrop of Malgudi and its environs, forms a kind of comic sub-plot to the serious main plot of the novel. It contributes to the entertainment value of the novel, and makes even the ordinary and commonplace interesting and amusing. The end of the novel is characterized by ambiguity, and has naturally attracted much critical attention.

The novel is a realistic art form; it is its realism which distinguishes it from romance. But in Narayan's plots there is usually a mixture of real and fantasy. The action begins realistically with commonplace events and characters but soon there is an intrusion of much that is improbable, unreal and fantastic. These two elements—the realistic and the fantastic—are fused into a single whole. There is no 'organic compound' but mere 'mechanical mixture'. This intrusion of the improbable and the fantastic is regarded as a serious fault of Narayan's plots, but the plot of *The Guide* is to a great extent free from this fault.

Narayan's is an art which conceals art. His plots are a delightful mixture of realism, fantasy, poetry and perception and gaiety. In this respect, he stands alone among Indians writing in English, none else has the like distinction.

### Significance of the Title

*The Guide* is one of R.K. Narayan's most interesting books. It focusses on the life of a happy, carefree person who is all out to use people to suit his needs. The story is set in Malgudi whose inhabitants consist of a mix of people of different cultures and traditions. These people, with their beliefs and values, represent Indian society overall.

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The title of the story, *The Guide*, is quite apt and suggestive, for it deals with the life and career of Raju, popularly known as 'Railway Raju', who becomes 'a full-blown' tourist guide in his hometown Malgudi and still later the spiritual guide and mentor of the people of the drought-infested village, Mangala. In the interim, he is the guide of Rosie, the classical dancer with aspirations; Raju helps her realize her aspirations when he promotes her as her business manager. This proves to be his nemesis and he lands in jail on a forgery charge.

Narayan's novel is a non-political story that has been acclaimed by many as his finest work though it stands apart in stark relief from his other novels. *The Guide* develops a theme touched on in *The Bachelor of Arts*; that of a bogus sanyasi.

Raju begins his career as a stall-keeper. He looks after the shop his father has been given at the railway station. He loves to read and picks up bits of information by going through old journals and magazines, etc. He is intelligent, observant, and a shrewd judge of human character. He has the gift of the gab and soon gets popular with tourists coming to Malgudi. He acquires detailed knowledge about Malgudi and its whereabouts by talking with the tourists, and uses the knowledge to great advantage. He has a rare knack of sizing up his customers, their means and their tastes. His understanding of human psychology is profound, he never says no, and makes vague, ambiguous statements so that he is never 'caught' even when talking about things he does not know. Soon he engages a boy to look after his stall, and himself sets up as a full-fledged tourist-guide. Raju is a model guide, and those who intend to take up the vocation of a tourist guide can learn much from his example. Raju, the guide is fated to be a guide by chance and temperament. He becomes a tourist guide by chance when he is given charge of the railway shop, he buys papers and old books to wrap articles, he reads book and papers to while away his time, gathers information about Malgudi, never says 'no', gives false information, cheats the tourists successfully and becomes famous as a tourist guide. In fact he tells Velan 'It was not because I wanted to utter a falsehood, but only because I wanted to be pleasant.'

Soon, there is a slight change in Raju's role. From the tourist guide he becomes the guide to one single family. This change takes place as soon as Marco and Rosie come to Malgudi. Marco is immensely pleased with him and engages him as a whole time guide. Raju takes Rosie by storm, as it were, and is able to win her heart and seduce her within no time. He shows himself to be an adept lady-killer, one who can play havoc with the female heart with his bold compliments, smooth talk and flattery. In this respect also, he is a model guide and valuable lessons in the art of lovemaking may be learned from his example.

The next role which Raju plays is that of a theatre-manager or impresario or the guide and manager of a dancer. He launches Rosie as a dancer and manages her affairs so ably that soon her fame spreads and contracts pour in. They earn a lot of money and begin to live lavishly. With his shrewd business sense, he tactfully handles Rosie's career. They can learn much from Raju. They can also learn from him that whether out of jealousy or a feeling of insecurity, a man should not commit forgery, for it is sure to land him in jail. One should beware of mysterious enigmatic people like Marco, for all the time they may be plotting and laying traps.

Raju is an exemplary prisoner in jail. He is well-mannered, hard-working and helpful. It is for this reason that he is quite comfortable in jail and wonders why people dread the life they have to spend there. He does not look forward to going out and facing the world.



Raju can be looked upon as a role model for all prisoners. In this respect, he is a 'guide' too.

On leaving prison, Raju goes off into isolation, a totally broken and embittered man when he is unwillingly mistaken for a sanyasi or a holy man. He cynically decides to go along with credulous villagers who feed him and offer him gifts. He finds his common place observations taken for words of wisdom and soon learns the trick of imposing his spurious holiness upon them. But the joke gets out of his hand. To keep up his imposture, Raju agrees to fast to death, if necessary, to end a drought. In despair and near death, at the end of his ordeal, he confesses to a village leader who, however, instead of repudiating Raju with scorn, sees his past life as a fated preparation for this ultimate moment of truth, when he will become a holy man indeed. Raju, seeing the logic as well as irony of the gesture, insists on going on with the fast against medical warnings and dies as the rains begin.

His example shows that the same qualities make a man successful both as a tourist guide and a spiritual guide. There is an unbroken connection between Raju, the guide who lives for others whose character and activity were a reflection of otherness, and Raju, the prophet surrounded by devout villagers waiting for a message or a miracle. In each case, he is a projection of what people need. His audience in its relation with him never runs into any hard, final refusal. He is there to be used, a tractable form prompt to assume any shape that maybe required. So extreme a degree of accommodation means that Raju's sincerity consists in being false, and his positive existence in being a vacancy filled by others. The events leading from the beginning to the conclusion of Raju's career, the links between the guide in the railway station and the swami in the temple, make up a natural, realistic sequence. As biographical events in a particular life, they display that convincing combination of logic and absurdity we are familiar with in our own lives, when from a certain point in time we look back on the whole and see the logic of the complete pattern together with the queerness of the connections that bind one part to another. But the events in the novel also have a thematic significance in that the apparently hopeless struggle of Raju's submerged individuality to achieve an independent identity. This is why, we are aware so often of a rather frantic quality in Raju's actions and meditations, for all that he keeps up throughout his off-hand, youthfully cheerful manner. Everything that happens to him, even when it is one of the several comic calamities that fall on him, is suffused by Raju's vague anxiety, his not quite conscious uncertainty about his own nature.

*The Guide* is a tragic treatment of the theme of innocence betrayed, leading to corruption and redemption but in this book Raju can never return to his job as Railway Raju, the tourist guide. Instead, he becomes a 'spiritual' guide and, ambiguously, a fraud-turned-holy, whose impersonation turns into a genuine act of self-sacrificial virtue.

In short, the title is apt and suggestive, for its central figure plays the role of a 'guide' during the successive stages of his career. The novel is a guide to life also, for it tells us both how to achieve success in life and how to avoid the various pitfalls which were Raju's undoing. It is also a guide to conduct, for it teaches us what to do and what not to do.

### **Narayan's Use of Humour, Irony and Wit**

Narayan is the greatest humourist among the Indo-Anglican writers of fiction. His humour is immensely varied and all pervasive. We get in him humour of character, humour of situation or farcical humour, irony, wit and satire. His humour mingles with pathos and

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tragedy; there is a Shakespearean interpenetration of the comic and the tragic. Every shade and variety of humour is to be met with in *The Guide* also.

In *The Guide*, there is a judicious blend of seriousness and comedy, which is well-balanced. T.D. Brunton calls it 'sympathetic comedy'. It is a sort of 'amused detachment' which sharply distinguishes Narayan from Jane Austen, with whom he has often been compared. Narayan's humour is immensely varied and all-pervasive. Here we have the humour of character, humour of situation or farcical humour, irony, wit and satire.

To begin with, there is the farcical humour of the *pyol* school that Raju is first admitted to. Raju's father sends him to school because he does not want him to pick up abusive words from the construction workers at the site of the railway station, but the school master himself is more abusive than the labourers could be. He is also henpecked. Besides teaching his young wards by making them shout at the top of their voices, he cooks for his domineering wife. The boys peep into the house when the master is called inside; they find him cooking in the kitchen. His wife stands close by and giggles when she sees the amazed boys. Then, Raju's discomfiture when he is thrown out of his shop at the railway station and looks at the whole scene from his doorway is more comic than tragic. Again, when towards the end of the novel, a 'fasting' Raju is starving and he goes into the sanctum to have some food, finds the vessel empty and throws it away in anger. Coming out, he explains the noise to his followers and devotees, saying: 'Empty vessels make much noise.'

Even the most trivial details and situations are used by the novelist as sources of hilarious comedy. For example, there is the teacher of the *pyol* school who, 'gathered a score of young boys of my age every morning on *pyol*, reclined on a cushion in a corner, and shouted at the little fellows flourishing a rattan cane all the time, and habitually addressed his pupils 'donkeys' and traced their genealogy on either side with thoroughness.'

There are many other instances of humour in the novel. For example, the efforts of Raju's uncle to bully and browbeat him and Rosie by getting on their nerves as well as Raju's description of Marco and his eccentric attitude to making payments, for he is so obsessed with receipts and vouchers that Raju has the notion that one could make Marco part with all his possessions if one gave a proper receipt for everything.

There is also an attempt to create humour at the expense of lawyers, one of whom is an 'adjournment expert' and the other is a 'star lawyer' who makes it his business to impede the work of the court as much as he can. The lawyer Rosie engaged to defend Raju had 'his own star-value' and he was expensive 'His name spelt magic in all the court halls of this part of the country'; he had saved many hardened criminals and lawless hooligans by setting at nought the laboriously prepared case by the prosecution. He took up Raju's case 'as a concession from one star to another—for Nalini's case'. But he had to be paid in cash for every court appearance and put up in the best hotel in Malgudi when he came there to defend Raju. In his own way, he was an 'adjournment lawyer'. He could split a case into minutes and demanded as many days for microscopic examination. He would keep the court fidgeting without being able to rise for lunch, because he could talk without completing a sentence; he had a knack of telescoping sentence into sentence without pausing for breath. He arrived by the morning train and left by the evening one, and until that time he neither moved off the court floor nor let the case progress even an inch for the day—so that a judge had to wonder how the day had spent itself.

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From this, one gathers the impression that neither the business of running the shop at the railway station nor that of working as a tourist guide is congenial to Raju's nature. He accepts them because he is in search of new roles. It is a challenge that he gladly accepts. It is this attempt to play all roles successfully, whether they are in keeping with his nature or not, which is the major source of comedy in the life and career of Raju, the Guide.

There is humour of character, too, in ample measure. Marco is a queer man, 'He would not yield an anna without a voucher whereas you give him a slip of paper, you could probably get him to write off his entire fortune.'

He 'dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition with his thick colour glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet over which was perpetually stretched a green, shiny, water-proof cover, giving him the appearance of a space-traveller.' He is an odd, out of the way character, like a knot in wood. The central figure in a Narayan's novel is an ordinary man with a potential for the extraordinary, and in one novel after another he shows him going about in a bumbling, ridiculous way to realize that potential. He is thus presented in a comic light. Raju in *the Guide* is also such a character, and many are the comic discomfitures he has to undergo in his progression from a stall-keeper to a Mahatma. To give a few examples chosen at random: Rosie returns to him when he was getting used to life without her and sees him in all his nakedness and poverty; the tall, giant-like uncle arrives and he has to eat the humble pie in the presence of Rosie; the idiot brother of Velan involves him in difficulties by misreporting him to the villagers. On all these occasions we are much amused at his discomfiture. The entire interior monologue of Raju shows him in a comic light, as when he realizes that he was expected to fast to bring down the rains.

He muses,

'Did they expect him to starve for twelve days and stand in knee deep water eight hours? He sat up. He regretted having given them the idea. It had sounded picturesque. But he had known that it would be applied to him, he might probably have given a different formula: that all villagers should combine to help him eat 'bonda' for fifteen days without a break. Upto them to see that the supply was kept up. And then the saintly man would stand in the river for two minutes a day; and it should bring down the rain, sooner or later.'

Irony and wit are woven into the very texture of Narayan's prose. At every step we get fine, sparkling things which startle and delight. Narayan has full command over verbal irony. To quote a few examples: (1) 'His interest in us was one-rupee a month and anything else in kind we cared to carry.' (2) 'The essence of sainthood seemed to lie in one's ability to utter mystifying statements.' (3) When Velan prostrates himself before Raju he says, 'God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us, if we attempt to usurp his rights.' (4) Velan says to Raju, 'your penance is similar to that of Mahatma Gandhi, He has left a disciple in you to save us.'

Narayan is the master of irony, and his irony is the instrument of his satire. And Narayan's satire is mild and gentle. In *The Guide*, he has satirized lawyers, government officials, fake holy men and their credulous disciples. He has cast his net wide and roped in all aspects of Indian life. For instance, we are told about the adjournment lawyer that 'a case in his hand was like dough, he could knead and draw it up and down'. Regarding obtaining a drinking permit on health grounds in a state where prohibition is in vogue, Raju says: 'More powerful than the once almighty dollar is the almighty permit.'

Narayan's irony is like shot silk showing different colours as it catches the light at different angles. Narayan is above all a master of irony. Irony is the instrument of his

satire. Narayan's satire is mild and gentle; he exposes and ridicules, but his primary aim is entertainment, and not social reform. Raju's career provides the novelist an excellent opportunity to satirize the government officers of post-independence India.

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New wealth leads Raju to vicious company, drinking and gambling:

'Although I myself cared very little for drink, I hugged a glass of whisky for hours, 'Permit holder' became a social title in our land and attracted men of importance around me .... I could get a train reservation at a moment's notice, relieve a man summoned to jury work, reinstate a dismissed official, get a vote for a co-operative election, nominate a committee man, get a man employed get a boy admitted to a school and get an unpopular official shifted elsewhere, all of which seemed to me important social services, an influence worth buying at the current market price.'

But these friends of Raju desert him as soon as he is arrested for forgery. However, the fake sadhus attract Narayan's most biting satire. Raju is a criminal, an inhuman monster who could think: 'Personally, he felt that the best thing for them would be to blow each other's brains out. That'd keep them from bothering too much about the drought.' He is merely one of the countless frauds posing as sadhus and living on the credulous people as parasites. Sainthood is reduced to a matter merely of external appearance when Raju thinks of growing a beard to enhance his spiritual status, 'Raju soon realized that his spiritual status would be enhanced if he grew a beard and long hair to fall on his nape. A clean-shaven, close-haired saint was an anomaly. He bore the various stages of his make up with fortitude, not minding the prickly phase he had to pass through before a well authenticated beard could cover his face and come down his chest.'

However, playing the role of a swami and basking in the adoration of the villagers makes Raju's personality undergo a sea change: 'His eyes shone with softness and compassion, the light of wisdom emanated from them, and he felt like shaking the dust off his own feet and placing it on his head and forehead, as was done by the simple folk of Mangala.'

Narayan's irony is at its sharpest when Raju relates 'some principle of living with a particularly variety of delicious food,' and he mentions it to his followers 'with an air of seriousness so that his listeners took it as a spiritual need, something of the man's inner discipline to keep his soul in shape and his understanding with the Heavens in order'.

Humour inter-penetrates tragedy towards the end of the novel. As the fasting Raju is on the verge of collapse, a whole crowd of men, women and children gathers on the riverbank; they indulge in eating, drinking and merrymaking. The whole scene wears the appearance of a village fair with the fasting Raju as the centre of attraction. Then comes the American reporter and he interviews the fasting fake swami. The entire interview is a brilliant piece of sustained irony:

'Tell me how do you like it here?'

'I am only doing what I have to do, that's all. My likes and dislikes do not count.'

'How long have you been without food now?'

'Ten days.'

'Do you feel weak?'

'When will you break your fast?'

'Twelfth day.'

'Do you expect to have the rains by then?'

'Why not?'

It is not a yogi but a bhogi that is being interviewed; a fraud and a 'cheat' is being asked to express his views on a number of questions. It is a devastating exposure of 'swamihood' and the credulity of Indian masses. In short, Narayan is a great humourist. His characteristic humour does not result from distortion, exaggeration or caricature. It results from an observation of the common human weaknesses, follies and foibles, and irony is the weapon he uses to expose and ridicule such weaknesses and absurdities.

His eyes take on a merry twinkle as he surveys the panorama of common humanity on the march.

### **Raju and Velan**

As the novel opens, we find Raju sitting lonely and bored in crossed-legged position on a granite slab, waiting for someone's company. A gullible villager, Velan, comes and sits two steps below Raju's granite slab. When asked, the stranger tells Raju that he is from Mangala, 'not very far from here'. He is returning from a visit to his daughter who lives nearby. Raju likes his 'rambling talk' and remembers how he met the loquacious barber just outside the prison gate soon after his release. Raju was not ready to talk about his conviction and sentence but barber guessed that Raju had not committed any serious crime. After he had finished, he told Raju that he looked 'like a maharaja'.

Velan mistakes him for a holy man and entreats him to solve his domestic problem. His half-sister has run away from the house on the day fixed for her marriage and was traced in a fair in a distant village three days later. The girl locked herself in a room the whole day and Velan wondered whether she was possessed by an evil spirit. As is his wont, Raju makes light of the whole thing saying that such things are a common part of life. Then he remembers his troubles started when Rosie came into his life.

Velan is a native of the Mangala village and he is Raju's first disciple. A simple man, he mistakes Raju for a holy man as Raju takes shelter in the old, dilapidated temple situated on the other side of the river Sarayu. He is credulous as he is easily impressed by the platitudes that Raju utters. As it happens, Velan arrives as a godsend to the ex-convict and tourist guide Raju as it relieves the tedium of his loneliness. Raju on seeing him, asks him to sit down if he likes. But Velan is too polite to open a conversation till Raju asks him where he is from. And then Velan opens up and gives the history of his whole family—his father's three marriages, his idiotic brother and the rebellious and sullen half-sister who is his present concern. All the while, Raju keeps adding a little comment in the form of general observation here and there.

Velan mistakes Raju for a holy man and wants him to solve the problem of his errant half-sister. Raju is amused and he readily takes up the role that he is expected to play. Raju has a long habit of solving other people's problems. Velan's step-sister won't accept the family's plans for her marriage. When the wedding day was fixed, she ran away from home and was found in a fair in a distant village three days later. Now the girl sulks in her room all day, and Velan wonders whether she is possessed by an evil spirit. As is his wont, Raju makes light of the whole thing saying that such things are common part of life. He then suggests to the worried Velan that he might bring his sister to him. Before departure, Velan tries to touch Raju's feet but the latter recoils from the attempt:

'I will not permit anyone to do this. God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us if we attempt to usurp His rights.'

Raju feels that he is 'attaining the stature of a saint'. Next morning, Velan brings his sister there. He also brings some food and other offerings for Raju. The girl has

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braided her hair and decorated herself with jewellery. Raju sits up rubbing his eyes: 'He was as yet unprepared to take charge of the world's affairs. His immediate need was privacy for his morning ablutions.' He asks them to go a certain distance away and wait for him. Raju starts telling them the story of Devaka which he cannot complete. Velan and his sister keep following him as he strides across the temple majestically; they also keep listening to him mutely. Velan is of the stuff disciples are made of: an unfinished story or an incomplete moral never bothers him; it is all 'in the scheme of life'.

At first, Raju is not decided to solve Velan's problems as he says to the latter: 'I am not going to think of your problems, not now.' He would do it 'when the time is ripe for it'. Velan meekly accepts. He starts telling Velan a story but forgets it midway as he had heard it from his mother long ago. When he lapses into silence, Velan patiently waits for the continuation. They gaze on the river as if the clue to their problems lies there, and leave. The role of the holy man has now been forced upon him and Raju tries to live up to it.

Another day, Velan is happy because he is 'bursting with news of a miracle'. He stands before Raju and tells him with folded hands that 'things have turned out well'. His sister has admitted her folly before a family gathering and accepted her marriage as arranged already by the elders. They have also lined a day for her marriage because they do not want to delay it any further. And he has come to invite Raju to the wedding.

'For fear that she may change her mind once again?' Raju interjects. He knows why Velan is rushing it through at this pace. It is easy to guess but Velan takes it to be an evidence of Raju's divine powers to anticipate what his disciples have in mind. Raju misses the marriage as he does not want to be seen in a crowd, and 'he did not want to gather a crowd around him as a man who had worked a change in an obstinate girl.' Still at the earliest possible opportunity, Velan comes to see him and seek his blessings along with his sister, the groom and other relatives as well as villagers. They all bring gifts and food for him. The girl herself seems to have spoken of Raju as her saviour and has told everyone: 'He doesn't speak to anyone, but if he looks at you are changed.'

Thus, initially we can visualize that Velan is behind Raju's transformation. By playing the role of a swami, he starts thinking like a swami. But this is not the end of Raju and Velan relationship. It is strengthened when the village is struck by drought.

Velan comes and sits with him at the end of his work in the field every day. Raju speaks and he listens. He is distinctly uncomfortable in his new role and he decides to leave the place but where can he possibly go? He can't go back to Malgudi for fear that people would make fun of him and avoid him. He can't go back to the village where his mother lives with her brother. Nor can he go back to Rosie who has broken all bonds with him since the day he was imprisoned by the court. He hasn't done a day's hard work in life and here he is getting food, clothes and veneration without asking for it and in return he has to involve in a glib talk. People have started attributing divine powers and miracles to him. Their domestic and work-related problems have been solved to their entire satisfaction since the swami's arrival in the temple on the banks of the Sarayu. Raju therefore, decides to stay there and bask in his new found glory.

Velan plays a crucial role in the swami's fast to propitiate the rain gods when there is drought in the region. There is starvation and the prices of essential commodities rise, leading to a clash between Velan and the villagers and a local shopkeeper and his men. Many, including Velan, are hurt. When Raju comes to know of this, he tells Velan's half-wit brother that he won't have any food till the fighting stops. The situation is bad already with no rains and Velan's brother mixes up the two things and informs the

villagers that the swami won't eat till the rains come. Velan and the villagers are overwhelmed. They hail Raju as another Mahatma.

During fast of twelve days, Velan did not part from Raju. He is a true disciple of Raju to whom Raju reveals his secrets of imprisonment and the entire life story of Rosie and his relationship. The narration of the story of his past took Raju all the night. He had mentioned every detail of his career, without a single omission, till the moment of his coming out of the gates of the jail. Velan listened to him with rapt attention. Raju had thought that, 'Velan would rise with disgust and swear,' And we took you for such a noble soul all along; if one like you does penance, it'll drive the little rain that we may hope for. Begone before we feel tempted to throw you out, you have fooled us. But the irony was that Velan still addressed him as 'Swami', still considered him a great man, and promising to keep it all a secret went away for the time being. Rather Velan feels grateful to Raju for choosing someone like him to share his past with. He says: 'I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It's very kind of you to address at such length your humble servant.'

The 'picaro turned Swami' had become a world figure. It is all a fine piece of satire on the credulity of the Indians, and on the techniques of sainthood. As the fast progressed, Raju grew weaker and weaker. On the tenth day of the fast, a couple of doctors, deputed by the government to watch and report, went to the Swami, felt his pulse and heart. They helped him to stretch himself on the mat. A big hush fell upon the crowd. Velan plied his fan more vigorously than ever. He looked distraught and unhappy. Raju is desperate. His daily ritual consists of going to the riverbed, standing there deep in water for a couple of hours while chanting mantras, returning to the temple and lying down to be gawked at by people. He feels weak. He wants to make a desperate appeal to Velan to bring him some food. He is one man responsible for Raju's plight. But Velan wouldn't leave Raju's side even for a moment.

Raju's life had become important for the nation and it was to be saved at all costs. It was with difficulty that Raju was carried to the place in the river where he was to stand in the river in knee-deep water. He entered the water, shut his eyes, and muttered his prayers. He opened his eyes and looked towards the distant mountains, and said, 'Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs—'. He sagged down. The end is shrouded in malignity. Was it really raining, or was it merely the hallucination of a starving man? Did Raju die, or did he merely fall down unconscious? Who can say?

Raju is all along doubtful about the efficacy of his fast to bring rains in the parched land. He longs for food and even thinks of running away from the place. But the people's faith holds him back, He resigns himself to his fate and resolves to fast unto death. The news of Raju's fast brings crowds from far and near, and the place hums with activity; it has never seen such crowds before. His fast is an unqualified success, but the ending of the novel is quite ambiguous.

Thus Raju and Velan's relationship is very strong. Even in bad days of drought, it does not weaken, rather it strengthens into a fruitful bond.

### **Raju and Rosie**

In *The Guide*, Raju, Rosie and Marco—all the three are remarkable characters. A host of other minor characters contribute to the tapestry of middle class life in Malgudi—Velan, Raju's parents, Gaffur; Joseph and others. In the very beginning of the novel when Velan tells Raju about his troubles in life due to his half-sister, Raju also remembers

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that troubles in his life also started with Rosie. Raju remembers his first meeting with Rosie. She was not very glamorous, but she had a beautiful figure, beautifully fashioned eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky. Raju is fascinated by 'the divine creature' that he perceives Rosie to be and wins her heart by his sympathy and consideration, as well as showing keen interest in her art. Both of them are born romancers and it is the coming together of two similar temperaments. As William Walsh says: 'She and Raju are two of a kind and they fall in love at once. Rosie is the essence of Indian womanhood. Her husband's indifference and callousness to her aspirations make her go astray while Marco is a totally self-absorbed art historian with strong likes and dislikes.

He is a lady killer. It is his confidence, his nonchalance which enables him to win Rosie so very easily. When Marco permits him to go and persuade Rosie to come with them to Mempo Hills, 'he has the audacity to tell her to come out as she was, without changing her dress and added, 'who would decorate a rainbow?' Later, he makes further advances to her, continues to play bold and flattering compliments, and so is able to seduce her.

Both fall in love with each other. Raju and Rosie fully enjoy the beauty and surroundings of Malgudi. They amuse each other; entertain each other and their days pass very smoothly. They pass together one night in the hotel and Rosie becomes Raju's mistress.

Rosie, in the novel, overshadows Raju whereas Raju remains the pivot for the whole part of the novel. Hers is a very complex character. As they say women are the most difficult creatures to understand on this earth, it is very difficult to understand her. She is moody, impulsive and ambitious. These frail aspects of her character have been glossed over in the novel. It was because the character of Rosie was ahead of its times. To imagine a woman leave her uncaring and impotent husband and live with her lover in his house was impossible in the era of sixties. Though she has been represented as a rebellious woman her rebellion has been justified in such a way that it does not find consonance with the novel. To humanize her and get the sympathy of the viewers with her, Marco has been demonized. This is the reason why it is difficult to understand her in the novel but still easy to comprehend.

Rosie is the heroine of the novel. She has a charming and fascinating personality. Raju falls in love with her at first sight and says, 'she was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made her only half visible as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice?' Her arrival at Malgudi, with her husband Marco, plays havoc with the life and career of Raju, the popular Railway guide. As soon as Rosie arrived at the Malgudi railway station along with her husband Marco, she asked Raju: 'Can you show me a cobra—a king cobra it must be, which can dance to the music of a flute'. Her husband, Marco, told her that they had other things to think of and Rosie was apologetic: 'I'm not asking this gentleman to produce at once. I am not demanding it. I'm just mentioning it that's all.' The husband, however, lost his temper and told her to go and find the king cobra in Raju's company without bothering him: 'Don't expect me to go with you. I can't stand the sight of a snake—your interests are morbid.'

The marriage of Rosie and Marco is flawed by incompatibility. Though both are artists in their own spheres, due to lack of understanding, this catastrophe takes place. Marco marries Rosie only for his personal comfort and remains busy day in and day out with his pursuits. In this way he has insulted womanhood.



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Even after being in relationship with Raju, Rosie wants to fulfil her wifely duties to her husband. There was a gradual change in Rosie's attitude, noticed Raju: 'In other ways too I found it difficult to understand the girl. I found as I went on that she was gradually losing the free and easier manners of her earlier days. She allowed me to make love to her, of course but she was beginning to show excessive consideration for her husband on the hill.

When that husband throws her out and she has no other place to go to, she comes to Raju. More than the attraction of sex is the desire to perfect her and realize herself fully in her God-given gift. She does not take long to achieve eminence. When Raju wants her to give performances she is not unwilling. But with fame come unceasing demands on her time and energy. She has to fall in to a routine and go round and round like a bull yoked to an oil-crusher. Her weariness of it all is like that of any film star: She is being exploited but sticks it out.

Raju recollects the evening when Rosie comes back to him. He becomes very happy getting Rosie back. Raju is obsessed with Rosie to the extent that, in giving her attention, he neglects everything else. He loses his job and shop, gets into heavy debt, and falls in his mother's eyes too. She cannot bear his living with a married woman, abandoned by her husband.

Raju fans Rosie's passion for classical dance and encourages her to start dancing again. This thrills Rosie for her husband, Marco, had forbidden her to dance. Under Raju's guidance and management, Rosie is on the path to a successful dance career. She gains name and fame and soon they become rich. But Raju starts spending the earned money recklessly. In order to keep control over Rosie, and out of greed, he even forges her signature. Marco has sent some documents for Rosie's signature. After signing the document, Rosie would be able to get a jewellery box which Marco has deposited in a bank.

When Rosie comes to live with him in his house, he takes her in without caring for the sentiments of his mother. Rosie practices in their home, the environment echoes with the sound of her dancing. But if we consider from other side, we find that Raju exploits Rosie for his own advantage and narrow, selfish ends. He says: 'I had monopoly of her and nobody had anything to do with her ..... She was my property.' And a little later, ... 'I did not like to see her enjoy other people's company. I liked to keep her in a citadel.' Raju takes all the credit for her success, and is of the view that she would not be able to do without him. But he is soon disillusioned. She rises to new heights of popularity and stardom without him. He is amazed at her extraordinary vitality. He realizes that neither he nor her husband matters at all to her.

With Raju's co-operation and her own untiring efforts Rosie manages to build up a dancing career for herself. Soon she rose phenomenally, reaching new heights and became a public heart throb. What Raju newly discovers about Rosie is also a tribute to the emancipated 'new woman'. He realizes 'Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along.'

Rosie is hurt when Raju gets arrested for forging her signature. She promises to pawn the last of her possessions to defend Raju in court, but tells him categorically that she won't have to do anything with him after that. Rosie proves to be true to her word. She engages the best lawyer from Madras to defend Raju and has to undertake numerous dance engagements to pay the star lawyer. When Raju is sentenced to two years' imprisonment, she closes down the establishment at Malgudi and moves over to Madras,

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where Marco lives. But she will have nothing to do with him also. Her career is on the upswing, as Raju learns from newspaper reports that he reads in jail. He wonders how she can manage without him. But Rosie is managing her career on her own admirably because she has found her *métier* at last.

Rosie's behaviour is always dignified and noble despite her nightlong bickering behind the closed bedroom doors with Marco or altercations with Raju later when she cautions him not to discuss anything in the presence of servants. She doesn't react when Raju's boorish uncle shouts at her, calls her names and orders her to get out of the house where she has come, and is staying, uninvited.

There is enough atonement for her adulterous liaison with Raju which is there primarily because he helps her realize her ambition of displaying her art in public. Rosie's delineation is in keeping with Narayan's delineation of female characters in general. Rosie may have succumbed to circumstances but she remains free from inward taint. That is why she makes such a complete and miraculous recovery, though the novelist, quite wisely, does not restore her to her earlier dubious marital status. Rosie is a strong minded woman who is unwilling to sacrifice her happiness or ambition for the sake of keeping up appearances and staying with an appalling husband.

Thus, both Rosie and Raju are romancers. Rosie believes in 'karma', whereas Raju is a lethargic personality who doesn't want to work at all. Raju's irresponsibility, recklessness and evil deeds become the cause of their separation otherwise, they flourished and managed their profession well. Moreover, Rosie's spoiled relations with Marco brought them close together. According to C.D. Narasimaiah, 'Raju-Rosie relationship becomes credible and acceptable only because of the neglect Rosie suffers at the hands of her husband.' But still Raju and Rosie cannot be called soul mates. Rosie's soul mate is her art, which is dance. She will remain happy until she stops dancing because she gets real satisfaction from it. Thus it is only dance which sustains her even after betrayal by two males.

### **Theme of Morality versus Spiritual Motivation and Aspiration**

Narayan is no didactic novelist; he is a penetrating analyst of human passions and human motives—the springs of human action—and this makes him a great critic of human conduct. Human relationships, relationships within the family circle, and relationships centering on sex and money are his ever recurring themes. Whatever disturbs the norms is an aberration, a disorder and sanity lies in return to, and acceptance of the normal. Life must be practical and lived despite its many shortcomings, follies and foibles.

In *The Guide*, acclaimed by many to be Narayan's finest novel, he develops a theme touched in *The Bachelor of Arts*, that of a bogus sanyasi. Raju, a restless, attractive youngster, acts as a guide to the tourists who come to visit the Malgudi ruins. The corruption-by-outsiders theme is this time initiated by the tourists. Marco and his glamorous wife, the dancer Rosie. Raju's love for Rosie is delineated as a consuming obsessive passion, fundamentally destructive and terrible. We find that Raju comes into conflict with traditional morality as he seeks to realize his aspirations. The result is the accepted order is disturbed, and there is chaos and disorder. He seduces Rosie and thus is guilty of immorality and corruption. When she comes to live with him, conventional morality is violated, and there is displeasure all around. The neighbours are annoyed, and his widowed mother is obliged to leave the home of her husband and go away with her brother. Raju does not attend to work, has to give up the railway stall and soon is in financial trouble. He is unable to pay his debts and has to face prosecution in the law courts. He is an

egotist, an individualist, a self-seeker who exploits Rosie sexually and commercially. They earn fabulous amounts but he wastes it all in drinking, gambling and extravagant living. He is too possessive and self-centred and forges Rosie's signatures to get a box of jewellery. It is a criminal act, and it soon lands him in jail. It is a violation of ordinary norms of conduct, and his example shows that crime does not pay. We must not act as Raju acts, we must not be over-possessive, so self-centred, and so extravagant and jealous. Thus the violation of conventional norms creates chaos and disorder in his own life and in the life of his social environment.

In the novels of R. K. Narayan, there is a rebellion in the characters who violate the social norms but this rebellion is followed by a return, a renewal and a conformity to the social set-up. Violation of traditional norms leads to disruption, misery and unhappiness. In *The Guide*, Marco snaps his conjugal tie with Rosie when he comes to know of her intimacy with Raju. It is nothing short of infidelity. He says to her:

'But you are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics.'

The traditional world of Malgudi has its own custom of arranged marriage which is settled by parents after negotiations and matching of horoscopes. In Indian society marriage is looked upon as a sacrament and a spiritual union. It has been sanctified by society and sanctioned by tradition. Men and women living together as husband and wife outside wedlock are regarded as sinners and hence do not enjoy or receive any social acceptance or recognition. It is therefore sacrilegious to violate the sanctity of sex. Illicit relationship is considered to be a stigma on those who are engaged in this kind of relationship. In *The Guide*, Rosie, after separation from her husband, lives with Raju as his wife under the assumed name Nalini, without marrying him. Raju's mother who is an orthodox woman is dead against her son's way of life with Rosie. She says to Raju:

'Why can't she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these modern girls imagine.'

She doesn't want the tainted woman to stay in her house. It is a moral as well as social sin. But Raju has no regards for his mother's sentiments. So she leaves the house forever. In course of time Raju's love for Rosie is replaced by love for money which leads him to forge her signature resulting in his arrest. Their relationship is finally severed. Thus, their romantic love not only causes miseries and sufferings to them but also to their families.

Raju's self-confidence and nonchalance enable him to make him quite comfortable in jail. But nemesis overtakes him soon after. He plays the role of a Swami, exploits the credulity of the simple people of Mangala who bring to him rich offerings of food. He lives on them as a parasite, and expects food from them even when they themselves are victims of famine and drought. This is certainly inhuman and monstrous. He is a fraud who deceives himself as well as the people of Mangal. But he is soon caught in his own trap. He is compelled to undertake a fast to bring down the rains. It is during the course of his fast that Raju achieves a measure of self-awareness and identifies himself with the community at large: 'For the first time in his life, he was making an effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing which he was not personally interested. He felt a new strength to go through the ordeal.'

The Bhagvad Gita and its *Karma* philosophy regard self-realization or enlightenment as the ultimate goal in a man's life, although the methods for the attainment of this goal may vary from man to man. Soul i.e. *Atman* acquires unanimity with the

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Supreme Soul or Almighty who is *Paramatma* or God. *Moksha* is a state of moral and intellectual perfection transcending the distinction between good and evil, between doubt and faith, between being and non-being. This goal is attainable in present life as per the teachings, sayings of the Upanishads and *Jivan Mukti* or liberation. In the end, when the individual who has reached this stage, dissociates himself from physical accomplishments, he becomes *Brahman* itself; that is final release or *Videha – Mukti*.

Narayan has very artistically interwoven various thoughts of the Bhagwad Gita in his novels. He has presented the theory of renunciation, and liberation or *Moksha* in *The Guide*. Raju, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic *Charvaka* philosophy guides and governs his life. He commits the crime of forging Rosie's signature and is accordingly punished and sent to the prison. His foul deeds pay him. He receives his ill fate as per his evil *Karma*. But during his term in prison, he finds time for his moral and social transgression. The prison accrues to him an ideal opportunity to journey into the innermost regions of his soul and shake off his material and social illusions. Thereafter, evolution in the character of Raju is a ceaseless and ongoing process.

It is now that spiritual regeneration takes place. Raju rises above his self. He recognizes the claims of humanity and learns to live and die for others. He may die, but his very death is his spiritual re-birth. Raju has matured, has achieved self-realization and self-fulfilment and has died into a new birth. His example shows that salvation and regeneration, the realization of one's highest aspirations, comes not through self-seeking but through self-negation and self-effacement. One must learn to live and die for others, before really noble and worthwhile achievement becomes possible.

The novel traces the growth and change of Raju from an egotistic tourist guide to a spiritual guide who wants to uphold the faith that the villagers have in him. From an unruly, undisciplined, and selfish man, he turns into a thoughtful, selfless, and disciplined person. The author brings out the transmigration of the human soul from the clutches of 'maya' or ordinary desires to attain 'nirvana' or self-realization.

### **Sex and Money as the Basis of Raju-Rosie Relationship**

In *The Guide*, Raju, Rosie and Marco—all the three are remarkable characters. A host of other minor characters contribute to the tapestry of middle class life in Malgudi—Velan, Raju's parents, Gaffur, Joseph and others. In the very beginning of the novel when Velan tells Raju about his troubles in life due to his half-sister, Raju also remembers that troubles in his life also started with Rosie. Raju remembers his first meeting with Rosie. She was not very glamorous, but she had a beautiful figure, beautifully fashioned eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky. Raju is fascinated by 'the divine creature' that he perceives Rosie to be and wins her heart by his sympathy and consideration, as well as showing keen interest in her art. Both of them are born romancers and it is the coming together of two similar temperaments. As William Walsh says: 'She and Raju are two of a kind and they fall in love at once. Rosie is the essence of Indian womanhood. Her husband's indifference and callousness to her aspirations make her go astray while Marco is a totally self-absorbed art historian with strong likes and dislikes.

He is a lady killer. It is his confidence, his nonchalance which enables him to win Rosie so very easily. When Marco permits him to go and persuade Rosie to come with them to Mempri Hills, he has the audacity to tell her to come out as she was, without changing her dress and added, 'who would decorate a rainbow?' Later, he makes further advances to her, continues to play bold and flattering compliments, and so is able to seduce her.

Both fall in love with each other. Raju and Rosie fully enjoy the beauty and surroundings of Malgudi. They amuse each other; entertain each other and their days pass very smoothly. They spend one night together in the hotel and Rosie becomes Raju's mistress.

The marriage of Rosie and Marco is flawed by incompatibility. Though both are artists in their own spheres, due to lack of understanding, this catastrophe takes place. Marco marries Rosie only for his personal comfort and remains busy day in and day out with his pursuits. This is insulting for Rosie.

Even after being in a relationship with Raju, Rosie wants to fulfil her wifely duties to her husband. There was a gradual change in Rosie's attitude, noticed Raju: 'In other ways too I found it difficult to understand the girl. I found as I went on that she was gradually losing the free and easier manners of her earlier days. She allowed me to make love to her, of course, but she was beginning to show excessive consideration for her husband on the hill.

Raju has apparently nothing heroic about him, He is rather an anti-hero, a typical Narayan figure, a common man with a touch of the uncommon, He is just ordinary and not so great or versatile or clever as he considers himself to be. He is one of those transformed, shapeless characters who easily pick up the suggestions of others; his personality is in fact a product of other people's convictions. He is extremely susceptible to the suggestions of others, and this plasticity of response determines his career and ultimate destiny. Raju is an amalgam of several traits; some of them are contradictory.

Raju is so despicable that he appears almost to be the antagonist of the novel until its concluding pages. Raju is arbitrarily cruel, hypocritical, and manipulative from his earliest recounted youth. He manipulates his father into taking him into town; he abuses a local cattle-boy for entering his private play-area; he lies to and takes advantage of tourists; he steals Rosie from Marco; he makes Rosie miserable, chasing away her friends, and becoming pretentious (even forging her signature on a legal document, rather than let her have any contact with Marco); finally, he takes advantage of the villagers in order to get food. These are hardly traits one would ascribe to a 'hero'. He displays greed and materialism matched only by narcissism and hypocrisy, so that he loses even his closest friends; only sudden money saves him, and he soon loses that as well.

Raju is thoroughly unprincipled and immoral. He is a self-seeker who seeks to achieve his goal by hook or by crook. When Rosie comes to live with him in his house he takes her in without caring for the sentiments of his mother. Rosie practices in their home, the environment echoes with the sound of her dancing. The neighbours and the poor old widowed mother are annoyed, but lost in the pleasures of sex, Raju has no thought or care for anyone else. He wastes his time and money on Rosie. By his insolent arrogance, he even drives his mother out of the home. She leaves him and goes away with his maternal uncle.

In the third stage of his career, he becomes a convict, and even this role he performs with enthusiasm, becoming an ideal prisoner. 'Raju did not drill into jail of course; he was taken there for a deliberate act of forgery. This was the one act that Raju did voluntarily and deliberately, it did not happen to him. But Raju was bewildered that such a trivial action should bring down such frightful consequences on his head. 'Once out of jail Raju finds himself drifting into the role of a sadhu. When out of jail, we find him playing the role of a Swami or Mahatma. He plays this role to perfection, for basically there is not much difference between the role of a railway guide and that of a

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spiritual guide. The same eloquence, the same ability to make grand, mystifying statements, the air of knowingness, enable him to play his new role with such success. He is a fraud and a rogue in reality, but he appears every inch a Mahatma. He sits on slab of stone as if it were a throne, and when Velan comes to him and consults him about his sister, the old habit of adorning guidance asserts itself, and when Velan prostrates before him he can speak pontifically 'I do not permit any one to do this, God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us if we attempt to usurp his rights.' Raju felt he was attaining the stature of a saint and later he felt he was growing wings.

Not once does he deliberately try to pass himself off for a holy man, but when he finds that people want to believe in his spiritual power, he cannot disappoint them.' He wants to tell the villagers of his shady past, of his stay in the jail, but he cannot: It looked as though he would be hurting the others' deepest sentiments. It is the public reposition of faith that compels him to act and die a holy man even though he had no inclination towards either option. Raju is both an Indian enigma and a key to the mystery and myth.

Thus, Narayan has always been a student of human-relationships. In his early novels, he dealt with such simple relationships as the relations between students and teachers, between friends and classmates, or relationships within the family between father and son, husband and wife, etc. His powers gradually matured and in his later novels, beginning with Mr. Sampath, he studies characters and relationships of a more complex kind. These relationships usually revolve round sex and money. This is also the case with *The Guide*- Rosie-Raju relationship is the most important relationship studied in the novel, and it revolves upon sex and money.

### ***The Guide is a Study of Life's Little Ironies***

Like Hardy's Wessex novels, Narayan's Malgudi novels are also studies in life's little ironies. The irony of life may be defined as happening of the undesired and the unexpected; in life we expect something and get the exact opposite, and what we get is not only unexpected, it is all the undesired. Life's little ironies make Narayan's novels, tragicomedies and *The Guide* is no exception to this genre. It is also a study of life's little ironies enacted against the backdrop of Malgudi.

The operation of life's little ironies is best seen in the life and career of Raju. In his life, the unexpected and the undesired always happens, and his discomfiture is sometimes comic, and sometimes more serious. As a tourist guide, he is very popular, and Marco treats him almost as a family member but he seduces his wife Rosie and has a good time with her. He takes pains to dress himself properly so that he may be able to impress her as a well to-do young man of taste and culture. But what happens, she decides to live with her husband who leaves her alone on the station and returns to Madras. When they were enjoying togetherness, she suddenly remembers her wifely duties and responsibilities. Later on, on seeing a picture in a magazine of her husband who has left her alone at the railway station, she says to Raju: 'After all he is my husband...'

At every turn, we find that Raju is a victim of the irony of life or circumstance. He forges Rosie's signature to get the box of jewellery lying with Marco, and everyday waits for the arrival of the box and makes eager inquiries. But the unexpected and the undesired happens. Instead of the box of jewellery, the warrant for his arrest arrives, and he is arrested in the midst of a show before a packed house. He had tried to conceal the facts from Rosie, but now she, as well as others, know about the generosity of Marco, as well as about his own villainy and depravity. He had always believed that

Marco was interested only in dead and decaying objects, but now, contrary to his expectation, he finds that he is quite capable of laying a trap and outwitting him. He had always been of the view that Rosie would never be able to pull on without him, but, quite to the contrary, she does well without him and so convincingly establishes that Raju is a mere parasite who had all along been living a life of luxury on her earnings.

Raju continues to be a victim of the irony of life up to the very end. On his release from jail he takes shelter in a ruined temple, hoping that there none would notice him, but soon he becomes the object of worship of the people of Mangala. The unexpected happens, and the fraud is now called upon to play the role of a swami or Mahatma. He lives comfortably in the temple, grows a beard, light of wisdom shines from his eyes, and wisdom flows out of his lips. He talks big and looks big, the people are impressed, and he is supposed to have magical powers and the ability to cure and heal.

He tells the simple credulous villagers that rains can be brought down if someone fasts for twelve days, and stands in water for a few hours every day. He had never expected that soon he himself would have to undergo this ordeal. But soon there is drought and famine, and he is called upon to undertake the fast. Ironically enough, this suffering and ultimate death is brought about by an idiot. He had told this idiot brother of Velan to tell his brother that the swami will not eat, unless they end their quarrel. But he told them that the Swami will not eat till the rains come. While he had been expecting foodstuff for preparing *bonda*, his favourite dish, the unexpected and the undesired happens. The people come to him with no food at all, for they believe that the swami is on fast, and so does not need any food. He is thus compelled to undertake the fast. In a desperate bid to save himself he narrates the story of his past to Velan. In this way, he expected to make him realize that he is no swami, no Mahatma, but a fraud, and no useful purpose can be served by his fasting. He expected that the people will call him a villain, stone him, and turn him out. Thus, his life would he saved. But the contrary happens. The narration of his past, further confirms Velan's faith in his goodness and nobility; he promises not to disclose his history to anybody, and contrary to his expectations, poor Raju has to go on with the fast.

Thus, we can say that whole text is full of ironies.

### 2.7.1 Brief Overview of Other Works by R.K. Narayan

R.K. Narayan was one among the three authors who shaped Indian writing in English, especially in fiction. The other two writers were Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. The trio defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established the suppositions, the manner, the idiom, the concept of character, and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its distinctiveness. R.K. Narayan introduced realism and psychology into Indian writing. He was a close associate of Graham Greene and a person who believed in promoting regional novels like Thomas Hardy. He created an imaginary town of Malgudi and set his works using it as a background. While Hardy is known for his tragic novels, Narayan's Malgudi novels are humorous. Let us now get an idea of what his other popular works were about.

#### *Swami and Friends*

*Swami and Friends* was Narayan's first novel published in 1935. It describes the life of boys in a south Indian school. Narayan's personal experience works in the making of the novel. The plot revolves around the hero, Swami, and his friends. The novel is remarkable for Narayan's understanding of child psychology.

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His next novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* deals with a later stage in a young man's career, when he is about to leave college and enter life. Within the next few months of his becoming a graduate, Chandran is faced with the problem of finding a job for himself. Unable to find a job, he passes the time by sleeping for long hours or walking on the banks of the river. During one of his walks, he sees Malathi, a beautiful girl of about fifteen years, who he wants to marry but due to horoscopes not matching, the proposal is ultimately dropped.

On recovering from this severe blow, part III describes his aimless wandering; in Madras and other parts of south India. He then visits several South Indian villages and after eight months of these purposeless wanderings, he gets tired of this role and returns to his parents. Part IV deals with Chandran's marriage and his settling down in life. Thus, the novel ends on an optimistic note and gives us the message of the continuity of life.

***The Dark Room***

*The Dark Room*, Narayan's third novel, was published in 1938. It is a tale of a tormented wife of a secretary, Ramani who due to his irritable behaviour is cynical and makes the atmosphere of the house always gloomy and bleak. His wife, Savitri, is a true symbol of traditional Indian womanhood. She is very beautiful and deeply devoted to her husband. Ramani, however, does not respond to her sentiments even with ordinary warmth. Though they have been married for fifteen years, his wife has received nothing from her husband except rebukes and abuses. Even his children get more of his rebukes than of his fatherly love. All goes well, until there arrives on the scene a beautiful lady, Shanta Bai who has deserted her husband and joined Engladia Insurance Company. Ramani succumbs to her beauty and coquettish ways. This upsets the peace of his domestic life still more. Seeing no way of correcting her arrogant and erring husband, Savitri revolts against him and in despair leaves the house to commit suicide.

She goes to the river and throws herself into it. The timely arrival of Mari, the blacksmith and burglar, who, while crossing the river on his way to his village sees her body floating on the river and at once rescues her, saves her life. Persuaded by Mari's wife Ponni, she goes to their village and embarks upon an independent living of her own by working in a temple. The feelings of homesickness and a tormenting anxiety for her children, however, soon make her restless. She realizes the futility of her attempt to escape from her bonds with the temporal world and returns home.

Such is this simple novel dealing with the sorry fate of Indian womanhood. It suggests no solutions to the problem, still it clearly brings out Narayan's concern for the Savitris of our country. Its plot is more coherent and well-knit than that of the earlier novels, the characterization is excellent, and there is a skilful blending of humour and pathos. Narayan has not preached any sermons, but has vividly and realistically presented a slice of life as he saw it. Despite the view of critics, one feels on reading it that it is quite a successful novel, and deserves much greater attention than has been usually awarded to it.

***The English Teacher***

*The English Teacher*, his next novel, was published in 1945, seven years after the *Dark Room*. Probably it was the shattering blow that he (Narayan) received in the death of his wife, which made him incapable of sustained artistic effort, and during this interval,



he could compose only short stories or sketches. Much of Narayan's personal suffering has gone into the making of this novel. It tells a love story, but a love-story entirely different from the conventional love-stories. It narrates the story of the domestic life of Krishna, a lecturer in English, in the Albert Mission College, Malgudi. Though he is only thirty years old, he feels bored with life in the absence of his wife and baby daughter. They arrive after a few months, along with his mother. Krishna and Sushila, his wife, lead a happy contented life for several months. But then their house is not up to the mark, and so on an ill-fated day they go out house hunting, and as ill-luck would have it, Sushila is stung by a flea, develops typhoid and dies after a few days.

It is a great shock to Krishna. He is much upset, and loses all interest in life and in his work. The only comfort to him is his little daughter, Leela, who now takes up much of his time and attention. He frequently wanders about a lotus-pond, where he meets a sanyasi who can communicate with the spirits of the dead. Through him, Krishna is able to communicate with the spirit of his dead wife, is thrilled, and regains his interest in life. This is the weakest part of the novel, it contains long, philosophical discussions on Para—psychology and the mysteries of the spirit-world. Krishna now meets the head-master of a new children's school. He is very much impressed by his educational theories and gives up his job in the college to serve the new institution. That very night he can commune with the wife directly, for the first time, and an ineffable bliss descends upon his soul.

### **Mr. Sampath**

*Mr. Sampath* was first published in 1949 in London, and in 1956 in India. It has been filmed both in Tamil and Hindi, and despite some weaknesses, ranks very high in the world of Indo-Anglican fiction. The novel is called *Mr. Sampath* but in the first 64 pages out of a total of 219, his name is not mentioned, though the man exists and is going in and out of the pages. A rather clumsy flashback lets us know the dramatic manner in which Srinivas, who seems till now to be the hero of the story, got acquainted with his future printer. Coming from Talapur to Malgudi, he had wasted nearly a week looking for someone who would print his journal, the *Banner*. He had dropped into the Bombay Anand Bhavan for a cup of coffee and was struck by the personality of a man with a scarf and a cap genially ordering everybody around and getting from the proprietor V.I.P. treatment. 'Who is that man?' asks Srinivas, and is told, 'He is our proprietor's friend. He prints all our bill-books and invoices'.

It is in this way that Srinivasa, the hero of the novel, meets Mr. Sampath, who starts printing his weekly, the *Banner*. The editing and publishing of the *Banner* absorbs all his attention, and he has no time left to think of his wife and his little son. When they suddenly arrive at Malgudi from the village, his surprise knows no bounds. Srinivasa neglected his domestic duties with the result that frequent are the domestic quarrels, which, however, are soon patched up, and they continue to live together, their routine humdrum life. The publication has soon to be suspended because of a strike in the press, largely the result of Srinivas' own mismanagement. The resourceful Mr. Sampath now decides to turn film producer, sets up the Sunrise Picture Studio with Srinivasa as the script-writer, his friend Somer as the financier, and a young man, Ravi, as the accountant of the company. *The Burning of Kama* is the first film to be produced with Mr. Sampath acting the role of Shiva, and a beautiful actress, Shanthi, that of Parvathi. Ravi idolizes her and when he discovers that she is acting the role of Parvathi, he runs on the stage, embraces her and takes her off'. 'I here is an uproar in the studio, much equipment is damaged, and so the film producing venture also comes to an end.

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Ravi turns mad and has to be sent to the police lock-up. Srinivasa is disgusted, severs all connections with the film-world, and revives the publication of the *Banner*. Mr. Sampath carries on for some time with Shanthi who then leaves him for good. Mr. Sampath himself has to leave Malgudi to escape the notice of his creditors, Somu and others. The novel ends as Mr. Sampath bids farewell to Srinivasa. In short, the novel is the story of Mr. Sampath, a clever and enterprising rogue, who can face even the most difficult situations with composure. He is one of the most memorable characters in the annals of Indo-Anglican fiction.

### *The Financial Expert*

Narayan's sixth novel, *The Financial Expert*, (1952), is his masterpiece. *The Financial Expert* tells the story of the rise and fall of Margayya, the financial expert. Margayya begins his career as a petty moneylender doing his business under a banyan tree, in front of the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank in Malgudi. He helps the shareholders of the bank to borrow money at a small interest and lends it to the needy at a higher interest. In the process he makes some money for himself. The secretary of the bank and Arul Doss, the peon, seize from his box the loan application forms he has managed to get from the bank through its share-holders; treat him with contempt; and threaten to take action against him. This sets him on the path of improving his position.

When Balu, his spoilt child, throws his account book, containing all the entries of his transactions with his clients, into the gutter, it becomes impossible for Margayya to resume his old practice. He shows his horoscope to an astrologer and is assured that a good time is coming for him, if only he did puja to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. The puja is done for forty days, with ash from a red lotus and ghee made out of milk from a grey cow. Margayya goes through the puja and at the end of it is full of hopes of a prosperous career. Old Dr. Pal, who sells him the MS of a book on Bed Lye, for whatever ready cash Margayya's purse contains, assures him that the book renamed Domestic Harmony, will sell in tens of thousands if only he can find a publisher. Madan Lal, 'a man from the North', reads the MS and agrees to print and publish it on a 50-50 partnership basis. The book is at once popular and Margayya's fortune is made. Margayya is again ruined through his son, Balu. He had put him to school in great style, getting the blessings of his brother and sister-in-law next door. His wealth had enabled him to become the Secretary of the School Managing Committee, with all that this meant in terms of power vis-a-vis the Headmaster and the school staff. He had engaged a private tutor for his son and instructed him to thrash the boy whenever necessary. But Balu is not good in his studies. He cannot pass his S.S.L.C. He attempts to persuade him to take the examination a second time. The result is that Balu seizes the school leaving certificate book, tears it into four quarters and throw them into the gutter, now the same gutter which closed its dark waters over Margayya's red account book and carries away the School Certificate book. Then he runs away from home. A few days later, there is a letter from Madras telling Margayya that his son is dead. The brother's family immediately comes to his help, though Margayya feels he can do without their help and wonders whether this will change the existing relationship between them. Thus, the theme of the novel is lust for money, but Margayya is no monster of greed and wickedness.

### *Waiting for Mahatma*

*Waiting for Mahatma* published in London in 1955 is not a political novel, though Mahatma figures in it frequently. It narrates the love story of Sriram and Bharti against

the political background of India during the years which immediately preceded the independence of country in 1947.

Sriram, a young man of twenty, lost his parents at an early age. He is looked after by his grandmother who deposited over thirty-eight thousand rupees for her pampered and worthless grandson out of the pension his father. Bharati is the daughter of a patriot who died at the hands of a policeman. She was adopted by the local Sevak Sangh and was brought and educated on Gandhian principles. She is a true follower and devotee of Gandhi. Sriram meets Bharati when one day she approaches him for contribution to the fund which is being collected for the reception of Mahatma Gandhi in Malgudi. Driven by his love for her, he joins Gandhiji's group of followers of which she is a member. He accompanies Mahatmaji in his tour of poverty-stricken villages and acquires first-hand knowledge of the miserable condition of the poor peasants who are suffering from the scarcity and hardships caused by the Second World War and are also the victims of the ruthlessness of the profiteers and hoarders. When the historic movement of 1942 breaks out and Mahatmaji is arrested, he retires to a deserted temple on the slope of Mempi Hill to escape the police. From here, he carries on the propaganda of the 'Quit India' movement. He meets Jagdish, a terrorist and zealous national worker. He joins his new friend in his terrorist activities and helps him first in noting down the messages and speeches of Subhas Chander Bose from Tokyo and Berlin and circulating cyclostyled copies of them among the Indian soldiers and afterwards in overturning and derailing trains, cutting telegraph wires, setting fire to the records in law courts, exploding crude bombs, and indulging in such other acts of violence. The result is he is arrested and sent to jail.

On being released from jail after independence, he goes to meet Bharati in Delhi where she is staying with Mahatma Gandhi in Birla Bhavan. He begs her to marry him and when she gives her consent, goes to Mahatmaji for his approval. Mahatmaji approves of their marriage and gives his blessings to them. In the beginning he promises to be present on the occasion of their marriage, but on a mysterious premonition expresses his unwillingness to do so. After a brief talk with Mahatmaji, Sriram and Bharati accompany him to the prayer ground in Birla Bhavan and witness the ghastly scene of his murder by a misguided youth. The novel is remarkable for its characterization and its study of life's little ironies.

### ***The Man Eater of Malgudi***

*The Man Eater of Malgudi* came out in 1961, and is considered by competent critics to be his finest work. It is an allegory or fable showing that evil is self-destructive. The title is ironic for the man-eater in the novel is no tiger, but a mighty man, Vasu, who not only kills a large number of wild animals in Mempi forests, but can also kill a man with a single blow of his hammer fist. The story is narrated in the first person by its tragic-comic hero, Nataraj, a printer of Malgudi. In his printing work he is assisted by Mr. Sastri who is a compositor, proof-reader and a machine-man all combined in one. Among his constant companions are a poet who is engaged in writing the life of god Krishna, and Mr. Sen, the journalist, who is always criticizing Nehru. The smooth and congenial life of this small group is disturbed when, H. Vasu, M.A., taxidermist, comes to stay with them as a tenant in a room in the upper storey of the printing press. This tall man of about six feet bull neck, hammer fist and rough and aggressive behaviour arouses fear in the hearts of Nataraj and his friends. Nataraj, tolerates him in his room upstairs till he makes himself unbearable by robbing Mempi forest of its wild life and collecting

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dead animals in his room for stuffing them. When even Nataraj's neighbours complain to him about the insanitary conditions he requests Vasu to find a new house for himself. The taxidermist treats this as an insult and sues him for harassing him and trying to evict him by unlawful means. The timely help from one of his clients, an old lawyer, his ability to prolong a case beyond the wildest dream of a litigant, saves Nataraj from the clutches of the law.

Soon after Vasu starts bringing Rangi, a notorious dancing woman and some other women like her, to his room, to the great annoyance of others in the house. But Vasu does not care for their feelings. The crisis, however, comes to a head when the pitiless taxidermist, threatens to kill Kumar, a temple elephant who, is to be taken in a festival procession organized to celebrate the poet's completion of a portion of his religious epic. Nataraj is very fond of the animal. He naturally gets very upset the moment he learns from Rangi, that Vasu intends to shoot it on the night of the proposed celebrations. Nataraj immediately acquaints his friend, the poet, the lawyer, and other important people of the town with taxidermist's wicked intentions. The matter is reported to the police authorities but they express their inability to take any action against him until the crime has been actually committed.

The very thought of Kumar's murder, however, drives Nataraj crazy. Even while compelled to stay in his house owing to the agitated condition of his mind, he continues thinking of Kumar. As the procession passes in front of his printing press, his heart begins to beat with fear. He waits every moment to hear the noise of gun shots and cries of panic-stricken people. He is surprised when the procession passes away without any untoward incident. Relieved of a great worry, Nataraj goes to his office as usual in the morning and to his great shock and dismay, he learns that Vasu is dead. The police authorities of the town soon start investigations. Murder is suspected and the police interrogate Nataraj, his friends, and Rangi, the temple dancer. From the medical report, it is gathered that Vasu has died of a concussion received on his right temple from a blunt instrument. When the police fail to find any clue of the culprit, the matter is dropped. Rangi, later, tells them that while striking a mosquito settled on his forehead, Vasu slapped his temple and died instantaneously. He thus died of a blow from his own hammer-fist. The novel has a well-knit coherent plot, and a fine gallery of vivid, life-like characters. The character of Vasu, the central figure, is a masterpiece. The narration is enlivened by Narayan's comic vision which frequently fuses and mingles with pathos.

### *The Sweet-Vendor*

*The Sweet-Vendor*, the latest of Narayan's novels came out in 1967. It is the story of Jagan, a sweet vendor. He is religious-minded and has been considerably influenced by the Gita. He is also a staunch follower of Gandhi and tries to live up to the Gandhian way of life. He wears khadi and spins a charkha. However, he is very careful about money and keeps two account books to avoid paying income tax. He is devoted to money, and he is also devoted to his twenty year old son, Mali. Indeed, it is Mali who is the cause of his undoing. He is a spoiled young man, who does not care much for his doting father. One fine morning he quietly announces his decision to give up his studies so that he may write a novel for a novel-competition and win a prize of twenty five thousand rupees. However, the father soon discovers that no novel is being written, his darling son is merely wasting his time. Further, he comes to know from a cousin that he intends to go to America to learn short-story writing there, and that he has already got a passport and booked his seat. To his great shock, he discovers that this has been done by stealing ten thousand rupees which he had so painstakingly saved.

Jagan makes the best of a bad bargain, and proudly tells the people that his son is in America. He fondly shows them his letters. But he receives another shock of his life, when in one of his letters his son tells him that he has started taking beef, and that they, in India, should follow his example. He receives a further shock when Mali returns home, not alone, but with his American wife, Grace. Later, Jagan learns to his great grief that they are not actually married, but have been leading an immoral, sinful life. Mali now wants to set up a factory for manufacturing story-writing machines. This is to be done with American collaboration, and as his share he needs two and a half lakh rupees. He presses his father to give him the money, for he is sure he has earned that much money by selling sweets at exorbitant rates, and avoiding the payment of income-tax. The idea that stories can be manufactured by electronic devices is a fine piece of satire on the modern craze for machines.

Jagan is now a frustrated man. First, he brings down the price of sweets and thus offends other sweet-vendors of Malgudi. Then he decides to hand over his business to his son, and himself to lead a retired life in an ashram across the river.

In addition to being a front ranked Indian English Novelist, Narayan was a prolific short-story writer. At some stage in his life after the death of his wife Rajam, he wrote nothing but short stories. He has half-a-dozen collections of short stories to his credit—*Malgudi Days*, *Dadu and Other Stories*, *An Astrologer's Day*, *Lawely Road*, *A Horse and Two Goats* and *Gods, Demons and Others*.

*Malgudi Days* is a collection of short stories involving incidents and experiences in the life of the people of this fictional city named Malgudi that remains central to all of Narayan's works. These stories, very delightfully convey experiences that form an intrinsic part of Indian life.

*My Days: A memoir*, is an autobiography of R.K. Narayan. Unlike his other texts which normally utilize a fictional setting with fictional characters, the book involves true characters that Narayan met in his lifetime, his perspective on these people and how it influenced his writing styles. It is Narayan's life story depicting people he met and experiences of his childhood. Many experiences we have may seem unimportant as we go along life but in retrospect, when we view these at a later stage in life, we can appreciate how these actually influenced us and made us the person we are today.

Another important work of R.K. Narayan was the translation into English of the Indian epic Ramayana, in 1972. The minute details and subtleties of this epic are narrated in Narayan's simple style. He has also given contemporariness to his translation in order to draw on its similarities and dissimilarities with modern Indian society.

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## 2.8 SUMMARY

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- Among the Indian writers in English, R.K. Narayan has a special place in Indian history.
- Narayan studied at his father's school and disappointed his family's emerging middle-class aspirations as he failed his first attempt to qualify for the graduate course in Arts.
- Narayan is unusual among Indian authors writing in English in that he has stayed contentedly in his home country venturing abroad only rarely.
- Narayan is the great artist who has achieved greatness by recognizing the limitations of his range, and keeping within them.

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### Check Your Progress

12. What is the major stylistic feature of *The Guide*?
13. When was *The Dark Room* published?

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- Narayan is a penetrating analyst of human passions and human motives—the springs of human action—and this makes him a great critic of human conduct.
- Borderline figures like Raju in *The Guide*, for example, make the reader aware of this down-to-earth aspect of life that pervades his work.
- The novel is an essentially Western art form, but Narayan has successfully used it to express Indian sensibilities.
- Love, sex and marriage play a significant role in the life of any individual and so they are present in *The Guide* also.
- Narayan has depicted the problem of corruption which is so much a part of India. Even a school teacher is shown to be corrupt.
- Narayan's novels are studies in human relationships, particularly family relationships. Of relationships within the family, the father-son relationship is most frequently studied.
- In *The Guide*, Narayan develops a theme touched in *The Bachelor of Arts*, that of a bogus sanyasi. Raju, a restless, attractive youngster, acts as a guide to the tourists who come to visit the Malgudi ruins.
- Rosie is a complex character and Narayan uses her to talk about women liberation.
- In *The Guide*, Raju is the central figure—a rogue and fraud who plays different roles, till, finally, he comes to be regarded as a Mahatma, and falls a martyr to his own ingenuity.
- In *The Guide*, Raju, Rosie and Marco—all the three are remarkable characters. A host of other minor characters contribute to the tapestry of middle class life in Malgudi—Velan, Raju's parents, Gaffur, Joseph and others.

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## 2.9 KEY TERMS

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- **Mythology:** Mythology refers variously to the collected myths of a group of people or to the study of such myths. Myth is a feature of every culture.
- **Metaphor:** Metaphor is a word or phrase used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful.
- **Moksha:** Moksha is a term in Hinduism and Hindu philosophy which refers to various forms of emancipation, liberation, and release.
- **Symbolism:** Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense.

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## 2.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. R.K. Narayan's first published work was a book review of *Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England*.
2. *Malgudi Days*, his first collection of short stories, was published in November 1942.
3. Some of the prominent novels of R.K. Narayan are *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher*

(1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952) and *The Printer of Malgudi* (1957).

4. The most characteristic feature of Narayan's literary world is that it comprises small-time cheats, street vendors, small businessmen and drifters, who together form a gallery of Indian characters. These are characters who are far from the stereotypes of extreme poverty or spiritual exoticism attached to the subcontinent.
5. Some of the social aspects of Indian society that can be seen in *The Guide* are as follows:
  - Indianness
  - Indian Economy
  - Superstition
  - Simplicity of Rural Population
  - Illiteracy
  - Love, Sex and Marriage
  - Corruption
6. The significant themes of *The Guide* are as follows:
  - The place of woman in a traditional society
  - The moral limitations of a materialistic way of life
  - The consequences of flouting accepted codes
  - The psychological and ethical implications of some Hindu concepts as ascetic purification, *Yoga*, renunciation, non-attachment, *Maya* and the cyclic progressions of life and death
  - The great Indian theory of *Karma* and the various paths of achieving *Moksha* or self-realization
7. Narayan has achieved the presentation of the social norms and class distinctions in *The Guide* mainly through the symbolism of Rosie's name. The non-traditional name is the marker of Rosie's social hybridity, through which the novelist gives a realistic and truthful representation of the social norms and prejudices in India.
8. In *The Guide*, Raju is the central figure—a rogue and fraud who plays different roles, till, finally, he comes to be regarded as a Mahatma, and falls a martyr to his own ingenuity. Raju's career from a railway guide to a Mahatma brings out the truth of the statement that, 'Raju never did anything; things always happened to him. His entire career illustrates the drill of a passive character from one role to another'.
9. Marco is the minor character in *The Guide*.
10. The tone of *The Guide* is quiet and subdued.
11. The two narrative techniques that are used in *The Guide* are comic vision and imagery and symbolism.
12. The novel incorporates symbolism as one of its major stylistic features: Raju, Rosie, Marco and various other characters are symbolically presented to give a vivid and realistic description of Indian society and its classes.
13. *The Dark Room*, Narayan's third novel, was published in 1938.

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## 2.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### NOTES

#### Short-Answer Questions

1. How did R.K. Narayan start his writing career?
2. What are the different economic groups mentioned in the story and who are they represented by?
3. Trace the events in Raju's life which take him from a path of selfishness to one of selflessness.
4. How does Narayan use Rosie to raise the subject of women's emancipation?
5. Who according to you, is the central figure in the novel? Give reasons in support of your answer.
6. Do you think Rosie is justified in her relationship with Raju?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss R.K. Narayan's childhood and education.
2. Elaborate on R.K. Narayan's vision of life.
3. Explain how the Guide is a typical picture of Indian Society?
4. Violation of set norms and traditional values leads to destruction. Discuss it with reference to The Guide.
5. Discuss Narayan's concept of Moksha and theory of Karma.
6. Is Marco an ideal husband? Comment.

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## 2.12 FURTHER READING

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- Srinivasa Iyengar, K.R. 1990. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
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- Prasad, Amar Nath. 2003. *Critical Response to R.K. Narayan*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.



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# UNIT 3 NOVEL - II: AUSTEN AND DESAI

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Jane Austen: About the Author
  - 3.2.1 *Pride and Prejudice*: An Overview
  - 3.2.2 Important Characters
  - 3.2.3 First Impressions to *Pride and Prejudice*
  - 3.2.4 *Pride and Prejudice* as a Domestic Novel
- 3.3 Anita Desai: About the Author
  - 3.3.1 *Fire on the Mountain*: Critical Appreciation
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Reading

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## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit studies the work of two prominent authors—Jane Austen and Anita Desai; particularly their novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Fire on the Mountain*, respectively.

Jane Austen was one of the greatest woman novelists of the nineteenth century. She was the daughter of a humble clergyman living at Stevenson, a little village among the Chalk hills of South England. Her full length novels are *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. This unit deals with Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in particular.

*Pride and Prejudice* is a novel of manners by Jane Austen, first published in 1813. The story follows the main character, Elizabeth Bennet, as she deals with issues of manners, upbringing, morality, education, and marriage in the society of the landed gentry of the British Regency. Elizabeth is the second of five daughters of a country gentleman living near the fictional town of Meryton in Hertfordshire, near London.

Anita Desai is an Indian novelist born on 24 June 1937. She has received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*.

*Fire on the Mountain* is a superbly constructed novel, known for its rich symbolic imagery and psychological insights. A winner of two prestigious awards, it tells the story of two older women and a young girl.

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## 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse Jane Austen as a novelist
- Discuss her art of characterization

- Analyse the features of domestic novels
- Describe the major themes and events of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Fire on the Mountain*
- Critically appreciate *Fire on the Mountain*

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### 3.2 JANE AUSTEN: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jane Austen was one of the supreme artists in fiction. She was a highly sophisticated artist. In the opinion of the critic, W.L. Cross, 'She is one of the sincerest examples of our literature of art for art's sake.' Her experience was meagre and insignificant, but from it sprang an art finished in every detail, filled with life, and meaning. She possessed the magic touch and a talent for miniature painting. No doubt her range was limited, but her touch was firm and true. She used a 'little bit two inches wide of ivory' and she worked on it 'with no fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour.'

Jane Austen was a very careful artist. She wrote her novels with care, constantly revising them. There was nothing in her novels that did not have a clearly defined reason, and did not contribute to the plot, the drama of feelings of the moral structure. She knew precisely what she wanted to do, and she did it in the way that suited best.

#### Her Limited Range

The range of Jane Austen's novels was limited. She drew all her material from her own experience. She never went outside her experience, with the result that all her scenes belonged to South England where she had spent a considerable period of her life. Austen exploited with unrivalled expertness the potentialities of a seemingly narrow mode of existence. From the outset she limited her view of the world that she knew and the influences that she saw at work.

Jane Austen defined her own boundaries and never stepped beyond them. These limitations were self-imposed and she always remained within the range of her imaginative inspiration and personal experience. The characters of the novel are neither of very high nor of very low estate, and they have no great adventures. A picnic, a dance, amateur theatricals, or at the most an elopement are some outstanding events. The stories and events are told from a woman's point of view and deals only with such persons and events that naturally come within the range of her novels. Lord David Cecil, a British biographer and historian remarks, 'Jane Austen obeys the rule of all imagination composition; that she stays within the range of her imaginative inspiration. A work of art is born of the union of the artist's experience and imagination. It is his first obligation, therefore, to choose themes within the range of this experience. Now Jane Austen's imaginative range was in some respect a very limited one. It was, in the first place, condoned to human beings in their personal relations. Man in relation to god, to politics, to abstract ideas, passed her by. It was only when she saw him with his family and his neighbours that her creative impulse began to stir to activity.'

Jane Austen was finely alive to her limitations 'and out of these unpromising materials, Jane Austen composed novels that came near to artistic perfection. No other writer of fiction has ever achieved such great results by such insignificant means; none other has, upon material so severely limited, expanded such beauty, imaginary and precision of workmanship.'

## Lack of Passion

Jane Austen's novels do not represent stormy passions and high tragedy of emotional life. She was primarily concerned with the comedy of domestic life. But with her very mental makeup she was incapable of writing a tragedy or romance. Jane Austen was absolutely incapable of writing adventurous tales dealing with romantic reveries and death scenes.

Austen chose a limited background for her novels. Her novels are recognized as 'domestic' or 'the tea-table' novels and the reader seeking anything like high romance in her works would be disappointed. There is hardly any feeling for external nature in her stories and there is little passion in her pictures of life. Whatever language of emotion is used, is forced and conventional. The kind of life that she has depicted is the one which she had put in the mouth of Mr Bennet in '*Pride and Prejudice*'. 'For what do we live but to make sport for our neighbours and to laugh at them in our turn?'

## Her Realism

Jane Austen was a supreme realist. Her stories are all drawn from the life that she knew. Emma tells us of a delightful girl who is as she was in the years when Napoleon was emperor. The ordinary commonplace incidents and the day-to-day experience formed the warp and woof of her novels. Sir Walter Scott wrote in his diary that the talent of Jane Austen as a realist was the 'most wonderful' he had ever met with. 'That young lady had a talent for describing involvements, feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I have ever met with.'

Jane Austen described the English country scene with skill and fidelity. She gives a vivid and glowing picture of the social manners and customs of the eighteenth century. She created numerous realistic characters. Jane Austen is nearer to life than any of the earlier novelists. Speaking of Jane Austen's age, the critic G.E. Milton wrote: 'Jane Austen was the first to draw exactly what she saw around her in a humdrum country life, and to discard all incidents, all adventures, all grotesque types, for perfect simplicity.'

## Plot Construction

Austen's great skill lies in plot-construction. Her skilfully constructed plots are really the highest objects of artistic perfection. Her novels have an exactness of structure and symmetry of form. All the incidents that are introduced have their particular meanings.

Jane Austen's plots are not simple but compound. They do not compromise barely the story of the hero and the heroine. In *Pride and Prejudice* for instance, there are several pairs of lovers and their stories form the component parts of the plot. In the novels of Jane Austen the parts are so skilfully fused together as to form one compact whole.

In the plots of Jane Austen action is more or less eliminated. Action in her novels consists in little visits, morning calls, weddings, shopping expeditions, or the quizzing of new arrivals. These small actions and incidents go to make up the plots of Jane Austen's novels. Her novels are not novels of action, but of conversation. The place of action is taken up by conversation and scene after scene is built up by the power of conversations. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, dialogues form the bulk of the novel.

Referring to the great skill of Jane Austen's plot-construction, W.L. Cross remarks in *The Development of the English Novel*: 'No novelist since Fielding has been master

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of structure. Fielding constructed the novel after the analogy of the ancient drama. *Pride and Prejudice* has not only the humour of Shakespearean comedy, but also its technique.'

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### Characterization

Jane Austen is a great creator of characters. She has created a picture-gallery filled with so many delightful characters. Her characters are not types but individuals. She portrays human characters with great precision and exactness. Her male characters are almost perfect. She creates living characters both male and female, and draws them in their private aspects.

Jane Austen has an unerring eye for the surface of personality and records accurately the manners, charms and tricks of speech of her characters. Nothing escapes her notice. In this respect she can be compared with her great successor Dickens, who is unique in drawing surface peculiarities. Dickens does not go below the surface while Jane Austen does. She penetrates to the psychological organism underlying speech and manner, and presents the external relation to the internal. In *Pride and Prejudice* the scene wherein Darcy proposes to Elizabeth at Hunsford Parsonage is a fine psychological study. Darcy, if outwardly composed and taciturn, is driven within by a conflict between his love for Elizabeth and hatred for her stupid relations which prevent him from marrying her.

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote of Jane Austen, 'She has a great sympathy for all her characters and their follies and foibles do not annoy her. Jane Austen is never angry with her characters. In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr Collins and Lady de Bourgh are figures of fun, monstrous puppets of silliness and snobbery, to be elaborated and laughed at.'

### As a Satirist and Moralist

Jane Austen is a satirist as well as moralist. Satire is an element in which Jane Austen lives but there is no trace of the savage indignation in her writings. Her attitude as a satirist is best expressed in the words of Elizabeth when she says: 'I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.' It is evident that her satire was sympathetic. Walter Allen, literary critic and novelist rightly points out, 'Jane Austen was a moralist – an eighteenth-century moralist. In some respects, she was the last and finest flower of that century at its quintessential.'

### Dramatic Nature of Her Art

Jane Austen developed the dramatic method both in the presentation of her plots and characters. Instead of describing and analyzing the characters, she makes them reveal themselves in their action and dialogues. The plot is also carried forward through a succession of short scenes in dialogues. Though keeping the right to comment, she relies more on dialogue and that is her main forte. The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is dramatic. Baker points out that both the theme and the plot-structure of *Pride and Prejudice* are remarkably dramatic. He divides the novel into five acts of high comedy.

### Her Humour

Jane Austen's attitude towards life, presented in her novels, is that of a humourist, 'I dearly love a laugh', says Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, and this statement equally applies to the novelist. She laughs at follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies.

Folly is the chief source of laughter in the novels of Jane Austen and she creates comic characters who provoke nothing but laughter. Her comic characters are Mrs Bennet, Sir Walter Eliot, Mrs Norris, Mr Collins and Mr Woodhouse. She laughs at each one of them because of their foolishness and foolish actions. Irony is a conspicuous aspect of Jane Austen's humour. There is enough of verbal irony in her novels.

### Style

Jane Austen rendered a great service to the English novel by developing a flexible, smooth-flowing prose style. She is sometimes a shade artificial. But at her best her prose moves nimbly and easily and enables her narrative to proceed onward without any obstruction. 'It does not rise to very great heights, being almost monotonous in its pedestrian sameness except when relieved by an occasional epigram or well-turned aphorism. It achieves its greatest triumphs in dialogue. It is not a prose of enthusiasm or exaltation. But it is wonderfully suited to dry satiric unfolding of the hopes and disappointments of the human heart.'

W.L. Cross aptly remarks, 'The style of Jane Austen cannot be separated from herself or her method. It is the natural easy flowing garment of her mind, delighting inconsistencies and infinite detail. It is so peculiarly her own that one cannot trace in it with any degree of certainty of the course of her reading.'

Jane Austen is undoubtedly the greatest woman novelist as Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist. Faithful observation, personal detachment, and fine sense of ironic comedy are among Jane Austen's chief characteristics as a writer. Austen's novels mark a big step forward in the development of English novel. Her range is limited but her touch is firm and true. Her stories may not be exciting and thrilling, but the picture of life that she presents has all the charm of vivid narration. Dialogues form a prominent feature of the narrative of Jane Austen. Her stories are dramatic in nature. Her characters are taken mostly from the aristocracy and upper middle class of the English village and its vicinity. She created numerous realistic characters. She presents remarkable psychological studies of men and women, avoiding passion and prejudice. Her novels have a distinct moral purpose. She is the greatest English novelist because of her craftsmanship, purity and simplicity of her style and themes.

### 3.2.1 *Pride and Prejudice*: An Overview

Mr and Mrs Bennet live in the village of Longbourn which is situated in the County of Hertfordshire. They have five daughters – Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine (or Kitty), and Lydia. The youngest is fifteen years old. Mrs Bennet's chief desire in life is to see all her daughters suitably married and happily settled. In fact, the marriages of her daughters have become an obsession with her.

#### **Mrs Bennet's Expectation**

A rich young man by the name of Mr Charles Bingley takes a palatial house called Netherfield Park on rent. This country house is situated at a distance of about three miles from the village of Longbourn. Mr Bingley begins to live in this house with his sister, Caroline Bingley, as his housekeeper. He has a friend by the name of Mr Darcy who joins him at Netherfield Park for a short stay, but continues to stay there for a couple of months. Mrs Hurst, a married sister of Mr Bingley, also comes with her husband to stay at Netherfield Park. Mrs Bennet feels very glad to know that the new occupant of Netherfield Park is a rich bachelor. She tells her husband that there is every

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possibility that Mr Bingley would choose one of their daughters as his would-be wife. Mr Bennet does not share his wife's enthusiasm though he too would like Mr Bingley to choose one of his daughters as his future wife. As Mrs Bennet is a woman of a mean intelligence, and as her talk is very often foolish, Mr Bennet had got into the habit of making sarcastic remarks to her and about her. In other words, he often pokes fun at her.

### **Mr Darcy, a Very Proud Man; Elizabeth's Prejudice against Him**

An assembly is held periodically in the town of Meryton which is situated at a distance of about one mile from Longbourn. This assembly is a kind of social gathering which is attended by all the respectable families of the town and the neighbouring villages. At the first assembly, which is attended by Mr Bingley and the other inmates of Netherfield Park, Mr Bingley feels greatly attracted to Jane Bennet who is the prettiest of the Bennet sisters. He asks Jane for a dance, and she gladly accepts his request. In fact, he dances with her a second time also. Mr Bingley suggests to his friend Mr Darcy that the latter should not stand idle but should dance. He suggests that Mr Darcy should dance with Elizabeth Bennet who is sitting nearby. Mr Darcy, however, replies that this girl is not attractive enough to tempt him to dance with her. Elizabeth overhears this remark and conceives a dislike for the man who has made such a disparaging remark about her in her hearing. In fact, from this time onwards, she becomes prejudiced against him. Darcy, on his part, is a very proud man. Like Mr Bingley, Darcy is also a very rich and a handsome bachelor. Any girl in this neighbourhood would be glad to marry him, but this pride is a most disagreeable trait of his character. Mrs Bennet describes him to her husband as a haughty and horrid man. In fact, everybody at the assembly finds him to be too proud.

### **Mr Bingley, Expected to Propose Marriage to Jane**

Mr Bingley's preference for Jane Bennet is noticed by everybody at the assembly. In fact, both Mr Bingley and Jane have felt mutually attracted to each other. Mr Bingley's two sisters, Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst, also develop a liking for Jane. In fact Miss Bingley invites Jane to dinner at Netherfield Park; and the Bennet family considers this invitation to be a great honour and also a golden opportunity for Jane. Jane goes to Netherfield Park but catches cold on the way because it has been raining. The consequence of her indisposition is that she has to stay on at Netherfield Park for about a week during which Elizabeth also joins her in order to attend upon her. The intimacy between Jane and Mr Bingley's sisters now increases; and both Jane and Elizabeth begin to think that Mr Bingley would surely propose marriage to Jane soon. However, Miss Bingley does not feel any liking for Elizabeth. In fact, Miss Bingley begins to feel jealous of Elizabeth.

### **A Change in Mr Darcy's Attitude to Elizabeth**

In the meantime, Mr Darcy's attitude towards Elizabeth changes. On a closer acquaintance with her, he finds that there is, after all, a good deal of charm about this girl. She has a very intelligent face; and she has dark eyes which add the charm of her countenance. She also has a pleasing figure and a lively temperament. Mr Darcy begins actually to like this girl of whom he had originally disapproved even for the purpose of dancing. Miss Bingley begins to dislike Elizabeth all the more because she finds Mr Darcy feeling inclined towards her (Elizabeth). Miss Bingley wants Mr Darcy for herself. In other words, she hopes that Mr Darcy might marry her; and therefore Miss Bingley

would not like any other girl to catch Mr Darcy's fancy and thus to come in her way. It is during Elizabeth's enforced stay with her sister Jane at Netherfield Park that Mr Darcy gets the opportunity to interact with Elizabeth with Mr Bingley and Miss Bingley participating in those conversations.

### **Miss Charlotte Lucas, the Daughter of Sir William Lucas**

Within a walking distance of Longburn, there lives a family which is on visiting terms with the Bonnet family, The head of that family is Sir William Lucas, and he lives in a house, which he has named 'Lucas Lodge' with his wife and several children, the eldest of whom is Charlotte Lucas, aged twenty-seven years. Charlotte is a great friend of Elizabeth; and they always like to talk to each other frankly.

Charlotte expresses to Elizabeth her view that Mr Bingley has felt greatly attracted by Jane and might marry her if Jane encourages him and reciprocates his interest in her. Elizabeth agrees with this view.

### **Elizabeth's Continuing Prejudice and Darcy's Continuing Pride**

Elizabeth finds herself no closer to Mr Darcy. If anything, the rift between them has become wider. Mr Darcy would certainly like to marry Elizabeth but he finds that she belongs to much lower status than he does, and he, therefore, finds it most improper on his part to marry a girl of that status. Elizabeth continuing to harbour her original prejudice against Mr Darcy does not show any special attention to him. In fact, in the course of a conversation, Elizabeth says to him that he has a strong tendency to hate everybody, while he says in reply that she has a strong tendency deliberately to misunderstand everybody.

### **Mr Collins's Proposal of Marriage, Rejected by Elizabeth**

Mr Collins now appears on the scene at Longburn. He is a cousin of Mr Bennet; and he is the man to whom Mr Bennet's whole property is entailed. On Mr Bennet's death, Mr Collins would inherit Mr Bennet's property because Mr Bennet has no male issue. On Mr Bennet's death, therefore, Mrs Bennet and her daughters would find themselves impoverished. Mr Collins comes on a visit to the Bennet family, his intention being to choose one of the Bennet sisters and propose marriage to her. As Jane is expected by everybody to marry Mr Bingley, Mr Collins makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. Elizabeth, however, has found Mr Collins to be an oddity, that is, a queer kind of man. Mr Collins speaks a good deal about his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh who has been kind enough to him to confer living upon him and appoint him the rector at Hunsford. The manner in which he talks about Lady Catherine shows him to be an accomplished flatterer. At the same time, he has too high an opinion of himself. Elizabeth, therefore, rejects Mr Collins.

### **Elizabeth's Prejudice Deepened by Mr Wickham's Account**

Another character now enters the story. He is Mr George Wickham, an officer in the militia regiment which is stationed near the town of Merytown. Mr Wickham and Mr Darcy had known each other since their boyhood because Mr Wickham's father was the steward to Mr Darcy's father. Mr Wickham has certain grievances against Mr Darcy, though these grievances are baseless and show only Mr Wickham's ill-will towards Mr Darcy. In the course of a social gathering, Mr Wickham gets acquainted with Elizabeth and tells her his grievances against Mr Darcy, emphasizing the fact that Mr Darcy is a

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very handsome man and whose talk is very interesting. In fact, she fancies herself as being in love with Mr Wickham. If Mr Wickham were to propose marriage to her, she would probably have accepted the proposal. In any case, she now feels further prejudiced against Mr Darcy because of Mr Wickham's tale of injustices and wrongs which, according to his account, he has suffered at Mr Darcy's hands. At the ball which Mr Bingley has arranged at Netherfield Park, Elizabeth is told both by Mr Bingley and Miss Bingley that Mr Wickham is an undesirable man, and that he seems to have told many lies to her about Mr Darcy; but Elizabeth is not convinced by what she is told by them. She cannot believe that Mr Wickham could have told any lies. In this, of course, she is badly deceived because later she discovers the reality of this man.

### **Mr Collins, Married to Miss Charlotte Lucas**

Mr Collins visits Longbourn again. Having come into contact with Miss Charlotte Lucas, he decides to propose marriage to her. He is very anxious to get married because Lady Catherine has been pressing him to get married, and because he thinks that a clergyman should set an example of his marriage to his parishioners. So he proposes marriage to Miss Charlotte Lucas who is only too pleased by this proposal because, having already attained the age of twenty-seven, she is very keen to get married at the earliest opportunity. And thus, Mr Collins and Miss Charlotte Lucas get married. Mr Collins takes his newly wedded wife to the personage at Hunsford where Lady Catherine is quite pleased to meet the reactor's wife.

### **A Setback to Jane's Hope of Marrying Mr Bingley**

Instead of receiving a proposal of marriage from Mr Bingley, Jane now receives a letter from Miss Bingley informing her that all the inmates of Netherfield Park are leaving for London. This piece of information comes as a great blow to Jane's hopes. Then Miss Bingley writes another letter to Jane, this time from London. Miss Bingley, through this letter, informs Jane that Bingley and the others might not return to Netherfield Park. Mr Bingley is thinking of marrying Mr Darcy's sister, Georgiana, who is a very beautiful and highly accomplished girl. Thus Jane finds that her hopes of marrying Mr Bingley have been dashed to letter, feels as disappointed and distressed as Jane herself. Elizabeth is deeply attached to Jane; and therefore, she fully shares all anxieties and Joys of Jane.

### **Elizabeth's Visit to Hunsford**

Elizabeth now pays a visit to Charlotte at Hunsford. She goes there in the company of Charlotte's father, Sir William Lucas, and Charlotte's younger sister, Maria. Charlotte introduces her friend and her relatives to Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lady Catherine is a very proud woman and takes every opportunity to impress upon others the fact that she is socially superior to them. Lady Catherine invites them all to a dinner at her house ('Rosings Park') which is a splendid mansion and splendidly furnished. Sir William and Maria are deeply impressed and awed by the splendour around them; but Elizabeth remains calm and composed.

### **Elizabeth's Rejection of Mr Darcy's Proposal of Marriage**

A new development now takes place. Mr Darcy, accompanied by a cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, comes on a brief visit to Lady Catherine who is Mr Darcy's and Colonel Fitzwilliam's aunt. And now the stage is set for another meeting between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. At a party which is held by Lady Catherine at her house, Elizabeth plays piano and also has much conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam who impresses her as a very



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kind man. Mr Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam now begin to call at the personage daily to meet the inmates. However, Mr Darcy's chief interest in paying these visit is to meet Elizabeth. Actually, Mr Darcy is now more in love with Elizabeth than he had been before. And so one day he makes a personal of marriage to her. However, in the course of making this proposal, he emphasizes on her social inferiority to him, and he makes her conscious of the fact that he is doing her a favour by proposing marriage to her. As a self-respecting girl, Elizabeth does not like the condescending and patronizing tone in which Mr Darcy proposes marriage to her. She, therefore, declines his proposal. She gives two other reasons for her refusal. One is that Mr Darcy had been unjust and cruel to Mr Wickham; and the other is that Mr Darcy had advised Mr Bingley not to marry Jane. The information about Mr Darcy's having obstructed Mr Bingley's proposal of marriage to Jane was given to Elizabeth by Colonel Fitzwilliam who, however, is not himself aware of the exact particulars regarding Mr Darcy's intervention in Mr Bingley's plans of marriage. Elizabeth has been able to infer the correct situation from Colonel Fitzwilliam's talk.

### **Mr Darcy's Defence against Elizabeth's Charges**

On the following day Mr Darcy hands over a letter to Elizabeth. Ongoing through the letter, Elizabeth is filled with astonishment. This letter contains Mr Darcy's defence of himself against the charges which Elizabeth had levelled against him on the previous day. In this letter Mr Darcy states the true facts about Mr Wickham, exposing that man as a most unreliable fellow and a rogue. In this letter he also admits that he had prevented Mr Bingley from proposing marriage to Jane but he defends himself by saying that he had done so under a genuine belief that Jane was not really in love with Mr Bingley. This letter produces a deep effect on Elizabeth. In fact, her reading through this letter marks a turning-point in her attitude towards Mr Darcy. She begins to think that she had been totally wrong in her judgment of Mr Darcy's character and also that she had grossly mistaken in having relied upon Mr Wickham's account of his relations with Mr Darcy. At the same time, Elizabeth finds that Mr Darcy's letter, though containing a defence of himself, is written in a tone, which is insolent and haughty. Thus, Mr Darcy's pride still remains intact, though Elizabeth's prejudice has begun to crumble.

### **No Development in the Jane-Bingley Affair**

Mr Darcy leaves Rosings Park for London before Elizabeth can take any action on the letter which he had handed over to her. On her way home, she stops in London for a day with her uncle and aunt Mr and Mrs Gardiner with whom Jane has already been staying for the past three months. Although Jane had been staying in London for such a long period, she had not been able to meet Mr Bingley who also lives there. Jane had during this period called on Miss Bingley but even she had shown some indifference to Jane. This creates an impression in Jane's mind that perhaps she is now permanently alienated from Mr Bingley whom, at one time, she had hoped to marry. Both sisters now return home. Elizabeth informs Jane of what had passed between Mr Darcy and herself. She also tells Jane of Mr Wickham's real character as revealed in Mr Darcy's letter to her. Jane feels shocked to know that such a handsome and smart man as Mr Wickham possesses a wicked heart.

### **Lydia, Invited by Mrs Forster to Brighton**

The militia regiment stationed near the town of Meryton has now shifted near the city of Brighton. Lydia feels very depressed because she would no longer be able to lead a gay

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life. However, Mrs Forster, the wife of the colonel of that regiment invites Lydia to accompany her to Brighton. Lydia feels delighted by Mrs Forster's invitation because, by going to Brighton, she can continue her contacts with the officers. Elizabeth privately urges her father not to give so much freedom to Lydia. Her father, however, does not wish to stop Lydia from going there.

### **An Unexpected Meeting between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy**

Mr and Mrs Gardiner come to Longbourn on their way to Derbyshire where they intend to go on a pleasure trip. They would leave their two children with the Bennet family, and themselves proceed to Derbyshire. They had previously arranged with Elizabeth that she would also accompany them on their trip. Originally, they had wanted to go to the Lake District, but subsequently they had changed their minds. In any case, Elizabeth now goes with them. On the way they pay a visit to Pemberley House which is tourist attraction. Pemberley House is a splendid mansion and belongs to Mr Darcy. When going round this great country house, they happen to meet Mr Darcy himself. Mr Darcy was not expected at the house till the following day when he was to arrive here from London; but he has come a day earlier because of a change in his schedule. Mr Darcy greets Elizabeth most cordially and shows a lot of courtesy to her uncle and aunt. There is not the least touch of arrogance in Mr Darcy's attitude at this time. Both Mr and Mrs Gardiner's get the feeling that Mr Darcy is in love with Elizabeth. On the next day, Mr Darcy calls on Mr and Mrs Gardiner and Elizabeth at the inn where they are staying in the nearby town of Lambton. He brings his sister Georgiana with him. This visit further strengthens Mr and Mrs Gardiner's belief that Mr Darcy is in love with Elizabeth. Elizabeth too gets the same impression.

### **The News of Lydia's Elopement with Mr Wickham**

Now Elizabeth has also begun to feel attracted towards Mr Darcy. This attraction had begun at Hunsford after Elizabeth had gone through Mr Darcy's letter. It is now likely that Mr Darcy would renew his proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. But an unexpected event occurs to disturb the peace of the Bennet family. Colonel Forster informs Mr Bennet by an express letter that Lydia, who was staying with Mrs Forster in Bridgton, had eloped with Mr Wickham whom she had been meeting frequently. When Elizabeth learns this sad news from a letter written to her by Jane, she tells her uncle and aunt that she must get back home to provide whatever comfort she can to her parents in this crisis. She also tells Mr Darcy of what has happened.

### **Elizabeth, Back at Longbourn**

Mr and Mrs Gardiner now cut short their holiday and return with Elizabeth to Longbourn. Mrs Bennet is almost crazy with grief at Lydia's misconduct and at the disgrace which Lydia has brought to the family. Mr Gardiner now also proceeds to London in order to help Mr Bennet in his efforts to trace Lydia. After a few days Mr Bennet returns to Longbourn, having failed in his efforts to trace Lydia or Mr Wickham. Mrs Gardiner now leaves Longbourn with her children, and joins her husband in London where they have their home. Mr Bennet feels most repentant of having always indulged Lydia's desires and whims.

After a few days, Mr Bennet receives a letter from Mr Gardiner. According to the information contained in this letter, Mr Wickham and Lydia have been traced and are staying in London without having got married. Mr Wickham has said that he would marry Lydia only on certain conditions. These conditions include the payment of a certain

amount of money to him. At the same time, Mr Gardiner has informed Mr Bennet that everything is being settled with Mr Wickham and that Mr Bennet should not worry about the welfare of Lydia. A marriage duly takes place after Mr Wickham's demand for money has been met. The Bennet family gets the impression that the money has been paid by Mr Gardiner. But Elizabeth soon learns from her aunt, Mrs Gardiner, that the whole settlement had been arrived at by the intervention of Mr Darcy, and that the entire money had been paid by Mr Darcy himself. This information produces a profound effect upon Elizabeth regarding the character of Mr Darcy who has done a great service and a great favour to the Bennet family by saving the good name of the family. But for Mr Darcy's intervention, Mr Wickham would never have married Lydia but would have forsaken her. Lydia would in that case have been a deserted girl with a shameful past.

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### Mr Bingley's Proposal of Marriage to Jane

A change now takes place in Mr Bingley. This change is as sudden as the change which had been responsible for his having given up his intention to marry Jane. Accompanied by Mr Darcy, he now goes to Netherfield Park and gets in touch with the Bennet family. He makes a proposal of marriage to Jane which she most gladly accepts.

### Elizabeth's Acceptance of Darcy's New Proposal of Marriage

Lady Catherine de Bough now pays a visit to Longbourn and has a private interview with Elizabeth. She warns Elizabeth not to agree to marry Mr Darcy in case he makes a proposal of marriage to her. Lady Catherine says that Mr Darcy has to marry her own daughter, Miss Ann de Bourgh, and that Elizabeth should, therefore, not come in the way. Elizabeth, however, refuses to give Lady Catherine any promise in this connection. After a few days, Mr Darcy comes to Longbourn and proposes marriage to Elizabeth. By this time Elizabeth's attitude towards Mr Darcy has undergone a complete change. All her prejudices against him have disappeared. She now feels that he would be the right kind of husband for her. She, therefore, accepts his proposal without the least demur or hesitation. Thus, Mr Darcy whose pride has by now completely melted away, and Elizabeth whose prejudices have completely disappeared, are united in wedlock. In fact, the marriage of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth takes place on the same day as the marriage of Mr Bingley and Jane.

## 3.2.2 Important Characters

Character sketch of some of the important characters of the *Pride and Prejudice* has been discussed in this section.

### 1. Elizabeth Bennet

**Her physical charm:** Of all her heroines, Jane Austen likes Elizabeth Bennet most. During the last one century and a half, countless readers and critics have fallen in love with her. Elizabeth is certainly not as beautiful as Jane, still she is graceful and charming. There is something indefinable about her charm which cannot be easily analysed. Her beauty does not strike at first sight but takes time to make impression. Darcy does not find her beautiful when he first meets her. She is tolerable. Darcy does not find her beautiful enough to tempt him. But later Darcy says that she is 'one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance.' Elizabeth is a complex character.

**Understanding of human nature:** Elizabeth has a good understanding of people. She claims that she fully understands Bingley and she is right. She looks through the mask of

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friendship of the Bingley sisters and discovers their conceit. She had known Mr Collins to be an affected fool from the first letter he writes to them. She alerts her father to the impending dangers of Lydia's flirtations. She is aware of the vulgarity of her mother, the simplicity of Jane, the pedantry of Mary and the frivolity of Kitty and Lydia. It does not take her long to feel the cynical irresponsibility of her father. Elizabeth, however, fails to understand some intricate people like Charlotte Lucas, George Wickham and Darcy. Charlotte is an intimate friend. Her feeling of affection blinds Elizabeth to her demerits. In case of Darcy, his slighting remark, in the beginning of the novel, about her being just 'tolerable' hurts her pride. This makes her prejudiced against him. As a result of this prejudice, she misunderstands every word and every action of his. Wickham appears, she misunderstands every word and every action of his. Wickham appears graceful and charming. Being singled out by such a charming officer gratifies her and she succumbs to his charms.

**Willingness to learn:** Elizabeth is willing to learn. The process of her self-awakening begins after she reads Darcy's letter. She begins to read it with a strong prejudice against him. But gradually she realizes the truth of his statements. She now feels mortified at her spiritual blindness. She grows absolutely ashamed of herself. She realizes that she had been blind and prejudiced. This dramatic moment of self-revelation gradually brings about a total awareness of reality. She comes to know that Wickham is a charming unprincipled flirt. She begins to understand that Darcy is exactly the man who, in nature and talent, would most suit her. Her prejudice was wrong, but there was an element of honesty about it. And we love her for her honesty of mind.

**Her moral courage:** Elizabeth has great moral courage. She declines two marriage proposals: both undesirable but both attractive in their own way. Her father's estate is entailed on Mr Collins. Her connections are very low and vulgar. Her mother warns her that she will not be able to maintain her after her father's death. Mr Collins's proposal at least promises the comforts and security of a home, if no love. Mr Darcy's proposal is still more attractive, because she realizes that it would be a great honour to be the mistress of Pemberley. In these circumstances, it needed great moral and spiritual courage to reject these proposals. But Elizabeth did not want to marry where there was no love. She is indeed gifted with rare strength of character.

Elizabeth shows her strength of character in other matters also. Whenever she faces an act of absurdity, she asserts her independence of mind. She faces Lady Catherine with calm composure and unruffled dignity. When this lady tries to pressurize her to promise that she will not marry Darcy, Elizabeth refuses to be browbeaten by her. She never loses an argument. She is really a spirited and independent girl. She asserts her individually whenever required.

**Her sense or wit and humour:** Elizabeth is gifted with an irrepressible sense of wit and humour. Mr Bennet is also very witty but he is often cynical. Elizabeth's wit pleases but it never hurts. In her brilliance of wit she reminds us of Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. There runs a strain of innocent raillery in all her conversation. Incurrigibly humorous, she does not spare anyone. She is capable of laughing as much at herself as at others. She loves Jane dearly but does not spare her from her raillery. She cannot help laughing even in most serious situations in life. When Elizabeth gives Jane the news of her engagement to Darcy, Jane asks, 'But are you certain – forgive the questions – are you quite certain that you can be happy with him?' Elizabeth, with cool and delightful irony, replies, 'There can be no doubt of that. It is settled between us already that we are to be the happiest couple in the world.' But she never oversteps the limits of propriety.

There is no doubt that Elizabeth's wit, besides being refined and subtle, never outruns discretion.

**Her warm-heartedness:** Another quality of Elizabeth is her selflessness and warm-heartedness. The concern she shows for Jane during her stay at Netherfield, the way she walks all the way to Netherfield speaks well for her. She feels concerned at Bingley's removal from the neighbourhood and is genuinely happy when Jane is engaged to him.

Elizabeth is indeed a lovable heroine. Of all Jane Austen's heroines, she impresses and delights us most. We can conclude with Shakespeare's words: 'Time cannot wither her nor custom stale her charm.'

## 2. MrDarcy

Darcy is the hero of *Pride and Prejudice*. He is the owner of the Pemberley estate worth ten thousand pounds a year. He is twenty seven, tall, handsome and of majestic appearance. He is one of the complex characters in the novel. While comparing Bingley and Darcy, Jane Austen tell us that in judgement and understanding, Darcy is definitely the better of the two.

**His pride:** The first characteristics that we note about Darcy is his pride. It is evident right from the moment he makes his appearance. He refuses to be introduced to any other lady except the two in his own party. He is declared to be 'the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world.' Several instances of his pride can be cited. He refuses to dance with Elizabeth: 'She is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me.' In Chapter 11, he tells her, 'I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offences against myself. .... My temper would perhaps be called resentful.' When he makes his first proposal to Elizabeth, his tone is very proud and haughty.

However, there are attempts to justify his pride. Charlotte Lucas does not feel offended by it: 'One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family fortune, everything in his favour should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud.' Wickham tells Elizabeth that 'almost all his actions may be traced to pride, and pride has often been his best friend.' Some characters in the novel think that his pride is the result of his shyness. But after Darcy has been engaged to Elizabeth, he himself confesses his having been proud:

'I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately, an only son (for many years, an only child), I was spoiled by my parents, who, though good themselves, allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing – to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own.'

He is shy, but his pride is not just his shyness. And he is not just proud, he is even prejudiced against other people. Hence when he first insults Elizabeth, he is motivated by his prejudice against the rural people who are much beneath him in social status.

**Humbled by love:** Darcy falls in love with Elizabeth quite early in the novel. Darcy feels that she is rendered intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. He is also attracted by her pleasing figure and the easy playfulness of her manners. He gets an opportunity to observe her more closely at Netherfield where she has gone to nurse the ailing Jane. He notices her exuberance of spirits, and her warm-heartedness. He is impressed by her intellectual sharpness and her sparkling wit. Darcy next meets her when she is on a visit to Hunsford. He repeatedly calls at the parsonage. He is again

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struck by her refinement and his sense of appreciation is shown in his compliment. 'You could not have always been at Longbourn.'

It is Elizabeth's angry refusal of his proposal that marks the beginning of the great change in him. Elizabeth charges him with having broken Jane's heart and having ruined Wickham's life. She also accuses him of not behaving in a 'gentleman-like manner'. This accusation humbles him. The next time, they come together at Pemberley, he takes pains to behave like a gentleman. He wishes to be introduced to the Gardiners. He requests Elizabeth to allow him to introduce her to his sister Georgiana. After Lydia's elopement with Wickham, he saves the family from disgrace. He makes provisions for the man he hates, pays off his debts, purchases him a new commission in the army and persuades him to marry Lydia. All this, he does out of his love for Elizabeth. He himself admits the miracles Elizabeth's love has brought about in him:

'What do I not owe you? You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you I was properly humbled.'

**His integrity of character:** Darcy appears to be a man of principle. There lies beneath all his actions a conformity with high standards of conduct. There is absolutely no duplicity about him. In his proposal of Elizabeth, he does not hide the struggle he has undergone before he finally professes his love. When he is rejected by Elizabeth, he is not ashamed of his feelings. He makes it clear: 'But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence.'

**His love and kindness:** Darcy's relationship with Bingley, Georgiana and his tenants gives other side of his character. It is his pride and haughty manners that are shown aside when he is in Elizabeth's company. But it is quite another Darcy that others speak of and admire. To Bingley he is an esteemed friend. He has the highest regard for his opinion and judgement. To Georgiana, Darcy is a very loving brother, very eager to fulfil every desire of hers. To his tenants 'he is the best landlord and the best master that ever lived; not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves.'

Some critics feel that Darcy's transformation in the second half of the novel is incredible. They regard him as one of Jane Austen's serious failures. They attribute this failure to either her immaturity or to her general weakness in portraying male characters. The fact is that the action is unfolded from Elizabeth's point of view. We see Darcy through Elizabeth's eyes, and her eyes are prejudiced. We have to put together all the qualities of his character to get a correct picture of his personality. The writer has emphasized his negative qualities in the first half of the novel, but his inherent goodness cannot be hidden for long. His pride is slowly humbled through the love of Elizabeth. Darcy's portrayal in no way can be seen unconvincing.

### 3.2.3 First Impressions to *Pride and Prejudice*

*Pride and Prejudice* was originally entitled *First Impressions*. When Jane Austen revised the novel, she gave it the present title. The present title is perfectly appropriate and suitable. It does not need any justification. We can only discuss its significance. Jane Austen is not a psychological novelist. She is a painter of social manners. In the present novel, however, she analyses the interaction of the human emotions like pride and prejudice.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy symbolizes pride. On his very first appearance in the novel, he is declared to be 'the proudest and most disagreeable man in the world.' Wickham tells Elizabeth that almost all of Darcy's action may be traced to pride, but he calls it 'filial pride, his pride in his father now dead', and 'brotherly pride, his pride in his sister Georgiana'. Darcy's pride hurts Elizabeth when he declines Bingley's suggestion

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to dance with Elizabeth. He remarks, 'She is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me.' Elizabeth at once gets prejudiced against him and she resolves to hate him. Darcy's assertion that he cannot forget the vices and follies of others intensifies her prejudice. She begins to misinterpret all his utterances and actions. If Darcy's pride affects his judgement, Elizabeth's prejudice affects hers. Darcy fails to detect the impropriety of Wickham's derogatory statements about Darcy. She allows herself to be imposed upon. So complete is her trust in Wickham that she readily declares Darcy to be hateful.

Their process of self-discovery starts at Rosings. Embarrassed by the vulgarity of his aunt Lady Catherine, Darcy gets a new vision of life. He realizes that the refinement of manners is not the monopoly of a particular class. His rejection at the hands of Elizabeth proves to him the futility of those things in which he took pride. There must be something wrong with his values as he could not please a woman he loved. His rejection completely humbles him. Elizabeth's moment of self-awakening comes when she receives Darcy's letter. She realises the validity of his objections to the Jane-Bingley marriage. She is now ashamed to think that she has been 'blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd'. She was proud of her discernment and understanding, but she has all along been blind. She is now ready to change her notion. Darcy's role in bringing about Lydia's marriage with Wickham overwhelms her. Elizabeth realizes that Darcy is exactly the man who is nature and talent will most suit her. Both of them give up their pride and prejudice and are united in marriage.

### 3.2.4 *Pride and Prejudice* as a Domestic Novel

Jane Austen has rightly been described as a writer of domestic novel. She is notorious for never going out of the parlour. She makes a very candid confession that for her two or three families in a 'country village' are enough to work with.

*Pride and Prejudice* deals with the domestic life and aspirations of the Bennets, the Lucases, the Bingleys and the Darcys with scattered references to a few other families. These are all middle class people. The Bennets and the Lucases belong to the lower middle class, while the Bingleys and Darcys are comparatively affluent. Since they are all land-owners, they have nothing to do to earn their living. The usual tensions of working life are absent from their life. *Pride and Prejudice* consists of a ball at Meryton, another at Netherfield, Jane's visit to Netherfield and Elizabeth's visits to the Hunsford Parsonage and the Rosings. Apparently, nothing sensational happens during these visits, except that Jane catches a cold on her way to Netherfield, Elizabeth unexpectedly runs into Darcy during her visit to Pemberley, or Lydia and Wickham elope towards the end of the novel. But even this elopement does not lead to any untoward results. Darcy, who was expected to withdraw after this slur on the Bennets, does nothing of the kind and in fact plays a key role in setting the matters right.

*Pride and Prejudice* is concerned with husband-hunting. The chief aim for Mrs Bennet, mother of five marriageable daughters, is to strike suitable matches for them. The Lucas family is confronted with the same problem. Miss Bingley is eager to secure Darcy's hand for herself. Lady Catherine is equally interested in her daughter's marriage with Darcy.

Jane Austen is also interested in discussing the importance of marriage taking place due to intellectual understanding and emotional compatibility, and not just for beauty or for the allurements of money. Mr Bennet married for beauty and for good looks and soon got disillusioned. His wife had a weak understanding and an illiberal mind.

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Mr Bennet sought comfort in his library or in his walks. Charlotte Lucas knows that Mr Collins is a pompous ass. But she agrees to marry him because he is in a position to offer her financial security. She too never finds real happiness in her life. Lydia is captivated by Wickham's handsomeness. That he is utterly unprincipled is obvious to everybody, for he shifts from Elizabeth to Miss King to Lydia with great felicity. But Lydia prefers to ignore this fact. And she too ruins her life.

The novel also shows the adverse effect of ill-matched marriages on the emotional development of the children. Thus if Mary, Kitty and Lydia are unequal to the demands of life, the responsibility lies primarily with their parents, one of whom is indifferent and irresponsible, the other indulgent and concerned but stupid, Jane too lacks emotional maturity. Even Elizabeth, the best of the lot, barely escapes the ill-effects.

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### 3.3 ANITA DESAI: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Anita Desai is one of the most renowned Indian writers in English. Born in 1937 to a Bengali father and German mother, she has been writing since the age of seven. She boasts of eight novels and numerous short stories, articles and literary pieces for journals and periodicals. She has won a number of awards, both in India and abroad. She was honoured with the Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*. The very next year *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* won her the Federation of Indian Publishers and the Authors Guild of India's award for Excellence in Writing.

#### Popular Works

- *The Artist Of Disappearance* (2011)
- *The Zigzag Way* (2004)
- *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2000)
- *Fasting, Feasting* (1999)
- *Journey to Ithaca* (1995)
- *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988)
- *In Custody* (1984)
- *The Village By The Sea* (1982)
- *Clear Light of Day* (1980)
- *Games at Twilight* (1978)
- *Fire on the Mountain* (1977)
- *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976)
- *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975)
- *The Peacock Garden* (1974)
- *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971)
- *Voices in the City* (1965)
- *Cry, The Peacock* (1963)
- *India - A Travellers Literary Companion*

#### Check Your Progress

1. Who is George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*?
2. Which character takes a palatial house called Netherfield Park on rent?
3. Name the five daughters of Mr and Mrs Bennet.
4. Which of Shakespeare's heroine does Elizabeth resemble?
5. What is the chief aim of Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*?
6. What was the original title of *Pride and Prejudice*?



Desai's writing goes beyond observing the mundane, superfluous realities. To quote her,

'One's preoccupation can only be a perpetual search—for meanings, for values, for dare I say it, truth. I think of the world as an iceberg—the one-tenth visible above the surface of the water is what we call reality, but the nine-tenths that are submerged make up the truth, and that is what one is trying to explore.

Writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things. Next to this exploration of the underlying truth and the discovery of a private mythology and philosophy, it is style that interests me most—and by this I mean the conscious labour of writing language and symbol, word and rhythms—to obtain a certain integrity and to impose order on Chaos.'

Anita Desai is concerned about 'the enduring human condition'. Her themes are existentialist and include: maladjustment alienation, absurdity of human existence, quest for the ultimate meaning in life, decision, detachment and isolation. Desai explains how women in the contemporary urban milieu fight against discrimination of various types, but some do surrender before the relentless forces of absurd life. A perusal of Desai's novels reveals her deep involvement in the inner emotional world of her characters. To aid her literary interests she, therefore, resorts to the use of symbols and images. She tries to drum the clouds of the varied complexities of man-woman relationship and also the varying states of human psyche. Desai is a great artist and has employed techniques of stream of consciousness, flashback, montage and reveries which suit her existential themes and her externalization of internal emotional turmoil and tumults. Consequently, her novels do not have a well-constructed plot and a tightly-knit structure. There are episodes, happenings, incidents, encounters and reminiscences. Her characters are both typical as well as individualistic. They are typical as they suffer from a universal predicament of isolation and uncertainty. They are individualistic as they appear to be more sensitive and reflective in nature rather than the mass of common humanity around them. Her canvas is also reasonably large and it encompasses a large variety of characters representing various hues and colours of humanity. In fact, Anita Desai turns novel into a serious, intellectual endeavour rather than an object of mere entertainment. In her hands, novel is a mature and evolved genre fit for expressing sombre and reflective thoughts. Desai is thus a highly evocative, intense and engrossing novelist who makes the modern reader aware of a new perspective to perceive life. Her protagonists lead a tortuous and exacting existence which is made comprehensible through Desai's own keen and profound sensitivity towards life.

London's famous Arts Guardian succinctly sums up the author:

'...One of the best known and highly regarded novelists working in English in the sub-continent. The style she has evolved is lucid, tight, undramatic... her imagistic phase acquires an ambiguous and terrible power—the words hold down the events forcibly.'

### Awards won

- 1978 - Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize- *Fire on the Mountain*
- 1978 - Sahitya Akademi Award (National Academy of Letters Award)- *Fire on the Mountain*
- 1980 - Shortlisted, Booker Prize for Fiction - *Clear Light of Day*
- 1983 - Guardian Children's Fiction Prize - *The Village By The Sea*
- 1984 - Shortlisted, Booker Prize for Fiction - *In Custody*

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- 1993 - Neil Gunn Prize
- 1999 - Shortlisted, Booker Prize for Fiction: *Fasting, Feasting*
- 2000 - Alberto Moravia Prize for Literature (Italy)
- 2003 - Benson Medal of Royal Society of Literature

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### 3.3.1 *Fire on the Mountain*: Critical Appreciation

The plot of *Fire on the Mountain* is rather ephemeral and straightforward. The story deals with the momentous actions happening inside the inner-self of Nanda and her granddaughter Raka. After Ila Das is raped and murdered, that ferocious act occurs 'offstage' towards the last part of the book. This coincides with Raka's pronouncement where she informs that she has ignited fire in the forest. Although, there are other significant incidents in the remaining story, the author uses her imagery and her symbolism to prepare the readers for the horrifyingly violent finale. Actually the 'fire' symbolically rages inside the characters created by the author and by the end of the novel the fire completely explodes.

The first part of the novel, *Fire on the Mountain* offers the physical and emotional situation before Raka arrives at her great-grandmother's place. Nanda lives a very quiet and isolated retired life since her husband died. She interacts with very few people, like the occasional visit from the postman which she finds as a disturbance. Nanda's cook, Ram Lal is the only person with whom she interacts on a daily basis. She feels that visitors disturb her privacy which she has in her home while she is all alone. The author has created a setting of Nanda's home in such a way that the reader is left in no doubt about the kind of solitary life lived by her. Carignano, is located besides a cliff and far from civilization. The author has literally and metaphorically created a picture of a 'retreat' in isolation so that she can get the readers to visualise the kind of life Nanda lives. There is nobody to interrupt her peace and for this reason she does not appreciate the visit by the postman as he has brought her the letter which informs her about Raka's visit. Along with the news of her great granddaughter's visit, Nanda receives a call from her childhood friend, Ila Das who wishes to visit her. Both these instances makes Nanda feel insecure about her solitary life-style. In the next part, the story revolves around the relationship between Raka and Nanda. It concerns with the lack of interaction amongst the two. The author tries to establish that in spite of a generation gap, the two have a lot of similarities in their behaviour. Initially, Raka's unwanted visit is treated like an intrusion by Nanda as she feels that her presence is a threat for her solitary existence. Nanda is happy in her lonely life and does not want to take up any responsibility. She is not happy about sharing her home with anyone as she enjoys the calmness and quietness around her. But the letter from Asha which informs about the arrival of her great granddaughter makes her feel anxious about the peaceful existence she has established for herself. Nanda is not keen to give up her freedom and take the responsibility of anyone. She is upset that the presence of Raka will compel her to make conversation where as she is very contented by not talking to anyone all day long, 'Now, to bow again, to let that noose sleep once more round her neck that she had thought was freed fully, finally, now to converse again when it was silence she wished.'

Nanda Kaul's strong-minded disinterestedness and non-involvement is dealt by the author in the novel. This detachment is a result of unfortunate matrimonial relations. The author has protected such ties in her previous novels, titled *Cry, the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, etc. The

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novels by Desai in a way project her personal yearning to lead a solitary life. She has a busy life, yet she is lonely because of her unhappy marriage to an ex Vice Chancellor of Punjab University. She lived a life as desired by her husband, but she was not satisfied with her meaningless existence. She missed loving care and warmth in her own life and once she got out of the unhappy relationship, she began to live on her own and was not happy if disturbed. She herself began to live a life of a recluse. The character of Nanda is a result of her own unsuccessful marriage. After discharging all her duties, Nanda no longer wishes to be disturbed by anyone. Emotional withdrawal is the actual cause for Nanda Kaul's cynicism towards human relationships. She did not feel wanted or loved by her husband, for him she was just a show-piece and someone to perform the daily household chores. Even though she was a wife of a dignitary and as a result had social standing, but all that was irrelevant as from inside she felt lonely and unwanted. Nanda was very upset because of her husband's extra marital affair with Miss David. As a result of her unsuccessful marriage, she started to believe that being attached to someone will always lead to infidelity and interacting with people socially was a gimmick. Her relation with her husband was very superficial as it did not completely involve her inner being and was completely shallow. Nanda has very painful memories of the time when her husband left her alone so that he could meet Miss David. Nanda likes her solitary existence as she does not want to be vulnerable to being attached with anyone and be betrayed again. Her distrust towards human relations becomes stronger when she hears about the rape and murder of her childhood friend, Ila Das. The distressing matrimonial life of Nanda Kaul is visible in the following lines, 'Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen-he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a life-long affair with Miss David. And her children were all alien to her nature.' In the novel *Fire on the mountain*, marital ties are shaken because of an extra-marital affair and become the cause of distrust for the characters. In her previous novels, the author has presented unhappy marriage due to discordancy of natures or mental complexes. These aspects have left a deep impact on her and completely changed her outlook towards relationships. They have made her lose faith in all emotional ties and affections required in a relationship.

The conflict between the need to withdraw in order to preserve one's wholeness and sanity and the need to be involved in the painful process of life is shown vividly in the novel. This wavering between attachment and detachment reflects the need for a meaningful life. Nanda Kaul meets with a measure of success until she is drawn out of herself by Raka's effortless withdrawal that seem to be totally absorbed in a world of her own and ignores Nanda Kaul completely when compared with the latter's flawed experiment. Raka only wants to be left alone to pursue her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of Kasauli. Nanda Kaul wants to penetrate Raka's secret world as if Raka's total withdrawal is a challenge to her because withdrawal does not come naturally to her. In her desire to win Raka's affection and attention she builds an imaginary world around her father but this is of no avail. This action of Nanda Kaul also shows the unsatisfying condition of her own childhood and family life.

Emotional experiment by the author in the story is visible by the way the character of Raka has been portrayed. Remarking about the novel's characters lonely and absorbed childhood, the author states that 'I agree that the experiences of childhood are the most vivid and lasting ones.' The novel makes an attempt to exhibit the essentials of a parent-child relationship and the impact it has on the personality and emotional state of the characters.

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One more facet of the novel outlines how tense and stifled domestic atmosphere affects Raka's tender psyche. The character of Raka is the only child in the story and as a result of an abnormal childhood, she rejects all efforts of tenderness shown to her. She is not like most children of her age who are fascinated by simple things like fairy stories, escapade stories and usual bright things which catch the interest of young children. Raka has a strange mind and is attracted to peculiar places and stuffs. As a character is realized by the readers, it is easy for them to comprehend the views of the burnt house care-taker who believes that she is crazy. He thinks of her as 'the crazy one from Carignano'. Raka wants to remain on her own and unlike most children of her age she is not happy to be in the company of others even Nanda. She wants to explore the surroundings on her own and is very reluctant and uneasy to go with Nanda. She explores her surroundings without telling her great grandmother, she even visits the ravines and the secluded burnt house on the hill on her own. She has no feelings for Nanda; this is clear by the following lines in the novel, 'She ignored her so calmly, so totally that it made Nanda Kaul breathless.'

The author has portrayed the character of Raka as an abnormal child because she does not behave as most children of her age. She does not need anything and never makes any demands. Like her great grandmother, she just wants to be left alone and carry on with her explorations, she just wanted 'to be left alone and pursue her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of Kasauli.' Loneliness by no means bothers her and she is as a result very content throughout her visit in Carignano. Once when she was returning from her routine explorations, she gets late as she goes to the club building to see the events which take place there, she had enquired about these events from Nanda's cook, Ram Lal who called them as fancy dress balls. Nevertheless, Raka is astonished to see the pervert manner in which people are dressed and gets very disappointed. Looking at the conduct of these people she is reminded of her father and his weird behaviour.

'Somewhere behind them was her father, home from a party, stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night beating her mother that made Raka cover under her bed clothes and wet the mattress in fright.'

Raka was deeply affected by the behaviour of her father towards her mother and as a result she has turned into such an emotionally imbalanced child. As a child, she witnessed how her father used to beat her mother when he was drunk. Her mother was always sad and helpless and in her misery did not realize the emotional needs of her daughter. As a result, Raka's distressing childhood years dispossessed her from trusting and enjoying other people's company and their attempts to interact with her. She ignores all attempts made by her great grandmother to attract her attention and she is not interested in listening about any stories from her childhood. Raka was never made to feel pampered as other children of her age; she was deprived of love and care by both her parents, as a result now she is not keen to listen to stories about relations and family. She is, as a result, contented in the charred house on the edge in Kasauli as the surroundings match the sadness and sorrow within her. She likes the solitary existence as by now she is completely averse to attachments. From the story, one can easily understand that childhood years are instrumental in shaping the mental state of the child, the standards of communications of Raka with her parents, clubbed with her home environment have resulted in leaving a lasting impact on the psyche of the young child. The author has called her an accepted loner and equates her with her great grandmother who had also become a loner as result of her married life which was only about fulfilling duties and obligations.

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Though, both characters are not loners by birth and have turned into one due to their circumstances. Raka was a victim of a broken house and the reason for her turning into a loner was because of the anomalous conditions prevailing in her house. She has experienced plenty of uncertainty and sourness in her young life. Raka is distrustful and suspicious of all emotional ties due to the violence and abuse witnessed by her. According to the author, she has reached a state of emotional withdrawal.

The author strongly believes that a person's personality and attitude are shaped during younger years, but she does not deny that traumatic experiences can bring changes in the personality of an individual during adult years as well. The author feels that Nanda Kaul became a recluse due to her unhappy marriage and prior to that she was perfectly normal and happy. She was not always averse to human contact. Essentially her craving for solitude was a result of her unfortunate bonding with her husband and her kids. She originally, begrudged the arrival of Raka as it reminded her of her earlier life. Her own children were very selfish and she had very sour memories about them, having Raka in her home reminded of her misery. The arrival of her great granddaughter made her feel that again she would be obligated to take care of someone and will have to perform duties. Moreover, her solitude would be threatened by the child; she did not want anyone to disrupt the peaceful existence which she had established for herself at Carignano. Nanda begins to feel that presence of Raka is beginning to disintegrate her solitude and she is again looking forward to take care of someone. In actuality, Nanda is bursting with affection for Raka. In spite of all the rejection, she has received at the hands of her husband and children Nanda is drawn towards Raka. She wishes to care for her and show her affection.

*Fire on the Mountain* mainly revolves around the issue of relationships. Relationships of its characters have resulted in adding a lot of emotional aspects to the story. Nanda Kaul and her great granddaughter suffer due to their loved ones. They both began to prefer solitude instead of interacting with people. They liked to live alone and not have interaction with anyone. The author feels that Nanda has chosen for solitude as she is afraid to be emotionally attached with anyone again and she prefers to be alone so that she has no temptations. Anita Desai has managed to add a fresh element to Indian fiction in form of her English novel, *Fire on the Mountain*. With her writing she has tried to probe deeper into the human inner self. The appeal of her writing revolves around how she shapes her characters, who on their own try to battle with their frustrations and anger. Due to her style of writing, the author has managed to establish a significant place in the Indo-English fiction as she is able to continue her texts by shifting the chorus of her works of fiction from outside reality to internal reality and by continuing the course of the emotional experience of her characters, she is able to add a fresh element to the work. She has managed to establish herself as a prominent post-independent English author. As an author, she makes up for the lack of variety in her subject matter by delivering the matter with a lot of strength and power. Her subjects are heart touching and most readers can relate to her writings. Desai's irrefutable topics concerning life and emotional disquiets have made her work stand out from other writers of her period. Desai is able to disentangle the subliminal of all her extremely complex central characters.

### Themes

Withdrawal is one of the most noticeable themes of *Fire on the Mountain*. The other themes which are outlined as the story progresses are solitude and need for isolation.

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The themes in their own way are personified in the characters of Nanda and Raka. In case of Nanda, the withdrawal is a result of an unsuccessful and persistent married life, whereas Raka is withdrawn because she has been a witness and victim of domestic violence; alienation in both the characters has been caused by one of the men in their life. Other theme which is unavoidable in the story is violence and existence of voracious characters of the world; this is expressed through the fate meted out to Nanda's childhood friend Ila Das. In the story, when Nanda is waiting for Raka to arrive, she saw a white hen dragging a worm and breaking it into two, Nanda felt she was the worm, 'She felt like the worm herself, she winced at its mutilation.' At the same time, Nanda has been compared to a voracious cat in hunt of the bird, and subsequently she has been shown as a hoopoe bird who wants to hunt and feed her young ones. Even though the author tries to portray the ravine as an illustration of nature and as a sanctuary for Raka, who is unable to tolerate the people of Carignano and the clubhouse, but the ravine is shattered by the waste discarded by the people and contaminated by the smoulder from the vents of the Pasteur Institute.

The Institute functions as a suitable representation for the conflicting nature of people and development, as it works for people by producing serum, nonetheless at a price: the odour of 'dogs' brains boiled in vats, of guinea pigs' guts, of rabbits secreting fear in cages packed with coiled snakes, watched by doctors in white.' The author is not very keen to remember the past; even as colonization presented a superficial magnificence as history of colonization is also associated with vehemence. The postman in the story tries to trace the accounts about various residents in a sarcastic manner, he mentions how corrugated roof of Colonel Macdougall blew off and in the process beheaded a coolie; he also humorously comments about the attempts made by the pastor's wife to poison him and even trying to stab him; how Miss Jane Shrewsbury's cook died because she had poked a knife in his neck. According to the picture created by the author in the fictional story, it is assumed that if people try to retreat from their responsibilities towards others, they are bound to get violent reactions. Failure of Nanda to be able to connect with Ila Das and with Raka became the indirect cause for death of her friend. In the same way, Raka's inability to be close to Nanda became the cause for her to put an end to everything around her as she is not able to survive or endure any of it.

### Characters

The characters of Anita Desai's novels are always stronger than her plot, in fact most of her novels are remembered because of the portrayal of the characters. This is visible in her novel *Fire on the Mountain* as well; the plot is required only because it helps in revealing the characters. Desai focuses on the physical appearance of her characters only when it provides symbolism to reflect the inner self of the character or it is integral part of the story. Nanda is the central character in the story and the author hardly mentions much about her appearance, but through her writing skills she has conveyed to the readers about her background and how it has had a deep impact on her thoughts, the author has conveyed the fears faced by Nanda and reasons for her inhibited antagonism, and unconscious want for affection and caring.

The author has tried to elaborate about Nanda's need for isolation by giving a detailed description of her house, Carignano, situated on a ridge away from the activity of the town. The author has explained the readers that Nanda has created these surroundings for herself as she wants to forget about her previous busy life as she does not wish to have duties and obligations towards anything or anyone: 'The care of others . . . had been a religious calling she had believed in till she found it fake.' The ending of

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part one of the novel reads, 'Discharge me. I've discharged all my duties.' Nanda wants to live a simple life and does not want any reminders from her past, the author has compared the barrenness of Carignano with Nanda and has presented her state as the 'withering away' garden as she no longer wishes to be in a state she used in her past, 'state of elegant perfection'. The author has presented the surroundings and Nanda's state in a similar manner.

The story of *Fire on the Mountain* is actually about four women—Nanda Kaul, her great granddaughter Raka, her childhood friend Ila Das and the fourth character is of the writer herself, as she is all over the story shaping and moulding each element of the settings in the story. *Fire on the Mountain* remains within the internal layer of an extremely isolated, gendered female cosmos which is a surreptitious storeroom of confusions and contradictory feelings which arise due to extreme situations in life. The novel attempts to clarify the events of life and the reasons for their occurrence. The story attempts to find answers to the problems in the life of its characters.

### Literature Appraisal

All the characters in the story are seeking loneliness. They are in a close relationship with solitude and in order to strengthen their relation with solitude they stay away from love, attraction, caring and longing, rather they are close to animosity, resentment, refutation and resignation. The story tries to explain why its characters are seeking solitude and want to be away from people. The protagonist Nanda has started to live a secluded life as she was fed up of her life as a dutiful wife and mother. She no longer wishes to be a part of the shallow life which only expected her to be performing duties and in return there was no appreciation or love. Nanda Kaul withdraws to Carignano, snuggled amid the hills of Kasauli, to be away from the insensitiveness and grossness of the world. Her retreat at kasauli provided her with the solitude she was seeking. As soon as Raka's arrival is announced in the story, Nanda Kaul flinches due to panic as she feels that her presence will end her solitude and peaceful existence that she has managed to establish for herself. Initially, her presence has been presented in following phrase by the author, 'mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry', but after interacting with her great granddaughter Nanda realises that she is very quiet and Raka is also happy to be on her own. Raka is forever exploring the grounds around the house and is most peaceful when she is not disturbed by anyone. The author soon establishes that Raka may be a visitor to Nanda's home, but she is not an intruder and her presence in the house will not become a reason for Nanda to be annoyed or disturbed. Ila Das is the third character of the story; she, also like others in the story is very lonely. With a lot of difficulty after her husband's death, she comes to accept her solitude and tries to live her life peacefully. However, she receives a very raw deal and loses her life after being brutally raped by some tribal men whom she had been trying to help so that they could lead a more civilized life.

### Critical Analysis

The story of *Fire on the Mountain* is quite similar to Anita Desai's previous short story titled as *Grandmother*, in that story the grandmother's life story is similar to that of Nanda of *Fire in the Mountain*. In both the stories, the author has established that most of the time, the experiences of the past become instrumental in shaping the present attitudes and psyche of an individual. The characters of both the stories wish to lead a life of solitude. *Fire on the Mountain* is the fifth novel of the author. The story of the novel is also closely connected with the stories of her other novels such *Cry, the Peacock*

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(1963), stream-of-consciousness narrative and imagery has been used in the novel in order to project the sickly psyche of a woman who is gradually putrefying and is a victim of her past experiences. Maya from the *Cry, the Peacock* and Nanda of *Fire in the Mountain* are lonely because of their husband's insensitive and uncaring behaviour. Most of Desai's novels revolve around the themes of isolation and absence of communication in wedded life. This theme can be found in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Desai has a tendency to focus on the inner self of her characters and mostly creates a setting so that the inner self can develop and shape the story to an intense level. Background and character intermingle most obviously in her novel, *Voices in the City* which was published in 1965. Desai's themes and characters offer short, poetic novel or the novella, and for this reason she has adopted a three-part structure in the *Fire on the Mountain* and some of her previous novels. In an actual sense, the construction seems dialectic, as it consists of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis conforming. This can be seen in her novel *Fire on the Mountain*, starting from Nanda's unsubstantiated withdrawal, to Raka's intimidation of her detachment, and the final death and fire which signify some sort of decontamination, and the author's attempt at establishing awareness within its characters.

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### 3.4 SUMMARY

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- Jane Austen was one of the supreme artists in fiction. She was a highly sophisticated artist. In the opinion of the critic, W.L. Cross, 'She is one of the sincerest examples of our literature of art for art's sake.'
- Jane Austen wrote her novels with care, constantly revising them. There was nothing in her novels that did not have a clearly defined reason, and did not contribute to the plot, the drama of feelings of the moral structure.
- The range of Jane Austen's novels was limited. She drew all her material from her own experience.
- Jane Austen defined her own boundaries and never stepped beyond them. These limitations were self-imposed and she always remained within the range of her imaginative inspiration and personal experience.
- Jane Austen's novels do not represent stormy passions and high tragedy of emotional life. She was primarily concerned with the comedy of domestic life.
- Jane Austen described the English country scene with skill and fidelity. She gives a vivid and glowing picture of the social manners and customs of the eighteenth century.
- Jane Austen is a great creator of characters. She has created a picture-gallery filled with so many delightful characters. Her characters are not types but individuals.
- Jane Austen is a satirist as well as moralist. Satire is an element in which Jane Austen lives but there is no trace of the savage indignation in her writings.
- Of all her heroines, Jane Austen likes Elizabeth Bennet most. During the last one century and a half, countless readers and critics have fallen in love with her.
- Elizabeth has a good understanding of people. She claims that she fully understands Bingley and she is right. She looks through the mask of friendship of the Bingley sisters and discovers their conceit.

#### Check Your Progress

7. What, according to Desai, are the two preoccupations of her writing?
8. What is unique about the structure of Desai's novels?



- Elizabeth is willing to learn. The process of her self-awakening begins after she reads Darcy's letter. She begins to read it with a strong prejudice against him.
- Elizabeth is gifted with an irrepressible sense of wit and humour. Mr. Bennet is also very witty but he is often cynical. Elizabeth's wit pleases but it never hurts.
- Darcy is the hero of *Pride and Prejudice*. He is the owner of the Pemberley estate worth ten thousand pounds a year. He is twenty seven, tall, handsome and of majestic appearance.
- Darcy falls in love with Elizabeth quite early in the novel. Darcy feels that she is rendered intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. He is also attracted by her pleasing figure and the easy playfulness of her manners.
- Some critics feel that Darcy's transformation in the second half of the novel is incredible. They regard him as one of Jane Austen's serious failures.
- *Pride and Prejudice* was originally entitled *First Impressions*. When Jane Austen revised the novel, she gave it the present title. The present title is perfectly appropriate and suitable. It does not need any justification.
- In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy symbolizes pride. On his very first appearance in the novel, he is declared to be 'the proudest and most disagreeable man in the world.'
- Jane Austen has rightly been described as a writer of domestic novel. She is notorious for never going out of the parlour. She makes a very candid confession that for her two or three families in a 'country village' are enough to work with.
- *Pride and Prejudice* deals with the domestic life and aspirations of the Bennets, the Lucases, the Bingleys and the Darcys with scattered references to a few other families. These are all middle class people.
- Anita Desai is one of the most renowned Indian writers in English. Born in 1937 to a Bengali father and German mother, she has been writing since the age of seven.
- She was honoured with the Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*.
- Anita Desai is concerned about 'the enduring human condition'. Her themes are existentialist and include: maladjustment alienation, absurdity of human existence, quest for the ultimate meaning in life, decision, detachment and isolation.
- The plot of *Fire on the Mountain* is rather ephemeral and straightforward. The story deals with the momentous actions happening inside the inner-self of Nanda and her granddaughter Raka.
- Nanda Kaul's strong-minded disinterestedness and non-involvement is dealt by the author in the novel.
- The conflict between the need to withdraw in order to preserve one's wholeness and sanity and the need to be involved in the painful process of life is shown vividly in the novel.
- The author has portrayed the character of Raka as an abnormal child because she does not behave as most children of her age.
- *Fire on the Mountain* mainly revolves around the issue of relationships. Relationships of its characters have resulted in adding a lot of emotional aspects to the story.

## NOTES

- Withdrawal is one of the most noticeable themes of *Fire on the Mountain*. The other themes which are outlined as the story progresses are solitude and need for isolation.

## NOTES

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### 3.5 KEY TERMS

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- **Domestic novel:** Sometimes referred to as ‘sentimental fiction’ or ‘woman’s fiction,’ ‘domestic fiction’ refers to a type of novel popular with women readers during the middle of the nineteenth century.
- **Moralist:** A moralist is someone who has very strong opinions about what is right and what is wrong.
- **Milieu:** Milieu means the particular people and society that surround you and influence the way in which you behave.
- **Realist:** Realist is a person who accepts a situation as it is and is prepared to deal with it accordingly.

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### 3.6 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. George Wickham is an officer in the militia regiment which is stationed near the town of Merytown.
2. A rich young man by the name of Charles Bingley takes a palatial house called Netherfield Park on rent.
3. Mr and Mrs Bennet have five daughters – Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine (or Kitty), and Lydia.
4. In her brilliance of wit Elizabeth reminds of Rosalind in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*.
5. The chief aim for Mrs Bennet, mother of five marriageable daughters, is to strike suitable matches for them.
6. *Pride and Prejudice* was originally entitled *First Impressions*.
7. The search for truth and exploration of style (writing language and symbol, word and rhythms) are the two preoccupations of Desai’s writings.
8. Desai’s novels do not have a well-constructed plot and a tightly-knit structure. Her stories are told through episodes, happenings, incidents, encounters and reminiscences.

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### 3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the dramatic nature of Austen’s art.
2. Who is Mr Bingley? What relation does he share with Jane?
3. At what point in the novel does Darcy experience change of attitude towards Elizabeth?

4. Why does Lydia feel delighted by Mrs Forster's invitation to accompany her to Brighton?
5. What is the importance of fire in the novel *Fire on the Mountain*?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the achievements of Jane Austen as a novelist.
2. Analyse Austen's art of characterization with special reference to Elizabeth and Darcy.
3. How can Jane Austen be called a domestic novelist? Support your answer with examples.
4. Discuss the appropriateness of the title *Pride and Prejudice*.
5. Desai's characters exist more as abstractions outlining mental conditions rather than living, breathing beings. Discuss.

### NOTES

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## 3.8 FURTHER READING

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Iyengar, K.R.S. 1962. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publication.  
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# UNIT 4 SHORT STORIES

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## Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Reading a Short Story: An Introduction
- 4.3 *The Cask of Amontillado*: Edgar Allan Poe
  - 4.3.1 About the Author
  - 4.3.2 *The Cask of Amontillado*: Critical Analysis
- 4.4 *The Duchess and the Jeweller*: Virginia Woolf
  - 4.4.1 About the Author
  - 4.4.2 *The Duchess and The Jeweller*: Critical Analysis
- 4.5 *The Fly*: Katherine Mansfield
  - 4.5.1 About the Author
  - 4.5.2 *The Fly*: Critical Analysis
- 4.6 *The Trail of the Green Blazer*: R.K. Narayan
  - 4.6.1 About the Author
  - 4.6.2 *The Trail of the Green Blazer*: Critical Analysis
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Key Terms
- 4.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.10 Questions and Exercises
- 4.11 Further Reading

## NOTES

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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A short story is a prose fiction with a concise form. Contemporary short stories have evolved from tales, myths and fairy tales of the ancient era and the middle ages. Unlike a story of a novel which is a complete account of a particular occurrence, short story systematizes the act, thoughts and conversation of its characters in a plot which is based on a systemised pattern. The plot is presented as per the point of view of comedy, sadness, romance or satire and the presentation can be done employing the description style of fantasy, realism or naturalism.

The short story is considered to be the earliest form of literary forms. For example, the Hebrew bible's tales of Jonah, Ruth and Esther; Boccaccio's *Decameron*; *The Arabian Nights* and *Canterbury Tales* all have features of contemporary short story in them. The short story developed as an autonomous transcript by the latter part of the eighteenth century, its development coincided with the time of emergence of novels and newspapers. Most nineteenth century recurrently published magazines, like *Tatler* and *Spectator*, became an appropriate avenue for the publishing of short stories.

The major difference between a short story and novel is of their length. The basic elements of both a story of a novel and a short story in a magazine are similar; both have common elements such as, setting, atmosphere, characters, conflict, plot of the story and the theme.

In this unit, we will learn about short stories by studying four famous short stories: *The Cask of Amontillado* by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Duchess and the Jeweller* by Virginia Woolf, *The Fly* by K. Mansfield and *The Trail of the Green Blazer* by R.K. Narayan.

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## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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### NOTES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and inspirations of the author, Edgar Allan Poe
- Explain the summary and themes of *The Cask of Amontillado*
- Describe the influences on the writings of Virginia Woolf
- Discuss the characters, themes and techniques used in *The Duchess and the Jeweller*
- Critically analyse Katherine Mansfield's *The Fly*
- Discuss the style of writing of R.K. Narayan
- Assess the themes and characters of *The Trail of the Green Blazer*

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## 4.2 READING A SHORT STORY: AN INTRODUCTION

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The father or originator of contemporary short stories, Edgar Allen Poe has defined short story as a tale which can be read in a short duration. According to him, any story which can be read in thirty minutes to two hours falls under the category of short story; the story has a single focal point and the rest of the story revolves around that 'certain unique or single effect' to which every detail is subordinate. Short stories have a limited length and for this reason the writers have the restriction of including only a few characters and they have to stress on single momentary action. As a result, the acts of a short story mostly coincide with the climax or are in the middle of the story so that it can give full importance to the events and the setting of the story. In order to make the presence of the central character effective, the central event has to be presented well by the writer. Short stories are likely to be less composite than novels. Typically, a short story concentrates on a single incident. Short stories work around a single plot, a solo setting, and limited number of characters; and the story covers a short duration of time. In the story which is focused on events or 'story of incident', the emphasis is on the sequence and the consequences of an event as in *The Golden Bug* by Edgar Allan Poe. In a story, where the focus is on the characters, the story deals with the emotional and moral potentials of the central character. Short stories which are written with the purpose of conveying virtuous or ethical awareness are categorized as parables or fables. This category of short stories is mostly meant to give spiritual and religious messages and hence used by various religious gurus and leaders for inspiring and enlightening their supporters.

Stories can be traced to the period of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which were orally narrated to people. Verbalized stories were mostly spoken in a rhyming and musical verse so that it could keep the listeners interested in the tale. The oldest record of these stories can be dated to the sixth century BCE; these were fables by Aesop who was a Greek slave as a result of which these fables in the recent times are known as Aesop's fables. Another form of ancient short story which was famous in the Roman Empire is known as the anecdote. Anecdotes operated as a type of parable, a short truthful description which tries to convey a message. Several remaining Roman anecdotes had been composed as the *Gesta Romanorum* during the period between the thirteenth and

fourteenth century. In this period, in England, several fictitious anecdotal letters of Sir Roger de Coverley were printed.

The tradition of verbally telling stories ended in Europe in the starting of the fourteenth century and they were replaced by written stories like *The Canterbury Tales* written by Geoffrey Chaucer and *Decameron* which was written by Giovanni Boccaccio. Both books consist of independent short tales. Some of the stories are serious and intense whereas some are full of humour; the stories are very well created work of literary fiction. Only few writers during that period adopted a frame story. Towards the last part of sixteenth century many short stories of Matteo Bandello were published in Europe, these were mostly tragic novellas.

France saw the development of sophisticated ‘nouvelle’ (short novel) by authors like Madame de Lafayette during the second half of the seventeenth century. Traditional fairy tales by Charles Perrault was published in the 1690s. The arrival of Antoine Galland’s original contemporary version of the *Thousand and One Nights* or popularly known as the *Arabian Nights* during the eighteenth century had a huge effect on short stories of Voltaire, Diderot and others.

Short stories have a vast extent as it covers a great variety of prose fiction, starting from a short story (flash fiction) with limited word limit of possibly five hundred words to a novelette or novella which is lengthier than a short story but smaller than a novel. This kind of short stories was mainly used in Germany and it was popularised in 1795 by Goethe.

Some of the initial experts of short story in America were Washington Irving, Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. In England, Sir Walter Scott and Mary Shelly were known short story writers. E.T.A Hoffmann in Germany, Balzac in France and Gogol, Pushkin and Turgenev in Russia. Writers like Charles Dickens, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, William Trevor, Herman Hesse, Vladimir Nabakov, Virginia Woolf, Rudyard Kipling, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, P.G Wodehouse, J.D Salinger, H.P Lovecraft, D.H Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Richard Matheson, Shirley Jackson, Stephen King and Earnest Hemingway were extremely talented authors of short stories as well as novels.

### Elements of Short Stories

We have learnt that a prose fiction which may be read in a single setting or a short time may be defined as a short story. They have developed from the previous tradition of verbal storytelling during the seventeenth century. In recent times, short stories have expanded to a large extent and they contain work which is very diverse and not easy to classify. The most typical elements of every short story would be to have a small number of characters; stress is given on a single self-contained event so that a ‘single effect’ or mood can be evoked among the readers. With this technique the writers of short stories are able to utilize the plot, characters, and supplementary vigorous components to maximum level than found in characteristic of an anecdote, though the level cannot be compared with a novel as it has much higher intensity. Even though there is a vast difference between a novel and a short story but the writers of both use similar techniques of literature while creating either.

The length of a short story is not fixed. When it comes to differentiating a novel or an anecdote and a short story on the basis of its word limit there is no fixed criteria. There is no formal differentiation in terms of word count. In fact, the parameters of each is provided by the oratorical and real-world context in which a certain story is

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created and deliberated, therefore the constituents of a short story might vary concerning its genera, countries, periods, and critics. The principal shape of a novel as well as a short story is redirected by the strains of the existing markets where it is going to be published. The development of the form also is dependent on the requirements of publishing industry and the guidelines provided by them as they wish to publish only that form which generates revenue.

The short stories can be compiled into one lengthy book and its size and price can match the price and length of a novel. The writers of short stories can describe their creation as part of the imaginative and individual manifestation of the form. They may not like to be categorized as writers of a particular form or genre.

A short story generally incorporates a solo central character and a few extra supporting characters. This is done so that the story can be given a structure and the monotony can be broken. The central character is recognized as primary character of the story. The writer can include comprehensive details about the setting, approaches and sensitivity. The story is centred on the primary character by the writer. Moreover, the central character frequently is the leading role or star in the story and may be referred as the protagonist while the antagonist is the character who plays a negative role in the story and is against the protagonist throughout the short story.

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### 4.3 THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO: EDGAR ALLAN POE

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In this section, we will have a look at the short story *The Cask of Amontillado* by Edgar Allan Poe. We will start by discussing the life of the author and then move on to the summary, characters and critical analysis of the short story.

#### 4.3.1 About the Author

*The Cask of Amontillado* was published in 1846 by the American short-story writer, essayist, and poet Edgar Allan Poe. The short story was the last creation of the author and is considered to be one of his best short stories. It is a story of revenge, murder, suffering, and obsession. The story is set in a vast Italian underground cemetery (Italian catacomb). The story is a journey into the gloomy and cryptic recesses of the human inner self.

The author was born on 19 January 1809 and his parents were actors David and Eliza Poe. The author lost his parents when he was just two-years-old and was made to be separated from his other siblings. The author was said to be attracted to gloomy themes because of his orphaned state. Poe has a fascinating biography and has been a topic of several debates and gossips. For instance, he is supposed to have died because of a bite of a rabid dog. However, he most likely would've died due to his drug and alcohol-related problems. He was known to be heavy drinker, and along with that he was addicted to the drug laudanum as well.

In spite of all the rumours, there is no denying the fact that as a writer Poe was absolutely vivid, farsighted, and powerful with his writings. He essentially developed the genre of mystery or detective fiction along with science fiction, and he carried a very clear-cut idea about the nature and aim of his stories, same preciseness is reflected in his essays as well. Most readers find Edgar Allan Poe's stories to be enjoyable as they are comparable to an intricate puzzle. The readers have to exercise their brains in order

#### Check Your Progress

1. What are fables?
2. Name some of the initial experts of short story in America.



to figure out the story. *The Cask of Amontillado* is very crisp, and it helps the readers follow the details very easily.

### 4.3.2 *The Cask of Amontillado*: Critical Analysis

In this section, we will discuss the summary, themes, characters in the story.

#### Summary

*The Cask of Amontillado*, occasionally known as *The Casque of Amontillado* was published as a short story in the November (1846) edition of *Godey's Lady's Book*. The book was one of the most widely read magazines in America at that time. And it was published merely one more time in Poe's life. The story is staged in an anonymous Italian city during the time of the carnival but the exact year is not mentioned. The story is about a man wanting to take revenge from his friend who he feels has insulted him terribly, as a result of which he wants to kill him. The story is about a person being buried alive in the box by detainment. The author has narrated the story from the point of view of the murderer; this perspective is also seen in other works by author such as *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

The story begins with the narrator, Montresor, speaking with an unnamed individual, who knows him well, about the day he was successful in his exercising his plan for revenge on Fortunato. Fortunato was a nobleman and the narrator's friend and colleague. The narrator tells that he killed his friend during the carnival. The reason for the murder was that he was annoyed over all the wounds and insults the friend had given him. He explains that the murder was easily carried out because Fortunato was drunk and dazed, and wearing a clown's motley.

The act of murder is unfolded in the following sequence. Montresor convinces Fortunato to come for a private wine-tasting outing by informing him about his access to about 130 gallons (a pipe full) of rare vintage Amontillado wine. He suggests gaining approval of the pipe's substances by inviting a wine enthusiast, colleague Luchesi, for the tasting session. Montresor is confident of the fact that Fortunato will look for the opportunity to boast about his own developed palate for wine. He will further try to convince Montresor that he does not need Luchesi for approving the quality of the wine as he himself is capable of doing that. Fortunato is so confident that he even jokes about the questionable authority of Luchesi given that he 'cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry'. They both go to the palazzo where the wine cellar is located. On reaching the wine cellar, Montresor serves him the wine. At first, Montresor serves wines like Medoc and then De Grave so as to get him to a drunken state. All this time, Montresor fakes a concern towards Fortunato and suggests that they should leave, he even informs Fortunato of the wet atmosphere inside and how it would aggravate his cough but Fortunato is adamant to keep going inside and says that '[he] shall not die of a cough'.

In the course of their walk, Montresor mentions his family coat of arms: 'a golden foot in a blue background crushing a snake whose fangs are embedded in the foot's heel, with the motto *Nemo me impune lacessit* ('No one attacks me with impunity')'. On hearing this, Fortunato makes an ostentatious, laughable movement with a raised bottle of wine. When Montresor gives the impression that he has not understood the gesture, Fortunato inquires, 'You are not of the masons?'. To which Montresor replies that he is, and when Fortunato says he does not believe him and demands a proof, Montresor shows him the trowel he had with him. Once they reach a slot, Montresor informs Fortunato that the wine is inside the slot. By this time, Fortunato is completely drunk and

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without any suspicions steps inside the slot and immediately upon entering he is chained to the wall by Montresor. After making Fortunato immobile, Montresor announces that as Fortunato does not want to leave, he must let him be inside and all alone. Montresor retrieves the brick and mortar that he had kept nearby, earlier and starts to fill up the slot with the help of his trowel, he entombs Fortunato alive inside the slot. Once Fortunato realizes what is actually happening, he tries to break away from the chains in order to escape and when he struggles to free himself, he begins to shout for help and in turn is mocked by Montresor who knows that nobody will be able to hear his cries. Fortunato tries to laugh it off by saying that it is a part of a joke and now they must leave as people are waiting for them, especially his wife. All this while, Montresor continues to erect the wall and once he reaches the last part, Fortunato cries and asks Montresor to leave him in the name of God. Montresor before placing the last brick puts a torch inside the opening. After finishing the wall, Montresor begins to feel a little sick but he quickly dismisses the feeling and blames it on the wetness of the underground cemetery.

Montresor ends his narration by telling his friend that after fifty also, Fortunato's body still hangs from the chains in the slot where he had put him. The murderer Montresor then says: 'May he rest in peace!' (*in pace requiescat!*).

The story has been told in first person and it is for this reason that the name of the narrator is only revealed in the end. Till then, he is referred to as 'the narrator' in the story. The readers learn about the narrator's name in the last few lines of the story where Fortunato while begging for his mercy calls him by his name 'Montresor.' It is the last cry of Fortunato which gives out the name of the narrator. The narrator tells his friend that he had killed Fortunato fifty years ago and nobody till date has found out about his murderous act.

### Critical Analysis

Even though the subject matter of the story is a murder, *The Cask of Amontillado* is not an account about uncovering the murderer like in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* or *The Purloined Letter*; no investigation takes place in order to investigate the crime committed by Montresor. In fact, the story is about a narrative by the murderer about the crime that he has committed a long time ago. The enigmatic matter in *The Cask of Amontillado* is the motive behind the act of murder committed by the narrator or Montresor. In the absence of an investigator in the tale, it is now the reader's onus to find the murderer.

The motive has just been explained vaguely by the narrator who mentions the 'thousand injuries' and 'when he ventured upon insult'. The readers may assume that the reason behind the fatal revenge are these insults which had hurt the narrator to the extent that he had taken his friend's life. There is a reference in the story where Montresor gives the impression that his family had a better standing at some point of time but it is no longer the same. Fortunato is also referred to as making demeaning comments about Montresor's elimination from Freemasonry.

Several critics have concluded that Montresor lacked any concrete reason for murdering Fortunato and he could be insane to do so, although this observation does not hold much ground as the writer has not provided any such input in his detailed outline of the plot. There is also an indication that Montresor is virtually as oblivious about his motives for revenge as Fortunato himself. While remembering the act of murder, Montresor observes, 'A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who

has done the wrong'. Once Fortunato is restrained to the wall with the chains and just about to be buried alive, Montresor simply ridicules and copies his cries for mercy instead of telling him the reason for this treatment. From this situation, the critics have assumed that even Montresor was not sure about the precise contents and the extent of the offenses committed by Fortunato and whether they were so grave that the poor soul had to be murdered for them. Superfluous analysis into the ambiguous hurts and abuses might be just in the mind of the narrator and may not actually be serious.

Montresor came from a well-off family and maybe due to the fall in the status he suffers from inferiority complex and unnecessarily reads too much into harmless jabber by Fortunato who is from a rich and established family. This assumption is based on the name of the victim. The reason for the murder could just be because Fortunato has a better status and had exceeded Montresor in society; this itself could be considered as an insult by Montresor and become a reason for revenge.

There is a hint that Montresor holds Fortunato responsible for his despondency and forfeiture of respect and self-esteem in the society. It is simple to establish that Fortunato is a Freemason, whereas Montresor is not, and this may be one of the reasons for Fortunato's rise in the society and his step towards the upper class. For this rise, too, Montresor has blamed Fortunato through the following lines: 'You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was'. This switching of affluences makes a suggestion that, as the names Montresor and Fortunato are similar to each other, hence there is an emotional common empathy between the casualty and the killer. This implication of an empathetic interchange is further reinforced with the suggestion that Montresor buries Fortunato specifically in the Montresor family catacombs instead of killing him at any other place in the city which is in the middle of the commotion of the Carnival. It is due to these congregation of the two characters that the bigger symbolism of the Montresor's crest is seen—'the footsteps on the serpent while the serpent forever has his fangs embedded in the heel.'

Once the critics try to investigate the nature of Montresor, they realize that there could be another implication of Montresor's crest. One of the understandings is that Montresor is justified in crushing the rude Fortunato as that will put an end to the numerous wounds he has inflicted. But a more probable understanding is provided by the author that the unsighted fool Fortunato, mistakenly, puts his foot on the snake, who according to the author is the devious and scheming Montresor, who returns the unintentional hurting by sinking his teeth deeply in the heel of his wrongdoer.

L. Moffitt Cecil of Texas Christian University discusses that even though Fortunato has been projected as a wine expert but his activities in the story do not substantiate this assumption. For instance, Fortunato remarks that his fellow nobleman will not be able to correctly differentiate Amontillado from Sherry while Amontillado is actually a variation of Sherry, and he drinks expensive French wine, De Grave, in a much unsophisticated manner. Cecil also feels that a person who is truly a wine expert will never taste wine when he is not in a sober state as the delicate flavour of wine cannot be tasted over any other alcohol. On a lighter note, Cecil comments that since Fortunato was not showing the due regard to such an expensive and vintage French wine he deserved to be buried alive.

The way in which Montresor's bricklaying has been elaborately explained in the story has led to many commentators believing that the author must have personal experience of the art. They feel that it is a possibility since all parts of Poe's life are not known to people, especially about the period after 1837 when he left the Southern Literary

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Messenger. The way Montresor has imprisoned Fortunato alive within the confinement of four walls has been a feature in few other stories written by the author. The act of immurement is there in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Premature Burial*, *The Black Cat*, and *Berenice*.

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### Motivation for the Story

A mythical modern legend says that the motivation for *The Cask of Amontillado* arose from an account which was narrated to Poe in Castle Island, Massachusetts, in 1827. As per the legend, when Poe was based at Castle Island in 1827 he came across a memorial which was made in the memory of Lieutenant Robert Massie. Massie was killed on Christmas Day in 1817 by Lieutenant Gustavus Drane during a sword duel. They got into a duel after they have a tiff while they were playing cards. The legend has conferred that all the soldiers decided to take revenge. They got him drunk and in his drunken state they lured him into a cell, the way Montresor had chained Fortunato is the same way in which the soldiers chained Drane to a wall, and sealed him inside the cell. Though later it was claimed that this was a false story as the skeleton which the author had found at the Island in a cell did not belong to Drane as he is believed to have lived until 1846 after being court-martialled from the army.

Poe's main source could be the story *A Man Built in a Wall* by Joel Headley, who reportedly had seen a confined skeleton in the wall of a church in Italy. In fact, the story written by Headley has fine points which are there in *The Cask of Amontillado* as well: it not only has the part about the enemy being walled into a slot but also gives a description of the art of bricklaying which is also done by the Poe in his story, in Headley's story, too, the motive for murder is revenge; and in both the stories the victims plead to the murderer to let them go. The author of *The Cask of Amontillado* could have been inspired from the themes of *La Grande Bretèche* by Honoré de Balzac or from the story of *The Quaker City* and *The Monks of Monk Hall* written by George Lippard; he was also very close to Poe. There is also a conjecture that Poe might have copied the motto of Montresor's family % 'Nemo me impune lacessit' from *The last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, which also features the same phrase.

It is believed that Poe had written the short story as a retort to Thomas Dunn English, an American politician, as both were rivals and had many conflicts, generally circling about literary travesties of each other. Poe was very offended by one of the works done by English; in fact, he was so upset that he sued the writer's editor for publishing it. The editor worked for *The New York Mirror*. In 1846, English wrote a novel titled as *1844, or, The Power of the S.F.* The theme of the novel was revenge. The plot of the story was complicated and the readers were not able to follow. Nonetheless, the story had references about secret societies and the central theme was revenge. It involved a character called Marmaduke Hammerhead. Poe retorted with *The Cask of Amontillado*, and throughout the story he made some particular mentions about the aspects of the novel written by English. In *The Cask of Amontillado*, the character of Fortunato makes a reference to the Masons belonging to a secret society; this can be a parallel to English's *1844's* secret societies. Fortunato gestures of distress are also portrayed in the similar fashion as in the novel, *1844*. The image used by English about the token with a hawk grasping a snake in its claws, is identical to the picture described on Montresor's coat of arms having a foot stamping on a snake, with the slight difference that the snake is at the same time biting the sole of the shoe. The scenario about the vault in *The Cask of Amontillado* is derived from the sequence in the novel which

happens in the underground vault. Finally, Poe does not take acknowledgment for his personal literary revenge and instead crafts a short story as a response to the novel. His story is written with a remarkable effect, as suggested by him in the essay ‘The Philosophy of Composition’.

Poe could have also taken the inspiration from the Washingtonian movement that was promoted by the members who supported temperance. The group contained people who had given up drinking and asked people to stay away from alcohol. This group could have played a small role in motivating some parts of the story. It is believed that Poe might have been interested in joining the movement as he wanted to himself give up drinking. In 1843, Poe had anticipations about attaining an appointment in the politics and so he might have written this story to make people realise the ill-effects of drinking and how it can cost someone their life. *The Cask of Amontillado* might have been an attempt to tell a gloomy tale about adopting temperance.

Richard P. Benton was Poe’s scholar and he has stated his view about the motivation of the story: ‘Poe’s protagonist is an Englished version of the French Montrésor and has argued forcefully that Poe’s model for Montresor ‘was Claude de Bourdeille, comte de Montrésor (Count of Montrésor), the 17th-century political conspirator in the entourage of King Louis XIII’s weak-willed brother, Gaston d’Orléans’. The renowned intriguer and memoir-writer was initially connected to *The Cask of Amontillado* by Burton R. Pollin; he was also Poe’s scholar.’

Additional motivation for the way Fortunato has been murdered originates from the dread of being buried alive. The period in which the story has been written, the coffins used to be designed with bells so that people outside could be alerted in case someone was being buried alive. On some occasions, the body used to be tied with bells so that an alerting signal could be easily given. The story incorporates this element through Fortunato attire; he is described as being dressed in a clown’s outfit with bells on his hat. In the end, the narrator does hear the bells from inside the bricked wall but he decides to ignore them and leaves the catacomb.

The story, *The Cask of Amontillado*, has been adapted in form of movies as well as television series on a number of occasions:

- A British film was made by Mario Cavalli, the screenplay was given by Richard Deakin and Anton Blake played the role of Montresor and Patrick Monckton of Fortunato in 1998.
- The fourth part of ‘American Masters’ season 9, named ‘Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul’ adapts the story.
- In 2011, Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Cask of Amontillado* was made into a film starring David JM Bielewicz and Frank Tirio, Jr. It was directed by Thad Ciechanowski, produced by Joe Serkoch, by production house DijitMedia, LLC/ Orionvega. In 2013, it won a regional Emmy Award.
- In 1976, The Alan Parsons Project put out an album named, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* and one of its tracks was ‘The Cask of Amontillado’.
- In 1977, Marvel Comics made a version in *Marvel Classics Comics*.
- In 1977, Pendulum Press did a version in *The Best of Poe*.
- In 1979, Moby Books did an illustrated story version in *Tales of Mystery and Terror* (part of their *Great Illustrated Classics* series). Adaptation by Marjorie P. Katz, art by Pablo Marcos.

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- Organizacion Editorial Novaro of Mexico in 1980 made a version of the story in Cuentos De Edgar Allan Poe (part of their Clasicos Ilustrados series). Adaptation by Hector D. Shelley, art by Guido Del Carpio Rivera.
- In 1982, Troll Associates made a children book with illustration based on the story. Adaptation by David E. Cutts, art by Ann Toulmin-Rothe.
- Globe Communications Corp made an adaptation about the story in Monsters Attack #2 in 1982. Adaptation by Charles E. Hall, art by Walter James Brogan
- In 1995, Mojo Press did a version in The Tell-Tale Heart: Stories and Poems by Edgar Allan Poe. Art by Bill D. Fountain.
- Udon Entertainment's Manga Classics line published The Stories of Edgar Allan Poe, which included a manga presentation version of *The Cask of Amontillado*.

**Themes**

- **Independence and Captivity:** The divergence concerning independence and captivity is thrilling in *The Cask of Amontillado*. The freedom of Montresor is dependent on Fortunato; therefore, one has to die so that the other can be free.
- **Treachery:** It initiates the action in *The Cask of Amontillado*. A series of hideous retributions is started by the betrayal of one of the characters. Betrayal is done so that revenge and murder can take place.
- **Drugs and Alcohol:** Though there is mention of only wine in *The Cask of Amontillado*. But several other forms of drugs are referred in between the lines indirectly. The story also tries to deliver a message of ill-effects of alcohol; as had Fortunato not been in a drunken state, Montresor would not have been able to take his revenge.
- **Mortality:** *The Cask of Amontillado* has a scary obsession with death, corpses, and bones. This is one of the last stories written by the author before his death and it has many elements which are related to mortality.
- **Imprudence and Foolishness:** In *The Cask of Amontillado*, the author has clearly shown how imprudence and foolishness can become fatal. The tale strengthens human idiocy and madness to extravagances which can make them harm a friend and fellow human-being.

**Characters**

- Montresor is the narrator who in order to take revenge has resorted to murder. The author has not been able to completely justify the reasons for the revenge. The injuries and the insults mentioned by the narrator could have been his misunderstandings and assumption that his friend was demeaning him due to his lack of status. The character of Montresor has been shown to be very cold and ruthless, who has not shied away from committing murder for some petty insults which may as well be a part of his imagination.
- Fortunato seems like a gullible fool who loves to drink and as a result could be easily fooled and murdered by Montresor. He trusted people very easily and for that reason he could be fooled through just an outing of wine tasting. The character of Fortunato thinks himself to be an authority over wine and that is why he told Montresor that after he got his approval he did not have to get any more guarantees. He is not aware that his innocent gestures have annoyed Montresor so much so that he is about to kill him.

- Luchesi is a character who has been used by the author as a device to create the plot. His mention is only to instigate the action in the story. Montresor purposely mentions his name for tasting the wine so that he can get Fortunato excited and prove himself to be the expert where vintage wine is concerned.
- The mention of Montresor's family is made by the author just to stress the point that he comes from a socially well-off family and for that reason the catacomb has all the graves which belong to his ancestors.

### Literary Devices

- **Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory:** The author has extensively used symbolism in his story as each detail is trying to convey a message. He has used symbols as he wants to keep the readers engrossed and compels them to decipher a lot of messages that he could have conveyed in a straight forward style. Each aspect appears to convey something else. In order to create suspense in the story, Poe has employed foreshadowing in the story. For instance, at the time when Fortunato says, 'I shall not die of a cough,' Montresor replies, 'True,' as he has already decided how Fortunato is going to die (he is going to be buried alive and die of hunger and thirst). Montresor's description of the family coat of arms, too, foreshadow the impending happenings. The shield has a human foot stamping on an obstinate snake in the grass. In this image, the foot symbolizes Montresor and the snake in the grass symbolizes Fortunato. Even though Fortunato has offended Montresor with bitter verbal abuses, Montresor will eventually crush him to death. The discussion about Masons also indicates the death of Fortunato. Fortunato contests Montresor's assertion that he is a fellow mason and Montresor responds by showing him that he is even carrying a trowel. The trowel is later on going to be used by Montresor in order to dig Fortunato's grave.
- **Setting:** The story has been set-up as a horror and gloomy fiction. The concluding dialogue between Montresor and Fortunato intensify the horror.
- **Narrator's point of view:** The entire story has been told from the point of view of Montresor, hence he is the narrator. He is emotionless, cruel, ruthless, conspiratorial, and revengeful. He gives out every detail about how he mercilessly buried a man alive and at the end did not feel guilty about it.
- **Genre and tone of the story:** The story is a gloomy horror tale. Most of the story takes place inside an underground burial area and late at night. The author has tried to describe the interiors of the graveyard in a very descriptive and elegant style and tried to even describe the architecture of the graves. The author has used sarcasm at a number of places and he has managed to narrate a spine-tingling story with several elements of irony. The title of the story also adds elements of mystery to the tale of revenge of Montresor.

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## 4.4 THE DUCHESS AND THE JEWELLER: VIRGINIA WOOLF

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In this section, we will have a look at the short story *The Duchess and the Jeweller* by Virginia Woolf. We will start by discussing the life of the author and then move on to the summary, characters and critical analysis.

### NOTES

#### Check Your Progress

3. When was *The Cask of Amontillado* originally published?
4. What is the enigmatic matter of the *The Cask of Amontillado*?
5. State the phrases through which Montresor explains his motive for murder in the story.
6. Name the story which mentions the image similar to that of Montresor's coat of arms having a foot stamping on a snake.

### 4.4.1 About the Author

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Adeline Virginia Woolf was born on 25 January 1882. The English writer has been regarded as notable modernists of her time. She has been identified as the forerunner of using the stream of consciousness as a device for narrations. She belonged to a well-off family in Kensington and she did her graduation from the King's College in London, as a result of which was very familiar with the initial activists of higher education for women. Her writing career started in 1900 and during the period between the World Wars, she became an important and a dominant personality of the intellectual group called the Bloomsbury. Her work began to be recognized in the London literary society. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out* was published in 1915, the book was published by Hogarth Press, and this publishing house was established by Woolf in partnership with her husband, Leonard Woolf. Her most popular writings consist of her novels namely, *Mrs Dalloway* which was published in 1925, *To the Lighthouse* published in 1927 and *Orlando* which was published in 1928. In 1929 she wrote an essay titled 'A Room of One's Own', the essay was as lengthy as a book and it carried a personal remark by her: 'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.'

During the movements of feminist criticism in 1970, Woolf's work came to be recognised in a major way as it was believed that it inspired feminism. The movements during this time made her pro-feminist aspect in her writings stand out and as a result, her work began to be read world-wide. Due to its world-wide recognition her work was translated in many languages. Woolf died at a young age of 59 as she suffered from mental ill-ness. In 1941, she died due to drowning. As a modernist writer, her work was considered to be the most appreciated amongst her colleagues like Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce. There was a decline in her fame post World War II, but then she gained popularity with the increase in feminist criticism during the 1970s. Her first writings were published by *The Guardian* in December 1904 and in 1905 she began to write for *The Times Literary Supplement*.

In 1915, *The Voyage Out*, was published by Gerald Duckworth and Company Ltd, the publishing house owned by her half-brother. The original title of the novel was Melymbrosia, but then Woolf constantly kept changing the draft. Woolf's scholar Louise DeSalvo had redone the initial version of *The Voyage Out* and this is presently offered to public under the proposed title. DeSalvo claims that various revisions done by Woolf in the text were due to the changes happening in her personal life. Woolf continued to put out books and essays which got attention from critics as well her readers. Bhaskar A. Shukla, in his book *Feminism: From Mary Wollstonecraft to Betty Friedan*, has commented about the writings of Woolf stating- 'Virginia Woolf's peculiarities as a fiction writer have tended to obscure her central strength: she is arguably the major lyrical novelist in the English language. Her novels are highly experimental: a narrative, frequently uneventful and commonplace, is refracted—and sometimes almost dissolved—in the characters' receptive consciousness. Intense lyricism and stylistic virtuosity fuse to create a world overabundant with auditory and visual impressions'. He has further stated that, 'The intensity of Virginia Woolf's poetic vision elevates the ordinary, sometimes banal settings'—often wartime environments — 'of most of her novels'. 'For example, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) centres on the efforts of Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-aged society woman, to organize a party, even as her life is paralleled with that of Septimus Warren Smith, a working-class veteran who has returned from the First World War bearing deep psychological scars'.



Her book, *To the Lighthouse* reconnoitres the passage of time, and how women in the society become a source of emotional strength for men. *Orlando* is considered to be the least intense novels of the author. The story is a biography of a parodic nature about a young nobleman who does not age in thirty years and instead he changes into a woman suddenly. The book partially portrays the author's male friend Vita Sackville-West. The purpose of writing this book was to cheer up Vita after he had lost his family home. The techniques of historical biographers are being scoffed in the book, *Orlando*; the author projects the biographer's character to be pompous so that he can be ridiculed. *The Waves*, which was published in 1931, is a story about six friends whose reproductions, are similar to singings than to inner orations as a result they produce a wave-like atmosphere which resembles a prose poem more than a novel based on a plot. *Flush: A Biography* can be described as a fiction as well as a biography since it is partially both. The biography is a cross-genre amalgam of fiction and nonfiction by Virginia Woolf. She had written this after she completed the emotional novel, *The Waves*. It is the story of a cocker spaniel belonging to Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The book is transcribed from the point of view of the spaniel. Woolf was inspired after the popularity of the play titled, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* by Rudolf Besier.

In 1941, the author wrote her last novel titled as *Between the Acts*, and according to Bhaskar A. Shukla, 'Her last work, *Between the Acts* (1941), sums up and magnifies Woolf's chief preoccupations: the transformation of life through art, sexual ambivalence, and meditation on the themes of flux of time and life, presented simultaneously as corrosion and rejuvenation—all set in a highly imaginative and symbolic narrative encompassing almost all of English history.' The book is considered to be the most expressively poetic work of the author as it is not only emotional but the style which is adopted in the book closely resembles verses. The writings of Woolf were very supportive of the tendencies of rationalism followed by the Bloomsbury group. Writes like Jorge Luis Borges and Marguerite Yourcenar translated works by Woolf in more than fifty languages so that they could be read all over the world.

### **Influences on the writings of Virginia Woolf**

Russian literature had a major influence on Woolf. From 1912 onwards she embraced the artistic conventions of Russian literature. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's style about depiction of a fluid mind in action facilitated to inspire Woolf's works on a 'discontinuous writing process', although Woolf was not in favour of his fixation with 'extreme psychosomatic' and the 'wild instability of emotions', which he projected through his characters. She also did not agree with his favourable attitude towards his right-wing, imperialist politics. Dostoyevsky was a fervent follower of the autocracy of Imperial Russia. Where Woolf was against the overrated emotional nature of Dostoyevsky's content she completely admired the work of Anton Chekhov and Leo Tolstoy. Chekhov's stories about ordinary people performing their routine activities were liked by Woolf. The stories of Chekhov were about banal things and the plots lacked a well-ordered ending. Woolf was able to learn a lot from the way Tolstoy wrote his books, she learnt about how the storywriter must portray the psychological and inner state of the character. Woolf was influenced by the works of Ivan Turgenev and from his writings she learnt that an author has to consider several 'I's' while writing a novel, and the author has to not only consider the 'I's' but at the same time balance all of them first with the character and then with the entire plot. She realized that writing novels required the author to be completely passionate about the art of writing. The facts of the story should be in complete harmony with the author's overstretching visualization.

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American writer Henry David Thoreau was another significant influence on Woolf. In one of her essays in 1917, Woolf wrote that as a writer she constantly wanted to follow Thoreau so that she could incorporate his style into her work. Woolf admired Thoreau for the 'effortlessness' with which he was able to write about complex topics, like the soul. Corresponding to Thoreau, Woolf also believed that peaceful state of mind helps in contemplating and understanding the world better. Together they believed that writing and life are related to each other hence it is better to write about simple things so that people can relate to them. They felt that it is not necessary to have complexity in the plot to generate emotions, peace and presence of mind is enough. The struggles which were a part of human relationships in the present time were a matter of deep concern for both of them. Other important influences comprise of: William Shakespeare, George Eliot, Marcel Proust, Emily Brontë, Daniel Defoe, James Joyce and E. M. Forster.

*The Duchess and the Jeweller* is a short story written by Virginia Woolf in 1938. Being a promoter of addressing the 'stream of consciousness,' Woolf in her story illustrates the views and activities of a materialistic jeweller; According to Woolf, people who are corrupt are selfish as well and they do not regret their actions. The story has been written in order to prove this belief of the author. The story was initially published in *Harper's Bazaar Magazine* in 1938 and after Woolf's death as a part of a collection of short stories in *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* in 1944.

#### 4.4.2 *The Duchess and The Jeweller: Critical Analysis*

In this section, we will discuss the summary, themes, characters in the story.

The protagonist of the story is Oliver Bacon. He is one of the affluent jewellers in England, though at one time he was just a poor boy living on the streets of England. In order to earn money, as a boy, he stole dogs and sold them to rich women. He also procured fake watches and sold them to rich women. He suffers from subservience because of his past. Even though he has become rich and is well respected in the society he cannot mend his ways and continues to be greedy. Once, he is visited by the Duchess of Lambourne. She wants to sell pearls to him so that she can pay for her gambling debts. The pearls are imitation, but she is able to cleverly sell them to Oliver for the price of twenty thousand. When Oliver makes an attempt to check the authenticity of the pearls, the duchess very smartly invites him for a party which will be attended by aristocrats and she even mentions her daughter's presence. Oliver has a liking for the Duchess's daughter Diana, as soon as he hears her name he signs on the cheque. Oliver Bacon purchases the fake pearls as he wishes to be present at the party and be with Diana with whom he has fallen in love. Moreover, he wants to be a part of the rich circle of the society. After the Duchess leaves, he looks at his mother's picture and apologizes.

The story *The Duchess and the Jeweller* reproduces the English society during the author's time. Social mobility was slowly developing during that time. The common people were rising to an upper status whereas, due to self-indulgence, the well-offs were struggling. The protagonist of the story, Oliver Bacon becomes rich because of his hard work but is still unable to forget his past and suffers from an inferiority complex. Now he has his residence in posh and prime location of Piccadilly, in London. He has become a part of the rich English society and is invited to several functions by the aristocrats. The Duchess of Lambourne also visits him at his office. These aspects in the story show how Oliver, a commoner, had managed to rise in the social setup. The story also reveals how the rich are losing their wealth and status because of their gambling habits, the Duchess comes to Oliver to sell fake pearls as she is in need of some money

to repay her debts. In order to get the twenty-thousand, she lets go of all her dignity and nobleness. The Duchess does not shy away from using her daughter as a pawn in order to get the money. It can be concluded that the author has charmingly revealed the English society during her time. She has shown the falling of the bigwigs as a result of their self-indulgence and the moving ahead of the commoners due to their hard work.

The pearls traded by the Duchess of Lambourne to Oliver were fake yet Oliver Bacon accepted them and gave the cheque of twenty thousand, the author has stated two reasons for this, the first reason was because Bacon wanted to be a part of aristocratic circles. Even though he was rich yet he felt out of class, hence when the Duchess invited him for the party which was going to be attended by the high-ups of the society he got lured in. The second reason was that the Duchess mentioned that her daughter Diana was going to be present at the party and he could spend the weekend with the woman he loved. Oliver gets so carried away that writes the cheque without checking their genuine-ness.

In the story the Duchess and the Jeweller are referred to as ‘... friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other...’ When the characters of the Duchess and the jeweller are compared it is realized that the expression in the story is correct. The second part of the statement states: ‘He was master, she was mistress.’ During the course of the story it is revealed that Oliver had become rich using fair and unfair methods, so in a way he is a master in cheating people and the Duchess is a mistress as she also is a cheat who fools Oliver into buying fake pearls. The statement, ‘Each cheated the other, each needed the other, and each feared the other.’ reveals that both the characters cheated in their own way and for their personal gain. In spite of knowing that the pearls were not genuine, Oliver paid for them because he wanted to go for the party and be with Diana. When the Duchess came to visit him, Oliver purposely keeps her waiting. Also, since they both need each other for their own personal reasons, the writer has remarked that they feared each other, because they knew each other’s weaknesses and secrets. They have been called friends by the author as they now belonged to the same financial status in the society.

The author has addressed the British class system in the story. Woolf shows no mercy in her criticism of all those who use devious methods to rise in the society, she has included the vanities of the upper class as well as the people of the lower class.

### **Characters**

The story has two main characters: The Duchess and Oliver. The character of Oliver Bacon has been given prominent development by the author in the story. The Duchess is one of the typical figures; the way of her entry into Oliver’s place of work has been described by the author as standard for all Dukes and Duchesses: ‘the aroma, the prestige, the arrogance, the pomp’. The author has conveyed that she has a commanding feature by comparing her presence metaphorically with the image of a wave and just as the wave breaks when it touches shore, she breaks down as soon as she takes a seat and begins to wallow and fall all over Oliver. The author has portrayed her to be oversized, and dressed in very tight fighting clothes. By providing this description of Duchess with the waves and the dressing, the author perhaps has tried to reflect that she lacked discipline and did not have a very strong character. Woolf depicts the Duchess to be a very careless person. She has been shown as an extravagant individual who loves to spend money and take advantage of her status. She is spoilt as well as selfish and

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because of her extravagance she has put herself into trouble and uses fraud to get out of the situation. She is having financial problems because of her habit of gambling and now she needs help from the jeweller so that she can gather cash to pay her debts. The other character in the story is Oliver Bacon, who is a rich jeweller. Like the Duchess, he is also projected as an unscrupulous individual who would not stop from taking advantage of others for his personal gain. The character of Oliver suffers from an inferiority complex, he has risen from rags to the riches and is yet not content with all that he has achieved. According to the author, both Oliver and the Duchess are materialistic and have no morals. They both cannot be described as friends as they are interacting with each other due to their personal motives. The Duchess has come to sell her fake pearls and in order to dupe him, she very manipulatively after showing him the pearls starts to talk about the party she is planning over the weekend with the guest list including the rich and the famous. When Oliver attempts to check the pearls she cleverly extends the invitation to him as well and informs him that her daughter Diana is also going to be present. On hearing this, Oliver promptly signs the check because he does not want to lose the opportunity to be with Diana as he is in love with her.

Although at one point, it appears that Oliver is truly in love with Diana but soon the readers realize that he is using her just as a means to an end as he wishes to be a part of the upper class. This can be seen from that fact that since the Duchess has subtly conveyed to Oliver that Diana can be his, for a price, the readers soon catch on that Oliver was not fooled by the Duchess to pay for the fake pearls but he actually paid the money because he wanted to be with Diana. He treated Diana as a commodity and this is what makes the readers observe a similarity between the Duchess and Oliver. They both have shown lack of ethics in order to gain personally and both are equally manipulative. Although Oliver apologizes to the picture of his mother for what his actions but in the end, he justifies it by saying that he paid the price for Diana, he plans to go for the party and become a part of the upper class.

The author feels that both are selfish and unethical. The greed inside is driving them and the author is concerned that most of the people in the society are like the jeweller and they could actually be ruling the country in near future by taking over the aristocrats. The author feels that people like Oliver are more corrupt than the aristocrats as they have just realized the luxuries of life and would go to extreme limits to get more. According to Woolf's assessment, it is not necessary that if one class overthrows the ruling class then change is bound to take place, particularly when the class in power is not better prepared and knowledgeable. Finally, it can be said that civilized society requires civilized individuals to bring about ethical changes and change is not always bought by the upper and the moneyed class.

### Themes

- Virginia Woolf has employed several themes in the story of *The Duchess and the Jeweller*. The themes which are most visible are trust, vanity, appearances, contentment, lack of confidence and manipulation. The story has been narrated in third person and is a part of the collection titled *The Complete Shorter Fiction*. The narrator of the story has not been introduced and this has managed to keep the readers interested and realize the importance of the setting of a story. The detailed description provided by the author about the residence in which Oliver stays highlights the theme related to appearance and its relevance in his life. The author gives a description of his earlier lifestyle so that the readers are able to understand the struggle he has gone through to reach his present status. Earlier

he used to live in a filthy alley in slums and now he lives in a posh flat in one of the prime locations of London. And yet the author has described his successful jewellery store as a 'dark little place.' This description is meant for the readers to realize that in spite of a grand outwardly appearance from inside Oliver has not changed. He is very concerned about what people think about him in the story and for that reason he wants to appear successful.

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- During the story the author tries to explore the theme of trust. Oliver is completely conscious about the ways of the Duchess, as on previous occasions too she had tried to sell fake jewellery. Hence she cannot be trusted. In the same way the author has made the readers aware that during his younger days, Oliver used to sell stolen dogs and fake watches to the rich. The author clearly suggests that it is not just the poor who cannot be trusted but the rich, too, are not trustworthy. This has been well established in the story.
- Vanity is another theme which the author uses in the story, especially when Oliver knowingly buys fake pearls from the Duchess. Oliver does not bother to verify the pearls because he wants to spend a weekend with Diana. He feels that by attending the party he will get an opportunity to be in the company of the aristocrats and he will be accepted by them. It is evident that Oliver links affluence and the accrual of riches to the upper class of the society. He feels that wealth will help him to be accepted by aristocrats of the society. Oliver believes that by being wealthy, he will be accepted by those who have been born upper class.
- The author has on several occasions has shown the manipulative nature of the characters. In order to sell her fake pearls, the Duchesses calls Oliver an old friend who has to help her to get out of the tricky situation. By calling him a friend the Duchess is trying to make him feel that they both belong to the same class, she is not only being charming but at the same time taking advantage of Oliver's insecurities and feeding his desire to be able to belong to the upper class.
- Another theme which stands out in the story is the lack of contentment, Oliver in spite of becoming a rich jeweller and acquiring many assets is not happy with his life and he is constantly aspiring for more wealth and recognition. Another aspect which highlights dissatisfaction is the fact that Oliver continues to try to impress his dead mother. His behaviour also suggests lack of self-confidence and for this reason he is constantly seeking others approval.
- The author's use of animal imagery in the story is very obvious. At one point the author has compared Oliver's pursuit for the impeccable jewellery to that of a hog trying to search a truffle piece. Well along in the story Oliver has been compared to a horse by the author, as he is constantly whinnying like a horse. These comparisons by the author are done in order to highlight the nature of Oliver to the readers. The author is trying to convey that Oliver is not a very pleasant individual. The author has used animal imagery to describe the bag which Duchess was carrying for the pearls; the author has compared it to a ferret. The use of animal imagery in the story on a number of occasions may also be the author's way to convey her own disregard for the people belonging to the upper society. The surname given by the author to Oliver could also be way of her trying to be uncomplimentary towards Oliver.
- In the concluding part of the story, the author has highlighted the insecurities and the vulnerabilities of Oliver as a result of which, he allows the Duchess to fool him once again. In the end, he asks for forgiveness from his mother and by this

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action the author is trying to show that in his mind, Oliver still belongs to the alley and is being scolded by his mother for selling stolen dogs. Oliver is unable to have control over his vanity and his constant aspiration to belong to the upper social circles. Even after realizing that the Duchess has sold him pearls which are fake, he does not take any action to get his lost money back, rather he states, 'it is to be a long week-end'. The Duchess has managed to not only take advantage of Oliver's insecurities but she has also used his vulnerability towards her daughter to get what she wants. The author has used control as one of the themes, but the irony of the situation is that it should have been Oliver who should have been in control rather than the Duchess who was desperately in need of money. The Duchess very cleverly controls the meeting and finally gets what she wanted.

**Techniques**

The author did not have too much opportunity to experiment and innovate in the short story as she is able to do while writing a novel. Nonetheless she was able to focus on a single feature and completely allowed it to control the outlook of the story. In *The Duchess and the Jeweller*, the author has concentrated on the tones of the central character as he is the main feature. The main aim of her technique, according to James Wood as he has mentioned in *The New Republic* was, 'to unwrap consciousness.' 'Character to the Edwardians,' he has further stated, 'was everything that could be described. For Woolf, it was everything that could not be described'. Therefore, her engagement of a stream-of-conscious narrative allowed her to precisely enter the mind of a character and since the mind functions in reaction to the direct present and as per the accumulated sensations present in the memory. Oliver's character has been unfolded by the author not only according to his present actions but the past too which has left a thorough impact.

The literary work of the British Isles was dominated by fiction novels during the major part of the nineteenth century. The short story written by Virginia Woolf can be considered as one of the pioneers of that time in England. Her style of writing in her short story *The Duchess and the Jeweller* bears resemblance to the work of Joseph Conrad as far as the detailed examination of one particular character is concerned. The description of the social standards is similar to the work of Guy de Maupassant, whereas the commanding expressive passages and conversation are resonant of few of the stories written by D. H. Lawrence and they are a part of his initial collection of 1914, titled as *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*.

**Check Your Progress**

7. Name the first novel by Virginia Woolf.
8. What did Virginia Woolf like about Chekhov's stories?
9. How does the author refer to the Duchess and the Jeweller in the novel?
10. List some of the prominent themes of *The Duchess and the Jeweller*.

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## 4.5 THE FLY: KATHERINE MANSFIELD

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In this section, we will have a look at the short story *The Fly* by Katherine Mansfield. We will start by discussing the life of the author and then move on to the summary, characters and critical analysis.

**4.5.1 About the Author**

Kathleen Mansfield Murry was a known modernist short story writer from New Zealand. She was born on 14 October 1888 and died at a young age of thirty-four. She grew up in colonial New Zealand and used her pen name Katherine Mansfield in her writings. Katherine left New Zealand at the age of nineteen years and went to the United Kingdom. The author was very close to D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. She was detected with extra pulmonary tuberculosis, and this became the cause of her early death.

Her initial stories were published in the High School Reporter and in the Wellington Girls' High School magazine in 1898 and 1899. In 1900, her foremost officially published writings featured in the society magazine *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*. Mansfield besides being a writer was an accomplished musician as well; she had received training from Thomas Trowell. In 1902 she became infatuated with her teacher's son, Arnold Trowell, who was also a prominent musician, though he did not reciprocate her feelings. In her journals, she has written about feeling lonely in New Zealand, and reasons her disillusionment as result of the subjugation of the Māori people. Māori characters were frequently represented in a compassionate way or with optimism in some of her stories which were written closer to her death, they are mentioned in her stories, *How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped*. In 1903, she shifted to London with her sisters and began to attend Queen's College. Mansfield resumed playing the cello, as she hoped that someday she would be able to make a career for herself in the field of music. During this time, she continued to write and contribute towards the college newspaper. Seeing her dedication, she was later made the editor of the college newspaper. She was mainly fascinated with the writings of French Symbolists and Oscar Wilde. Her vivacious and charismatic approach to life and work was highly appreciated by all her peers. During her college years she met a South African writer, Ida Baker known by the name Lesley Moore. Mansfield and Moore became close friends. Mansfield concentrated on her music and writings and while she was in London she did not become a part of political activities of the time.

In 1922 Katherine wrote her short story *The Fly* and on 18 March it was published in *The Nation & Athenaeum* and then in 1923 the story appeared as a part of the collection of short stories titled as *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*.

#### 4.5.2 *The Fly*: Critical Analysis

In this section, we will discuss the summary, themes, characters in the story.

The story *The Fly* tries to establish the fact that time heals all sorrows of people. Mr. Woodifield, is a man in a sickly state due to his age. He is not allowed too many outings by his family, except on Tuesday, when he is allowed to have his day of outing. On one such occasion, Mr Woodifield comes to visit his friend who used to be his boss as well. The author refers to Mr Woodifield's friend as 'the boss' throughout the story. The boss is rich and in good health in spite of being five years older than Mr Woodifield. Mr Woodifield notices that his ex-boss has renovated his office and changed the furniture as well. With all the changes, he also notices that there is an old framed picture on the boss's table. The author reveals to the readers that the picture belongs to the boss's son who had died during the war. The identity of the person in the picture has not been mentioned by the boss in the story. While the friends are conversing, Woodifield mentions that he had wished to inform the boss about something but now he is unable to recollect what the topic was and he seems quite restless about his inability to remember. In order to cheer him up, the boss serves him a drink of vintage whisky. Though Mr Woodifield is surprised by the gesture yet he accepts the drink. The drink of whisky relaxes him and he is able to recall the topic he wished to bring out. It was regarding a visit made by his daughter to their brother's grave and while they were at the graveyard, his daughters came across the grave of the boss's son. At this point the readers come to know that the boss had lost his son six years ago during the war. The loss of the son had had a deep impact on the boss. Even the mention about his son makes the boss feel very miserable and for that reason even after Mr Woodifield departs he is upset and wishes to be alone. The memory saddens him but still he is not able to cry. He looks at the picture of his son

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on his desk and feels that he does not remember his son ever having such harsh expressions. The memory he has was of a boy who was cheerful and full of life. While he was engrossed in his thoughts, he suddenly notices that a fly had fallen into the inkpot on his desk and now it is struggling to come out. The boss takes the fly out of the pot and puts it on the blotting paper, the fly once out of the pot manages to dry itself but as soon as it is completely dry the boss puts little ink over it and as a result it starts struggling again. The boss is impressed by the way the fly tries to dry itself again though this time the fly is not able to be as quick given that it is weak from the constant struggling. When the boss drops the next ink drop the fly becomes completely powerless and dies. The boss realizes that his unkind actions has led to the death of the fly and he tosses the dead fly and the paper into the dustbin and calls the clerk to get new blotting paper for his desk. The boss all of a sudden 'feels a wretchedness that frightens him and finds himself bereft'. He attempts to think of what he was doing prior to noticing the fly but all of sudden he is completely blank and unable to even recall that he was thinking about his dead son and feeling sad remembering him.

### Characters

*The Fly* is a short story which is a part of the collection of *Dove's Nest*. The story is considered to be one of the best works of the author and it is believed that she wrote this story after the death of her brother. *The Fly* mainly is the story of a person who has been trying to overcome the death of his son for the last six years. The author has tried to depict his anguish. Furthermore, she has tried to create an intense setup by providing indicative details. This technique has been used by Lawrence as well. The author has mentioned several characters in the story but she has concentrated only on Mr. Woodifield, who is a heart patient with very frail health. He is not allowed to be out of the house alone because of his health. He lives with his wife and daughters who let him go out of the house only on Tuesdays. Mr. Woodifield has lost his son in the war. Mr Woodifield is allowed to go visit his ex-boss. The boss is five years older than Mr Woodifield, and yet in better health. He has also lost his son during the war. There are a few other characters which have been mentioned in passing and have only been introduced in the story for effect.

The flowing characters in the story are:

- The office clerk - Macey
- The author's symbolic device in the story - the Fly
- One of Mr Woodifield's daughters - Gertrude
- Mr Woodifield's son - Reggie, who lost his life in the First World War

The main character is that of the boss and he has been fully developed by the author with the help of discourse, monologue and imagery. Woodifield visits his friend and ex-boss on a Tuesday and mentions that his daughter had been to the grave of their brother and during that visit they also happened to come across the grave of the boss's son. The Boss does not react to this information. The only way it is clear that he has heard this dialogue is described by the author as quivering of his eyelids. From here on, the author tries to convey that the boss is trying to suppress his emotions. The author establishes this by telling the readers that even though Mr Woodifield continues to talk about the graves of the boys, the boss tries to project that he is completely unaware about the context in which his friend is talking. At this point, a simple comparison can be made between the characters of *The Fly*. Mr Woodifield freely talks about the death of his son as he has come to terms with his loss, but at the same time the boss ignores these



topics as he is still struggling to overcome his loss; he hides his sorrow by avoiding the topic of his son. The author manages to evoke a sense of pity for the boss among the readers. The sorrow which was hidden inside him surfaces after his friend departs and he looks at the picture of his son and remembers him. He remembers his son as a cheerful boy and feels that the picture on his desk has a very stern look. The boss tries to cry but he is unable to do so and soon gets distracted by the fly in the inkpot and forgets about his son. Most of Mansfield's stories project the emotional state of the characters but she avoids sentiments like weeping and wallowing. By not showing them in tears she tries to evoke deeper sentiments.

The catastrophe of the boss's life is in his attempt to simplify human existence. It provides an additional aspect to his character which is his understanding of the uselessness and brittleness of human effort. He has been trying for the past six years to avoid the memory of his son who is dead, however just a passing reference of his grave made by his friend brings his memory back and he realizes that he has not been able to forget his loss. The boss submits to the unavailability of human destiny. He cultivates a kind of cynicism and negativism. The episode with *the fly* in the inkpot depicts the boss as the unpredictable spirit who inflicts harm for getting negative pleasure. He feels that the plight of the fly could have been what his son must've had gone through at the battlefield as he would have also struggled for his life. Though his pessimism made see the fly struggle and suffer for its life. By the end, the boss begins to give an impression of a person who is insignificant, helpless and weak as he is not willing to accept the reality that his son is no more. Therefore, the boss reflects the strait of Dostoyevsky's acceptance of death.

### Themes

The author never gives a clear understanding of her story's theme and what it is meant to signify and as a result the theme of the story has been considered to imply several subjects. Mansfield at no time clarified precisely what she denoted by the title *The Fly*. The story is repeatedly understood as a condemnation of the inhuman horrors of the First World War and its impact on property and people. Several researchers have commented that the time in which the author wrote the story concurs with the year of her brother's death. (he died in 1915 and was a causality of the same war). Another understanding about the theme is the fly being compared with war heroes who are innocuously trounced by war and it signifies their struggle for survival during the war. Few of the critics have reached to the conclusion after going through her papers and letters that the fly was meant to portray her own struggles with her aliment and how she lost due to her father's cruel and selfish attitude, which is similar to the character of the boss in the story.

There are many who feel that the author through her story only wants to convey that death is often not accepted by most easily and time proves to be the only healer. It has been established in the story *The Fly* that time conquers grief; hence this can be identified as one of the themes of the story. With the help of the character of Mr. Woodfield and the author has established that six years is long time and the passage of time has helped him to accept the death of his son. He is able to talk about his daughters visiting his son's grave without feeling sad. Similarly, the author mentions how the time has managed to heal the boss, who always thought that he will not be able to overcome the death of his son. In the story, after his friend leaves he wants to cry over the loss of his son but is unable to cry, then he looks at the photograph of his son, thinking that seeing his picture, will make him cry but actually he realizes that the picture does not

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resemble his son as he remembers him to be cheerful whereas the picture is making him look very stern. The author articulates his emotional state strikingly: 'He wanted, he intended, he arranged to weep... But no tears came yet.' These lines reflect the current state of his grief. Time has helped him to heal. The fact that the boss easily gets distracted by the fly and its activities finally makes him forget all about his previous thoughts.

Another theme which has been reflected by the struggling fly is the helplessness which is faced by man to survive. The quote by William Shakespeare beautifully words the second theme of the story, 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport.'

The readers realize that the author tries to symbolize the vulnerability of man in the hands of fate. The way the author describes the struggles of the fly, man attempts to struggle for its life but then he cannot go against his destiny. In the story the writer uses the fly to symbolize all the characters in the story. The strong are always able to crush the weak. The writer tries to use the struggles of the fly to symbolize her fight with the incurable disease of her time.

The author has paid a lot of attention in developing the character of the boss. He symbolizes malicious powers which are unjustified and groundless, he has been projected as the cruel forces of war that are just out to kill innocent people for their amusement. The readers were impressed by the character of the boss in the beginning of the story but as the author begins to bring forth his true nature the readers realize that he is just an intimidating sadomasochistic. He could have intimidated his son just as he was able to intimidate his friend and Macey. The way he behaves with the helpless fly he seems as a tormenter who takes the boyish pleasure in torturing others. On the other hand, some critics feel that the boss is not an unfeeling character, as he may have been just performing an experiment to check the survival instincts of a mere housefly. He is terrified with his discovery and clears the mess and the order for a new paper was just his way of diverting himself.

It has been observed by many critics that story has multifaceted symbolism. Initially the contrast between the boss and Mr Woodfield shows the boss to be stronger and energetic though he is five years older. During the story the attitude of Mr Woodfield about his son's death makes him appear as a stronger of the two. The critics feel that both are weak and immature as they do not face the realities of life. They both do not visit the grave of their dead sons. The fly has been shown as a symbol of struggle of life and power of destiny and at the same time the author uses the fly to symbolize strong men (bosses) taking advantage of the weak (staff members). The boss's behaviour with the fly is similar to how he behaves with Mr Woodfield and his clerk; he is benevolent towards his friend in the same way as he helps the fly out of the inkpot. But later he behaves in a condescending manner, when simply for his amusement, he puts ink over the struggling fly and expects it to survive; this is the way he orders his office clerk. These actions put a doubt in the minds of the readers about his behaviour towards his son.

There are many critics who believe that in *The Fly*, Katherine Mansfield has tried to employ themes of control, obliviousness, martyr, accountability and war. Though the story has been narrated in third person but she has completely developed the character of the boss. The story occurs at the boss's office; this could be a ploy of the author to highlight the theme of control. The way the office is described in the story and the mention made by Mr Woodfield about its snugness all point towards boss's nature to maintain control. The action of dropping ink on the fly by the boss in the later part of the

story also denotes his wish to be in complete control. The way he behaves with his staff is also an indication of his controlling nature. Through the boss the author may as well be referring to all the army generals who always liked to be in control and give instructions to the soldiers.

The author has symbolised the pen used to drop ink on the fly by the boss as constant signing of orders by the generals during the war. The pen helped in signing orders which caused tremendous loss of life and property and in the story pen seems to be the source of the fly's death as well. The remark made by Woodifield about the vastness of the graveyard in Belgium also points out towards the extent of damage and destruction that took place during the war. The boss has been compared with the generals of the army who have caused so many deaths as the boss became the cause of the fly's death.

It is shown in the story that the boss was able to get diverted by the fly so easily while he was remembering his son. In fact, he started to conduct a test about its survival skills. And even after he was done with his testing, he could not remember what his thoughts were prior to the starting of the test. The fly incident may also be an important indication that despite the boss feeling sorrow about the loss of his son, when he begins to experiment with the fly, he easily forgets him. It is possible that the author is trying to make the suggestion that just as the generals of the war have no recollection about the losses they caused during the war, similarly the boss has forgotten about his son.

The author's description and characterization of the main characters being old ages can be an attempt by the author to state that many young and productive people lost their lives during the war and the ones remaining are old and are not capable of much work. The author comments the characters being not wise by comparing Mr Woodifield to a baby. Additionally, the experiments of the boss with the fly does not portray him to be any more mature than a child who is playing games to end his boredom. Lack of wisdom in the characters can be the writer's way to convey that all the generals who supported war were also devoid of intelligence.

The story has an interesting ending as it is clear that the boss has not gained any insight after his childish experiment with the fly. The story tries to convey that in spite of such a large scale loss of life, the war, too, did not benefit anyone and it was a total wastage of resources and men. Like the death of fly did not prove anything similarly neither did the war. Furthermore, the no recollection of the boss's thoughts prior to the experiment signifies that even the generals do not realize the repercussions of their actions. The action of throwing the dead fly into the dustbin is similar to the generals not paying much heed to their actions. They are all leading a comfortable life as decorated generals like the boss remains in his redecorated comfortable office.

The distressing short story written by Katherine Mansfield has been put through several extensive and vivacious debates by the critics. There is not much agreement about the credibility or the relevance of the story. The story revolves around the visit of an old friend to the office of his ex-boss; his visit reminds the boss about the death of his son during the war. The second part of the story shows the boss first rescuing a housefly and then becoming the reason for its death. The simple plot of the story give an in depth description of the characters. The critics feel that the narration lacks humour and empathy. Other the other hand, many critics are of the opinion that the story also creates an interesting reading of an emotional crisis that affects a man in such a way that he becomes completely oblivious to his surroundings. The story has several elements which feature in other short stories written by the author. The story uses epiphany as the

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pivotal point of the storyline. Critics have found several issues with the internal aspects of the plot. The author has extensively used symbolic patterning in order to project the key aspects; she has used the main aspects along with imagery to stress up on the complexities of the situations as well as the characters. The work is often referred as an autobiographical creation as many similarities have been found with her situation during her last years of life in the story. The story tries to project the helplessness of the writer during her last days by showing the struggles of the fly. The story may be referred to as an analysis of war and domination of elders. It is an attempt to conduct a philosophical survey of finding the value of life. All versions, though, appear to be in accord that *The Fly* is possibly the gloomiest and utmost heart-breaking treatment of human venality amongst the literary compositions of the author, along with being the most blatant attempt at criticizing the war because of its noticeable impact after it ended.

The ending is very abrupt as it makes no conclusions and leaves the readers wondering. The boss kills the fly and his experiment has no outcome. He even forgets all about his previous conversation with his friend and how he was remembering his son. The reader is left to ponder whether the boss has so easily forgotten about his son out of grief or lack of affection for him.

The story has been analysed from other angles where the boss is stimulated by the memory of his dead son. The boss chooses to torture a housefly which he sees struggling for life in the inkpot in order to check the strength of the fly. The boss may be thought to be visualizing himself while seeing the fly struggling. It may be a representation of his subconscious mind and his own inquiry about whether he will ever be able to reconcile with the loss of his son. It tries to draw a comparison between their individual struggles. The writer wants the readers to realize the internal struggles the boss is undergoing. The author has set the tone of the story by providing a setting which is full of a feeling of bleakness, anger, and resentment. In spite of the third person narration the focus remains on the boss. The storyteller is not well-informed as he only conveys the feelings and the emotions of the boss and is completely ignorant about the feelings of Mr Woodifield. The metaphor of the fly has been used by the author to signify the recollections and tussles of the boss. The allegory is used to disperse meaning throughout the story and it aids describing the drives and views of the boss. The use of the metaphor helps in enhancing the overall appeal of the story for the readers. There are several detailed sentences, terms and expressions in the story that throw light on the character of the boss. It is clearly stated in the story that the boss 'was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by the old Woodifield'. This, in fact, displays to the readers that he wants to feel superior and perhaps is showing his arrogance. Once Woodifield departs, the boss states- 'My son! But no tears came yet' makes the readers question his love for the dead son. Lastly, the expression, 'Look sharp!' shows the readers that the boss makes too many demands over people who work for him. It also implies that maybe he had such expectations from his son as well and he expected him to take over his business after returning from the war.

**Check Your Progress**

11. List the flowing characters in the story *The Fly*.
12. How does the boss react when Woodifield talks about coming across the grave of the boss's son?
13. What does the character of the boss symbolize in *The Fly*?

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## 4.6 THE TRAIL OF THE GREEN BLAZER: R.K. NARAYAN

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In this section, we will have a look at the short story *The Trail of the Green Blazer* by R.K. Narayan. We will start by discussing the life of the author and then move on to the summary, characters and critical analysis.

### 4.6.1 About the Author

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, popularly known as R.K Narayan was an Indian author famous for his writings set in the imaginary South Indian town of Malgudi. He was born on 10 October 1906. As an important author of early Indian literature in English he was as well-known as Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao.

Graham Greene was Narayan's mentor and close friend and he played an important role in helping Narayan get his first four books published. Among these were the partial-autobiographical trilogy of *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*. The imaginary town of Malgudi was initially created in *Swami and Friends*. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* is considered to be one of the most unique writings of 1951 and his work *The Guide* won the Sahitya Akademi Award and subsequently was adapted for a movie and for Broadway.

The writings of R.K Narayan try to highlight the social situations and routine life of the characters in the story. His work has been equated to William Faulkner as he had also introduced an imaginary town in his stories and reconnoitred the humour and care in the routine life of his characters. The short stories written by R.K Narayan have a similarity with the ones written by Guy de Maupassant. The readers can see the similarity in the way each manages to wrap up a story. On the other hand, the author has faced lot of criticism for the way he simplifies his text. R.K Narayan, in his writing career of more than sixty years, was presented with several accolades and awards. The Royal Society of Literature presented him with the AC Benson Medal; In India, he has been honoured with the second and the third highest civilian awards namely, the Padma Vibhushan the Padma Bhushan and the Rajya Sabha of the Indian parliament nominated him as a member.

### Style of Writing

The technique of writing adopted by Narayan was natural and self-effecting and had a natural flare for hilarity and wittiness. The writer always focused on regular people, with whom the readers could easily relate. The simplicity of the characters helped the readers to understand the topic of writings. He managed to write intricately about the Indian society and was able to maintain the style of fictional writing throughout the story. The author was always able to maintain the simplicity that was an essential feature of his characters. The author often used Tamil overtones along with nuanced dialogic prose depending on the character's nature. Narayan has been often called as the Indian Chekhov by the critics as they find many similarities in his writing style with the author. Both the authors have the ability to present a tragic situation with ease and the calm splendour and wit which makes it an interesting reading. Narayan's mentor and friend Greene often found similarities in their work. According to Anthony West of *The New Yorker*, his work was close to Nikolai Gogol but it contained practical variability. Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri feels that Narayan's short stories are as entrancing as his novels, although they have a less word count and can be read very fast. Due to his style he is able to convey much more in a mere short story whereas few authors fail to deliver the same in a novel with hundreds of pages. The author is able to give a thorough understanding to the readers about the characters' lives. Due to these abilities, Lahiri feels that Narayan is at par with geniuses of short stories which O. Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor. She has like others compared Narayan to Guy de Maupassant for his ability to be able to make the story concise and yet not lose the charm of the story. Lahiri felt that both the authors were able to write about the life of a common man as their main

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theme. Critics have observed that his writings have a tendency to be extra expressive and there is not much of critical observations; the independent style of the author was a result of a disconnected life-force which made his stories seem real and genuine. The author's attitude and his approach towards life delivered an exceptional skill to blend characters and actions. The knack of being able to use common situations helped the readers to connect very easily with the events of the story. The creation of the fictional South Indian small town Malgudi enabled the author to introduce various superstitions and traditions which were stated to be in practice there. Malgudi is often considered to be an important element of his writings. Malgudi was a fictional, semi-urban town conjured by the author. The town was created by him in September 1930 on the day which happened to be the auspicious day of Vijayadashami. Narayan's grandmother wanted him to start his efforts on a good omen. The town was fictional but Narayan gave a very realistic appeal to it by providing a history about its origin. The author gave the full description to Susan and N. Ram during an interview while they were working on his biography. The town dates back to the period of Ramayana and Lord Rama is supposed to have visited the town. The history of the town has mentions of the visits made by Buddha during his explorations. Although Narayan did not offer any exacting physical limits for the town, he endorsed it as per the events of the stories, laying foundations for next story. A map of the town had been created by Dr James M. Fennelly, he had researched Narayan's writings very thoroughly and on the basis of the descriptions in the stories he gave an outline of the extent of the town. Malgudi progressed with the shifting political backdrop of India. During the 1980s, when the patriotic enthusiasm in India did away with several British names and statues and replaced them with Indian names and personalities, the mayor of Narayan's Malgudi removes the statue of Frederick Lawley in order to exhibit the same sentiments. Though, after the Historical Societies presented evidence that Lawley was a strong supporter of the independence movement in India, the mayor was compelled to reinstall his statue.

### Critical Reception

Graham Greene was responsible for R.K Narayan's first break. When his friend read his stories in *Swaminathan and Tate*, he decided to act as the agent for the author. He changed the title to *Swami and Friends*, and found a publisher for the subsequent books written by Narayan. Although Narayan's initial writings were not successful commercially but he began to be noticed by other writers of that time. In 1938 Somerset Maugham, while travelling to Mysore, specially made an effort to meet Narayan. After reading *The Dark Room* by Narayan, Maugham wrote him a letter wherein he admired Narayan's work. E.M Forster was another modern author who liked the initial work done by Narayan. Few of the critics who found a stark similarity in the way both the authors equipped their narratives with dry humour began to call Narayan as 'South Indian E. M. Forster'. Although Narayan was very popular amongst his followers and colleagues, his work failed to impress the critics. His work did not receive similar critical consideration bestowed to other authors of his standing.

His accomplishment in the United States began to be noticed when Michigan State University Press began to publish his books. He visited United States for the first time while he was on a fellowship of the Rockefeller Foundation. During his visit he conducted lectures in several universities, and these included the Michigan State University and the University of California, Berkeley. His work was noticed by John Updike, he felt that his writings were similar to Charles Dickens. In an evaluation of Narayan's works printed in *The New Yorker*, Updike termed him as a writer who belonged to an endangered

variety. According to him, Narayan as an author was able to totally identify himself with his characters and he realized the importance of common people and their stories.

The author is instrumental in spreading Indian writings to the entire world, his novels, essays and short stories are now read in many parts across the globe. Critics have often regarded his writings to be pleasant, mild and benevolent. Notwithstanding these adjectives Narayan is considered to be the greatest writers of the Indian literature in the twentieth century. He has faced criticism at the hands of some of the present day writers, mainly of Indian origin. According to them, his writings have a very pedestrian style with a superficial vocabulary and lacks in vision. Shashi Tharoor had once stated that Narayan's subjects are like the subjects found in Jane Austen's stories since they both do not include the society as a whole. And moreover he felt that at least Austen was able to take her prose subjects away from their routineness, Narayan's fails to do that. Shashi Deshpande holds a similar view point about Narayan's writings, she feels that in his writings are pedestrian and childlike as the language and diction is very simple and this is further clubbed with the absence of intense emotions among his characters. According to V.S Naipaul and many others, Narayan never mixed himself or his works with the political affairs or concerns of India. On the other hand, Wyatt Mason of *The New Yorker* felt that even though Narayan's writings appeared unpretentious and displayed a lack of attention to the political situation, yet he delivered his story with a clever and illusory technique while dealing with such topics and has definitely included them very tactfully and it has left the readers guessing. According to former vice-chancellor of Andhra University, Srinivasa Iyengar, Narayan included politics only with reference to his subjects, rather distinct from his fellow writer Mulk Raj Anand as he mostly addressed the political situations and problems of the period. Paul Brians, has stated in his book *Modern South Asian Literature in English*, that Narayan totally overlooked British rule and stressed on the personal lives of his characters, this shows that he was not affected by the impact of colonialism.

Narayan's simplicity of writing was very much appreciated in the west. William Walsh, who has written one of his biographies, commented on the way his stories were a comedic art. Anita Desai who was nominated for Booker prize on several occasions considers his writings as '*compassionate realism*' according to which fundamental immoralities are cruelty and pretentiousness. Wyatt Mason feels that Narayan had his own individual style as he treated his characters to be a public entity instead of private being. Mason has identified Narayan's initial writings to be amongst the significant English-language fiction from India, with this development, he delivered his western readers the primary works in English to be instilled with an eastern and Hindu existential viewpoint. Mason felt that through his writings Narayan just does not provide description of events but portrays his true feelings.

#### **4.6.2 The Trail of The Green Blazer: Critical Analysis**

In this section, we will discuss the summary, themes, characters in the story.

People are continuously cautioned about the pickpockets who are mostly found in crowded places so that they are able to gel in the crowd after they have spotted their victim. The pickpockets prudently watch the victim while they attempt to quietly check their wallet and reassure themselves but by doing this they provide the indication to the pickpocket that the presence and location of the wallet. *The Trail of the Green Blazer* is a short story about the grind and life of a proficient pickpocket. Raju or the pickpocket attempts to be dressed in such a way that he completely blends in with the crowd. His

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aim is to be extremely plain and ordinary. The readers come to know that he gets delighted when a stolen wallet holds sufficient cash to get by for many days and he is annoyed when stolen wallet has less money. While reading the story, the readers come to know the places which are more frequently visited by the pickpocket and the ones he avoids. For instance, he considers the market for stolen fountain pens as a waste of time. Since he gets and could get caught for pickpocketing he does not tell his wife the source of his income and his wife is almost scared to question him as she is afraid to find out. The author has very skilfully managed to depict the dynamics of their marriage by devoting just a few lines. The author feels that in spite of being a pickpocket, he is very much answerable to his wife. The plot revolves around one day, when he steals a wallet and decides to return the wallet. In the process of slipping the wallet back into the green blazer he gets caught and when he tells everyone that he was actually putting the wallet back in the owner's blazer, nobody believes his story and he is ridiculed. He is handed over to the police and goes to jail for a period of eighteen months. The jail term manages to change him slightly and in the end, the story puts forward a thought-provoking lesson in morals.

**Summary**

Raju masquerades himself as a resident and comes to a village fair in search of persons whose wallets he can flick. He notices a man wearing a green blazer. Raju starts following the man from a distance but keenly listens to what he is saying to the coconut vendor. From the way he is haggling with the coconut vendor about the cost, Raju realizes that the man in the green blazer is grouchy and miserly. During this time, Raju hears him talking about buying a balloon for his son as he does not want him to be upset and from this Raju deduces that the man is soft-hearted. Soon Raju manages to pick the wallet from the green blazer and as soon as he opens the wallet Raju is thrilled with the amount of money he finds inside. The wallet contained thirty rupees and some change. He gets super thrilled as with this amount he will not have to pick any pockets for at least two weeks and additionally, it will allow him to treat his wife to a movie. Raju even decides to give the change to beggars. While emptying the wallet, Raju notices the balloon the man had purchased for his motherless child, he cures the father for keeping the balloon folded inside the wallet. Now Raju realizes that if he throws the wallet the man will not have the balloon to give to his child. Raju imagines the disappointment of the child when his father would return without a balloon. The guilt of becoming the cause of the disappointment becomes too much for Raju to handle hence he decides to put the wallet back into the man's green blazer pocket. The moment he puts his hand inside the pocket to slip the wallet back, the man in the green blazer catches his hand and starts shouting. His shouting draws the attention of the people around and they all start to beat him. Nobody believes when Raju claims that he was putting the wallet back and not stealing. The police is called and Raju is sent to prison. His claim that he was putting the wallet back is not bought by the magistrate or even his wife. After serving the jail term of eighteen months when Raju comes out of the jail, he feels that he will never again in life return something that he has stolen as his hands are only efficient in picking things and not putting them back.

**Characters**

The protagonist of the short story *The Trail of the Green Blazer* is Raju who earns a living by picking pockets. Raju is very efficient at his job and goes about his job in a very skilful and systematic manner. This can be known given the reference in the story about



maintaining adequate distance and constantly keeping an eye on the prey. Moreover, Raju has been portrayed as a lazy person as he has all the energy to observe his prey for picking pockets but does not want to do any substantial job to take care of his family. The readers realize that in spite of being a thief Raju is a soft-hearted and compassionate man, who after seeing the balloon folded in the wallet thinks about the disappointment of the child and decides to take the risks of returning the wallet.

The other character in the story is the green blazer which from Raju's point of view is the antagonist. The green blazer may be described as the minor character or the flat character in the short story. It has been called as a flat character because it is not fully developed nor is described with enough details: The author portrays the owner of the green blazer to be a rich man as he stands out in the crowd and because of his outfit Raju decides to pick his pocket.

The setting of the story is a hot, sunny afternoon. A village fair is in progress and as a result there is lot of noise and activity happening at the market place. The author has depicted an Indian village during British period. The social conditions were bad due to poverty and over population. In the story, Raju is a pickpocket. Pickpocketing becomes easy at crowded places. Narayan has provided a very suitable start to the story:

The Green Blazer stood out prominently under the bright sun and blue sky. In all that jostling crowd one could not help noticing it. Villagers in shirts and turbans, townsmen in coats and caps, beggars bare bodied and women in multicoloured saris were thronging the narrow passage between the stalls and moving in great confused masses, but still the Green Blazer could not be missed.

Each occupation requires hard work and attentiveness. In profession of pickpocket, accountability is dual. Bulging wallets have an extra appeal for Raju and after spotting one, he picks it up with the utmost precision. He just keeps the cash and throws the wallet. Once he has picked pockets, his day's work is over and he returns home. His wife thinks he does a decent job in an office as she is not aware of his actual job and like all dutiful wives, she does not question him about his source of income and respects him for his hard work. Raju picks at pockets very skilfully as a lot of skill is required doing this job. The author describes the job of pickpocket very beautifully in the story:

It was a nicely calculated distance, acquired by intuition and practice. The distance must not be so much as to obscure the movement of the other's hand to and from his purse, nor so close as to become a nuisance and create suspicion.

Raju is very good at his work and after taking the cash he throws the wallet. It is while he is about to throw the wallet taken from the green blazer that he notices the balloon. On seeing the balloon, he suddenly gets very emotional and does not want to become the cause of disappointing a motherless boy. His feelings for the unknown child are poignantly described in the following lines in the story:

Raju almost sobbed at the thought of the disappointed child-the motherless boy. There was no one to comfort him. Perhaps this ruffian would beat him if he cried too long. The Green Blazer did not look like one who knew the language of children. Raju was filled with pity at the thought of the young child-perhaps of the same age as his second son.

Raju, on thinking of the disappointed child, becomes troubled and unwilling to take the stress. He decides to put the wallet back into the blazer's pocket. Regrettably, while he is putting the wallet back into the pocket he gets caught by the man in the green blazer. When he tries to explain that he was keeping the wallet back and not taking it.

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nobody in the crowd believes him. Instead all ridicule him. He is sent to jail. The policemen also do not believe him and think he is joking. His wife also condemns his acts and reprimands him for the disgrace he has brought to the family. After finishing his sentence of eighteen months as soon as he comes out, he decides that never in his life would he steal and return anything. He decides:

If ever I pick up something again, I shall make sure I don't have to put it back. For now, he believed God had gifted the likes of him with only one-way deftness. Those fingers were not meant to put anything back.

The poor pitiable individual mislaid many things starting from his freedom for a short period and his respect in his family. This can be described as the irony of life.

According to Disha Sharma, 'the short story is a good example of Narayan's use of irony. Life is full of contradictions and this is what the story conveys to us in a typical Narayan's way. The pickpocket was successful so far he was professional devoid of human sentiments.

The lesson learnt by Raju at the end of the story is not correct as it is essential to realize that one good deed does not make up for all the wrong doings in life.

### Analysis of Structure

Like all short stories, *The Trail of a Green Blazer* evolves from a solo incident. The story develops from the point, when Raju picks the pocket of the person wearing the green blazer and then the events which follow form the structure of the story. The story has three parts: starting, middle and ending.

- **Starting:** Raju lookouts for the man wearing the green blazer with the poise of a specialized pick-pocket.
- **Middle:** The middle consists of two parts, the first part portrays Raju as a hunter and the second part he himself becomes the prey. First, Raju skilfully picks the pocket and he is as usual not caught. So he is the hunter. Then while he is putting the wallet back he gets caught and from a hunter he becomes the prey.
- **Ending:** Raju is not able to comprehend why he is being punished for returning the wallet, as he feels that it was his moral action.

### Themes

The author has tried to convey many themes in the short story. The main theme of the story is crime as the central character of the story is a professional pickpocket. The author also tries to tell the readers that illegal ways of life cannot become permanent and all criminals are bound to be caught. Another theme is of hesitation; which Raju feels after stealing the wallet, as he did not want to become the cause of disappointment of a motherless child. His hesitation to keep the wallet led to his downfall. The author admires the patience which is shown by the pickpocket in order to closely observe his prey.

**Conflicts:** There are several conflicts in the story, some of them are listed below:

- **Human vs human:** This type of conflict in a story means that the central character is in conflict with other characters, especially the antagonist. In this story the protagonist is Raju and the antagonist is the green blazer. The person wearing the green blazer stood out in the crowd amongst the villagers and he seemed to be a rich person because of the blazer. This makes Raju select him to be his victim as he feels that his wallet will have ample money. Raju gets into trouble while he is

attempting to put the wallet back into the blazer and nobody in the crowd believes his innocence. Hence one of the conflicts is between Raju and green blazer. The other struggle of this nature is between Raju and his wife as she also does not believe that he is innocent.

- **Human vs Society:** When the story involves a struggle between the central character and the society. In the story, when Raju returns the wallet nobody is willing to believe that he was actually putting the wallet back. The society condemns the acts of the pickpocket and ridicules him.
- **Human vs Self:** The protagonist's struggle with his own self in the story is visible when after stealing the wallet, Raju remembers the child and gets emotional thinking about his tears and disappointment. He is going through a struggle with his conscience about returning the wallet. He keeps the money and decides to put the wallet back as it still has the folded balloon inside.

### Point of View in the Story

The story has been narrated from the point of view of the third person. The narrator is able to convey the thoughts of all the characters besides Raju together with the wife, green blazer, coconut seller or even the police. The narrator has clearly described the thoughts of Raju after he discovers the folded balloon in the wallet which he has stolen and what is going to be the plight of the child when he does not get the balloon.

### Language Style of the Story

- The story uses the flashback in the initial paragraphs. While Raju is following the green blazer, the author mentions about his skill of pickpocketing and his preference for crowded places or his reluctance to pick fountain pens.
- The author externalises Raju's emotional side while narrating the state of the child when he does not get the promised balloon: 'Raju almost sobbed at the thought of the disappointed child – the motherless boy. There was no one to comfort him. Perhaps this ruffian would beat him if he cried too long. The Green Blazer did not look like one who knew the language of children'. Raju feels that since his mother is dead who shall comfort the crying child as he could not picture the person in the green blazer being capable of consoling a crying child.
- The author has used the simile in order to make a figurative comparison in the story. He has compared the act of pickpocket waiting for targeting his victim with how a hunter waits for his prey. 'It had to be finely balanced and calculated – the same sort of calculations as carry a shikari through his tracking of game and see him safely home again. Only this hunter's task was more complicated. The hunter in the forest could count his day a success if he laid his quarry flat; but here one had to extract the heart out of the quarry without injuring it'. In paragraph four, the author has compared the pitch of the person in the green blazer with a tiger's growl.
- The use of metaphor is noticed in the story. At one point the author has compared Raju with a hunter: 'only this hunter's task was more complicated. The hunter in the forest could count his day a success if he laid his quarry flat; but here one had to extract the heart out of the quarry without injuring it. But in the following lines he has been described as a lazy person. Constitutionally he was an idler and had just the amount of energy to watch in a crowd and put his hand into another

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person's pocket.' These extreme comparisons in relation of the same person exhibit the metaphorical language used by the author.

- The author has personified the green blazer in the following lines of the story, 'Over and above it all the Green Blazer seemed to cry out an invitation. Raju could not ignore it'. The use of imagery is very prominent in the beginning lines of the story where the author manages to make the readers clearly picture the market scene as described by him in the story. Symbolism is used when the author uses the green blazer to state that the owner of the green blazer is a foreigner.

The short story written by R.K Narayan has been described as an irony of life as Raju get punished for the one good deed that he was trying to do in life.

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## 4.7 SUMMARY

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- The father or originator of contemporary short stories, Edgar Allen Poe has defined short story as a tale which can be read in a short duration. According to him, any story which can be read in thirty minutes to two hours falls under the category of short story; the story has a single focal point and the rest of the story revolves around that '*certain unique or single effect*' to which every detail is subordinate.
- Short stories which are written with the purpose of conveying virtuous or ethical awareness are categorized as parables or fables.
- The most typical elements of every short story would be to have a small number of characters; stress is given on a single self-contained event so that a 'single effect' or mood can be evoked among the readers.
- *The Cask of Amontillado* was published in 1846 by the American short-story writer, essayist, and poet Edgar Allan Poe. The short story was the last creation of the author and is considered to be one of his best short stories. It is a story of revenge, murder, suffering, and obsession. The story is set in a vast Italian underground cemetery (Italian catacomb). The story is a journey into the gloomy and cryptic recesses of the human inner self. It features a narrator telling his friend about a murder he committed.
- Most readers find Edgar Allan Poe's stories to be enjoyable as they are comparable to an intricate puzzle. The readers have to exercise their brains in order to figure out the story. *The Cask of Amontillado* is very crisp, and it helps the readers follow the details very easily.
- Major themes involved in *The Cask of Amontillado* are: independence and captivity, treachery, drugs and alcohol, imprudence and foolishness, etc.
- Adeline Virginia Woolf was born on 25 January 1882. The English writer has been regarded as notable modernists of her time. She has been identified as the forerunner of using the stream of consciousness as a device for narrations.
- Amongst Virginia Woolf's prominent works are: *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and essay titled 'A Room of One's Own'.
- *The Duchess and the Jeweller* is a short story written by Virginia Woolf in 1938. Being a promoter of addressing the 'stream of consciousness,' Woolf in her story illustrates the views and activities of a materialistic jeweller; According to Woolf,

### Check Your Progress

14. Why is the writing style of R.K.Narayan equated with that of William Faulkner?
15. What is Raju's reaction on finding the wallet of the man with the green blazer?
16. Which character is the antagonist of *The Trail of the Green Blazer* according to Raju?
17. State the simile which is used by the author to talk about the act of pickpocketing in the story.

people who are corrupt are selfish as well and they do not regret their actions. The story has been written in order to prove this belief of the author.

- Virginia Woolf has employed several themes in the story of *The Duchess and the Jeweller*. The themes which are most visible are trust, vanity, appearances, contentment, lack of confidence and manipulation.
- Kathleen Mansfield Murry was a known modernist short story writer from New Zealand. She was born on 14 October 1888 and died at a young age of thirty-four. She grew up in colonial New Zealand and used her pen name Katherine Mansfield in her writings.
- In 1922 Katherine wrote her short story *The Fly* and on 18 March it was published in *The Nation & Athenaeum* and then in 1923 the story appeared as a part of the collection of short stories titled as *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*.
- *The Fly* mainly is the story of a person who has been trying to overcome the death of his son for the last six years. The author has tried to depict his anguish.
- The story is repeatedly understood as a condemnation of the inhuman horrors of the First World War and its impact on property and people. Another understanding about the theme is the fly being compared with war heroes who are innocuously trounced by war and it signifies their struggle for survival during the war. There are many who feel that the author through her story only wants to convey that death is often not accepted by most easily and time proves to be the only healer.
- Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, popularly known as R.K Narayan was an Indian author famous for his writings set in the imaginary South Indian town of Malgudi. He was born on 10 October 1906. As an important author of early Indian literature in English he was as well-known as Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao.
- Prominent works of the R.K.Narayan include: *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide* which won the Sahitya Akademi Award and subsequently was adapted for a movie and for Broadway.
- The technique of writing adopted by Narayan was natural and self-effecting and had a natural flare for hilarity and wittiness. The writer always focused on regular people, with whom the readers could easily relate.
- *The Trail of the Green Blazer* is a short story about the grind and life of a proficient pickpocket. The plot revolves around one day, when he steals a wallet and decides to return the wallet. In the process of slipping the wallet back into the green blazer he gets caught and when he tells everyone that he was actually putting the wallet back in the owner's blazer, nobody believes his story and he is ridiculed. He is handed over to the police and goes to jail for a period of eighteen months. The jail term manages to change him slightly and in the end, the story puts forward a thought-provoking lesson in morals.
- R.K. Narayan has tried to convey many themes in the short story. The main theme of the story is crime as the central character of the story is a professional pickpocket. The author also tries to tell the readers that illegal ways of life cannot become permanent and all criminals are bound to be caught. Another theme is of hesitation; which Raju feels after stealing the wallet, as he did not want to become the cause of disappointment of a motherless child.

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## 4.8 KEY TERMS

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- **Short story:** It is a work of fiction that is written in prose, in a narrative form. It usually presents a single significant episode or scene involving a limited number of characters.
- **Fable:** It refers to short stories which are written with the purpose of conveying virtuous or ethical awareness.
- **Simile:** It refers to a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g. as brave as a lion).
- **Metaphor:** It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.
- **Stream of consciousness:** It is a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust are among its notable early exponents.

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## 4.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. Short stories which are written with the purpose of conveying virtuous or ethical awareness are categorized as parables or fables. This category of short stories is mostly meant to give spiritual and religious messages and hence used by various religious gurus and leaders for inspiring and enlightening their supporters.
2. Some of the initial experts of short story in America were Washington Irving, Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe.
3. *The Cask of Amontillado*, occasionally known as *The Casque of Amontillado* was published as a short story in the November (1846) edition of *Godey's Lady's Book*. The book was one of the most widely read magazines in America at that time.
4. The enigmatic matter in *The Cask of Amontillado* is the motive behind the act of murder committed by the narrator or Montresor.
5. The motive has been explained vaguely by Montresor through phrases like the '*thousand injuries*' and '*when he ventured upon insult*'.
6. The story which mentions the image similar to that of Montresor's coat of arms having a foot stamping on a snake *1844, or, The Power of the S.F* by Thomas Dunn English.
7. Virginia Woolf's first novel is *The Voyage Out*, which was published in 1915. The book was published by Hogarth Press, and this publishing house was established by Woolf in partnership with her husband, Leonard Woolf.
8. Chekhov's stories about ordinary people performing their routine activities were liked by Woolf.
9. In the story the Duchess and the Jeweller are referred to as '*... friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other...*'.

10. Virginia Woolf has employed several themes in the story of *The Duchess and the Jeweller*. The themes which are most visible are trust, vanity, appearances, contentment, lack of confidence and manipulation.
11. The flowing characters in the story, *The Fly*, are:
  - The office clerk- Macey
  - The author's symbolic device in the story- the Fly
  - One of Mr Woodifield's daughters- Gertrude
  - Mr Woodifield's son-Reggie, who lost his life in the First World War
12. The Boss does not react to the information given by Woodifield about coming across the grave of his son. The only way it is clear that he has heard this dialogue is described by the author as quivering of his eyelids. From here on, the author tries to convey that the boss is trying to suppress his emotions.
13. The author has paid a lot of attention in developing the character of the boss. He symbolizes malicious powers which are unjustified and groundless, he has been projected as the cruel forces of war that are just out to kill innocent people for their amusement.
14. The writings of R.K Narayan try to highlight the social situations and routine life of the characters in the story. His work has been equated to William Faulkner as he had also introduced an imaginary town in his stories and reconnoitred the humour and care in the routine life of his characters.
15. Raju is thrilled with the amount of money he finds inside the wallet of the man with the green blazer. He gets super thrilled as with the amount he will not have to pick any pockets for at least two weeks and additionally, it will allow him to treat his wife to a movie. Raju even decides to give the change to beggars.
16. According to Raju, the green blazer is the antagonist of the story.
17. The simile used by the author in *The Trail of the Green Blazer* is the comparison of the act of pickpocket waiting for targeting his victim with how a hunter waits for his prey.

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### 4.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. State the elements of short stories.
2. Briefly state the themes of *The Cask of Amontillado*.
3. What are the literary devices used in *The Cask of Amontillado*?
4. Write a short-note on the influences on the writings of Virginia Woolf.
5. What tragic situations helped Mansfield create a tragic world?
6. What are the kinds of symbolism used by Mansfield in *The Fly*? How does the story end?
7. Write a short-note on the critical reception that R.K. Narayan received for his writing style.

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**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Discuss the motivation for Edgar Allan Poe for writing *The Cask of Amontillado*.
2. How does Virginia Woolf depict the relationship between the Duchess and the jeweller?
3. Explain the themes of the short story, *The Duchess and the Jeweller*.
4. Evaluate *The Fly* as a story of the post-war period.
5. 'The Fly by Katherine Mansfield, can be fruitfully read as potent social criticism.' Discuss.
6. Describe the conflicts that are raised in *The Trail of the Green Blazer*.
7. Critically analyse the short story, *The Trail of the Green Blazer*.

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**4.11 FURTHER READING**

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- Prasad, B. 2010. *A Background to the Study of English Literature*. New Delhi: Macmillan.
- Rees, R. J. 2009. *English Literature: An Introduction for Foreign Readers*. New Delhi: Macmillan.
- Denforth Ross. 1963. *American Short Story*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kimber, Gerri. 2015. *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Naik, M.K. 1983. *The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.



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# UNIT 5 PRACTICAL CRITICISM: APPRECIATION OF UNSEEN PROSE PASSAGES

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Non-Fiction Prose and English Prose Fiction: An Introduction
  - 5.2.1 Letter and Biography
  - 5.2.2 Autobiography
  - 5.2.3 Essay
- 5.3 Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own*
- 5.4 R.K. Narayan: *The Axe*
  - 5.4.1 *The Axe*: Summary and Analysis
- 5.5 J.L. Nehru: Speech on Indian Independence
  - 5.5.1 Overview of 'Tryst with Destiny'
  - 5.5.2 Critical Analysis
- 5.6 Summary
- 5.7 Key Terms
- 5.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.9 Questions and Exercises
- 5.10 Further Reading

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## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

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Prose is the most basic form of written language, applying common grammatical structure and natural flow of speech rather than rhythmic structure. Its simplicity and loosely defined arrangement has led to its usage in the majority of spoken dialogues, factual discourse as well as contemporary and imaginary writing.

There are many prose forms. Novels, short stories, and works of criticism are kinds of prose. Other examples include comedy, drama, fable, fiction, folk tale, hagiography, legend, literature, myth, narrative, saga, science fiction, story, articles, newspaper, journals, essays, travelogues and speeches. Each form of prose has its own style and has to be dealt with in its own particular way. Travel writing is also one form of prose. Through this, we get a first-hand account of the travels of the writer, the places he has visited, and the experiences he has encountered.

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## 5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the different styles of non-fiction prose
- Understand the treatment of unseen prose passages
- Critically analyse Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*
- Discuss Narayan's short story *The Axe*

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## 5.2 NON-FICTION PROSE AND ENGLISH PROSE FICTION: AN INTRODUCTION

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Non-fictional prose is any literary work founded chiefly on fact or reality, even though it supposedly incorporates elements of fiction or fancy. Its example can be essays, biographies, letters, diaries, autobiographies, confessions, and so on. Non-fictional prose differs from factual business letters or prescriptions and is used to define an aesthetic writing which aims to teach, convert or impart experience or reality through factual or spiritual revelation. Under this, infinite themes and subject-matter can be dealt with, which may vary from personal to objective. It encompasses political, philosophical, moral, historical, biographical, autobiographical, religious, romantic and argumentative literature. It came into existence after the Renaissance in the sixteenth century England. Non-fictional literature has been used as an effective source of displaying emotions in modern literature. In such prose, the complexities of life give way to self-revelation and introspection on different issues, both personal and objective. There are numerous eminent writers of non-fictional prose, such as Sir Thomas Browne, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Thomas Moore, Jonathan Swift, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, among others.

### 5.2.1 Letter and Biography

**Letter:** A letter is a written message which is usually sent by post. It is a familiar source that gives an insight into the personal life and feelings of a writer. It can be both personal and impersonal. Generally, a letter is a personal expression. In English literature, we have a number of writers whose letters are of literary and aesthetic importance. Among them, Keats is the foremost. His letters are personal in expression and are a very important source of information on his poetic progress and his poetic theories. There are many other letter writers of significance including Horace Walpole, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, William Cowper, Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley, Charles Lamb and Charles Dickens.

**Biography:** Biography is a story of a person's life told by someone else. It is a description in detail or a complete account of someone's life. It covers the happenings from the beginning to the end of a person's life which include birth, education, youth, experience, marriage, middle age, professional achievements, old age and his or her death. It also includes information about family and important acquaintances. It is a literary form of writing, based only on facts.

**Origin and Example:** Earlier, biographies used to be in the form of information about saints, monks and priests so that people could follow them for the betterment of society. But in the late Middle Ages, biographies became a form of literature which was secular. The focus was on famous kings, queens, political figures, and people of different classes. Sir Thomas Malory's (1405–1471) *Le Morte d'Arthur*, first published in 1485, is the life sketch of King Arthur of England. With the passage of time, man started taking interest in various streams like science, fine arts, literature, architecture, and so on, and his curiosity to know about people paved the way for biographies of notable persons. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563) was the first dictionary of the biography in Europe. Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) wrote *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662) which focused on public life. *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724) was a well-known record of notorious pirates. This form of literature saw considerable change as earlier it used to record the lives of saints and during the eighteenth century, biographies of thieves became a fashion.

**Modern biography:** In the eighteenth century, this form of writing was revived by James Boswell (1740–1795) and Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784). Johnson's critical *Lives of the Poets* (1779–81) was a famous example of an eighteenth century biography. James Boswell had to undergo much nuisance and a number of oddities while recording his work *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (1791). This is considered a monumental piece of literature from that period. In the twentieth century, Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) was a famous biographer during the 1920s–1930s. His *Eminent Victorians* (1918) is a notable biographical work. Robert Graves (1895–1985) also wrote a biography known as *I Claudius* (1934). It is the life sketch of the Roman emperor Claudius.

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### 5.2.2 Autobiography

An autobiography means the story of the life of a person written by the person himself. The term was coined by William Taylor (1786–1858) in 1797 in the English periodical, *the Monthly Review*. For Taylor, the word was a hybrid coinage and had to be shunned because it was too 'pedantic.' Robert Southey (1774–1843) also used the term in 1809. For him, it was a story based on the writer's memory about himself. Autobiography is a form of literature in which the writer writes about his own life, experiences and achievements. It aims at a successful presentation of the self or personality. It is a record of the most important events and periods of the writer's life.

Earlier autobiographies were called or entitled *Apologia*. They were meant to provide self-justification for the life of the author. John Henry Newman's (1801–1890) autobiography (1864) is called *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Saint Augustine's (354–430) *Confessions* is his famous autobiographical work. Rousseau (1712–1778) used *Confessions* (1782) as the basis for writing his autobiography. In India, Babur (1483–1530) wrote *Baburnama* between 1493–1529. During the Renaissance, the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571) wrote his biography, *Vita* (Life) between 1558 to 1562. During this period autobiography became a medium to express political, social, philosophical, psychological and aesthetic thoughts. In the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler's autobiography *Mein Kampf* and Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* are very famous example of autobiographies which also reflect their political views. An autobiography does not mention the end of a person, as a writer himself is supposedly writing it. Dr. Samuel Johnson, a noted critic and writer of the eighteenth century, considered autobiography as a better medium than biography. According to him:

'The writer of his own life has at last the first qualification of an historian, the knowledge of truth; and though it may be plausibly objected that his temptations to disguise it are equal to his opportunities of knowing it, yet I cannot but think that impartiality may be expected with equal confidence from him that related the passages of his own life, as from him that delivers the transactions of another'

According to Longfellow, 'Autobiography is a product of first-hand experience...' Thus, it is a thing expressed more truthfully and objectively because it is a writer's first-hand experience. The felt experiences can be expressed best by a person himself. An autobiography can be written in two forms: (i) Subjective (ii) objective or fictionalized. A subjective autobiography is that which expresses the author's own ideas about himself and centres the events around it. It speaks about his personal life, childhood, youth, emotional experiences, his career, profession, status, and so on. It is generally expected that a writer would write his autobiography after he has passed a considerable period of his life. St. Augustine's *Confessions* of 5th century A.D. can be quoted as one of the first examples of full and candid analysis of the self. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* published during the later half of the eighteenth century influenced European thought in the 18th century, becoming one of the inspirations for the French Revolution.

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An autobiography can also become an instrument to express a person's philosophical, political, social, economical and psychological ideas. It may also turn from subjective to objective like Rousseau's *Confession*. The autobiographies of David Hume, Edward Gibbon and Benjamin Franklin, written in the 18th century, are notable works of art. There are autobiographies in which the name of the writer and his real stories are not revealed. They are called fictionalized autobiographies. In such types of autobiography, the important ideas, emotions, experiences are all mentioned but names of the characters are different. Here, the writer expresses his emotions through an invented set of characters and events. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one such example. William Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* (1823) is a sad story of the writer's love-life. Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope and others wrote autobiographies using their personal experiences of life. Henry Brooks Adams, John Stuart Mill, and Cardinal Newman all are considered as famous writers of autobiography.

The subject and treatment of an autobiography differ according to the profession, skill, learning and intellectual inclination of a writer of autobiography. Sir Osbert Sitwell's autobiography *Left Hand, Right Hand!* is a great piece of literature. Thomas De Quincey, Benjamin Robert Haydon (painter), Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, J.S. Mill, John Ruskin, Morley, H.G. Wells, Lloyd George, Rudyard Kipling, George Moore, Sir Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru all are known as the masters of the art of autobiographical writing. Their autobiographies inspire people with literary taste and artistic fervour. Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* are all categorized as fictional autobiographies. In short, autobiography is a form of literary expression which expresses the writer's own personality in art subjectively. Like the novel, this is a very popular form of expression in the modern age.

### 5.2.3 Essay

An essay is a short piece of writing which reflects the writer's own point of view about a particular subject. Essays are essentially written in prose form. They may have diverse elements in focus such as literary criticism, political manifestos, observations of daily life, reflections of an author, recollection, personal philosophies, learned arguments, criticism of life, events or happenings, and so on. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'essay is a composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish, but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range.' A philosophical essay may turn into a treatise in length. W.H. Hudson says that an essay should be subjective because it is a literature of self-expression. An essay should be brief, precise, argumentative, fact or philosophy-based and logically satisfying. It should aim to fulfil or give some understanding of a certain aspect of a subject. Francis Bacon's essays are the best examples of these types of essays.

According to M.H. Abrams, an essay is any short composition in prose that undertakes to discuss a matter, express a point of view, and persuade to accept a thesis on any subject, or simply entertain. The Frenchman, Montaigne and the Englishman, Sir Francis Bacon are called the fathers of the modern essay. Essays are of many kinds. The four broad categories are, narrative, descriptive, persuasive and expository essays. There are other types such as cause and effect, classification and division, compare and contrast, dialectic, exemplification, familiar, personal, history, critical, economic and logical. **Critical** essays are those in which the subject matter is impersonal. It comes more from the brain than the heart and is generally an evaluation of a subject or work of art. All the

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important critics of English letters come into this category. It also aims at theorising literature. We have chiefly two types of critics in English: (i) Classic (ii) Romantic. But in the post war period, we have numerous variations in this genre. **Personal** essays have more to do with inner feelings and the heart of the writer than the brain. **Familiar essay** is a type in which the essayist addresses a single person and he speaks about himself and a particular subject. Charles Lamb in the Romantic Age of English literature has been called the greatest exponent of familiar essays. This essay type is a blend of both personal and critical, and hence, use both heart and brain equally.

An essay is a composition of short prose. The English essay has many forms, but there are hardly any cut and dried rules to guide and govern their writing. Sir Francis Bacon rightly suggests that there is a very close relationship between the word 'essay' and the word of the mineralogist 'assay' which means the process employed in mineralogy to remove the dust away to be left with specks of gold. Bacon thinks deeply over some topics of social custom or behaviour till his conclusions are reduced to well written concise statements, justifying the appropriateness of the remark, 'Brevity is the soul of wit'. It is for this reason that Bacon's essays can be called a collection of sayings, mottoes and proverbs. Bacon has the power of explaining a bare truth with the help of an appropriate image or metaphor.

It is as relevant as it is important to note that although Bacon is called the father of the English Essay, he did not invent the form. He should be given the credit for importing the idea from France and transplanting it into the literary soil of England. In his essays, Bacon does not appear as a scientist or a philosopher but as a man of action or in the words of Bacon himself a 'Citizen of the World'. However, he is too much of an English man, or rather an Elizabethan-Jacobean Englishman, to be more precise, to fit into the category of a citizen of the world. Bacon was not only a speculative philosopher. He lived in a world of action and formulated a philosophy for a man of action. Many of Bacon's essays are written for the benefit of kings. Bacon was a very shrewd observer of society and took a keen interest into the nature and affairs of men. He was born in the age which was remarkable in many ways. It was a period of great importance in the history of England. He was the true son of Renaissance. The elements of wonder, of enquiry, of admiration, is all found in Bacon's works.

**Early English Prose Fiction** is a balanced and representative collection of fictional prose works from the 16th and 17th centuries, and many of these important texts are difficult to obtain elsewhere.

Early English Prose Fiction is the largest corpus of works of prose fiction available in electronic form. It includes Elizabethan fiction, Jest Books, collections of short pieces and novellas, Restoration fiction, and works of popular fiction.

Early English Prose Fiction is the perfect complement to English Poetry and English Drama. It contains prose versions of some of the poetry in those databases and includes many of the same authors.

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### 5.3 VIRGINIA WOOLF: A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

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*A Room of One's Own* is a comprehensive composition by Woolf. Initially published on 24 October 1929, the composition was based on a sequence of lectures she gave at Newham College and Girton College, the two women's colleges at Cambridge University. Although this comprehensive composition actually make use of an imaginary storyteller

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and storyline to look at women, both, as writers of and characters in fiction, the text for the delivery of the series of lectures, named 'Women and Fiction' and consequently the essay, are regarded as non-fiction. The composition is by and large viewed as women-oriented and is well-known in its argument for both, a factual and outlining space for women writers in a literary practice governed by.

### Chapter 1

The chapter opens with Woolf saying she has been asked to give a lecture on women and fiction. She tells her audience that the topic made her think on subject matters from a woman's viewpoint: what was it that made a uniquely female experience, what were the salient features of the fiction women themselves wrote and how was it different from the creative output of men when they talked of women in their works. She goes on to say that she could not come to any definitive conclusion in her ramblings. She did, however, come to one conclusion and that was 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. To further explain her point she decides to use the fictional narrator Mary Belton as her alter ego.

She goes on to say that a week ago she was sitting by the riverside and thinking about the topic. However, her thoughts were not very productive. She compares them to the measly catch of a fisherman who throws the half grown fish back into the water since it is useless to him. However she is excited by the simile and rushes over the lawns of Oxbridge to go to the library. However she is stopped and told that she cannot be there since only 'fellows' and 'scholars' are allowed. She forgets whatever she was thinking about at this interruption. Her thought changes direction and she wonders as to the creative genius of the literary giants like Milton and Shakespeare. She decides to research their creative minds in the library. However, she is denied entry again: women can enter only if they are accompanied by a scholar or if they can produce a Letter of Introduction written by one of them. She is angered by this denial and refuses to enter the library again. While leaving she passes the chapel and notices a service about to begin. However she doesn't contemplate entering: she would only be denied entry. At this point she looks at the wealth that was consumed to create these magnificent structures and realizes men can create these because they have money.

She goes to lunch and sees a huge variety laid out before her: soles, partridges, a delicious dessert, and excellent wine. The relaxed atmosphere and the food inspire 'rational intercourse' in the conversation. At this point she sees a tailless minx cat and feels as if something is lacking in the scene. When she goes back to Fernham College, where she is staying as a guest, she has a plain dinner. The food is starkly different from that served in Oxbridge: it comprises of plain soup, mediocre beef, vegetables, potatoes, bad custard, prunes, biscuits cheese and water. She starts a conversation with her friend Mary Seton. As the conversation meanders she thinks of kings and magnates and their contribution to the field of education. Looking at the bare food and surroundings she is reminded of the opulence she saw in the morning. The women wonder what lies beneath their building and Mary talks of the perpetual shortage of funds required to run the college.

Their strained circumstances make the women realize that their own mothers did not leave them any monetary legacy; had they done so they would have been financially independent and could have lived a life of luxury as enjoyed by their male counterparts in Oxbridge. However, as they discuss this the narrator realizes two things: one, women never had ownership of their own wealth and it passed from father to husband. The

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situation had changed only in the last 48 years. She also realizes that their mothers would have had gone into business to earn financial independence and there is a real possibility that they would not have been born. In other words it seems a Hobson's choice. On the way back to her inn, the narrator ponders over issues of wealth and poverty and how the former is assigned to men and the latter to women. This in turn leads her to think of the issue as to whether this has any impact on the literary tradition or the lack of it when it comes to creative writing by women. This is her last thought as she goes to sleep.

### Chapter 2

The next day the narrator goes to the British Museum in London in an effort to get some answers to questions regarding men, women, creativity and wealth, that had occurred to her in her ramblings. When she reaches the hallowed halls of the Museum she realizes that there is no dearth of books on women. However, she is dismayed to learn that most of these are books about women, but written by men. In other words the male mind has been constructing the approved female mind and is playing it for consumption for a long time. In contrast she finds that there are very few books on men written by women. She selects some of these books randomly and studies them in order to get a satisfactory answer to the question as to why women are poor. Trying to come up with an answer for why women are poor, she locates a multitude of other topics on women in the books, and a contradictory array of men's opinions on women. She is frustrated in her endeavors and imagines that these tomes expounding the inferiority of women have been written by a dour, angry looking professor. It is at this point that she realizes that it is the professor's anger towards women that is making her angry as well. She realizes her reaction would have been different if he had written about women 'dispassionately.' She returns the books since she finds them useless. When her anger dissipates she is left wondering as to why these men are all angry towards women.

During lunch while reading the newspaper she is struck with the realization that every news item and opinion in the paper underlines the fact that England is a patriarchal society. She realizes that men hold all the power and money in their hand. They are in the position to make decisions and the decisions they make are those that are in their interests. She wonders as to why men are angry when they hold so much power in their hands. One reason that she can think of is that they are fearful that their power may be snatched from them and this fear causes anger in them. She qualifies her statement when she realizes that men are angry only in their interactions with women. This leads her to the realization that when men claim women to be inferior to them, they are in effect laying claim to their own superiority. The narrator acknowledges that both the genders find life difficult. She believes that the only way to make some sense of the disappointments of life is to live it with a modicum of self-confidence. It is easier to generate this self-confidence if one considers the other to be inferior. Her belief is that male self-confidence comes from their belief that women are inferior. Such a formulation immediately raises questions about the supposed innate inferiority of women and proves it false. The narrator states that throughout history, women have served as models of inferiority that enlarge the superiority of men: 'Looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.' She extrapolates her argument to suggest that men become angry and violent with women whenever the latter criticizes them because such a criticism directly challenges their inferior status when compared to men.

At this point the narrator is grateful for her inheritance of 500 pounds a year which she receives from her aunt. She recalls that before she received this largesse she

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had to rely on menial degrading work to earn money. This work made her feel like a slave with no soul. Her inheritance serves as an antidote to this feeling of powerlessness. She further goes on to say that her money has changed the tenor of her relationship with men: since she does not rely on them for her well-being she does not fear or resent them anymore. She also goes on to point out a basic difference between men and women. She suggests that while she was happy and satisfied to be able to feel free and was happy to be able to 'think of things in themselves,' men do not respond to money and power in a similar way. They are never satisfied with the power or money they have and are constantly looking for ways to enhance it. On her way back home, she witnesses men working on the street. She ends the day's journey in the hope and anticipation that a day will soon come when women will no longer be considered the weaker sex in need of 'protection' and will have access to the same jobs and opportunities as men.

### Chapter 3

This part of the essay begins with the narrator expressing her disappointment at failing to draw any conclusion as to why women are poorer than men. While she was wondering about this question her attention is drawn to the relative lack of female writers in the most fertile period of literary creation in British history. She suspects that this disjunction exists because there is a connection between living conditions and creative works: it is difficult to be creative if one is living in difficult and strained conditions. When she studies the history of the age she realizes that even though there were strong women during the age they did not have many occasions to express this strength of character simply because they did not have any rights. However she cannot arrive at any firm answer and her query remains incomplete.

At this point she recalls the bishop's statement that Shakespeare is the greatest creative genius of his age. His recognition leads her to conjecture as to what would have been the fate of his equally talented sister, if he had had one. This leads her to comparing the lives of Shakespeare and his mythical sister Judith. She realizes that while Shakespeare would have gone to school, married, gone to work in the theatre where he would have met interesting people and made a name for himself; his sister's life would have been radically different. Despite possessing an equal talent not only would it not have been acknowledged, in fact steps would have been taken to actively stifle it. She would not have been allowed to go to school and would have been forced to marry before she was willing to do so. Instead she would have been forced to become pregnant. The narrator conjectures that these disappointments in life would have so broken her spirit that she would have committed suicide. In other words there was no place for a female Shakespeare in the time. Despite this she agrees with the bishop's statement that no woman of the time could have been a comparable genius simply because a genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. Another point she makes that the age must have witnessed female talent of some sort, even if it was not of the calibre of Shakespeare. The tragedy is that even if this creative voice succeeded in surmounting obstacles and was successful in creating a literary work it would have survived as an anonymous piece.

This leads her to explore the question of what is the desirable state for the mind to reach the optimum creative level. She realizes that creativity is a very difficult process. The artist has to face a perpetual scarcity of privacy and money; at the same time the world is indifferent to the writer's ability or inability to write. The situation is even direr for women since the indulgence granted to male authors is denied to them. The world is indifferent to the female writers' creative desires and impulses which in time are subdued



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if not totally killed by an unsympathetic public. She believes that the male gaze is unsympathetic to the female desire for creativity simply because it gives him another item to express his superiority. However, she believes that the truly creative mind rises above such mundane matters and is 'incandescent.' It filters out personal 'grudges and spites and antipathies' to present the distilled essential human experience. Her argument here is that for all its supposed superiority a lot of the work the male mind produces is worthless since it is inspired by a desire to prove superiority over women. Such a work is not 'free and unimpeded' like Shakespeare's is.

### Chapter 4

The narrator continues her search for an unimpeded creative mind during the Elizabethan Age. She fails to find any creative female voice. The only candidate she can find is Lady Winchilsea. However she discounts her because according to the narrator her writing is marred by fear and hatred. She believes that if she had not been consumed by these negative emotions she had the potential of writing brilliant verse. She finds the same drawback in the writings of Duchess Margaret of Newcastle. She believes that Margaret too would have been a better poet had she lived in the modern age. She finds that the letters of Dorothy Osborne another Elizabethan to reveal a similar insecurity. Though brilliant she was an insecure writer since looked for affirmation not within herself but from the patriarchal society. As long as women do this they will never succeed in creating a viable creative piece.

She considers Aphra Behn a milestone in the history of women's literature. She is the first middle class female voice who was forced to enter the public realm to earn money after the death of her husband. The narrator considers the first female writer who successfully achieved 'freedom of the mind' and surpasses even her own innate skill as an artist in her work. She further goes on to present Behn as a model younger women can use in their literary journeys. Though she did not influence her immediate descendents since being recognized as an author was considered nearly sacrilegious, nevertheless she did influence women writers from the 18th century onwards. Another importance of Aphra Behn lies in the fact that she was living proof that monetary stability made one immune to snide comments and unflattering statements which anyway decreased as a writer became financially successful.

The fact that nineteenth century women writing primarily produced novels, in spite of the fact that women began with poetry writing, confuses the narrator of the essay. She wonders why all women writers of the nineteenth century chose to write novels. She thinks about the four famous novelist of the said period — George Eliot, Emily and Charlotte Bronte, and Jane Austen — and concludes that they had little in common apart from the fact that they all were childless. The narrator tries to speculate regarding their choice of novel form. All the four mentioned novelists belonged to the middle class, which meant the lack of privacy. Perhaps, it was this lack of privacy that prompted them to choose novel form, for they might have seen it as harder form than poetry or plays in the climate of middle class distraction. For example, it is a known fact that once when Austen was distracted in her family's sitting room whilst writing, she hid the manuscript. Another reason could have been that these writers might have found the novel form an absolute fit for her talents, given the customary training of nineteenth century women in the art of social observation.

The narrator does not find any sign in the work of Austen that might suggest that her work was affected due to her lack of privacy or her personal hatred or fear. She

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writes: her novels are 'without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching'. The narrator suggests that Charlotte Bronte might have had more genius than Austen but the reason that she is not able to write with the same incandescence is that her works bear the shadows of her own personal hatred and wounds. The narrator thinks that amongst the four mentioned novelist, Charlotte Bronte could have gained most from some travel, experience, and a better financial situation.

While talking about diverse effects of a novel on different readers, the narrator comes to talk about the integrity of a novel, which she thinks is the quality that makes a novel universal in nature. She defines integrity as 'the conviction that' a novelist 'gives one that this is the truth'. According to the narrator, integrity not only holds the entire novel together, but also makes the novel exciting and interesting. She then comes to the question of whether the sex of the writer affects the artistic integrity.

Considering the works of Bronte, the narrator thinks it certainly did. She writes: 'She left her story, to which her entire devotion was due, to attend to some personal grievance. She remembered that she had been starved of her proper due of experience. ...Her imagination swerved from indignation and we felt it swerve.' In Bronte's case, the gender residue leads not only anger, but also to fear, pain and ignorance. She asserts that Bronte was not the only novelist whose work was affected by her own personal grievances: 'One has only to skim those old forgotten novels and listen to the tone of voice in which they are written to divine that the writer was meeting criticism; she was saying this by way of aggression, or that by way of conciliation. ...She was thinking of something other than the thing itself.' The only two female novelists, according to her, who successfully maintained their artistic integrity in the face of misunderstanding, criticism, and opposition are Austen and Emily Bronte.

The narrator argues that tradition had masculine values, such as war, as the subject of novels and other forms of literature, instead of more feminine ones, like character studies in a drawing room setting. And because of such tradition the women writers of nineteenth century had to adapt by adjustments and compromises in order to escape the inevitable criticism of their works being insubstantial. The compromises affected their works, for they had to deviate from their original ideas to suit the critical and traditional demands. The narrator thinks that it is no less than a miracle that in such an uncongenial climate, writers like Austen and Emily Bronte were able to survive and thrive as a writer.

The greatest impediment for the women writers of the nineteenth century was the nonexistence of any literary tradition to follow, for they could not possibly have followed the existing male literary tradition. They might have had a little help from the male writers, but the narrator says that 'the weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully'. 'There was no common sentence' for these women writers to follow. The masculine sentence of male writers like Johnson could not have done much to help her. .'

According to the narrator, Austen successfully created her own 'natural, shapely sentence' which enabled her to articulate her deeper expressions, unlike Charlotte Bronte and Eliot, who could not successfully deal with the lack of feminine sentences. The narrator thinks that this could have been another reason for their inclination towards the novel form, for it was the only literary form 'young enough to be soft in their hands'. She predicts that in future women writers will move onto other forms of literature, for they have poetry inside them that is still unexpressed. This does not mean that women will

begin writing poems. They may find some 'new vehicle' to express what resides within them still unexpressed.

## Chapter 5

The narrator shifts her focus on the book shelf which contains books by her contemporary male and female writer on wide variety of topics. The number of books produced by women is nearly as much as men, and interestingly they are not only novels; they cover all sorts of subjects. She feels that women could not possibly have touched these subjects a generation ago. The narrator feels that women have grown past novels to express themselves. In order to assess the development in the contemporary women's writing, she picks a novel called 'Life's Adventure or some such title', by Mary Carmichael. This is the first novel of Carmichael. The narrator sees this young writer as a direct descendent of other female writers like Lady Winchilsea and Aphra Behn. She goes on to assess her novel to see that how this young female writer has inherited from the women writers of the past, both their 'characteristics and restrictions'.

The narrator finds the prose uneven and not as good as Austen's. She writes: 'The smooth gliding of sentence after sentence was interrupted. Something tore, something scratched.' She then corrects her previous remark and says that Carmichael is attempting something very different from that of Austen and that there is nothing common between the two writers. She then says that perhaps the unevenness of her prose style is a break away from the 'flowery' writing style that is so characteristic of women's writing. But she cautions that the breaking is good if it is done for the purpose of creating: 'First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence. Very well, she has every right to do both these things if she does them not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating.'

As the narrator continues her reading, she comes across a simple sentence – 'Chloe liked Olivia'. The narrator is surprised. She considers this to be a critical moment in the Carmichael's innovation as a writer. How rarely, she realizes, has literature viewed women in relation to other women. For centuries women in literature have been seen only in relation to other men, and that is why the narrator finds the idea of friendship between two women as something very innovating and groundbreaking. The romance, says the narrator, in the life of a woman has a role to play, but a minor one.

The problem arises when the writers have their fictional women characters concern excessively about it, for it is this excessive concern with romance that results in their portrayals as either beautiful and good or depraved and horrific: 'Hence, perhaps, the peculiar nature of woman in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity—for so a lover would see her as his love rose or sank, was prosperous or unhappy.' Such an attitude towards the women characters in fiction changed by the nineteenth century, and the women characters grew more complex in novels and other forms of literature, but the narrator still holds that both men and women are limited in their knowledge about the opposite sex.

The narrator continues to read Carmichael's novel to find that the women characters in the novel are not confined in the limitation of their house, and that they have interests and pursuit outside the home. Both Chloe and Olivia have work in a laboratory. This little fact greatly changes the dynamics of their friendship. The narrator speculates about the significance of this detail and how important a transition this little

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detail could bring about, 'for if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been'.

The narrator contemplates on the destituteness of literature if men were perceived only in relation to the women. She firmly believes that a little more genius in her work, and Carmichael's book will have a significant place in the history of women's literature. She continues reading the novel and come to a scene that has both the women in it. The narrator reflects that it is a 'sight that has never been seen since the world began.' She has grown very fond and hopeful for the Carmichael's descriptions of the complexities and female mind, and it is this hope that makes her realize that she has betrayed her original aim, i.e. not to praise her own sex. She acknowledges that in spite of whatever genius or greatness they may possess, women have not yet made much of mark in the world when compared to the achievements of men. But still, the narrator thinks that all the great men in history received 'some stimulus, some renewal or creative power' from the women, something that they could not possibly have received from other men. She asserts that there is a vast difference in the creativity of men and women, and 'It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how we should manage with one only?'

The narrator is of the opinion that 'merely as an observer', Carmichael has much to do. She will have to explore the lives of 'courtesan' and 'harlot' who, for a long time, have been stereotyped by the male writers. The narrator, however, expresses her fear that while writing about these subjects controversial in nature, Carmichael will be self-conscious. While writing about the countless women, whose lives are still not recorded, Carmichael will have to resist the anger against men. As the narrator continues to read her novel, she feels that even though Carmichael's writing bears no traces of anger or fear, she is 'no more than a clever girl'. The narrator feels in a century or so, with a room of her own and a little money, Carmichael will evolve as better writer than she is now.

### Chapter 6

In the last chapter the narrator is left wondering if her thoughts regarding the differences between men and women have had a negative impact on her view of the two sexes. She sees a young couple get into a taxi and their unity soothes her. Their unity forces her to question as what 'unity of the mind' actually means especially since it keeps changing. Remembering the couple in the taxi, she concludes that this unity could also mean that the two are in 'complete satisfaction and happiness' and are living in harmony. This leads her to the conclusion that what Coleridge meant by a creative mind being 'androgynous' is that it does not think as male or female. His belief was that the androgynous mind does not think in terms of gender. The narrator explains this when she says that the 'androgynous mind transmits emotion without impediment it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided.' She considers Shakespeare to be the perfect example of such an androgynous mind and rues the fact that such minds are not found in the present age.

She believes the Suffrage campaign for the women's vote provoked men's defensiveness over their own sex. To prove this point she reads a novel by a respected male writer. She notes that though the writing is strong and clear it betrays a bias against women. She notes that he protests 'against the equality of the other sex by asserting his own superiority.' This is destructive since it prevents the representation of women as

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viable creatures capable of expression in their own right. She uses his argument to state that only a truly androgynous mind can foster 'perpetual life' in its reader's mind. She finds both male and female writers at fault in this and posits the idea that as long as a sexual identity and a sexual bias permeates a text the writer and the writing is not free and will not be 'fertilized.' In other words there is a dire need in both sexes to rise above the self-consciousness of gender in their works.

The narrator says that women's suffrage campaign to gain the right to vote incited the men to be more defensive against their own sex. To illustrate further, she chooses a respected male author's novel to read. She points out the novel betrays a sense of bias against women, though she acknowledges that the writing is strong and clear. She highlights that in order to protest 'against the equality of the other sex,' he asserts the superiority of his own sex. According to the narrator, such an attitude is destructive, for it does not allow women to be represented as capable of expressing in their own right. She takes his own argument back to him in order to assert that it takes a true androgynous mind to further 'perpetual life' in the minds of the readers. She argues that both male and female writers should be blamed for this, and continues with the idea that there is no possibility for the writer and the writing to be free and 'fertilized' as long as the sexual identity and sexual bias continues to influence a text.

At this point in the text, Virginia Woolf takes over the narrative voice. She anticipates and responds to the two possible criticism of the narrator's voice. First, she points that it was not a mistake that he did not express any opinions regarding the relative merits of the two genders, it was a deliberate decision, for such a judgment is neither possible nor desirable. Second objection that may come from the reader is that she excessively emphasized the importance of thing material in nature, while underplaying the role of mind, which is perfectly capable of overcoming poverty and lack of privacy. To respond to this objection she cites an argument of a professor claiming that only three amongst the best poets of the last century were well educated, and all but Keats was fairly well off. She asserts that without material freedom one cannot possibly imagine to have intellectual freedom, and without that creation of great poetry is impossible. Women who have been less fortunate as far as the material things are concerned, have not yet produced anything to be called as great. She writes:

Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time. . . . Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry. That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own.

She then talks about her position on women's writing, and explains why she consider it to be important. She says that she is an avid reader, and of lately she has been disappointed by the writings that are masculine in nature. Besides, she believes that a good writer are good human beings, who are more close to reality than anyone else, and through their writings they can communicate this sense of reality to the readers of their works. She asks her readers to 'Think of things in themselves,' and write not only in the genre of fiction but in all kinds of genre. She urges her readers to remember what men have thought of women. She acknowledges that in spite of the various opportunities that presented themselves to the young women in the audience, they have taken but few steps ahead. But she is not disappointed, and asserts that Judith Shakespeare still lives in all women, and with little financial freedom and privacy, she will soon be reborn.

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### Critical Appreciation

*A Room of One's Own* (1929) is an extended essay by Woolf. In the essay she employs a fictional narrator and narrative to explore women in their role as writers of fiction and as characters in it. The title of the essay focuses on the author's need to create art and her need for poetic license. She also examines the question as to whether women can actually produce a viable piece of art. The central premise of the essay, which the title further exemplifies, is that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. In other words, it is the lack of independent financial resources and not an inability to create viable art that prevents women from creating it. It is not a woman's limitations but the limitations imposed on her from outside that prevent her from creating art. Here it should be pointed out that while Woolf never received a formal education, here audience was getting precisely such an education. So her purpose in the essay becomes manifold: on the one hand she wants her audience to understand the significance of the education they are receiving and not waste it; she also wants them to be conscious of the burden they carry vis a vis other women who are not present in the university with them; and she also wants them to realize that their education and freedom can easily be taken from them and so wants them to work to prevent such a thing from happening.

The essay is a partly fictionalized narrative that led her to the belief that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.' The dramatic setting of the essay is that Woolf has been invited to speak on the topic of Women and Fiction. She creates a fictional narrator; the four Mary's who dramatize the process she took before she arrived at this conclusion.

The fictional narrator starts her exploration by delineating the different educational and material experiences of both men and women. She then talks of her experiences researching the British Library only to find that it is the male voice that presents the authoritative female experience. She also shares another discovery: most of these experiences are written in anger with an aim to control if not silence the subversive female voice. Another discovery she makes is that the female voice and persona is absent from history: it is almost as if women do not exist in the history. She uses this absence to justify her project of creating her own female history of the world. When she tries to do so she realizes that history is unforgiving to women. She uses the fictional character of Judith Shakespeare to prove this point. The intelligent woman faces a tragic future simply because she cannot reconcile her limited constraining reality to her unrealized potential. The fictional narrator then travels further into time to re-create a feminine canon which any aspiring authoress can draw inspiration from. When she does this she realizes that very few writers are expounding a truly female voice and experience and an only these need to be emulated. Then the narrator goes on to survey her contemporaries and finds them wanting. The essay concludes with the fictional narrator expounding her audience to build on the tradition they have been bequeathed and to enrich it further.

In the essay Woolf argues that women be granted a literal and figurative space as legitimate writers within a male dominated literary tradition. In other words she stakes claim for the acknowledgement of female writers and their creative endeavors. The ideas propounded by the essay were revolutionary for their time, especially if we consider the fact that while men were encouraged to forge their own path in life, women were expected to do nothing more than support their men in this effort. The essay verbalizes the dissatisfaction and resistance to this discriminatory patriarchal system. In the essay

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she states: 'Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, and no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.'

In the essay she insists the only way to ensure independence was having access to one's own money, i.e. money for which one did not have to give explanations to anybody. Since she spent her life on the 500 pounds per annum she received as inheritance from an aunt; she postulated that this was the amount necessary to achieve financial freedom. In the essay she asks the question 'What effect has poverty on fiction?' Her answer is that 'Intellectual freedom depends on material things. Poetry depends on intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time.' Her argument is that women are intellectually poor and unable to express themselves, not because they don't know how to do so but because they are not allowed to do so. She further states that if one's survival depends on the approval of the other, creativity will be stifled. To ensure creativity therefore material freedom is a must.

In the essay Woolf presents George Eliot, Emily Bronte, Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte as the 'four great novelists' to be studied, emulated and appreciated. Through these writers she attempts to create a female canon that can rival the patriarchal canon. She considers this attempt important also because she believes that only female writers can express female experience in all its shades. She considers them to be worthy of study and presents them as proofs that if allowed to be themselves women of any age can produce literary works which will not just stand the test of time but will also rival the literary creations of the best male writers. She also uses their example to point out the fact that it is only when women write of women that the true depth and complexity of the female mind and soul is revealed in the character they create. She further adds that when masculine writers present female characters in their works they project flat characters devoid of any richness of emotion and feeling. In fact these female characters serve as foils to the male protagonists. Instead of standing on their own they gain their identity and legitimacy within the text only in relation to their role with respect to the male protagonist. Therefore not only is the presentation of female characters flawed, such a representation detracts from the value and role of literature in society. In the essays she posits this idea when she says: 'Suppose, for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreams; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them; how literature would suffer.'

Another argument she makes is that the writings of earlier women novelists can be attributed to either one of two reasons: either they wrote in defiance of masculine standards or in deference to them. In most of these authors we rarely find the true female voice. She argues that George Eliot and the Bronte sisters wrote as per the prevailing notions of a masculine idea of the novel. Hence their works are inferior. By contrast she considers Jane Austen's novels to be reflective of the female voice and experience. Virginia Woolf goes on to criticize her contemporary novelists of being sex-inhibited. She goes on to argue that though one's sex is important the effective artist is androgynous. By this she means that the artist is harmoniously bisexual in comprehension (which affects a creative fusion). This argument links with her statement regarding lesbianism in the sense that the artists' sexual orientation is irrelevant while considering the efficacy of his/her work.

Therefore she conjectures that a great deal of literary wealth has been lost since women are unable to write as they deem fit. As proof of this she points out the fact that

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even Jane Austen a recognized canonical author was forced to hide her work because she feared that she not only would not be accepted but instead she would be ridiculed. In the essay she writes: 'Imaginatively [a woman] is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant.' This bold statement highlights the wealth of fiction and poetry written about women and the lack of it actually written by them. She highlights the difficulties women face in their effort to create art through Judith, Shakespeare's fictional sister. She argues that while Shakespeare is encouraged to go to school and learn new ideas and thoughts, Judith is confined to the life of performing household chores. Though she wishes to learn, she is scolded by her parents whenever they find her holding a book: they believe that any time she spends reading detracts her from completing her household tasks. As they grow up she is forcibly betrothed to a man she does not love. When she resists she is beaten into submission. After marriage she is condemned to a life of drudgery and more household work. In contrast Shakespeare is encouraged to go out in the world and make a name for himself. He succeeds spectacularly and his name is synonymous with literature.

In contrast Judith's talents are not just lost; tragically they are never even given an opportunity to be realized. She highlights the tragedy of Judith's life when she says that 'She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as a boy to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school.' The 'but' makes it clear that her desires do not matter and that she is considered valuable only in the degree to which she fulfils social roles assigned to her. Woolf's argument here is that it is a woman's gender and not her lack or presence of skills that closes doors for her. This is the reason she wants her listeners to be conscious of their role in history: they are the privileged few who have the opportunity to have an education and make intelligent choices. They should ensure that they do so that others may find it easier to follow. At the same time she does not deny the fact that the way will not be easy for them. Nevertheless, it is the one which has to be travelled to ensure that women receive their due not just in the field of art and literature but in other areas as well. The argument she makes here was used by later feminists to work against the glass ceiling in various professions and to demand for more inclusive policies in various fields of public life.

In addition to the four novelists she also refers to the feminist scholar Jane Ellen Harrison and also to Rebecca West. She presents them as proof of a woman's ability to think critically. At the same time she uses their example to present the extent to which the patriarchal set up is uncomfortable with decisive feminist voices and the extent to which it will go to discredit them. To support this claim she refers to Desmond MacCarthy's (referred to as 'Z') claim that West a mere 'arrant feminist' and need not be taken seriously. She also refers to F. E. Smith, 1st Earl of Birkenhead and his retrogressive attitude to women; especially his resistance in granting them suffrage. Through these examples she shows that women will only be indulged if they expect men to treat them seriously and with respect. These will have to be snatched from them and only the financially independent woman will be able to do this. She refers to the term Oxbridge, a not too subtle amalgam of the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge to suggest that such regressive ideas are shared by the intellectuals residing in these hallowed walls as well. The idea she wishes to put across is that the dice is laden against women since they can expect no support from either the intellectual or the political front. They will have to fight their battles on their own. Moreover, in this way they can rely only on their fellow sisters for support. In this too the essay lays a central argument of the feminist movement: the essential universality of the female experience and its discriminatory nature across class and social barriers.



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To argue her viewpoint Woolf creates a fictional narrator. At several points in the text she is identified as ‘Mary Beaton, Mary Seton, or Mary Carmichael.’ This line refers to the 16th century ballad of Mary Hamilton, a woman who was hanged since she refused to don the socially accepted roles of wife and mother. This made her a subversive figure which needed to be silenced. It needs to be remembered that Judith too commits suicide when she becomes pregnant and is expecting an actor’s child. Her death is the only way available to her to register her protest at the life imposed on her. Through all these examples Woolf is trying to underline the point that the imposition of socially sanctioned role on women while reprehensible will continue until women develop strategies to resist them. Art therefore becomes not just an expression of the essential female experience; it is also a tool of resistance.

The reference to the four Mary’s is important on many levels. On a personal level it draws attention to Woolf’s own position as someone who is not a mother, and so by extension someone who is not nurturing and can, therefore, be destructive. On another level this reference draws attention to the fact that the narrator’s demand that her female audience chart their own path of freedom and redefine art and create the same according to a feminine sensibility is not without danger. It can have severe repercussions on the physical wellbeing of the individual since the exercise is a direct challenge to held patriarchal beliefs. The reprisal can take many forms ranging from being indulged as a child to being dismissed as being unimportant. To support this argument she gives the example of female critics and the reaction of the establishment to them.

Woolf acknowledges that fact that in her essay she offers no opinion and puts a lot of importance on material things. She justifies this by suggesting that creative output is possible only when one is financially secure. She also states the purpose of the essay is not so much to create an artifact for her; it is instead a clarion call to her sisters around the world to realize that the creative instinct lives in them as well and needs to be given voice. She justifies the right of women to create a literature about themselves and for themselves and says in the essay that even though Shakespeare’s sister never wrote a word she ‘lives in you and in me... For great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh.’

Woolf lays claim that women’s attraction towards each other is a legitimate emotion. In other words she brings lesbianism to the fore both as a sexual choice and as a political statement. She suggests that any sexual attraction women feel for each other is legitimate emotion since only they can truly understand each other. As a political statement it implies that women can only find comfort and a sense of self only in the community of other women. It is this idea that is later used to justify the creation of a purely female literature. Since only women can understand the deeper emotions of each other, therefore it is only in the literature of women that the true female experience will be reflected. The reference to lesbianism needs to be considered in the backdrop of the obscenity trial and public uproar resulting from the publishing of Radclyffe Hall’s lesbian-themed novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Jane Marcus believe that in her talk of lesbianism and the way she approached it, Woolf was showing the way on how to treat this issue in public: ‘Woolf was offering her besieged fellow writer a lesson in how to give a lesbian talk and write a lesbian work and get away with it.’

Woolf’s central premise and the justification of her call for a feminist fiction that presents the true female character and the true female experience is evident in the following extract from the tract. The tract also highlights her fundamental objection to the canon: it deifies the woman and in doing so do defamiliarizes her experiences from

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herself. A female fiction is the only solution to this: 'Women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time. Indeed if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some would say greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room. A very queer, composite being thus emerges. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words and profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read; scarcely spell; and was the property of her husband.'

Alice Walker criticized Woolf on the grounds that in her assertion that a woman needed her own room and money in order to create art she was referring to a purely white female Anglo-Saxon identity. Her charge is that Woolf's conception of a primarily female art form excludes women of colour and so is reductive and discriminatory in its own way. Nevertheless Woolf's argument was an improvement on the current debates regarding women's issues and their capabilities and skills and paved the way for opening doors for them.

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### 5.4 R.K. NARAYAN: *THE AXE*

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It was Graham Greene's who in his introduction to '*The Bachelor of Arts*' drew comparisons between Chekhov and Narayan which eventually became the benchmark of successive critical analysis of Narayan's works. Both Chekhov and Narayan's prose style is full of pathos and humour, as Greene while speaking of Narayan says, 'Sadness and humour in the later books go hand in hand like twins, inseparable as they do in the stories of Chekhov.'

According to Thieme, Chekhov and Narayan exhibit a similar capacity 'to give voice to the language of provincial life and ... artistry in rendering the mundane.'

However, the most abiding quality of his works is the ever pervading sense of irony; almost all his works are informed with the 'quintessential irony of what man can make of himself and of the entire business of living.' Nearly, all his novels are neatly structured and use the omniscient author method of narration. His protagonists are extremely appealing on account of their simplicity. To quote Naik, 'The protagonist in each of Narayan's novels is made to play his life-role during the course of which he or she either matures in the process or rebels, or simply drifts or gain is chastised or even destroyed by a characteristic inner weakness.'

Although not as popular as the novels, Narayan's short stories are remarkable for their workmanship and '... finish than for the quality of reading of life they offer... a persistent note of irony is, by and large, their distinguishing feature.' Deeply influenced by the various eminent writers whom Narayan had diligently pursued since early childhood, Narayan's writings often illustrate the impact of various authors upon his writing. For instance, the endings of his short stories show a strong influence of O. Henry's celebrated technique of the trick finale.

Thematic connections between the short stories and the novels of Narayan are interesting. Almost in each work of Narayan, situations, characters and motifs from

#### Check Your Progress

1. What does Virginia Woolf's dinner at Fernham College comprise?
2. How does Chapter 3 of the essay begin?
3. Why does the narrator mark down the literary work of Lady Winchilsea?

other works of his resurface making an interesting pattern. Although none of his short stories can be criticized on account of being dull or mundane yet none are of such merit that they can be compared to O Henry's 'The Gift of Magi', Maupassant's 'The Umbrella', Chekhov's 'The Cherry Orchard', or Mulk Raj Ananad's 'Birth'.

He has often been criticized for inadequacy of expression, for instance in his short story, 'The Axe' he concludes the story at a very vulnerable moment of Velan turning his back to his beloved garden, Narayan does not fully develop the situation. To quote Naik, 'The Axe,' the story of an old gardener attached to a sprawling house who is dismissed when the ownership changes hands. The gardener leaves as the garden is being demolished – a situation reminiscent of The Cherry Orchard, but here again, the reader gets the impression that in contrast to Chekhov, Narayan has not adequately met the challenge of his tragic theme here, and there is a failure of the imagination in apprehending with the requisite power the experience sought to be conveyed.'

It is the simplicity of narration that has been most vehemently criticized by innumerable critics. For critic's Narayan's stylistic rendition is detached, concomitantly lacking in depth to the point of being benign. His writing lacks the imaginative flair displayed by Raja Rao. In stead it is his informal ease, directness, precision and readability which account for his popularity. He avoids use of figurative language which along with his limited capability to imaginatively evoke scenes often leads to colourlessness in his narrative. In fact to quote Shashi Deshpande, a prominent writer of Indian writing in English, 'Narayan's writings as pedestrian and naive because of the simplicity of his language and diction, combined with the lack of any complexity in the emotions and behaviors' of his characters.' His works have also been criticized for being completely out of league with Indian politics and instead creating a parochial and chimerical town of Malgudi.

#### 5.4.1 *The Axe*: Summary and Analysis

Velan is a village boy living with his family in a humble manner for the family had little means to support themselves. His life changes when one day an astrologer makes the prediction that Velan is destined to live in a palatial three storied building encompassed by a huge garden. This prediction elicits as lot of ill will among the villagers who taunt Velan and make fun of him. However, the prediction does come true although several decades later. When Velan was just eighteen years old he left his native village for good. He had been slapped by his father in front of the village men for bringing his mid-day meal late. This hurt Velan so much that he decided to leave his village and family for ever.

After walking for days on end, he reached the town of Malgudi. Having nowhere to go, he was distraught when an old man took him as an assistant for laying out a garden. Velan was set a very difficult and uphill task, he had to clear singlehandedly a few acres of land which was completely covered by weeds and plants. Working determinedly and continuously for days on end he finished the task satisfactorily. Hereafter, he started to help the old gardener with the laying of the foundation for a big garden. As fate would have it the old gardener fell ill and died. After his demise, Velan was made the chief gardener. Velan, a hardworking simple soul dedicated him completely to the task of creating a beautiful garden. In the meantime, adjoining the garden the majestic house being built for the master was also completed. As the plants were still tender Velan asked his beloved plants to grow faster and quicker. Nature responded to his call and the flower plants, the numerous trees he had planted grew up in abundance and

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beauty. The garden gave a very scenic and peaceful appearance to the mansion. The mansion came to be known as 'Kumar Baugh'. Velan tended to the plants with utmost love and care, innumerable varieties of plants grew in his garden.

One particular tree that Velan was very fond of was the Margosa tree. Velan treated this tree almost like his own child. He showered upon it his best attention and care.

Velan lived simply in a humble thatched hut but he was happy and content. Years quickly rolled by and with the passage of time Velan started growing old. Age and decay also claimed the once beautiful mansion which had for long now had lost its glitter and charm. Velan's master also started keeping ill health and was soon bed-ridden. After few years of suffering the master died. The master's death came as a severe blow for Velan not only on compassionate grounds for his master but more so because Velan knew that his master's sons wouldn't care for his garden. Soon after the master's death the sons started quarrelling amongst themselves and went to live in another house. Thereafter, a few tenants came to stay in a big house but none of them stayed long in the house. Gradually, the house started to be known as a 'Ghost House'. However, Velan continued to live in his thatched hut. A few years passed this way until the master's sons entrusted the key of the mansion to Velan. When because of lack of repair Velan's hut began to leak, he had to recourse but to live in the verandah of the big mansion. In this way the astrologer's prophecy about Velan living in a three-storeyed building came true.

One day a group of people came to the mansion and examined the house very carefully. Velan heard them remark that the house and the entire garden had to be destroyed and in its place, new buildings would be constructed. Following their departure, within a few days, Velan was informed that the entire property had been sold out to a company and Velan's services were no longer required. Velan was asked to vacate the place within a fortnight. In a couple of days, even before Velan had time to vacate the mansion, the developers arrived with the wood cutters. Velan heard the harsh sound of the woodcutter's axe ripping through his beloved Margosa tree. Velan pleaded to them not to cut his favourite tree but to no avail. The woodcutter's were working under orders and could not pay heed to Velan's request. Velan was so saddened that he asked the woodcutters to wait until he had left the place. He quickly packed his meager belongings and left the place with tears in his eyes. Reaching some distance, he shouted back to the woodcutters saying to wait a little more till he had gone a little farther. The wood-cutters waited for a few more minutes in respect to the old man's wishes and felled the mighty Margosa tree to the ground.

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## 5.5 J.L. NEHRU: SPEECH ON INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

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### The Text

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially.

At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.

It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

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At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again.

The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.

The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work, and work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for anyone of them to imagine that it can live apart.

Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.

The appointed day has come - the day appointed by destiny - and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about.

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the east, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!

We rejoice in that freedom, even though clouds surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems encompass us. But freedom brings responsibilities and burdens and we have to face them in the spirit of a free and disciplined people.

On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the father of our nation, who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us.

We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the tempest.

Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death.

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We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good and ill fortune alike.

The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be.

We are citizens of a great country, on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy.

And to India, our much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, we pay our reverent homage and we bind ourselves afresh to her service. Jai Hind [Victory to India].

### 5.5.1 Overview of ‘Tryst with Destiny’

Some words and speeches by great men are always remembered by people for generations. They become timeless because of their universal appeal. They always have a unique place in the hearts of the people for ages. Their words serve as a torch bearer for generations to come. Abraham Lincoln’s ‘Gettysburg Address’, Thomas Jefferson’s ‘Declaration of the Independence’, Martin Luther King’s (Jr.) ‘I have a Dream’, have gone down in the history as memorable events. These addresses are quite brief but enormously inspiring. In this particular speech by Nehru, the tone, substance, style render ample scope for a range of interpretations.

‘Tryst with Destiny’ was a speech made by Nehru to the Indian Constituent Assembly, on the eve of India’s Independence towards midnight on 14 August 1947. It is considered one of the greatest speeches of all time. Nehru points out though the rest of the world is in deep sleep, for this moment little matters for them, but India finally awakes to life and freedom.

This forced slumber that India finally woke up from was due to colonial suppression for one and a half century. Millions in the nation took a pledge to make India free at that long awaited moment. The speech signifies a kind of phase of salvation which comes after retribution. It is a stage of redemption and reawakening.

Nehru describes the mission in the speech as ‘a pledge’, ‘an unending quest’, ‘the ideal’, ‘the triumph’, ‘a challenge’, ‘a responsibility’, ‘an ambition’, ‘a dream’, ‘a noble mansion’, ‘a great adventure’, a bold advance’, and the like. Throughout his speech, Nehru outlines the vision for an ideal India. Nehru says, ‘we had made a tryst with destiny long ago and now we are to redeem the pledge.’ Therefore, making India free from the foreign rule was a pledge that India took long back and when India becomes free, Nehru questions how this sort of freedom would actually work. The speech brilliantly answers this very question. It has become relevant once again as the task of freedom

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has been accomplished now the next step is to wipe tears from the face of the poor citizens in the country. The idea of freedom and nation remain incomplete if the poor are in tears. His main motive now will be to find out means to improve the lot of the common men, peasants and workers. This is the challenge he puts to the public during his freedom speech. Thus, we have redeemed the first pledge now it is the time to take another pledge to serve nation and her people. The pledge can be redeemed only when the fruits reach to the grassroots in this nation.

Nehru terms this freedom as another opportunity as a bright future awaits the nation. Freedom is a means not an end. Such transitions do not happen again and again. The end of the freedom should be accomplishments and achievements and these opportunities bring both material and spiritual prospects. We all have to forget the harrowing experience of the past and we should focus on future and its possibilities fully. We should focus on the future very positively.

India had always been powerful in mind through the times of hardships. It has always been striving for 'unending quest'. India has great culture since pre-historic dawn. This is the reason why great civilization called Harappa flourished on the banks of rivers in the subcontinent. Nehru therefore, asks them to live up to that high standard. Indians have always been hard-working by nature; they have to maintain that hard-work. Their first priority should be to give a helping hand to millions who are suffering. Until the last man is happy, the hard work will continue.

Nehru magnifies the idea of nationalism saying that the dream of India for the cause of suffers is also the dream of the whole humanity. The suffering of the people has been called 'disaster'. We cannot split peace, freedom and prosperity into fragments as they are the common property of the whole world.

Nehru embraces a broad idea of profound change beyond the stereotypes of social and economic connotations. He believes that approaching freedom is the first step and even the first step assumes importance. He also says that the unity of all nations should be considered as 'one world'. He integrates the idea of nationalism with universal brotherhood. The appeal here is for universal peace as freedom of every single individual is at stake. Therefore, it is the pledge to serve India and her people to a larger cause of humanity. There are certain universal ideas that connect all. It hardly depends where we are living. Thus dreams for India are actually for the world. Hence, the well-being of Indian is connected to the well-being of the whole world as no nation can progress in isolation. He says:

'In finding the solution of our problem we shall have helped to solve the world problem as well. What India has been, the whole world is now.'

Nehru is also aware of the fact that on such occasions, people criticize and blame others and how we should not indulge in such practices as this is a very crucial time. We should not focus our energy on past now as this is the time to think of future only. We should respect the future which stores innumerable opportunities. We have to discard 'narrow-mindedness' as it is the major obstacle in nation building. Broad-mindedness is the need of the hour. He also narrates how on the strength of the principle of non-violence that 'the greatest man of our generation', Mahatma Gandhi endowed us and led us to the luminous path of freedom. He is also, deeply pained over the partition that is dividing the people who fought together for this dream. Thus, in this hour of rejoice, the 'clouds surround us'.

The speaker also insists that freedom brings responsibility to build the destiny of India and this is not, in any way, different from that of the people living in the rest of the

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world. This relationship is reciprocal as whatever happens in India will impact the other parts of the world. He also emphasizes that India has an important role of leadership for the cause of the larger humanity. His sole intention is not that we must turn a blind eye to the past; rather he expresses great reverence for the past, to the history in terms of its inspirational and educational value.

Therefore, we can say that Nehru's thrust towards independence was more political. He was a visionary who wanted India to succeed in all her missions and that can only be possible through unity.

### 5.5.2 Critical Analysis

The phrase 'tryst with destiny' is inspired by the phrase 'rendezvous with destiny' used by Franklin .D. Roosevelt in his Democratic National Convention speech in 1936. In his own speech, Nehru acknowledges the role of Satyagraha leading to the never-ending struggle for Independence. The speech was so powerful that it instilled the spirit of patriotism in the heart of any Indian who listened to it as Gandhi's contribution through Satyagraha was quite acknowledged he was the Father of Nation whom everyone respected. The speech was deeply imbibed with devotion to his country and his people. Every word and sentence of it was filled with pride. Nehru expresses at one point in his speech:

'A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.'

The Indian who had been a part of that oppression and suppression since ages, or the exploitation faced by his or her ancestors, felt a sense of pride that he or she was one of those thousands, who brought peace, sovereignty to his or her nation. Throughout his speech, Nehru maintained his sensibility and at no point did he make any reference to the freedom movement as being an intense struggle due to the injustice meted out by the British. He uses very positive words full of positive connotations. He also mentions that this was not the time for the discussion of petty and trivial things. People should not waste their energy now on destructive criticism nor should they blame each other. India is proud enough to have a reawakening after a long slumber and struggle.

Throughout his speech, Nehru cultivated the feelings of humility in his fellow-men. He also paid homage to all people and their efforts to bring about the position of self-governance to India. Nehru makes an appeal to the newly-independent populace to dedicate themselves to the service of India and to the service of the whole mankind.

Nehru recognizes the stupendous efforts made by abundant freedom fighters of several generations. He knows that the people of India will imbibe courage from past examples and the success celebrated on 15 August is only an opportunity for greater success in the coming future. He asks Indians to accept this challenge to serve the future generations of India.

Nehru reminds the people that now India is her own master. It can no longer lean on England for any sort of guidance or leadership. Now his country is able to take her own decisions, learn from her mistakes and move forward, for India has to mature and grow into a wise nation. He specifies that it is of great importance that India should also try to be a model to other nations.

Nehru appeals to all Indians to work harder for the development for their dream nation. To serve India means to serve millions of poor people who suffer all over the country. The past is over and only the future is in front of everyone which has to be



taken care of. The dreams to build India are not only for India but are in fact for the entire world as all countries are closely connected to each other and no one can live in isolation. The entire humanity can be built on the foundation stone of peace, freedom and prosperity. The disaster that happens in one part of the world can affect other parts of the world as the world cannot be divided into small pieces.

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### 5.6 SUMMARY

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- Non-fictional prose is any literary work founded chiefly on fact or reality, even though it supposedly incorporates elements of fiction or fancy. Its example can be essays, biographies, letters, diaries, autobiographies, confessions, and so on.
- Earlier autobiographies were called or entitled *Apologia*. They were meant to provide self-justification for the life of the author. John Henry Newman's (1801–1890) autobiography (1864) is called *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Saint Augustine's (354–430) *Confessions* is his famous autobiographical work. Rousseau (1712–1778) used *Confessions (1782)* as the basis for writing his autobiography.
- An essay is a short piece of writing which reflects the writer's own point of view about a particular subject. Essays are essentially written in prose form. They may have diverse elements in focus such as literary criticism, political manifestos, observations of daily life, reflections of an author, recollection, personal philosophies, learned arguments, criticism of life, events or happenings, and so on.
- *A Room of One's Own* is a comprehensive composition by Woolf. Initially published on 24 October 1929, the composition was based on a sequence of lectures she gave at Newnham College and Girton College, the two women's colleges at Cambridge University.
- In the essay she employs a fictional narrator and narrative to explore women in their role as writers of fiction and as characters in it. The title of the essay focuses on the author's need to create art and her need for poetic license. She also examines the question as to whether women can actually produce a viable piece of art.
- In the essay Woolf argues that women be granted a literal and figurative space as legitimate writers within a male dominated literary tradition. In other words she stakes claim for the acknowledgement of female writers and their creative endeavors.
- In the essay Woolf presents George Eliot, Emily Bronte, Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte as the 'four great novelists' to be studied, emulated and appreciated. Through these writers she attempts to create a female canon that can rival the patriarchal canon. She considers this attempt important also because she believes that only female writers can express female experience in all its shades.
- For critic's Narayan's stylistic rendition is detached, concomitantly lacking in depth to the point of being benign. His writing lacks the imaginative flair displayed by Raja Rao.
- In stead it is his informal ease, directness, precision and readability which account for his popularity. He avoids use of figurative language which along with his limited capability to imaginatively evoke scenes often leads to colorlessness in his narrative.

#### Check Your Progress

4. When was the 'Tryst with Destiny' speech made?
5. How was the phrase 'Tryst with Destiny' coined?

## NOTES

- Thematic connections between the short stories and the novels of Narayan are interesting. Almost in each work of Narayan, situations, characters and motifs from other works of his resurface making an interesting pattern.
- Some words and speeches by great men are always remembered by people for generations. They become timeless because of their universal appeal. They always have a unique place in the hearts of the people for ages.
- ‘Tryst with Destiny’ was a speech made by Nehru to the Indian Constituent Assembly, on the eve of India’s Independence towards midnight on 14 August 1947. It is considered one of the greatest speeches of all time.
- The speech signifies a kind of phase of salvation which comes after retribution. It is a stage of redemption and reawakening.
- Nehru describes the mission in the speech as ‘a pledge’, ‘an unending quest’, ‘the ideal’, ‘the triumph’, ‘a challenge’, ‘a responsibility’, ‘an ambition’, ‘a dream’, ‘a noble mansion’, ‘a great adventure’, a bold advance’, and the like.

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### 5.7 KEY TERMS

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- **Protagonist:** The protagonist is the main character of a story and is at the center of the story, makes the key decisions, and experiences the consequences of those decisions.
- **Apologia:** Apologia is a formal defense of a conduct, opinion, position or action.

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### 5.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. Her dinner at Fernham College is starkly different from that served in Oxbridge: it comprises of plain soup, mediocre beef, vegetables, potatoes, bad custard, prunes, biscuits cheese and water.
2. This part of the essay begins with the narrator expressing her disappointment at failing to draw any conclusion as to why women are poorer than men.
3. The narrator marks down the literary work of Lady Winchilsea because according to the narrator, her writing is marred by fear and hatred. She believes that if she had not been consumed by these negative emotions she had the potential of writing brilliant verse.
4. The ‘Tryst with Destiny’ speech was made by Nehru on the eve of India’s Independence towards midnight on 14 August 1947.
5. The phrase ‘tryst with destiny’ is inspired by the phrase ‘rendezvous with destiny’ used by Franklin D. Roosevelt in his Democratic National Convention speech in 1936.

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### 5.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the different types of essays.
2. On what grounds has Alice Walker criticized Woolf?

3. State some of the similarities between Chekhov and Narayan.
4. Write a short note on Velan and margosa tree.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the different forms of non-fiction prose.
2. Critically examine the story *The Axe* by Narayan.
3. 'Narayan's writings are pedestrian and naive because of the simplicity of his language and diction, combined with the lack of any complexity in the emotions and behaviors' of his characters.' Discuss.
4. Provide an overview of Nehru's *Tryst with Destiny*.

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## 5.10 FURTHER READING

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- Panda, H. 1997. *Selections from Modern Prose*. Hyderabad: Universities Press (India) Private Ltd.
- Liebler Naomi Conn. 2006. *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*. London: Routledge.
- Hudson, W.H. 2006. *Introduction to the Study of Literature*: New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Pvt Ltd.

### NOTES

