

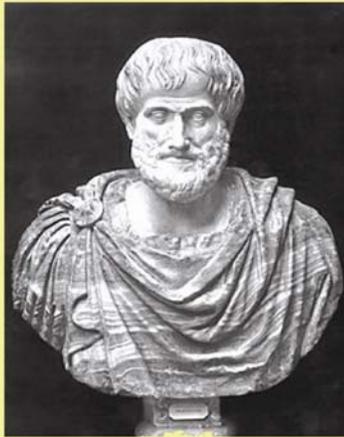


# Dr. V. R. Godhaniya College

POST-GRADUATE CENTRE OF ENGLISH

M.A. - PART - II

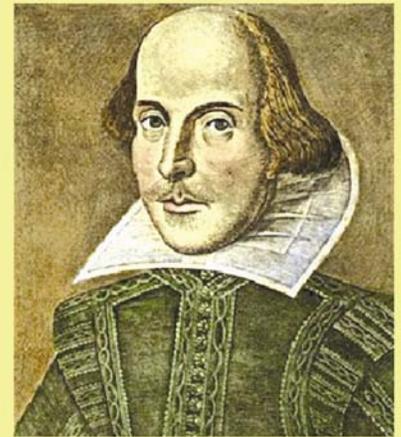
— ARISTOTLE —



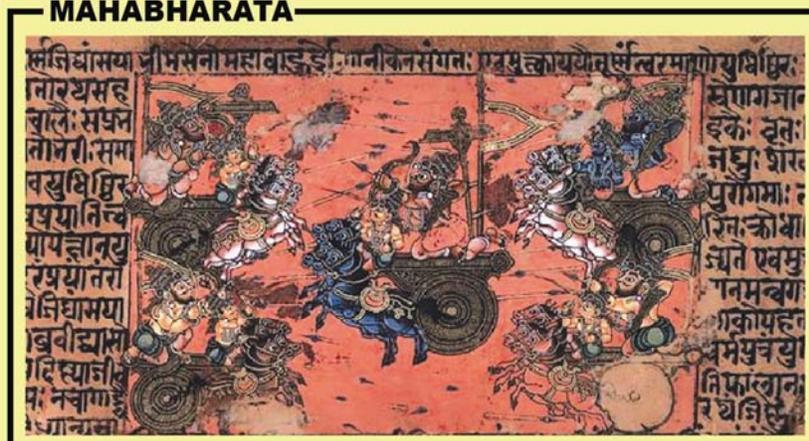
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— SHAKESPEARE —



— MAHABHARATA —



Students' Manual

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**“Whoever gives to others will get richer,  
those who help others will themselves be helped.”**

I wish to acknowledge my sincere gratitude and profound thanks to the management of our institute for their support and encouragement to materialize this students’ manual. I would like to express my gratefulness to the Faculty for their helpful guidance and every ready suggestions.

**“Some trust in chariots, others in horses,  
but we trust the Lord our God.”**

Here in this task ‘horses’ like Amit, Naresh, Krupa and with magic fingers Prashant Modha helped me a lot to convert manuscript into a computerized Manual. I cannot forget Karshan Karavadra who managed the printing task and Sandeep Vaghela for his contribution in making the cover page of The Students’ Manual.

Charioteer like Shri Krishna, Dr. Anupam Nagar has been always with us, whether it be material production or proof reading, without Nagarsir’s deep involvement and inspiration, this would not have been possible.

Though we all tried to put the best in the Manual, it may not be ‘perfect’ or ‘final’ but it’s a significant step in the expedition we have heralded.

Lastly, I offer my regards and good-wishes to all those who supported me in any respect during the completion of this Students’ Manual.

**Hirak Jogia**

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# PLATO

**Full title** · *The Republic*

**Author** · Plato

**Philosophical movement** · Plato has his own philosophical movement, known as “Platonism.”

**Language** · Ancient Greek

**Time and place written** · Plato wrote *The Republic* in Athens around 380 B.C.

**Speaker** · as in nearly all of Plato’s works, Socrates acts as Plato’s mouthpiece.

**Areas of philosophy covered** · though *The Republic* is primarily concerned with defining and defending justice, it is in no way limited to ethics and political philosophy. It also presents bold and fascinating theories in the fields of epistemology and metaphysics.

**Philosophical movements opposed** · Plato’s main opposition in *The Republic* is towards the Sophists.

**Other works by Plato on similar topics** · for more on Plato’s political theory see the *Laws*. For more on his theory of Forms see the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium*.

## Introduction & Life:

Plato was born in Athens in 428 B.C. to an aristocratic family. Ancient sources claim that his father, Ariston, was a descendant of Codrus, the last king of Athens, and his mother, Perictione, of Solon, an almost mythical Athenian lawgiver and the author of the city’s first constitution. Plato’s two brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, appear as two of the main characters in *The Republic*. Ariston died during Plato’s boyhood, and Perictione remarried Pyrilampes, a friend of the Athenian statesman Pericles. With his noble birth and intellectual talents, young Plato had fine prospects in Athenian politics. The political upheavals of his youth attracted him to the public sphere.

Two major upheavals turned Plato away from politics. The first was the assumption of power by two groups—the Four Hundred and the Thirty. These factions of wealthy citizens seized control at the end of the Peloponnesian War and turned Athens into an oligarchy. Plato had mixed feelings about the takeover. He was related to Charmides, a member of the Thirty. But his nascent rational outlook made him critical of the government for its tyrannical leanings and instability. He was active in supporting the restoration of democracy, but that system proved itself less than perfectly just in 399 B.C. In that year, Plato’s mentor, Socrates, an eccentric philosopher and a cult figure among the Athenian youth, stood before a jury of about 500 Athenians on charges of not recognizing the gods of the state, of inventing new deities, and of corrupting the youth of Athens. More than these charges, Socrates’s close association with a number of men who had fallen out of political favor in Athens brought him to trial. Because an amnesty had been declared for political offenders, other charges had to be brought against him. Socrates was found guilty by a narrow margin and sentenced to death.

After Socrates’ death, Plato devoted himself to continuing the work of his teacher. He spent years traveling around the Mediterranean, teaching and learning. Among the places he visited was Sicily, the center of Pythagorean thought. In 387 B.C., Plato resettled in Athens and founded the Academy, probably the first institution of its kind, and the model for the Western university. Plato and other teachers instructed students from all over the Mediterranean in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and the natural and mathematical sciences. Although the Academy was not meant to prepare students for any sort of profession, such as politics, law, or medicine, the topics taught there were not divorced from the larger world. Members of the Academy were invited by various cities to aid in the development of new constitutions. The Academy lasted in one form or another until A.D. 527, 912 years in total. Plato spent the rest of his life as the director of studies at the Academy,

although it is not at all clear that he himself taught there. He is thought to have written *The Republic* there in around 380 B.C. The most famous student of the Academy during this time was the philosopher Aristotle.

From 385 B.C. until his death in 347, Plato only left the Academy twice, both times to visit Sicily. What drew him away from his school was the possibility of putting the political theory he outlined in *The Republic* into practice. In 367 B.C., Dionysus I, tyrant of Sicily, died. His brother Dion, father of the heir, had been a student of Plato's and immediately sent for his teacher. Unfortunately, Dionysus II remained unconvinced that the vigorous study of mathematics and philosophy would be the best preparation for his rule, and so the world lost its chance to test the first philosopher-king.

Atkins says... *“One of the greatest critics, in the true sense, a light bringer,  
Ever guiding man's steps to the spiritual side of art”*

### **Plato's Charges against poetry:**

Plato's three main objections to poetry are that poetry is not ethical, philosophical or pragmatic. It is not ethical because it promotes undesirable passions, it is not philosophical because it does not provide true knowledge, and it is not pragmatic because it is inferior to the practical arts and therefore has no educational value. Plato then makes a challenge to poets to defend themselves against his criticisms. Ironically it was Plato's most famous student, Aristotle, who was the first theorist to defend literature and poetry in his writing *Poetics*.

Throughout the *Republic* Plato condemns art in all forms including literature or poetry. Despite the fact that he wrote, Plato advocates the spoken word over the written word. He ranks imitation (mimetic representation) on a lower plane than narrative, even though his own works read like scripts (the *Republic* is written in dialogue form with characters doing all the talking). It appears as though his reasoning is that imitation of reality is not in itself bad, but imitation without understanding and reason is. Plato felt that poetry, like all forms of art, appeals to the inferior part of the soul, the irrational, emotional cowardly part. The reader of poetry is seduced into feeling undesirable emotions. To Plato, an appreciation of poetry is incompatible with an appreciation of reason, justice, and the search for Truth. To him drama is the most dangerous form of literature because the author is imitating things that he/she is not. Plato seemingly feels that no words are strong enough to condemn drama.

Plato felt that all the world's evils derived from one source: a faulty understanding of reality. Miscommunication, confusion and ignorance were facets of a corrupted comprehension of what Plato always strived for - Truth. Plato is, above all, a moralist. His primary objective in the *Republic* is to come up with the most righteous, intelligent way to live one's life and to convince others to live this way. Everything else should conform in order to achieve this perfect State. Plato considers poetry useful only as a means of achieving this State, that is, only useful if it helps one to become a better person, and if it does not, it should be expelled from the community. Plato's question in Book X is the intellectual status of literature. He writes in Book II,

*“the good poet cannot compose well unless he knows his subject,  
and he who has not this knowledge can never be a poet” (Adams 33).*

Plato says of imitative poetry and Homer,

***"A man is not to be revered more than the truth" (Adams 31).***

Plato says this because he believes that Homer speaks of many things of which he has no knowledge, just as the painter who paints a picture of a bed does not necessarily know how to make a bed. His point is that in order to copy or imitate correctly, one must have knowledge of the original. Plato says that imitation is three degrees removed from the truth. Stories that are untrue have no value, as no untrue story should be told in the City. He states that nothing can be learned from imitative poetry. Plato's commentary on poetry in Republic is overwhelmingly negative. In Books II and III Plato's main concern about poetry is that children's minds are too impressionable to be reading false tales and misrepresentations of the truth.

As stated in book II,

***"For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thought" (Adams 19).***

He is essentially saying that children cannot tell the difference between fiction and reality and this compromises their ability to discern right from wrong. Thus, children should not be exposed to poetry so that later in life they will be able to seek the Truth without having a preconceived, or misrepresented, view of reality. Plato reasons that literature that portrays the gods as behaving in immoral ways should be kept away from children, so that they will not be influenced to act the same way. Those who disagree with Plato's views on censorship would not necessarily disagree had Plato been trying to keep pornography or violence away from children. An argument against pornography is that viewing pornography may influence people to commit violent, demeaning or anti-social acts. Another objection is that it is often viewed as portraying either male dominance or female exploitation. People argue that this should not be the way the world works, therefore it is not the Truth. Thus, people want pornography to be kept out of the hands of children. These claims sound much like the claims that Plato is trying to make when he asserts that certain poetry should be kept out of the hands of children. While the power of censorship can be abused, Plato seemed to believe that his stance is justified because he is trying to make children grow to be good, moral individuals.

While Plato has some very negative views on the value of literature, he also states the procedures that he feels are necessary in order to change poetry and literature from something negative to something positive. He does feel that some literature can have redeeming values. Good, truthful literature can educate instead of corrupting children. In the City Plato would only allow , "hymns to the gods and praises to famous men". Plato does not want literature to corrupt the mind; he wants it to display images of beauty and grace.

Plato's views may be deemed narrow-minded by today's society, but one must remember that Plato lived over 2000 years ago. He probably wrote Republic with the best intentions for the people of his time. While his views on censorship and poetry may even seem outlandish today, Plato's goal was to state what he judged to be the guidelines for a better human existence. The merit in Plato's arguments is demonstrated by the fact his philosophies on poetry are still studied by scholars around the world today.

### **Theory of Imitation:**

Plato had a love-hate relationship with the arts. He must have had some love for the arts, because he talks about them often, and his remarks show that he paid close attention to what he saw and heard. He was also a fine literary stylist and a great story-teller; in fact he is said to have been a poet before he encountered Socrates and became a philosopher. Some of his dialogues are real literary masterpieces. On the other hand, he found the arts threatening. He proposed sending the poets and playwrights out of his ideal Republic, or at least censoring what they wrote; and he wanted music and painting severely censored. The arts, he thought, are powerful shapers of character. Thus, to train and protect ideal citizens for an ideal society, the arts must be strictly controlled.

Plato's influence on western culture generally is a very strong one, and this includes a strong influence on the arts, and on theories of art. In the case of the arts and aesthetic theory that influence is mostly indirect, and is best understood if one knows a little bit about his philosophy.

Plato saw the changing physical world as a poor, decaying copy of a perfect, rational, eternal, and changeless original. The beauty of a flower, or a sunset, a piece of music or a love affair, is an imperfect copy of Beauty Itself. In this world of changing appearances, while you might catch a glimpse of that ravishing perfection, it will always fade. It's just a pointer to the perfect beauty of the eternal. The same goes for other Essences, like Justice. Anyone knows that Real Justice is too much to hope for in this corrupt world. The best you can find is a rough approximation. To take a third example, the most carefully drawn circle turns out to be irregular if you inspect it closely enough. Like The Point, The Line, and all geometric shapes, The Circle is a mathematical ideal. It is not possible to draw a Real Circle, but only an imperfect physical copy (or instance) of one. (If you have ever striven to achieve an ideal, you may have some sympathy with this part of Plato's philosophy.)

Beauty, Justice, and The Circle are all examples of what Plato called Forms or Ideas. Other philosophers have called them Universals. Many particular things can have the form of a circle, or of justice, or beauty. For Plato, these Forms are perfect Ideals, but they are also more real than physical objects. He called them "the Really Real". The world of the Forms is rational and unchanging; the world of physical appearances is changeable and irrational, and only has reality to the extent that it succeeds in imitating the Forms. The mind or soul belongs to the Ideal world; the body and its passions are stuck in the muck of the physical world. So the best human life is one that strives to understand and to imitate the Forms as closely as possible. That life is the life of the mind, the life of the Philosopher (literally, the lover of wisdom). Self control, especially control of the passions, is essential to the soul that wants to avoid the temptations of sensuality, greed, and ambition, and move on to the Ideal World in the next life.

Of course there is a lot more to Plato's philosophy than this; but this is enough background to begin explaining his views about the arts. Plato had two theories of art. One may be found in his dialogue The Republic, and seems to be the theory that Plato himself believed. According to this theory, since art imitates physical things, which in turn imitate the Forms, art is always a copy of a copy, and leads us even further from truth and toward illusion. For this reason, as well as because of its power to stir the emotions, art is dangerous. Plato's other theory is hinted at in his shorter dialogue Ion, and in his exquisitely crafted Symposium. According to this theory the artist, perhaps by divine inspiration, makes a *better* copy of the True than may be found in ordinary experience. Thus the artist is a kind of prophet. Here are some features of the two theories:

## **Art is imitation:**

This is a feature of both of Plato's theories. Of course he was not the first or the last person to think that art imitates reality. The idea was still very strong in the Renaissance, when Vasari, in his Lives of the Painters, said that "painting is just the imitation of all the living things of nature with their colors and designs just as they are in nature." It may still be the most commonly held theory. Most people still think that a picture must be a picture of something, and that an artist is someone who can make a picture that "looks just like the real thing". It wasn't until late in the nineteenth century that the idea of art as imitation began to fade from western aesthetics, to be replaced by theories about art as expression, art as communication, art as pure form, art as whatever elicits an "aesthetic" response, and a number of other theories.

So art is imitation. But what does it imitate? Here is where Plato's two theories come in. In the Republic, Plato says that art imitates the objects and events of ordinary life. In other words, a work of art is a copy of a copy of a Form. It is even more of an illusion than is ordinary experience. On this theory, works of art are at best entertainment and at worst a dangerous delusion.

According to Plato...

***“All arts, especially poetry are imitative by nature”.***

In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of ‘The Republic’, he advocates...

***“Ideas are the ultimate reality”...***

Things are mere copies of it. Further, Plato develops this argument by putting the examples of the carpenter and the painter.

First, Plato denounces the poet who imitates reality without understanding it. Plato argues that there many tables in the world but there is one and single idea behind all the tables. Thus the one idea behind the entire created table is called the ‘platonic idea’, when a carpenter makes a chair or a table, he produces a mere illusion of this idea. In this way, behind all the tables made by carpenter, there lies only one & real-idea of the table. In brief, the carpenter makes a chair by imitating the idea that is with in his mind. Thus, the carpenter’s chair is once removed from the truth, reality, or idea of the chair.

Moreover, when a painter sits down to paint a picture of the chair; his picture will be the result of a copy of the carpenter’s chair. In other words, a painter’s picture of the chair is itself a copy of a copy or a shadow of shadow, of the real object. Thus, a painter’s chair is twice removed from reality. Because the painter does not imitate his own idea of truth. He paints or imitates the carpenter’s chair, which is itself a copy of idea. A carpenter’s chair is not real one or true. It is a copy of the idea, it means once removed from truth.

According to Plato, the painter and the poet imitate reality without understanding it. Plato believes that arts-imitation are twice removed from the truth, they are also the product of a futile ignorance. To Plato, works of art were the partial images of the ideas. Now if reality does not lie in a thing, it can never be truthful. According to him, idea is the real thing. The Carpenter who makes a chair is once removed from the idea. When a painter paints a picture of such a chair, his picture

becomes an imitation; it is twice removed from the idea. There cannot be many truths or realities. Idea or reality is one, it should be one & only. There is only one idea of a chair. A painter's chair is also twice removed from the reality. Just in the same way, the poet, using words, appeals to our ears, but he creates a copy of a copy. His art is based on ideas but it cannot be the real idea.

**Criticism of his theory:**

Thus, Plato's views on imitation have been found not worthy of a great philosopher. Very hastily, he attacked art by his doctrine of ideas. He failed to think that the painter imitates the transcendent idea, the impression of his material surface. He could not realize that what the painter paints is not the exact reproduction of reality. It is the artist's impression of reality. It is never be a mechanical representation of it. Poetry is not a slavish imitation or copying. It is creative. Plato expects to find reality or truth. However, he forgets that the artist produces something better or worse than reality. Yet there is a truth in Plato's ideas that 'all art are imitative by nature'. They are produced according to the real and one idea.

# ARISTOTLE

## Introduction:

Greek Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC), Greek philosopher and scientist whose thought determined the course of Western intellectual history for two millennia. He was the son of the court physician to Amyntas III, grandfather of Alexander the Great. In 367 he became a student at the Academy of Plato in Athens; he remained there for 20 years. After Plato's death in 348/347, he returned to Macedonia, where he became tutor to the young Alexander. In 335 he founded his own school in Athens, the Lyceum. His intellectual range was vast, covering most of the sciences and many of the arts. He worked in physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, and botany; in psychology, political theory, and ethics; in logic and metaphysics; and in history, literary theory, and rhetoric. He invented the study of formal logic, devising for it a finished system, known as syllogistic, that was considered the sum of the discipline until the 19th century; his work in zoology, both observational and theoretical, also was not surpassed until the 19th century. His ethical and political theory, especially his conception of the ethical virtues and of human flourishing ("happiness"), continues to exert great influence in philosophical debate. He wrote prolifically; his major surviving works include the *Organon*, *De Anima* ("On the Soul"), *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*, *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics*, as well as other works on natural history and science.

## Analytical Overview of Poetics

Aristotle approaches poetry with the same scientific method with which he treats physics and biology. He begins by collecting and categorizing all the data available to him and then he draws certain conclusions and advances certain theses in accordance with his analysis. In the case of tragedy, this means he divides it into six parts, identifies plot as the most important part, and examines the different elements of plot and character that seem to characterize successful tragedies. He tentatively suggests that tragedy ultimately aims at the arousal of pity and fear and at the *katharsis* of these emotions. Then he begins to lay out certain theories as to what makes a good tragedy: it must focus on a certain type of hero who must follow a certain trajectory within a plot that is tightly unified, etc. Aristotle's conclusions, then, are based less on personal taste and more on an observation of what tends to produce the most powerful effects.

Aristotle's method raises the fundamental question of whether poetry can be studied in the same way as the natural sciences. Though there are some benefits to Aristotle's method, the ultimate answer seems to be "no." The scientific method relies on the assumption that there are certain regularities or laws that govern the behavior of the phenomena being investigated. This method has been particularly successful in the physical sciences: Isaac Newton, for example, managed to reduce all mechanical behavior to three simple laws. However, art does not seem to be governed by unchanging, unquestionable laws in the same way that nature is. Art often thrives and progresses by questioning the assumptions or laws that a previous generation has accepted. While Aristotle insisted on the primacy and unity of plot, Samuel Beckett has achieved fame as one of this century's greatest playwrights by constructing plays that arguably have no plot at all. Closer to Aristotle's time, Euripides often violated the Aristotelian principles of structure and balance in a conscious effort to depict a universe that is neither structured nor balanced. Not surprisingly, Aristotle seems to have preferred Sophocles to Euripides.

These remarks on Sophocles and Euripides bring us to another problem of interpreting Aristotle: we have a very limited stock of Greek tragedies against which to test Aristotle's theories. Aristotle could have been familiar with hundreds, or even thousands, of tragedies. All we have today are thirty-three plays by three tragedians. As a result, it is difficult to say to what extent most tragedies fit Aristotle's observations. Those that we have, however, often grossly violate Aristotle's requirement. The best example we have of an Aristotelian tragedy is *Oedipus Rex*, so it is no wonder that Aristotle makes such frequent reference to it in his examples.

Three points stand out as probably the most important in the *Poetics*: (1) the interpretation of poetry as *mimesis*, (2) the insistence on the primacy and unity of *mythos*, or plot, and (3) the view that tragedy serves to arouse the emotions of pity and fear and then to effect a *katharsis* of these emotions. (1) is discussed in the commentary on Chapters 1–3, (2) is discussed in the commentary on Chapter 6 and Chapters 7–9, and (3) is discussed in the commentary on Chapter 6 as well.

## **Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy**

### **The Concept of Tragedy:**

The word tragedy can be applied to a genre of literature. It can mean 'any serious and dignified drama that describes a conflict between the hero (protagonist) and a superior force (destiny, chance, society, god) and reaches a sorrowful conclusion that arouses pity or fear in the audience.' From this genre comes the concept of tragedy, a concept which is based on the possibility that a person may be destroyed precisely because of attempting to be good and is much better than most people, but not perfect. (Irony, therefore, is essential and it is not surprising that dramatic irony, which can so neatly emphasize irony, is common in tragedies.) Tragedy implies a conflict between human goodness and reality. Many scholars feel that if God rewards goodness either on earth or in heaven there can be no tragedy. If in the end each person gets what he or she deserves, tragedy is impossible. Tragedy assumes that this universe is rotten or askew. Christians believe that God is good and just, hence, for certain scholar's tragedy is logically impossible. Of course a possible variation of the tragic concept would allow a character to have a fault which leads to consequences far more dire than he deserves. But tragic literature is not intended to make people sad. It may arouse pity and fear for the suffering protagonist, or for all humanity, especially ourselves. But usually it also is intended to inspire admiration for the central character, and by analogy for all mankind. In the tragic hero's fall there is the glory in his or her misfortune; there is the joy which only virtue can supply. Floods, automobile accidents, children's deaths, though terribly pathetic can never be tragic in the dramatic sense because they do not occur as a result of an individual man's grandeur and virtue.

### **Definition of Tragedy:**

*“Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its katharsis of such emotions. . . . Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Melody.”*

The treatise we call the *Poetics* was composed at least 50 years after the death of **Sophocles**. Aristotle was a great admirer of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, considering it the perfect tragedy, and

not surprisingly, his analysis fits that play most perfectly. I shall therefore use this play to illustrate the following major parts of Aristotle's analysis of tragedy as a literary genre.

**Tragedy is the “imitation of an action” (*mimesis*) according to “the law of probability or necessity.”**

Aristotle indicates that the medium of tragedy is drama, not narrative; tragedy “shows” rather than “tells.” According to Aristotle, tragedy is higher and more philosophical than history because history simply relates what *has* happened while tragedy dramatizes what *may* happen, “what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.” History thus deals with the particular, and tragedy with the universal. Events that have happened may be due to accident or coincidence; they may be particular to a specific situation and not be part of a clear cause-and-effect chain. Therefore they have little relevance for others. Tragedy, however, is rooted in the fundamental order of the universe; it creates a cause-and-effect chain that clearly reveals what *may* happen at any time or place because that is the way the world operates. Tragedy therefore arouses not only pity but also fear, because the audience can envision themselves within this cause-and-effect chain.

**Plot is the “first principle,” the most important feature of tragedy.**

Aristotle defines plot as “the arrangement of the incidents”: i.e., not the story itself but the way the incidents are presented to the audience, the structure of the play. According to Aristotle, tragedies where the outcome depends on a tightly constructed cause-and-effect chain of actions are superior to those that depend primarily on the character and personality of the protagonist. Plots that meet this criterion will have the following qualities.

1. The plot must be “a whole,” with a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning, called by modern critics the **incentive moment**, must start the cause-and-effect chain but should not be dependent on anything outside the compass of the play (i.e., its causes are downplayed but its effects are stressed). The middle, or **climax**, must be caused by earlier incidents and itself cause the incidents that follow it (i.e., its causes and effects are stressed). The end, or **resolution**, must be caused by the preceding events but not lead to other incidents outside the compass of the play (i.e., its causes are stressed but its effects downplayed); the end should therefore solve or resolve the problem created during the incentive moment. Aristotle calls the cause-and-effect chain leading from the incentive moment to the climax the “tying up” (*desis*), in modern terminology the **complication**. He therefore terms the more rapid cause-and-effect chain from the climax to the resolution the “unravelling” (*lusis*), in modern terminology the **dénouement**.
2. The plot must be “complete,” having “unity of action.” By this Aristotle means that the plot must be structurally self-contained, with the incidents bound together by internal necessity, each action leading inevitably to the next with no outside intervention, no *deus ex machina*. According to Aristotle, the worst kinds of plots are “‘episodic,’ in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence”; the only thing that ties together the events in such a plot is the fact that they happen to the same person. Playwrights should exclude coincidences from their plots; if some coincidence is required, it should “have an air of design,” i.e., seem to have a fated connection to the events of the play. Similarly, the poet should exclude the irrational or at least keep it “outside the scope of the tragedy,” i.e., reported rather than dramatized. While the poet cannot change the myths that are the basis of his plots, he “ought to

show invention of his own and skillfully handle the traditional materials” to create unity of action in his plot.

3. The plot must be “of a certain magnitude,” both quantitatively (length, complexity) and qualitatively (“seriousness” and universal significance). Aristotle argues that plots should not be too brief; the more incidents and themes that the playwright can bring together in an organic unity, the greater the artistic value and richness of the play. Also, the more universal and significant the meaning of the play, the more the playwright can catch and hold the emotions of the audience, the better the play will be.
4. The plot may be either simple or complex, although complex is better. Simple plots have only a “change of fortune” (catastrophe). Complex plots have both “reversal of intention” (peripeteia) and “recognition” (anagnorisis) connected with the catastrophe. Both peripeteia and anagnorisis turn upon surprise. Aristotle explains that a peripeteia occurs when a character produces an effect opposite to that which he intended to produce, while an anagnorisis “is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined for good or bad fortune.” He argues that the best plots combine these two as part of their cause-and-effect chain (i.e., the peripeteia leads directly to the anagnorisis); this in turn creates the catastrophe, leading to the final “scene of suffering”.

### **Character has the second place in importance.**

In a perfect tragedy, character will support plot, i.e., personal motivations will be intricately connected with parts of the cause-and-effect chain of actions producing pity and fear in the audience. The protagonist should be renowned and prosperous, so his change of fortune can be from good to bad. This change “should come about as the result, not of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character.” Such a plot is most likely to generate pity and fear in the audience, for “pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves.” The term Aristotle uses here, *hamartia*, often translated “tragic flaw,” has been the subject of much debate. The meaning of the Greek word is closer to “mistake” than to “flaw,” and I believe it is best interpreted in the context of what Aristotle has to say about plot and “the law or probability or necessity.” In the ideal tragedy, claims Aristotle, the protagonist will mistakenly bring about his own downfall—not because he is sinful or morally weak, but because he does not know enough. The role of the *hamartia* in tragedy comes not from its moral status but from the inevitability of its consequences. Hence the *peripeteia* is really one or more self-destructive actions taken in blindness, leading to results diametrically opposed to those that were intended (often termed **tragic irony**), and the *anagnorisis* is the gaining of the essential knowledge that was previously lacking.

### **Characters in tragedy should have the following qualities:**

1. “good or fine.” Aristotle relates this quality to moral purpose and says it is relative to class: “Even a woman may be good, and also a slave, though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless.”
2. “fitness of character” (true to type); e.g. valor is appropriate for a warrior but not for a woman.

3. “true to life” (realistic)
4. “consistency” (true to themselves). Once a character's personality and motivations are established, these should continue throughout the play.
5. “necessary or probable.” Characters must be logically constructed according to “the law of probability or necessity” that governs the actions of the play.
6. “true to life and yet more beautiful” (idealized, ennobled).

**Thought is third in importance, and is found “where something is proved to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated.”** Aristotle says little about thought, and most of what he has to say is associated with how speeches should reveal character. However, we may assume that this category would also include what we call the **themes** of a play.

**Diction is fourth, and is “the expression of the meaning in words” which are proper and appropriate to the plot, characters, and end of the tragedy.** In this category, Aristotle discusses the stylistic elements of tragedy; he is particularly interested in metaphors: “But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor; . . . it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances”.

**Song, or melody, is fifth, and is the musical element of the chorus.** Aristotle argues that the Chorus should be fully integrated into the play like an actor; choral odes should not be “mere interludes,” but should contribute to the unity of the plot.

**Spectacle is last, for it is least connected with literature; “the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.”** Although Aristotle recognizes the emotional attraction of spectacle, he argues that superior poets rely on the inner structure of the play rather than spectacle to arouse pity and fear; those who rely heavily on spectacle “create a sense, not of the terrible, but only of the monstrous”.

**The end of the tragedy is a *katharsis* (purgation, cleansing) of the tragic emotions of pity and fear.** *Katharsis* is another Aristotelian term that has generated considerable debate. The word means “purging,” and Aristotle seems to be employing a medical metaphor—tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in order to purge away their excess, to reduce these passions to a healthy, balanced proportion. Aristotle also talks of the “pleasure” that is proper to tragedy, apparently meaning the aesthetic pleasure one gets from contemplating the pity and fear that are aroused through an intricately constructed work of art.

A work of art presents feeling (in the broad sense I mentioned before, as everything that can be felt) for our contemplation, making it visible or audible or in some way perceivable through a symbol, not inferable from a symptom. Artistic form is congruent with the dynamic forms of our direct sensuous, mental, and emotional life; works of art . . . are images of feeling that formulate it for our cognition. What is artistically good is whatever articulates and presents feeling for our understanding.

### Extra short questions:

- What is *katharsis*? How does it work in the context of tragedy? What purpose does it serve?  
*Katharsis*, in the context of tragedy, is the purgation or purification of the emotions of pity and fear. According to Aristotle, this is the effect of tragedy, though he is less clear as to whether it is the purpose of tragedy for which all poets should aim. He does discuss quite a bit the importance of pity and fear, but he only mentions *katharsis* once, in Chapter 6. The psychological purpose of tragedy, it seems, is to arouse deep emotion but then to provide it with a release. That way, the audience will be made to feel more aware and alive without having the trauma of what they have experienced stay with them and inhibit a healthy social life.
- How does Aristotle's definition of "poetry" differ from our own? What problems do you perceive in the limitations set by Aristotle's definition?  
We normally think of poetry as anything that is written in verse. Aristotle's definition is more specific, saying that poetry is a kind of imitation that employs language, rhythm, and harmony. These elements are certainly present in most poetry, though there are notable differences. First, Aristotle makes no requirement that poetry be written in verse. Provided it has rhythm and harmony, prose could count as poetry. Second, in claiming that poetry is imitative, Aristotle limits poetry to narrative: it has to describe something in the world. This would exclude most abstract or experimental poetry in this century, and would also raise serious questions about the dominant tradition of lyric poetry in the modern world, which usually deals more with emotions and ideas than with events and actions.
- Explain Aristotle's concept of *mimesis*. In what way is poetry imitative? Why, according to Aristotle are we naturally disposed toward imitation? Do you agree with his arguments?  
*Mimesis* can be roughly translated as "imitation." We might say that something is mimetic if it is not, and does not pretend to be, "the real thing." A painting of a chair is not a chair. Poetry is imitative in that it describes events in the real world without pretending to be these events. No one watching *Oedipus Rex* will think that they are watching real life unfold, but the performance will approximate something that could happen in real life. This is somewhat problematic, since the events in *Oedipus Rex* did not actually take place in real life. What is important is that, in some sense, they could have taken place. Aristotle claims that we are naturally imitative creatures and learn from imitation, and so we are naturally drawn to tragedy and other mimetic arts.

# LONGINUS

## Introduction:

*“The bold Longinus, all the nine inspire;  
And bless their critics, with a poet’s fire...  
Whose own example strengthens all his laws;  
And is himself that great Sublime he draws.”*

- Alexander Pope

**Longinus** is the conventional name of the author of the treatise, *On the Sublime*, a work which focuses on the effect of good writing. Longinus, sometimes referred to as pseudo-Longinus because his real name is unknown, was a Greek teacher of rhetoric or a literary critic who may have lived in the first or third century AD. Longinus is known only for his treatise *On the Sublime*.

## On the Sublime:

*On the Sublime* is both a treatise on aesthetics and a work of literary criticism. It is written in an epistolary form and the final part, possibly dealing with public speaking, has been lost. Longinus critically praises and blames literary works as examples of good or bad styles of writing. Longinus ultimately promotes an “**elevation of style**” and an essence of “**simplicity**” or...

*“A certain distinction and excellence in composition.”*

As a critic, Longinus displays a rare breadth and catholicity of outlook, and a mind disinterested and free from prejudice. His estimates are just, and have been upheld by posterity. For him literature is not a mechanical craft, but a thing of the spirit, of imagination, of feeling, and of the gift of communication. He thus becomes a pioneer in the field of aesthetic appreciation of literature. His great doctrine is that in great literature there are certain basic qualities which are permanent and universal, and that these qualities are embodied in the ancient masterpieces of Greece. In this way, he advocates a return to the standards, and above all the spirit of the classical Greeks. Again and again he directs attention from the technical to the more elusive and spiritual side of literature. He hints in more than one place that formal rules may be disregarded at the bidding of a higher law; an important aesthetic truth which was to be rediscovered by modern critics.

## FIVE PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF SUBLIMITY:

By the word ‘sublime’ Longinus means elevation or loftiness – all that raises style above the ordinary, and gives it distinction in its widest and truest sense. So sublimity is a certain distinction and excellence in composition. Longinus says that, both nature and art contribute to sublimity in literature. Art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains art hidden within her. The five principal sources of the sublime are as under:

### **Grandeur of Thought:**

Nobody can produce a sublime work unless his thoughts are sublime. “*Sublimity is the echo of greatness of soul*”. It is impossible for those whose whole lives are full of mean ideas and habits, to produce anything that is admirable and worthy of an immortal life. It is natural that great accents should fall from the lips of those whose thoughts have always been deep and full of majesty. Therefore, he who would attain distinction of style must feel his soul on the works of the great masters, as Homer, Plato and Demosthenes, and capture from them some of their own greatness. This reflects the classicism of Longinus.

### **Capacity for Strong Emotion:**

The second source of the sublime is forceful and inspired passion. Longinus asserts that nothing contributes to loftiness of tone in writing than genuine emotion. At one place, for instance, he says,

*“I would confidently affirm that nothing makes so much for grandeur, as true emotion in the right place, for it inspires the words as it were, with a wild gust of mad enthusiasm and fills them with divine frenzy”.*

But the emotions have to be true emotions and in the right place.

### **Appropriate Use of Figures:**

The third source of attaining excellence of style is the use of figures of speech which he considers very important, and so devotes nearly one third of his work to it. He shows discrimination and originality of thinking in his treatment of the subject. Figures of speech should not be used mechanically; rather they must be rooted in genuine emotion. Used naturally, they impart elevation to style, and are themselves made more effective by an elevated style.

*“Arts lies in concealing art, therefore a figure is at its best, when the very fact that it is a figure, escapes attention.”*

The grandeur of any figure will depend on its being employed in the right place and the right manner, on the right occasion, and with the right motive. It strengthens the sublime, and the sublime supports it.

### **Nobility of Diction:**

The fourth source of the sublime is diction which includes choice and arrangement of words and the use of metaphors and ornamental language. The discussion of diction is incomplete because four leaves of this part of the book are unfortunately lost. Nevertheless, words, when suitable and striking, he says, have a moving and tempting effect upon the reader and are the first things in a style to lend it grandeur, beauty and mellowness, dignity, force, power and a sort of glittering charm.

*“The choice of proper and striking words is essential for producing sublimity in an art.”*

### **Dignity of Composition:**

The fifth source of the sublime is the dignity of composition, that is, a dignified composition or the arrangement of words. It should blend thought, emotion, and figures and words themselves —the preceding four elements of sublimity – into a harmonious whole.

A harmonious composition alone sometimes makes up for the deficiency of the other elements. Such an arrangement has not only a natural power of persuasion and of giving pleasure but also the marvelous power of exalting the soul and moving the heart of men.

*“Excessive conciseness of expression tends to mar the sublime.”*

Making a distinction between the false and the true sublime, Longinus says that the false sublime is characterized first, by timidity or bombast of language, which is as great an evil as swellings in the body. Secondly, the false sublime is characterized by triviality, which is a parade and pomp of language. Thirdly, the false sublime results when there is a cheap display of passion, when it is not justified by the occasion, and so is wearisome. True sublime, on the other hand, *pleases all and pleases always*, for it expresses thoughts of universal validity – thoughts common to man of all ages and centuries – in a language which instinctively uplifts our souls.

### **Summing up:**

Hence, being a great rhetorician, Longinus gave great importance to the use of figures, diction and the artistic arrangement of whole. In this respect he follows Aristotle; for Longinus the ultimate function of literature is to be ‘Sublime’ and its effect on the readers should be of ecstasy or transportation to a new ever widening horizon.

## **Q-SUBLIMITY IS THE ECHO OF A NOBLE MIND**

Longinus says,

*“Great utterance is the echo of greatness of the soul”.*

It is impossible that those whose thoughts are trivial and servile should flash out anything wonderful and worthy of immortality. Great literature is thus the creation of instinctive genius. Thoughts that are lofty and awe-inspiring find their natural expression in exalted phrase. Such loftiness of thought is normally a gift of nature rather than an acquired quality. But art can help in putting a curb on the wild tendencies of nature. Longinus says,

*“Fine writing needs the spur as well as curb”.*

Both nature and art are, therefore, necessary for the creation of the Sublime in literature.

Great thoughts spring from great souls. The truly eloquent must be free from low and mean thoughts. Men with mean and servile ideas cannot produce immortal literature. It is only great minds that produce great literature. So the first source of the sublime is that of grasping great thoughts.

Sublimity is the image of the soul. A thought, even when it is not uttered, is at times sublime. Such is the silence of Ajax in Odyssey.

But, what does actually the sublime consists of? Longinus tries to answer the question at the very outset of his treatise:

***“The Sublime consists in certain loftiness and of language, and it is by this and this only that the greatest poets and prose writers have won pre-eminence and lasting fame”.***

And he goes on:

“Work of a genius does not aim at persuasion, but ecstasy of lifting the reader above himself. Its wonder, wherever and whenever it appears, startles us; it prevails where the persuasive or agreeable may fail; for persuasion depends mainly on ourselves, but there is no fighting against the sovereignty of genius. It imposes its irresistible will upon us all.

Where there is only skill in invention and laborious arrangement of matter a whole treatise, let alone a sentence or two, will scarcely avail to throw light on a subject. But the Sublime at the critical moment shoots forth and tears the whole thing to pieces and like a thunder bolt, and in a flash reveals the entire author’s power”.

R.A. Scott-James says, “We have the first perfectly definite statement of doctrine, here, which Joubert could not make more precise when he said: ***“Nothing is poetry unless it transports”***; which Sir Thomas Browne was to translate into the language of sentiment when he exclaimed, “I love to lose myself in a mystery to pursue my reason to an O Altitude! And which De Quincy was to nail down in his distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power – ‘The function of the first is to teach; the function of the second is to move’” the sublime effect of literature, for Longinus, attained, not by argument, but by revelation. Its appeal is not through the reason, but what we should call imagination. Its effect on the mind is immediate, like a flash of light upon the eyes”.

The function of literature, before Longinus, if it was poetry, was to instruct or to delight or to do both and, if it was prose, to persuade the reader. Longinus found this three word formula wanting. He discovered that the masterpieces of Greek classical literature – epics of Homer, the lyrics of Sappho and Pinder were great for a different reason altogether – their sublimity. So instruction or delight or persuasion, therefore is not the test of ecstasy caused by an irresistible magic of speech. If he is spellbound by what the writer says, the work has the quality of the Sublime.

## **Q-LONGINUS AS A ROMANTIC CRITIC**

Scott-James calls Longinus ***“The first romantic critic”*** because of his insistence on passion, ecstasy, transport, imagination, intensity and exaltation. These are the romantic traits found in criticism of Longinus. In the words of Prof. Saintsbury...

***“Longinus has marked out grounds of criticism very far from those of the ancient period.”***

Before Longinus the Greek and Roman critics judged a work of art in accordance with the set rules, or considered it either from the pragmatic or the ethical stand-point. Longinus used all these standards. He judged a work more by its essence than by its form. He gave his theory of sublimity and insisted that the reader or hearer should be carried away, transported and moved to ecstasy by the grandeur and the passion of the work

We should be cautious in observing that he was not a thorough romantic critic. He tempers romanticism with what is sanest in classicism. Scott-James says that classicism was touched with romance, but not darkened. He knew that emotion and passion should be guided by some rules. He says that mere grandeur is exposed to danger when left without the control of reason and the ballast of scientific method. In this way it can be said that he is the first romantic critic who maintained his affiliations with classicism. Prof. Scott-James also says,

***“Though he was the first to raise the base upon which romanticism rests, he turned and tempered them with what is the sanest in classicism.”***

Though he was the first great critic to proclaim the efficacy of inspiration, he did not think that beauty comes like wind from heaven to fill the sails of the poet’s ship and drive it without effort across the sea.

Longinus is a romantic critic in some other ways too. He opposed the classical view that not more than two metaphors at a time should be used in a work, especially because he was gifted with a genuine romantic temper. He was a romantic critic as Rhys Roberts says,

***“He is subjective rather than objective.  
He is an enthusiast rather than an analyst.  
He is better fitted to fire the young than to convince the maturely skeptical.  
He speaks rather of transport or inspiration, than of purgation or universal.”***

Prof. Atkins disagrees with Scott-James, and says that it is as an exponent of the genuine classical spirit that Longinus is perhaps best described, and not, as he has been called, the first romantic critic. The classical qualities of Longinus as a critic are quite obvious. He shows a great reverence for the ancient Greek models, for tradition, and advocates this imitation. He does not believe that a genius is a law unto himself.. He stands for fitness, correctness, selection and balance. He is blind to the “romance” in Homer’s Odyssey. He believes in rules and regulations. He stands for the use of a refined and cultivated poetic style.

But, it is true that he anticipates much that is modern in critical works. And this is shown by his concern with the sense rather than with the form of literature. He is indeed the most modern of the ancient critics. His chief claim to modernity rests on his conception of inspiration and ecstasy.

In fact the fusion of the romantic, the classical and the modern strains in Longinus is the real key to his greatness, originality and relevance. He has an appeal to the romanticists as well as classicists and also to some extent to the moderns. He was first to assert that ***“Style is the man”***.

# **Natyashastra by Bharata**

## **Introduction:**

Natyashastra by Bharata is the most detailed and elaborate of all treatises on dramatic criticism and acting ever written in any language and is regarded as the oldest surviving text on stagecraft in the world. Bharata in his Natyashastra demonstrates every facet of Indian drama whilst covering areas like music, stage-design, make up, dance and virtually every aspect of stagecraft. With its kaleidoscopic approach, with its wider scope Natyashastra has offered a remarkable dimension to growth and development of Indian classical music, dance, drama and art. Natyashastra indeed laid the cornerstone of the fine arts in India.

## **Text of Natyashastra:**

The Natyashastra of Bharata Muni contains about five thousand six hundred verses. The commentaries on the Natyashastra are known, dating from the sixth or seventh centuries. The earliest surviving one is the Abhinavabharati by Abhinava Gupta. It was followed by works of writers such as Saradatanaya of twelfth-thirteenth century, Sarngadeva of thirteenth century, and Kallinatha of sixteenth century. However the abhinavabharati is regarded as the most authoritative commentary on Natyashastra as Abhinavagupta provides not only his own illuminating interpretation of the Natyashastra, but wide information about pre-Bharata traditions as well as varied interpretations of the text offered by his predecessors.

## **Background of Natyashastra:**

Written in Sanskrit, the vast treatise consists of six thousand sutras. The Natyashastra has been divided into thirty six chapters, sometimes into thirty seven or thirty eight due to further divergence of a chapter or chapters. The background of Natyashastra is framed in a situation where a number of munis approach Bharata to know about the secrets of Natyaveda. The answer to this question comprises the rest of the book. Quite ideally therefore narratives, symbols and dialogues are used in the methodology of Natyashastra.

## **Contents of Natyashastra:**

A mere perusal of the contents of Natyashastra will depict the variety of the topics discussed therein. The principal theme is the dramatic art which concerns the producers of the plays as well as those who compose them, the playwrights. Bharata wanted the plays to be a Drisya Kavya that can be successfully and profitably represented on the stage. The dramatic theory as well as practice has been elaborately dealt with in the text. Hence, manual gestures, facial expressions, poetics, music with all ramifications whether vocal or instrumental, prosody, some points of grammar, costumes, ornaments, setting up of the scenes with appropriate background etc. have been methodically dealt with. The author has treated the subject matter so very analytically as not to hesitate to repeat the things mentioned earlier in order to be more specific.

## **Cultural Projection in Natyashastra:**

Prakrita and allied native languages are meticulously dealt with by means of examples in the Natyashastra. References have been made to the languages of ancient tribes such as Barbaras, Kiratas, Andhras, Dravidas, Sabaras, Candalar etc. Beautiful verses of very fine literary excellence have been given by way of examples, while dealing with Dhruva songs, metres etc. In many of these verses the innate charm divested of all the artifices of the later classical age are found. Rasas, Bhavas, Alankaras etc. are portrayed well. Dance is inseparable from drama and Bharata has done full justice to it. The various Abhinayas mentioned in the text have been portrayed by mural paintings, sculpture, architecture etc. in the temples. Various crafts are brought into play to create a suitable background in the stage in different scenes. Natyashastra gives detailed directions about the dressing material, modes of wearing the garments and jewellery, articles to be used by the different characters in a play in accordance with their social status, profession, the cultural practice etc.

Natyashastra mentions mythological figures starting from the lowest stratum such as the Uragas, Patangas, Bhutas, Raksasa, Asuras etc. and also the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon viz; Danavas, Guhyakas, Kstadikpalakas, Gandharvas Apsaras, Asvins, Manmatha, Rudra, Visve Devas, Brhaspali Narada, Tumburu, Rishis, Mantradrastras, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshmi, Chandika, Sarasvati etc. There are references to cities and rural regions such as **Anga**, Antagiri, Andhra, Avarta, Kharta, Anarta, Usinara, Odra **Kalinga**, Kasmira, Tamralipta, Tosala, **Tripura**, Dakshinapatha, Dramida, Nepala, Pulindabhumi etc. Rivers and mountains such as Sindhu, Ganga, **Malaya**, **Sahya**, Himalaya and Vindhya finds place in the Natyashastra. Natyashastra opens with the origin of theatre, beginning with inquiries made by Bharata's pupils, which he answers by narrating the myth of its source in Brahma. Natyashastra consists of four elements namely pathya or text, including the art of recitation and rendition in performance taken from the **Rig Veda**. The other one is gita or songs, including instrumental music from the **Sama Veda**, abhinaya or acting, the technique of expressing the poetic meaning of the text and communicating it to the spectator from the **Yajur Veda**, and rasa or aesthetic experience from the **Atharva Veda**.

## **Chapters of Natyashastra:**

With well knit chapters Natyashastra covers every aspect of Indian art and drama. From issues of literary construction, to the structure of the stage or mandapa, from a detailed analysis of musical scales and movements, to an analysis of dance forms and their impacts on the viewers, Natyashastra covers every possible facet in detail.

As an audio visual form, Natyashastra mirrors all the arts and crafts, higher knowledge, learning, sciences, yoga, and conduct. Its purpose is to entertain as well as educate. Bharata was an ideal theatre artist and is gifted with restraint as well as vision. He understood the fact that performance is a collective activity that requires a group of trained people, knit in a familial bond and has best portrayed this understanding in the first chapter of his treatise, Natyashastra. In the first chapter Bharata therefore talks about the response and involvement of the spectator in drama. The spectators come from all classes of society without any distinction, but are expected to be at least minimally initiated into the appreciation of theatre. This is because of the fact that they may respond properly to the art as an empathetic sahridaya. Theatre flourishes in a peaceful environment and requires a state free from hindrances. The first chapter ends emphasising the significance and importance of drama in attaining the joy, peace, and goals of life, and recommending the worship of the presiding deities of theatre and the auditorium.

The second chapter lays down the norms for theatre architecture or the *prekshagriha* i.e. auditorium. This also protects the performance from all obstacles caused by adverse nature, malevolent spirits, animals, and men. It describes the medium sized rectangular space as ideal for audibility and visibility, apparently holding about four hundred spectators. Bharata also prescribes smaller and larger structures, respectively half and double this size, and square and triangular halls. Bharata's model was an ideal intimate theatre, considering the subtle *abhinaya* of the eyes and other facial expressions which he described in the second chapter of *Natyashastra*.

The third chapter describes an elaborate *puja* for the gods and goddesses protecting the auditorium, and prescribes rituals to consecrate the space. Chapter four of the *Natyashastra* begins with the story of a production of *Amritamanthana* i.e. 'Churning of the Nectar', a *samavakara* performed according to Brahma's instructions on the peaks of Kailasa, witnessed by Lord Shiva. After some time, a *dima* titled *Tripumdaha* or 'Burning of the Three Cities' is staged, relating Shiva's exploits. Shiva asks Bharata to incorporate *tandava* dance in the **Purvaranga** preliminaries and directs his attendant *Tandu* to teach Bharata. **Tandu** explains the components of **tandava**, the categories of its movements, and their composition in chorographical patterns. These form the pure dance movements required for the worship of the gods and the rituals. This chapter also lays the foundation of *angika abhinaya* or physical acting developed in later chapters. The fifth chapter however details the elements of *Purvaranga*. Thus the first five chapters are structurally integrated to the rest of the text.

The sixth and seventh chapters deal with the fundamental emotional notions and aesthetics of *rasa* and *bhava*. The *Bhavas*, which include the *vibhavas*, are communicated to spectators through *abhinaya*, especially *angika*. Therefore it receives elaborate treatment in the chapter eight to twelve. The chapters like 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 thus codify body language based on a definite semiotics. Movement requires well-defined blocking, so immediately afterwards the *Natyashastra* lays down the principle of *kakshyavibhaga* in the thirteenth chapter. The extremely flexible and easy principle of establishing space on stage and altering it through *parikramana* or circumambulation is a unique characteristic of traditional Indian theatre and dance and are subtly dealt in the next chapters of *Natyashastra*.

Chapter eighteen discusses the ten major **Rupakas**, or forms of drama and *natika*, a variety of **uparupaka**. The next chapter analyses the structure of drama as well as the inclusion of *lasyangas* or components of feminine dance derived from popular dance and recitative forms in theatre. Chapter twenty gives an elaborate account of the *vrittis*. Chapter twenty one deals with *aharya abhinaya* and covers make up, costume, properties, masks, and minimal stage decor. Chapter twenty two begins with *samanya* or 'common' *abhinaya*, which compounds the four elements of *abhinaya* harmoniously. It discusses other aspects of production too, which may be viewed as 'inner', adhering to prescribed norms and systematic training, and 'outer' or done freely outside such a regimen. This chapter ends with an analysis of women's dispositions, particularly pertaining to love and terms of address, while the following chapter twenty three deals with male qualities and patterns of sexual behaviour, as well as classification and stages of feminine youth. Chapter twenty four specifies the types of characters in Sanskrit drama. Chapter twenty five deals with *chitrabhinaya* i.e. 'pictured acting' especially meant for delineating the environment occurring as a stimulant or *uddipana vibhava* of different *bhavas*. It also defines the specific ways of expressing different objects and states, and the use of gestures, postures, gaits, walking, and theatrical conventions. The next two chapters present the nature of *dramatis personae*, the principles of make-up, and speak about the success and philosophy of performance.

The chapter twenty seven deals with music employed in theatre. Chapter twenty eight covers *jati* or melodic types or matrices, *sruti* or micro-intervals, *svara* or notes, *grama* or scales, and *murccana* or modes or *ragas*. Chapter twenty nine describes stringed instruments like the *vina* and distinguishes between vocal and instrumental music, further dividing vocal into two types, *varna* or

`colour`, only syllabics and giti or `song`, with lyrics. Chapter thirty describes wind instruments like the flute and ways of playing it. Chapter thirty one, deals with cymbals, and tala, rhythm, and metrical cycles. Chapter thirty two defines dhruva songs, their specific employment, forms, and illustrations. Chapter thirty three lists the qualities and defects of vocalists and instrumentalists. The next chapter relates to the origin and nature of drums.

The concluding two chapters lay down the principles for distributing roles and the qualifications for members of the troupe. Bharata narrates the story of his sons, who ridiculed the sages and were cursed. He instructs them to expiate their sin, so that they attain their lost glory again. He returns to the performance in heaven where Indra enacts Nahusha, and finally to the descent of theatre on earth. Bharata ends his *Natyashastra* by stating the glory of theatre. *Natyashastra* remained an important text in the fine arts for many centuries whilst influencing much of the terminology and structure of Indian classical dance and music. For about two thousand years the *Natyashastra* has inspired new texts and various regional traditions of theatre. Kutiyattam in Kerala is an extant Sanskrit form that imbibed and developed the theory and practice originating from the *Natyashastra*. The analysis of body forms and movements defined in *Natyashastra* also influenced Indian sculpture and the other visual arts in later centuries.

## **Glimpses of Natyashastra**

The Indian dramatic art is called *natya* in *natyashatra*. *Shastra* is the term accepted in Indian tradition for the holy writ dedicated to a particular field of knowledge. *Natyashastra* is a compilation of work by various sages but the tradition offers its authorship to sage Bharata. So it came to be called *Bharatamuni's Natyashatra*. Its date is not definitely known. It is taken as 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. It must have reached its present form sometime during this period. It is an encyclopedic work having 37 chapters and it deals with various topics, which are necessary for the production and presentation of the drama before the spectators.

In its first chapter, Bharata gives an account of its creation. It is in a mythical form. The *natya* was created by Brahma, the god of creation, to meet the demand of a plaything a source of pleasure to minds weary of strife, wants and miseries of daily existence. An art form like a drama does it very ably because it has a visual and aural appeal. Any piece of advice communicated through a visual-aural form has more impact on human mind than any other form. A drama, besides offering entertainment, can also influence and uplift the minds of spectators.

The four *vedas* were created by Brahma, but the lower caste and ladies were not allowed to study them. So, the myth says, Brahma created the fifth *veda* called *Natyaveda*, i.e. the art of drama, which can be studied and practiced by everybody. While creating this *natyaveda*, Brahma adopted its constituents from the four *vedas*. Recitation was adopted from *Rigveda*, music and song from *Samaveda*, histrionics from *Yajurveda* and sentiments from *Atharvaveda*. Subordinate *vedas* called *Upavedas* were also connected with *natyaveda*, e.g. *Ayurveda* was used to show expressions of diseases, their symptoms and certain mental moods etc. as explained by *Charaka* and *Sushruta*. *Dhanurveda* (archery) was made use of in the representation of fights on the stage. *Gandharveveda* was used in the preliminaries and in the actual performance of drama. *Sthapatyaveda* (architectural science) was necessary for construction of the playhouse.

Bharata assures us that we cannot think of any piece of knowledge or lore, art or craft, design or activity that will not enter into the composition and stage presentation of drama.

The story goes that this *natyaveda* was handed over to Indra and Indra handed it over to Bharata. This Bharata was supposed to have 100 sons. It should probably mean that Bharata made use of all kinds of people in the society coming from different parts of the country, or having deformities like squint eyes, stammering speech, or were very tall, very short, bald, hunch backed just about anybody, in the presentation of the drama. To play the role of women Brahma created *Apsaras* (celestial maidens), who were experts in dramatic art.

Ancient dramas were danced and presented. The dance form was attributed to Shiva. He requested one of his disciples named *Tandu* to teach the dance, hence called the *Tandava*. The feminine form of dance called *Lasya* was taught by Parvati. The drama was performed on the slopes of the mountains or in the open. Later it was found that it needed protection from natural calamities and also from the bad elements in the society, especially when protests from some groups of people take a violent form. This can be seen even in present days. So playhouses were constructed. Bharata gives details of construction of a playhouse right from the selection of land and its preparation, construction material, building plans, pillars, measurements and so on.

There are rituals before presentation of drama and they are described in detail. The principle deities of drama, viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are worshipped. Shiva is in the form of Nataraja. Even today, Nataraja is offered a *puja* before any stage performance. Then the well-being of the spectators is wished for.

Further, there is a chapter discussing the aesthetic theories, definitions and characteristics etc. in detail.

Then Bharata describes histrionics, which is called *Abhinaya* in *natyashatra*. The drama is communicated to the spectators in four ways.

- The communication through body movements, called *Angika abhinaya*, where the movements of major limbs like head, chest, hands and feet as well as movements of minor limbs like eyes, nose, lips, cheeks, chin etc. are involved. The glances, gestures, gaits are also part of *angika abhinaya*.
- The communication by speech is called *Vachika abhinaya*. In this, the vowels, consonants and their places of origin in the mouth, intonation, modes of address etc. are discussed. While giving the literary aspect of drama Bharata describes ten types of dramas which are known as *Dasharupaka*. One of them is *Veethi* i.e. road shows. At present, a lot of them are seen during the election time.
- Extraneous representation is called *Aaharya Abhinaya* and is done by means of costumes, make up, ornaments, stage properties etc.
- Representation of temperament of the characters is called *Sattvika Abhinaya*. It is the highest quality of *abhinaya* expressing the inner feelings of the character by subtle movements of lips, nasal ali, trembling of body, turning the face red, rolling down the tears etc.

- Then Bharata describes how to represent the phenomena like sunrise, sunset, different times of the day, rains etc. which is called *Chitrabhinaya*. He also mentions in detail how to show the animals on stage, how to make them artificially and with what material.

Bharata makes a note of the dramatic competitions, how to conduct them, the qualification of judges, gifts to be given to the actors in one of the chapters.

A lot of importance is given to music in *natyashastra*, wherein about nine chapters have been dedicated to music. In vocal and instrumental music, he describes *svara* (a musical note) and its use in expressing particular aesthetic sense i.e. *Rasa*.

*Gandhar* and *nishada* are used for expressing a pathetic sense i.e. *Karuna rasa*, *shadja* and *rishabha* in heroic and marvelous sense i.e. *Veera* and *Adbhuta rasa*, *madhyama* and *panchama* in erotic and comic sense i.e. *Shrungara* and *Hasya rasa* and *dhaivata* for odious sense i.e. *Beebhatsa rasa*. Details about *murcchana* (a group of *svaras* to be sung together) and its types have been given also.

The music is derived from *Samaveda*. *Gandharva* music is also *sama* music. Seven notes were already established in *sama* music. The *sama* singers were connected with sacrifice and *gandharvas* were professional singers or musicians. *Svara*, *pada*( composition) and *tala* (beats) are the three constituents of *gandharva* music. Bharata gives details about songs to be used in drama. They are called *Dhruvas*.

Instruments are divided in four groups.

- Stringed instruments are called *Tata*.
- Windblown instruments are called *Sushira*.
- Percussion instruments are called *Avanaddha* and
- Cymbals are called *Ghana*.

The stringed instruments like *veena* are of different types. *Chitra*, *Vipanchi* are major *veen*as and *Ghosha*, *Kacchapi* are the subordinate ones. Human body is also called *veena*, a musical instrument as it produces musical notes through vocal cords.

The stringed and windblown instruments naturally produce pleasant notes so they get upper hand in musical instruments.

*Chitra veena* has seven strings and is played by fingers. *Vipanchi* has nine strings and is played by *kona* (plectrum). These *veen*as can be seen in early sculptures of Sanchi, Barhat, Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda etc. In Buddhist literature, there is a mention of a seven stringed *veena*. It describes there that Buddha broke the seven strings one by one and still the notes continued. It shows that the influence of music lasted even after the actual music stopped. There are other types of *veen*as having fourteen strings for two *saptakas* (*Mahati*) and twenty one strings for three *saptakas*. (*Mattakokila*).

The second group is of windblown instruments like flute. These instruments are hollow and have holes to control the air flow. The flute is the major instrument while conch, *tundakini* are the subordinate ones. The *shahanai* is also a windblown instrument. Flute is the important leading instrument. The magic cast by Krishna's flute is well known. In many dance panels in ancient Indian

sculptures flute is seen though *veena* is absent. In Khajuraho temple structure, *veena* is seen with flute, drum and cymbal.

The third group is percussion instruments like drums. They are covered tightly with hide. The tightening or loosening of hide would change the pitch higher or lower. *Mrudanga*, *Panava*, *Dardura* are the major ones and *Pataha*, *Zallary* are the minor ones. The face of the drum is called *Pushkara* which is covered by mud. A drum with three faces *Tripushkara* is seen in Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. It is said that sage Swati heard the raindrops falling on the petals of lotus. The sound produced by them appealed to him and he created this instrument. In the detailed treatment we get *mrudanga* (two faces), *panava* (two heads then thinning in the middle part and fastened with strings) and *dardura* (drum with one face shaped like a pitcher, i.e. *Ghata*). Bharata also describes how to play them.

The fourth group is cymbals, like *zanza* and *manjira*. They supplied rhythm, i.e. *taal*. *Taal* is derived from *tala*, i.e. stability. *Taal* is the foundation necessary for music. It is indicated by clapping of hands also. Bharata describes various *taals*. He says, “Music, vocal and instrumental, and dance should be performed harmoniously to give pleasant experience like a fire band (*alatachakra*). A stick with fire at both ends, when rotated fast enough in a circular movement, creates an impression of a circle of fire. That is called *alatachakra*.”

This is only a gist of *natyashastra*. There are many other topics described in it and their finer details are given. It shows how well developed our dramatic art was right from the ancient period.

# Natya Shastra

The **Nātya Shastra** (*Nātyaśāstra*) of Bharata is the principal work of dramatic theory, encompassing dance and music, in classical India. It is attributed to the *muni* (sage) Bharata and is believed to have been written during the period between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. The *Natya Shastra* is the outcome of several centuries of theatrical practice by hereditary actors, who passed their tradition orally from generation to generation. It is in the form of a loose dialogue between Bharata and a number of *munis* who approach him, asking about *nāṭyaveda* (lit. *nāṭya*= drama, performance; *veda*= knowledge).

The ‘*Natya Shastra*’ discusses a wide range of topics, from issues of literary construction, to the structure of the stage or *mandapa*, to a detailed analysis of musical scales and movements (*murchhanas*), to an analysis of dance forms that considers several categories of body movements and their effect on the viewer. The ‘*Natya Shastra*’ posits that drama originated because of the conflicts that arose in society when the world declined from the Golden Age (*Kṛta Yuga*) of harmony, and therefore a drama always represents a conflict and its resolution. Bharata’s theory of drama refers to *bhavas*, the imitations of emotions that the actors perform, and the *rasas* (emotional responses) that they inspire in the audience. The eight basic *bhavas* (emotions) are: love, humor, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust and astonishment. In observing and imagining these emotions, the audience experiences eight principal responses, or *rasas*: love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror and comedy. The text contains a set of precepts on the writing and performance of dance, music and theater, and while it primarily deals with stagecraft, it has influenced Indian music, dance, sculpture, painting and literature as well. Thus, the *Natya Shastra* is considered the foundation of the fine arts in India.

## Date and Authorship:

The document is difficult to date and Bharata's historicity has also been doubted, some authors suggesting that it may be the work of several persons. However, Kapila Vatsyayan, a leading scholar of Indian classical dance, has argued that based on the unity of the text, and the many instances of coherent references to later chapters in the earlier text, the composition is likely that of a single person. Whether his Bharata was the author’s actual name is open to question; near the end of the text we have the verse: "Since he alone is the leader of the performance, taking on many roles, he is called Bharata" (35.91), indicating that Bharata may be a generic name. It has been suggested that Bharata is an acronym for the three syllables: *bha* for *bhāva* (mood), *rā* for *rāga* (melodic framework), and *ta* for *tāla* (rhythm). However, in traditional usage, Bharata has been iconified as a *muni* or sage, and the work is strongly associated with this personage.

Since nothing is known about Bharata, any arguments regarding date of the *Natya Shastra* are based solely on the text. It has been argued that the text predates several sections of the *Ramayana*, since the music terminology used in them by Valmiki follows Bharata's outlines. From similar evidence, it is clearly later than some of the *Purana* and *Brahmana* texts. These arguments, and others, have led to the opinion that the date may lie somewhere between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. Though earlier and later dates are often postulated, this appears to be the "broad consensus."

## **Title and Setting:**

Written in Sanskrit, the text consists of 6,000 *sutras*, or verse stanzas, organized in 35 or 36 chapters. Some passages that are composed are in a prose form.

The title, ‘*Natya Shastra*’, can be loosely translated as *A compendium of Theater* or a *Manual of Dramatic Arts*. *Nātya*, or *nāṭaka* means “dramatic arts.” In contemporary usage, this word does not include dance or music, but etymologically the root *naṭ* refers to "dance." The ‘*Natya Shastra*’ is the outcome of several centuries of theatrical practice by hereditary actors, who passed their tradition orally from generation to generation.

The text is in the form of a loose dialogue between Bharata and a number of munis who approach him, asking about *nāṭyaveda* (lit. *nāṭya*=drama, performance; *veda*=knowledge). The answer to this question comprises the rest of the book. Bharata testifies that all this knowledge is due to Brahma. At one point, he mentions that he has a hundred "sons" who will spread this knowledge, which suggests that Bharata may have had a number of disciples whom he trained.

The creation by Brahma of *natyaveda* is associated with an egalitarian myth about a *fifth veda*; since the four vedas, also created by Brahma, were not to be studied by women and lower castes, he created this fifth veda, the art of drama, to be practiced by everyone.

## **Performance Art Theory:**

Classical Indian dance: the inheritor of the ‘*Natya Shastra*’

The *Natya Shastra* discusses a wide range of topics, from issues of literary construction, to the structure of the stage or *mandapa*, to a detailed analysis of musical scales and movements (*murchhanas*), to an analysis of dance forms that considers several categories of body movements, and their effect on the viewer.

Bharata describes fifteen types of drama, composed of from one to ten acts. Full-scale plays of five or more acts are classified as either history or fiction. The ‘*Natya Shastra*’ describes eight types of shorter plays, from one to four acts: heroic, tragic or comic plays, together with the satirical monologue; the street play; and three kinds of archaic plays about gods and demons. There is also a secondary four-act “light play,” a fictitious, sensitive comedy about a real character. The principles for stage design are laid down in some detail. Individual chapters deal with aspects such as makeup, costume, acting, and directing. A large section deals with how the meanings conveyed by the performance (*bhavas*) can be particularly emphasized, leading to a broad theory of aesthetics (*rasas*).

Four aspects of *abhinaya* (acting, or histrionics) are described: the messages conveyed by motions of parts of the body (*angika*); speech (*vachika*); costumes and makeup (*AhArya*); and on the highest level, by means of internal emotions, expressed through minute movements of the lips, eyebrows, ear, and so on (*sAttvika*).

The ‘*Natya Shastra*’ claims that drama originated because of the conflicts that arose in society when the world declined from the Golden Age (*Kṛta Yuga*) of harmony, and therefore a drama always represents a conflict and its resolution. The conversion of a story into a dramatic plot is based on the single main element which ends the conflict, elaborated in its elements and conjunctions. Each

full-scale play embodies five “conjunctions:” opening, re-opening, embryo, obstacle, and conclusion. Each of these “conjunctions” is filled out with up to a dozen dramatic incidents and situations which show the characters in action. A large number of dramatic devices are available to express the causes and effects of emotion.

### **Rasa:**

The Nāṭyashāstra delineates a detailed theory of drama comparable to the *Poetics* of Aristotle. The purpose of drama is to entertain the audience. The joy (*harṣa*) and solace experienced by the audience is induced very deliberately by the actors through special acting techniques.

Bharata refers to *bhavas*, the imitations of emotions that the actors perform, and the *rasas* (emotional responses) that they inspire in the audience. The eight basic *bhavas* (emotions) are: love, humor, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust and astonishment. These are not conveyed directly to the audiences, but are portrayed through their causes and effects. In observing and imagining these emotions, the audience experiences eight principal responses, or *rasas*: love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror and comedy. Bharata recommends that plays should mix different *rasas* but be dominated by one. The audience essentially enjoys the play, but is also instructed by observing both good and bad actions, and the motivations which inspire them.

Each *rasa* experienced by the audience is associated with a specific *bhava* portrayed on stage. For example, in order for the audience to experience *srngara* (the 'erotic' *rasa*), the playwright, actors and musician work together to portray the *bhava* called *rati* (love).

### **Dance:**

Dancing is closely related to drama, and like drama, is a portrayal of the eight emotions. Drama employs chiefly words and gestures; dance employs music and gestures. The “Natya Shastra” classifies thirteen positions of the head, thirty-six of the eyes, nine of the neck, thirty-seven of the hand, and ten of the body. Modern Indian dancers still dance according to the rules set forth in the “Natya Shastra.”

Group dances or individual dances could be introduced into a drama whenever appropriate. The *lasya*, a solo dance invented by Parvati, represented a story, or part of a story, within a drama.

### **Music:**

After the *Samaveda* that dealt with ritual utterances of the *Vedas*, the “Natya Shastra” is the first major text that deals with music at length. It is considered the defining treatise of Indian Classical Music until the thirteenth century, when the stream bifurcated into Hindustani classical music in North India and Pakistan, and Carnatic classical music in South India.

While much of the discussion of music in the “Natya Shastra” focuses on musical instruments, it also emphasizes several theoretical aspects that remained fundamental to Indian music:

1. Establishment of *Shadja* as the first, defining note of the scale or *grama*. The word *Shadja* means 'giving birth to six', and refers to the fact that once this note (often referred to as "sa" and notated S) is fixed, the placement of other notes in the scale is determined.

2. Principle of Consonance: Consists of two principles:
  - a. The first principle states that there exists a fundamental note in the musical scale which is Avinashi and Avilopi that is, the note is ever-present and unchanging.
  - b. The second principle often treated as *law*, states that there exists a natural consonance between notes; the best between Shadja and Tar Shadja, the next best between Shadja and Pancham.
3. The “Natya Shastra” also suggest the notion of musical modes or *jatis*, which are the origin of the concept of the modern melodic structures known as *ragas*. Their role in invoking emotions is emphasized; compositions emphasizing the notes *gandhara* or *rishabha* are said to be related to tragedy (*karuna rasa*), and *rishabha* is to be emphasized for evoking heroism (*vira rasa*). Jatis are elaborated in greater detail in the text *Dattilam*, composed around the same time as the “Natya Shastra.”

The “Natya Shastra” discusses several aspects of musical performance, particularly its application to vocal, instrumental and orchestral compositions. It also deals with the *rasas* and *bhavas* that may be evoked by music.

### **Impact:**

“Natya Shastra” remained an important text in the fine arts for many centuries, and defined much of the terminology and structure of Indian classical music and Indian classical dance. Many commentaries have expanded the scope of the “Natya Shastra,” including Matanga's *Brihaddesi* (fifth to seventh century); Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati* (which unifies some of the divergent structures that had emerged in the intervening years, and outlines a theory of artistic analysis); and Sharngadeva's *Sangita Ratnakara* (thirteenth-century work that unifies the raga structure in music). The analysis of body forms and movements also influenced sculpture and the other arts in subsequent centuries. The structures of music outlined in the “Natya Shastra” retain their influence even today, as seen in the seminal work *Hindustani Sangeetha Padhathi*, by Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, written in the early twentieth century.

## Vakrokti by Kuntaka:

### Introduction:

‘Kavya’ or poetry consists of a co-operative conjunction of words and their meaning. Above all, such a conjunction must be significant and striking. By the word ‘striking’ or ‘vakra’ Bhamaha means that kind of expression where,

*“...more is meant than, meets the ear.”*

The term ‘Vakrokti’, thus, is made of two words ‘varka’ that means ‘striking’ or ‘statement’. And hence, ‘Vakrokti’ means:

*“Striking or indirect speech or statement.”*

More precisely Vakrokti is a striking mode of speech, different from the day to day, ordinary mode of speech.

### Its Origin and Development:

- Banabhatt can be cited as one of the earliest writers to use the term VAKROKTI; in Harsacharitam (1/8), considered the path of Vakrokti to be:

*“full of uncomplicated pun and new meaning and that is endowed with miracle of word and meaning as well.”*

However, Bhamaha was the first poetician to recognize Vakrokti as the root of all figures of speech. He related it not only with word and meaning, but also the obliqueness of their expression. As for, word and meaning he said:

*“Vacavakrārtha sabdōktiralankarāy kalpate.”*

It means, Vakrokti or Obliquity of expression, comprises obliquity of word and meaning.

- Next to Bhamaha, Dandin, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century recognized the significance of Vakrokti. He saw binary oppositions between ‘Svabhavokti’ (i.e. Natural utterance) and ‘Vakrokti’ (i.e. Oblique utterance). He Svabhavokti is discernible in natural description of things and events, whereas Vakrokti is not natural but oblique and miraculous. Moreover, he stated that, all figures of speech (alankaras) are kinds of Vakrokti.

The difference between Bhamaha’s and Dandin’s approaches is that, while the former included natural expression in the larger ambit of Vakrokti, the later considered Svabhavokti as separate from Vakrokti.

- Vamana, in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, also tried to determine the nature of Vakrokti, but in the process he limited its scope. He said:

*“Sadr̥syallaksana Vakroktih.”*

*(Kavyalankarsutraurti)*

That is to say, Vakrokti is figurativeness based on analogy.

- In 9<sup>th</sup> century, Rudrata, rather more narrowed the discourse, by defining Vakrokti as:

*“A mere poetic figure, based upon a play on words and occurs as a kind of pretended speech.”* (Translated by S. K. De)

He further added, that this pretended speech, which could be a sentence or a word, spoken in own sense and is taken in another. On the bases of this distinction he divided Vakrokti into two.

- 1) Kakuvakrokti: In which intonational fluctuations produce obliquity.
- 2) Slesavakrokti: Where obliquity is created with the help of pun.

In the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century Anandvardhana followed Bhamaha’s position on vakrokti. He considered it as synonymous with hyperbole. But his real contribution lay in relating Vakrokti to ‘auchitya’ (propriety) as he stressed that,

*“the Vakrokti should be used in accordance with the context.”*

Bhoja saw the whole literature in three categories as:

- 1) Svabhavokti (Natural Expression)
- 2) Vakrokti (Oblique Expressio)
- 3) Rasokti (Expression capable of pleasing, sentiments)

But Vakrokti that was endowed with large scope by Bhamaha was narrowed down to just a figure of speech later. It was Kuntaka who intensely thought on various aspects of Vakrokti. He may, in fact, be called a direct descendent of Bhamaha.

### **Vakrokrijivita:**

Under the title of Vakroktijivit, Kuntaka discussed in detail, the whole range of activity of a writer, dividing into four Unmesas. The title, Vakroktijivita means ‘Revival of Vakrokri’ or better,

*“figurative expression as the life or the essence, or the soul of poetry.”*

According to Bhamaha, Kuntaha held that, whatever beautiful and miraculous takes place in poetry is the consequence of Vakrokti. He was poetry, primarily, made of two elements word and meaning. These elements are embellished by Vakrokti. Elaborating upon Bhamaha’s definition of poetry:

*“Sabdarthaw Sahitau Kavyam.”* (Kavyalankar)

Kuntaka argued that neither word nor meaning and its purposeful accompaniment (Sahit) can create poetry. It is with the uniqueness of poetic language that poetry is created and this literary quality of a work can be discerned and recognized as Vakrokti. Kuntaka rejects Svabhavokti as a figure of speech on the ground that, if it were a figure of speech, than even our daily discourse should have been poetic.

### **Definition:**

Vakrokti is thus a manifestation of the basic obliquity of the poet’s creative process. Kuntaka defines it thus,

*“Vaidagdhya vidagdhabhavah,  
kavikarmakavsalam tasya bhangivicchiti, taya  
bhanitih vicitraivabhidha vakroktirityucate.”*

This definition suggests that Vakrokti is an expression made possible by Vaidagdhya (skilled style) Vidagadhata means an expression through poetic endeavor, skill and elegance. The two words central to kuntakas definition are 1) ‘Vicitra’ which means use of different/ strange expression from well known manner and 2) ‘Prasidhdha’, that means style used in customary practice and treatises. The poetic dexterity, which is imperative for this miraculous an elegance, is nourished and developed in the form of inherited or inborn faculty. Vakrokti presupposes genius on the part of the poet, which is capable of pleasing sensitive hearts. Kuntaka further says:

*“Sabdarthaw Sahitau Vakrakaviya parsalini,  
Bandhe vyasthitaw Kavyarn  
tadvidaladakarini.”*

So by adding ‘tadidahladakari’ he rejected Vakrokti to the reader who, like I. A. Richards’ competent reader, can read with care and sensitivity. If poetry fails to please the heart and mind of a sensitive reader, it forfeits its claim to Vakrokti.

### **Classification of Vakrokti:**

Kuntaka classified vakrokti into six categories. They are as following:

#### **1) Varna-Vinyasa Vakrata:**

Varna-vinyasa vakrata or phonetic figurativeness includes repetition of similar sounds at regular intervals by the arrangements of syllables and use of alliteration and rhyme or Sabdalankar and Lavanya Guna in poetry.

#### **2) Pada - Purvardh Vakrata:**

Pada –Purvardh vakrata or lexical figurativeness includes stylistic choice in vocabulary, metaphor power of adjective and suggestive use of linguistic elements.

#### **3) Pada – Pratyaya Vakrata:**

Pada pratyaya vakrata of grammatical figurativeness includes all possibilities of varying the grammatical construction of an expression that is suggestive of the dexterous use of affixes, personification and so on.

#### **4) Vakya Vakrata:**

Vakya vakrata or sentential figurativeness includes the figure of sense. They are thousands in numbers. Its effect can be compared to a painter’s master stroke that glows out from the beauty of the material used.

#### **5) Prakaran Vakrat:**

Prakaran Vakrata includes the episode or peculiar topic in plot with unity, ingenuity, systematic unfolding and the technique of ‘Garbhanka’ that is ‘a play within the play’.

#### **6) Prabandh Vakrata:**

In the composition as a whole or whole plot with well knitting and originality is called Prabandh vakrata.

Kuntaka’s this scientific and empirical classification may be divided into two:

**I) Grammatical Vakrokti:**

The grammatical Vakrokti variety of Vakrokti is concerned with the inner structure of language. It includes phonetic, lexical and sentential Vakrokti.

**II) Non – Grammatical Vakrokti:**

The non – grammatical variety of Vakrokti includes extra-linguistics features such as context and composition. This extra-linguistic or non – grammatical variety is further divided into two:

- a) Compositional figurativeness
- b) Contextual figurativeness

The compositional figurativeness comprises adaptation of a story from a known source with additions resulting in new creative deviations, a new emotional significance, and erasure of unwanted episodes and plausible development of composition.

The contextual figurativeness includes all integrating strategies in poetry such as the ingenuity of plot, its systematic, unfolding, techniques like ‘garbhanka’ (a play within the play) and integration of all parts into a harmonious whole.

**Summing Up:**

Though later writers did not accord a high place to Kuntaka, yet it appears clear that an all round estimate of literature with emotion and beauty as its root is conceived by Kuntaka. Kuntaka seems to beat even the authors of the Dhvani School, who were more or less obsessed by the Dhvani and the Rasa perspectives.

Kuntaka tried to understand the poet through binary opposition by pitching him against an ordinary person. It is only the poet who can render worldly objects into emotional materials because he is gifted with the intensity of pulsation which ordinary people do not have.

Thus, Kuntaka rightly relates Vakrokti to the personality of the poet.

## Essay of Dramatic Poesy by John Dryden:

[John Dryden (1631-1700), English poet, dramatist, and critic, who was the leading literary figure of the Restoration. Dryden was born to a Puritan family in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, and was educated at Westminster School and at the University of Cambridge. About 1657 he went to London as clerk to the chamberlain to the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell. Dryden's first important poem, *Heroic Stanzas* (1659), was written in memory of Cromwell. After the Restoration, however, Dryden became a Royalist and celebrated the return of King Charles II in two poems, *Astraea Redux* (1660) and *Panegyric on the Coronation* (1661). In 1663 he married Lady Elizabeth Howard, sister of his patron, the courtier and playwright Sir Robert Howard.

In 1662 Dryden began to write plays as a source of income. His first attempts, including the comedy *The Wild Gallant* 1663, failed, but *The Rival Ladies*, a tragicomedy written in 1664, was a success. During the next 20 years, he became the most prominent dramatist in England. His comedies, including *An Evening's Love; or, the Mock Astrologer* (1668), *Ladies à la Mode* (1668), and *Marriage à la Mode* (1672), are broad and bawdy; one of them, *The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham* (1678), was banned as indecent, an unusual penalty during the morally permissive period of Restoration theater. His early heroic plays, written in rhymed couplets, are extravagant and full of pageantry. Among them are the semiopera *The Indian Queen* (written with Sir Robert Howard in 1664); this work contains some of the most famous music of his contemporary, the English composer Henry Purcell. Other works of this period are *The Indian Emperour; or, the Conquest of Mexico by the Spanish* (1665) and *The Conquest of Granada* (1670). One of his later tragedies in blank verse, *All for Love; or, the World Well Lost* (1678), a version of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, is considered his greatest play and one of the masterpieces of Restoration tragedy.

In his poem *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), Dryden wrote of the events in the "Wonderful Year" 1666, chiefly of the English naval victory over the Dutch in July and of the Great Fire of London in September. In 1668 he wrote his most important prose work, *Of Dramatick Poesie, an Essay*, the basis for his reputation as the father of English literary criticism (see Criticism, Literary).

Dryden was appointed poet laureate in 1668 and royal historiographer in 1670. In 1681 he wrote his first and greatest political satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*; a masterful parable in heroic couplets, it employs biblical characters and incidents to ridicule the Whig attempt to make the duke of Monmouth, rather than the duke of York (the future King James II), successor to King Charles II. His other great verse satires, all written in or about 1682, are *The Medall*; the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, written in collaboration with the poet and playwright Nahum Tate; and *Mac Flecknoe*, a vigorous attack on the English playwright Thomas Shadwell, which influenced Alexander Pope's mock-heroic poem *Dunciad*.

Although Dryden had defended his adherence to Protestantism in the poem *Religio Laici* (1682), he became a Roman Catholic in 1685, presumably because James II, an avowed Roman Catholic, came to the throne in that year. The poet then wrote *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), a metrical allegory in defense of his new faith. The Glorious Revolution (1688) and the resulting succession of the Protestant King William III did not change Dryden's religious views, but he lost his laureateship and his pension because of them.

Dryden returned to writing for the stage but without much success. He then began a new career as a translator, the most important of his translations being *The Works of Virgil* (1697). During the same period he wrote one of his greatest odes, "Alexander's Feast" (1697), which, like an earlier ode, "A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day" (1687), was written for a London musical society and set to music by Purcell. In 1699 Dryden wrote the last of his published works, metrical paraphrases of Homer, the Latin poet Ovid, the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio, and the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer, under the title *Fables Ancient and Modern*; its preface is one of his most important essays.]

## **Introduction:**

*“Take him where you will; you will find him always the same, always clear, and always modern.”*

John Dryden indeed was the most considerable literary figure of his age as well as of the ages to come. His life was spent as a playwright and as a man of letters. He wrote a great number of plays, poems, satire and didactic or argumentative poems. There is not enough of the stuff of genuine human nature in them to give them vitality. At the same time one cannot fail to be struck with the excellence of the literary workmanship.

On the other hand, he wrote two finest critical works in English. His *Essay Of dramatic Poesy* and *The Preface to the Fables*, are best instances of descriptive criticism. And for the same reason Dr. Johnson called him,

*“...the father of English critic.”*

## **Criticism Before Dryden:**

Literary criticism can be divided into three kinds:

- 1) Legislative Criticism,
- 2) Theoretical Criticism,
- 3) Descriptive Criticism.

In Legislative Criticism, the critic assumes the role of a teacher, and teaches the writer how to write and prescribes the rules which should guide him in literary composition. This kind of criticism often becomes the magisterial or dictatorial.

Theoretical criticism is concerned with the abstract questions of literary aesthetics. Whereas, in Descriptive criticism the critic places himself in the position of a mediator between the writer and the reader, and analyses existing works of art, mainly with a view to interpreting them to the public.

English criticism before Dryden was either Legislative or Theoretical. The main concern of the critics was to lay down rules for composition. Dryden, for the first time, started the practice of writing Descriptive criticism.

## **Essay Of Dramatic Poesy:**

As, the Essay published in 1668, Wimsatt and Brooks call it:

*“...the most ambitiously constructed critical document of his career and the most important for general literary theory.”*

Dryden begins with the address, ‘To the Reader’, prefixed to the Essay, wherein, he heralds his aim of vindicating the honor of our English writers,

*“...from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them.”*

The Essay is also an attempt to evolve the principle, which ought to guide the reader in judging a play, as well as, an effort to discover the rules which could be helpful to a dramatist in writing a good play. Moreover, the five main critical questions are handled in the essay:

- Whether the existing French school of drama is superior or inferior to the English school of drama?
- Whether the Elizabethan dramatists were, in all points, superior or not to those of Dryden's own time?
- Whether the plays are perfect in proportion, as they conform to the dramatic rules laid-down by the ancient?
- Whether the Substitution and rhyme for blank verse in serious plays is an improvement?
- And above all, the question regarding the relative merits and limitations of the ancient and modern poets.

### **Essay in the Dialogue Form:**

The essay is in the form of a dialogue, in the manner of Plato's Republic and by his skillful handling of it, Dryden made it into a popular literary form which according to Wimsatt and Brooks, was to reign supreme in English during the next seventy five years:

*“The dialogue is sustained by persons of several opinions all of them left doubtful to be determined by the reader in general.”*

Hence, the great advantage of the dialogue form is that it is 'open ended'. There is a free give and take of views; nothing is stated with any finality and in the end the readers are left to draw their own conclusion.

### **Its Dramatic Nature with Symbolic Characters:**

The setting of the essay is dramatic wherein there are four speakers or interlocutors. The background of the plot is the battle, fought in channels of the British and Dutch on June 3, 1665. Dryden imagines the four witty gentlemen as interlocutors, who have drifted in a boat down the river Thames.

These four interlocutors have symbolic significance. Each one of them, namely Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius and Neander stand for a school of thought or the other. A brief and respective analysis of them would be interesting.

Crites: The first interlocutor to develop his view is Crites, standing perhaps for Dryden's brother in law Sir Robert Howard. He expresses the extreme classical views, that the Greeks and Romans fully discovered and illustrated those reasonable and perennial rules to which the modern drama must conform.

Moreover, he tries to establish the 'last age' i.e. Elizabethan age superior to 'present age' i.e. Restoration age, in making plays. But through the discussion he tends to recognize the new degree of correctness in versification achieved by Weller and Denham of 'the present age'.

Eugenius: Eugenius is the second person to speak at length, who seems to stand for Dryden's friend Charles Sackville, Lord Bucknust. He takes, altogether, a negative position that the ancient poets failed badly in rules. The implication is that the moderns have actually best illustrated the rules. However, he fails to provide any positive evidence for his views.

Lisideius: thirdly, Lisideius or Sir Charles Sedley, a younger wit of the day, advocates French Drama. According to him, the classical rules for the imitation of nature are indeed the fundamentals of perfection. And the perfect realization of these rules is not to be found in the contemporary English drama but in French drama.

Neander: It is not until this point in the essay that the main pivot of argument occurs. Neander – Dryden himself upholds the superiority of the English drama over blank verse. He doesn't claim to know the truth; his purpose is to advance towards greater approximation of truth, gradually and through discussion.

**An Open-ended Criticism:**

It is interesting to note that the four speakers hardly agree to any point. Having discussed amply and aptly, they part with mutual courtesy. And readers are left to draw their own conclusion. The different characters may stand for some prominent friends and Dryden's acquaintances, but what is more to the point is the fact that they are objective representatives of four different points of view prevailing in his time.

**Summing Up:**

Thus, unlike dogmatic or magisterial tone, Dryden displays an openness of mind to opposite argument, almost approaching 'Skepticism'; which Wimsatt and Brooks call, 'Probablism'. As it is said,

***“True art leis in suggestion and not in stating.”***

The essay is rich in suggestion and through the dramatic technique it is the most elaborate piece of Dryden's poetics.

## Poetic Diction by Wordsworth

[William Wordsworth (1770-1850), English poet, one of the most accomplished and influential of England's romantic poets, whose theories and style created a new tradition in poetry.

Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, and educated at Saint John's College, University of Cambridge. He developed a keen love of nature as a youth, and during school vacation periods he frequently visited places noted for their scenic beauty. In the summer of 1790 he took a walking tour through France and Switzerland. After receiving his degree in 1791 he returned to France, where he became an enthusiastic convert to the ideals of the French Revolution (1789-1799). His lover Annette Vallon of Orleans bore him a daughter in December 1792, shortly before his return to England. Disheartened by the outbreak of hostilities between France and Great Britain in 1793, Wordsworth nevertheless remained sympathetic to the French cause.

Although Wordsworth had begun to write poetry while still a schoolboy, none of his poems were published until 1793, when *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* appeared. These works, although fresh and original in content, reflect the influence of the formal style of 18th-century English poetry. The poems received little notice, and few copies were sold.

Wordsworth's income from his writings amounted to little, but his financial problems were alleviated for a time when in 1795 he received a bequest of £900 from a close friend. Thereupon he and his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth, went to live in Racedown, Dorsetshire. The two had always enjoyed a warmly sympathetic relationship, and Wordsworth relied greatly on Dorothy, his devoted confidante, for encouragement in his literary endeavors. Her mental breakdown in later years was to cause him great sorrow, as did the death of his brother John. William had met the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an enthusiastic admirer of his early poetic efforts, and in 1797 he and Dorothy moved to Alfoxden, Somersetshire, near Coleridge's home in Nether Stowey. The move marked the beginning of a close and enduring friendship between the poets. In the ensuing period they collaborated on a book of poems entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1798.

This work is generally taken to mark the beginning of the Romantic Movement in English poetry. Wordsworth wrote almost all the poems in the volume, including the memorable "Tintern Abbey"; Coleridge contributed the famous "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Representing a revolt against the artificial classicism of contemporary English verse, *Lyrical Ballads* was greeted with hostility by most leading critics of the day.

In defense of his unconventional theory of poetry, Wordsworth wrote a "Preface" to the second edition of *Ballads*, which appeared in 1800 (actual date of publication, 1801). His premise was that the source of poetic truth is the direct experience of the senses. Poetry, he asserted, originates from "emotion recollected in tranquility." Rejecting the contemporary emphasis on form and an intellectual approach that drained poetic writing of strong emotion, he maintained that the scenes and events of everyday life and the speech of ordinary people were the raw material of which poetry could and should be made. Far from conciliating the critics, the "Preface" served only to increase their hostility. Wordsworth, however, was not discouraged, continuing to write poetry that graphically illustrated his principles.

Before the publication of the "Preface," Wordsworth and his sister had accompanied Coleridge to Germany in 1798 and 1799. There Wordsworth wrote several of his finest lyrical verses, the "Lucy" poems, and began *The Prelude*. This introspective account of his own development was completed in

1805 and, after substantial revision, published posthumously in 1850. Many critics rank it as Wordsworth's greatest work.

Returning to England, William and his sister settled in 1799 at Dove Cottage in Grasmere, Westmorland, the loveliest spot in English Lake District. The poet Robert Southey as well as Coleridge lived nearby, and the three men became known as the Lake Poets. In 1802 Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend, who is portrayed in the charming lyric "She Was a Phantom of Delight." In 1807 *Poems in Two Volumes* was published. The work contains much of Wordsworth's finest verse, notably the superb "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," the autobiographical narrative "Resolution and Independence," and many of his well-known sonnets.

In 1813 Wordsworth obtained a sinecure as distributor of stamps for Westmorland at a salary of £400 a year. In the same year he and his family and sister moved to Rydal Mount, a few kilometers from Dove Cottage, and there the poet spent the remainder of his life, except for periodic travels.

Wordsworth's political and intellectual sympathies underwent a transformation after 1800. By 1810 his viewpoint was staunchly conservative. He was disillusioned by the course of events in France culminating in the rise of Napoleon; his circle of friends, including the Scottish author Sir Walter Scott, also influenced him in the direction of orthodoxy.

As he advanced in age, Wordsworth's poetic vision and inspiration dulled; his later, more rhetorical, moralistic poems cannot be compared to the lyrics of his youth, although a number of them are illumined by the spark of his former greatness. Between 1814 and 1822 his publications included *The Excursion* (1814), a continuation of *The Prelude* but lacking the power and beauty of that work; *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815); *Peter Bell* (1819); and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822). *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* appeared in 1835, but after that Wordsworth wrote little more. Among his other poetic works are *The Borderers: A Tragedy* (1796; published 1842), *Michael* (1800), *The Recluse* (1800; published 1888), *Laodamia* (1815), and *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* (1822). Wordsworth also wrote the prose works *Convention of Cintra* (1809) and *A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England* (1810; reprinted with additions, 1822).

Much of Wordsworth's easy flow of conversational blank verse has true lyrical power and grace, and his finest work is permeated by a sense of the human relationship to external nature that is religious in its scope and intensity. To Wordsworth, God was everywhere manifest in the harmony of nature, and he felt deeply the kinship between nature and the soul of humankind.

The tide of critical opinion turned in his favor after 1820, and Wordsworth lived to see his work universally praised. In 1842 he was awarded a government pension, and in the following year he succeeded Southey as poet laureate. Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount, April 23, 1850, and was buried in the Grasmere churchyard.]

## **Introduction:**

*“Every genius is a rebel and so was  
Wordsworth.”*

Wordsworth, sparkling star of Romantic English poetry, protested against the traditions and usages set by the poets of the pseudo-Classical school during the eighteenth century. Like, Blake, Wordsworth also disliked the laid-down rules and regulations of eighteenth century poetry. He expressed his views on the nature and language of poetry in the Preface to The Lyrical Ballads, 1798 (second edition - 1800). Defining the nature and function of poetry, Wordsworth enunciated:

*“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of  
powerful feelings; it takes its origin from  
emotion recollected in tranquility.”*

Poetry, he believed, is not dependent upon rhetorical and literary devices; it is the free expression of the poet’s thoughts and feelings.

## **Poetic Diction Before Wordsworth:**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term Poetic Diction began to assume its importance, with the question raised about the language of poetry by Wordsworth. However, before Wordsworth, (in English poetry) Milton and Dryden had discussed about Poetic Diction. Dryden had mentioned in *Preface to the Fables* (1700), the term Poetic Diction. He described the theory of Poetic Diction as:

*“...a system of words, refined from the  
grossness of domestic use.”*

The most important view on the matter of Poetic Diction, then was given by a poet-critic, Thomas Gray:

*“The language of the age can never be the  
language of poetry.”*

Next to Gray, Wordsworth presented the most comprehensive views on Poetic Diction. His views were important as they mark a complete break from the poetic tradition of the Neo-Classical school. He set a new theory of Poetic Diction.

## **Who can be a poet?**

Wordsworth defined the poet as:

*“...a person having, more than usual organic  
sensibility.”*

Moreover, the poet is a man with more enthusiasm and tenderness. He has to have the knowledge of human nature and more comprehensive soul. A poet is pleased with his own passion and volition and...

*“...who rejoices more than other men in the  
spirit of life.”*

## **What is poetry?**

Further, Wordsworth defined poetry, as:

*“...a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling;  
recollected in tranquility.”*

The function of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an over balance of pleasure. Here he put accent on ‘pleasure’ but by ‘pleasure’ he did not mean merely aesthetic one. It should be moral also, which is much higher and results from religious faith.

## **His Theory of Poetic Diction:**

In his Preface, then, Wordsworth enunciated the theory of Poetic Diction. He averred that poetry should be written in,

*“...a selection of language, really used by  
men.”*

For him rustic speech became, almost, synonymous with the language; with the general human speech – the language spoken by human beings in a state of excitement, purged and purified by the poet.

Here, the term, ‘selection’ is significant, for it indicates that artistic creation implies the process of the elimination of the vulgar, coarse and painful elements. The aim of the poet, according to him, was to give pleasure and he can do so only when a judicious selection of the language of the rustics is made.

Moreover, he said that, there should have a certain coloring of ‘imagination’. According to Wordsworth:

*“The poet should give the colour of his  
imagination to the language employed in  
poetic composition.”*

Through the power of imagination the poet can select words fit for poetic composition.

## **Language of Prose and Poetry:**

In his revolt against the artificial and stereotype Poetic Diction of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth went so far as to state that:

*“...there neither is, nor can be any essential  
difference between the language of prose and  
the metrical composition.”*

In the Preface, he examined a sonnet of Gray – *On the Death of Richard West*, to show that the language of poetry is hardly different from good prose. He referred, particularly to the following two lines:

*“I fruitless mourn to him, that cannot hear, And weep  
the more because, I weep in vain.”*

Examining this sonnet, Wordsworth tried to prove that it is quite obvious that:

*“except in the rhyme and in the use of single word, ‘fruitless’ and ‘fruitlessly’ the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.”*

There is, however, the problem of the use of meter in poetry which in itself causes a distinction between the language of prose and poetry. The fact is that Wordsworth’s views on Poetic Diction and on the use of meter in poetry are not in harmony with one another, and appear contradictory.

### **Practice and Deviation of the Theory:**

Wordsworth’s theory of Poetic Diction is of immense value, and is considered as a corrective to the artificial and unnatural phraseology current in his own times. But, considered in itself, the theory is full of contradictions and limitations. Wordsworth’s love of plain language, however, does not prevent the frequent borrowing of apt phrases from other poets. Relagh has remarked:

*“The fact is, he hardly ever observes his own rules and the poems in which he most nearly violates them are often among his best.”*

For instance, he produced grandest poetry such as the *Immortality Ode*, *Tintern Abbey* and *Ode to Duty*, the diction of which could never be within the common speech of rustics. Hence, he violates his own rules in many of his poetic compositions, and it can be said evidently that he is at his best only in those poems, in which he deviates from his own principles of Poetic Diction.

### **Conclusion:**

Whatever may be the shortcomings of Wordsworth’s theory of Poetic Diction, it cannot be denied that he rendered remarkable service to poetry by effectively putting an end to the use of ‘false poetic diction’ – the worst of all the diseases which afflicted English poetry. To conclude, it would be convenient to quote Wyatt, who appreciates Wordsworth’s contribution to the poetic theories of English literature:

*“It cannot be denied that Wordsworth did a valuable service to poetry; and made available for poetic use many words that had long been falsely regarded as un-poetic.”*

## Fancy and Imagination by Coleridge

**Early Life:** Coleridge was born in Ottery Saint Mary in the English county of Devonshire on October 21, 1772. His father was a clergyman and a scholar. From 1791 until 1794 Coleridge studied classics at Jesus College at the University of Cambridge and became interested in the politics of the French Revolution (1789-1799), which was then underway. Through heavy drinking and other self-indulgent behavior he incurred large debts, which he attempted to clear by entering the army for a brief period. His brother paid for his release from the army. At the university Coleridge absorbed political and theological ideas then considered radical, especially those of Unitarianism.

Coleridge left Cambridge without a degree and worked with his university friend the poet Robert Southey on a plan, soon abandoned, to found a utopian society in Pennsylvania. This ideal society, which Coleridge dubbed “Pantisocracy,” was based on the ideas of English political philosopher William Godwin. But the plan evaporated soon after the two friends married sisters, Sara and Edith Fricker, in 1795. Coleridge’s marriage to Sara proved extremely unhappy, and his friendship with Southey cooled as well. Southey departed for Portugal in 1795, but Coleridge remained in England to write and lecture. From his new home in Clevedon, he edited a radical Christian journal, *The Watchman*. In 1796 he published *Poems on Various Subjects*, which included “The Eolian Harp” and “Monody on the Death of Chatterton.”

**Friendship with Wordsworth:** By 1797 Coleridge had met the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, and had begun what was to be a lifelong friendship with them. The years 1797 and 1798, during which the friends lived near each other in the county of Somerset, were among the most productive of Coleridge’s life. The two men anonymously published a joint volume of poetry, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which became a landmark in English poetry (see English Literature). It contained the first great works of the romantic school, including the famous “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”

In the fall of 1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth left for a trip on the European continent. Coleridge soon went his own way, spending much of his time in Germany. During this period he lost his early sympathy with political radicalism and became interested in German philosophy, especially the 18th-century idealism of Immanuel Kant and the 17th-century mystical writings of Jakob Boehme, and in the literary criticism of the 18th-century dramatist G. E. Lessing. Coleridge studied German and translated into English the dramatic trilogy *Wallenstein* by the romantic poet Friedrich von Schiller. These studies made Coleridge the most influential English interpreter of German romanticism. By this time Coleridge had become addicted to opium, a drug he used to ease the pain of rheumatism.

In 1800 Coleridge returned to England, and shortly thereafter settled with his family and friends at Keswick in the Lake District of Cumberland. In 1804 he went to the island of Malta as secretary to the governor. Coleridge returned to England in 1806. Between 1808 and 1819 he gave his famous series of lectures on literature and philosophy; the lectures on Shakespeare were partly responsible for a renewed interest in the playwright. In this period Coleridge also wrote about religion and political theory. Financial donations and grants supplemented his literary income.

**Seclusion in London:** In 1816 Coleridge, still addicted to opium and now estranged from his family, took residence in the London home of an admirer, the physician James Gillman. There he wrote his major prose work, *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a series of autobiographical notes and dissertations on many subjects, including some brilliantly perceptive literary criticism. The sections in which Coleridge defines his views on the nature of poetry and the imagination and discusses the works of Wordsworth are especially notable. Other writings were published while he was in seclusion at the Gillman home, notably *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *Church and State* (1830). He died in London on July 25, 1834. Coleridge’s oldest son, Hartley Coleridge, was an accomplished scholar, best known for his poetry.]

### **Introduction:**

*“So, then there abide these three – Aristotle, Longinus and Coleridge.”*

Thus, concludes Sainsbury after eliminating one after another, the possible contenders for the title of the greatest critic. Indeed, Coleridge is one of the greatest critic-poets that England has ever produced.

Coleridge is a man of wide and comprehensive reading and reviews the writers that he reads. However, the influences which are most potent in shaping the views and theories of Coleridge are three:

- 1) *Wordsworth,*
- 2) *Hartley and Hume and their Associationist Psychology,*
- 3) *German Transcendental and Idealistic Philosophy of Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Shelling, Schiller etc.*

However, his theory of Imaginaiton is derived largely from the German Idealist Philosophers. In spite of his indebtedness to Germany, he is one of the most original critics of England. For the same reason Rene Wellek, views him as,

*“...a link, between German Transcendentalism and English Romanticism.”*

### **His Works of Criticism:**

His stray remarks on literature and literary theories are scattered all over his prose writings such as *The Friends, Table Talks, Letters, Confessions of An Inquiring Spirit, Anima Poetae* and *Sibyline Leaves*. But, the bulk of his literary criticism, all that is worthwhile in it, is contained in his:

- 1) *Biographia Literaria, and*
- 2) *Lectures on Shakespeare and Other Poets.*

*Lectures on Shakespeare and Other Poets* (1808-1819) is predominantly devoted to practical criticism. Whereas, *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is a work on literary aesthetics or on literary theory.

### **Biographia Literaria:**

*Biographia Literaria* is a work of great value, but it too suffers from the usual faults of Coleridge. As its name signifies, it pretends to be a record of the poet's literary upbringings, but there is little consecutive narrative; there is too much of philosophizing and too many side issues and digressions.

However, chapters XIII and XIV stand remarkable in English Criticism, where Coleridge elaborates his concept of 'Imagination' and also differentiates it from 'Fancy'. Moreover, in chapter XVII, which is considered to be a 'digression' by many scholars, he analyses Wordsworth's theory of Poetic Diction in a masterly fashion.

### **Theory of Imagination:**

Coleridge's view on the nature and function of Imagination are brought out clearly in chapter XIII and XIV. According to Coleridge, Imagination has two stages, Primary and Secondary. Further, he elaborates the way in which Imagination distinguishes from Fancy.

➤ Primary Imagination:

In chapter XIII of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge considers Imagination,

***"...either as Primary or Secondary."***

By Primary Imagination he means:

***"...the living power and prime agent of all human perception."***

However, Primary Imagination is merely the power of receiving impressions of the sense, both in their parts and as a whole. It is an unconscious and involuntary act of the mind; the human mind receives impressions and sensations from the world outside, and imposes some sort of order on those impressions so that the mind is able to form a clear image inside, of the outside world. It is in this manner that clear and coherent perception becomes possible.

But it must not be forgotten that the Primary imagination is universal and thus is excisable to all.

➤ Secondary Imagination:

Secondary Imagination, on the other hand, may be possessed by others also, but it is the peculiar and distinctive attribute of the artist. Secondary Imagination, Coleridge considers as:

***"...an echo of the former (i.e. Primary Imagination), co-existing with the conscious will."***

Secondary Imagination is thus, more active and conscious in its working, which requires the will, volition and conscious efforts. However, it works upon what is perceived by the Primary Imagination; its raw material is the sensations and impressions supplied to it by the Primary Imagination.

With an effort of the will and intellect, Secondary Imagination selects and orders the raw material and re-shapes and re-models it into objects of beauty. This very process of re-shaping and re-modeling is considered by Coleridge as 'Essemplastic', that is:

***"...a shaping and modifying power."***

By its Essemplastic Stress, Secondary Imagination re-shapes objects of the external world and steepens them with a glory that never was on sea and land. Thus, Secondary or Essemplastic Imagination is an active agent which:

***"...dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to create."***

The Primary Imagination and Secondary Imagination do not differ from each other in kind. The Primary Imagination, on the other hand, is universal, while the Secondary is a peculiar privilege enjoyed by the artist.

**Imagination and Fancy:**

Coleridge, further, distinguishes Fancy and Imagination. Unlike, Primary and Secondary Imagination, Fancy and Imagination differ in kind. Fancy is not a creative power at all. It is...

***“...no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space.”***

It combines what it perceives into beautiful shapes, but like the Imagination it does not fuse and unify. Coleridge considers the difference between them as:

***“...the difference between a mechanical mixture and a chemical compound.”***

In a mechanical mixture a number of ingredients are mixed up, but they do not lose their individual properties. They still exist as separate identities. In a chemical compound, on the other hand, the different ingredients combine to form something new. The different ingredients no longer exist as separate identities. In short, a chemical compound is an act of creation; while a mechanical mixture is merely a bringing together of a number of separate elements.

In the same way, Imagination creates new shapes and forms of beauty by fusing and unifying the different impressions it receives from the external world. Whereas, Fancy is a kind of memory that arbitrarily brings images together, they continue to retain their separate and individual properties.

For Coleridge, Fancy is the ‘drapery’ (dress) of poetic genius, but Imagination is its very soul, which forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole and for the same reason he calls Imagination:

***“...a magical and synthetic power.”***

## **Chapter XVII**

In this chapter, Coleridge takes up the problem of Poetic Diction and examines Wordsworth’s view regarding it. In the beginning, he agrees with Wordsworth that the early poets were influenced by genuine feelings and real passions, and wrote in a language which was involuntarily rich in metaphors and figures of speech. He also agrees that the later poets had no real feelings and passions and they only tried to copy their metaphors and figures of speech as adornments to their language. But he observed that:

***“...Wordsworth has over emphasized this fact.”***

Then, Coleridge exposes many weaknesses of Wordsworth’s theory. In fact, he was the first critic to pounce upon Wordsworth’s Poetic Diction. He lays four points to prove Wordsworth’s theory incomprehensible.

- i) He points out first that a language so ‘selected’ and ‘purified’, as Wordsworth recommends, would differ in no way from the language of any other men of common senses. After such a ‘selection’ there would be no difference between the rustic language and the language used by men in other walks of life.
- ii) Secondly, Wordsworth permits the use of meter, and this implies a particular order and arrangement of words. If meter is to be used, the order of words in poetry is bound to differ from that of prose. It does differ, even in the poetry of Wordsworth himself. So Coleridge concludes that:

***“...there is, and there ought to be, an essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.”***

iii) Thirdly, Coleridge objects to the use of the word 'real language'. He writes:

*“Every man’s language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge; of the activities of his faculties and the depth or quickness of his feelings.”*

Moreover, everyman’s language has first, its individuality, second, the common properties of the class to which he belongs and finally, words and phrases of universal use. No two men of the same class or of different classes ‘speak’ alike first, because their natures are different and second, their classes are different.

Consequently, Coleridge substitutes the word ‘ordinary’ for ‘real’ and argues that the language of every person has to be purged of its uncommon and accidental features before it can become the ordinary language of man and fit for poetry.

iv) Lastly, Coleridge says that the case does not become more tenable by the addition of the words,

*“...in a state of excitement.”*

For the nature of man’s words, where he is strongly affected by joy, grief or anger must necessarily depend on the number and quality of the general truths, conceptions and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. And if there is a paucity of ideas, says Coleridge, there will be only meaningless repetitions:

*“For, the property of passion is not to ‘create’ but to set in increased activity.”*

### **Limitation:**

When in mood, Coleridge could create works of highest order, but he was incapable of sustained and persistent labour. He could work only by fits and starts; as a result, *Ancient Mariner*, is the only complete work that he has left behind.

In his critical theories, particularly his views are too philosophical; he is a critic not easy to understand. Often it is fragmentary and unsystematic. George Watson observes in this connection:

*“As a descriptive critic, his achievement is brilliant but sporadic.”*

### **Summing Up:**

Despite the fragmentary nature of his work, he is now regarded as the most original critic of England. It is, interesting to note that, Coleridge’s aesthetics could not appeal to the generation of

Victorians, to whom any system of aesthetics was of much interest. It is only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that his literary criticism has truly been understood, and recognition and appreciation have followed.

However, today his reputation stands very high, and many go to him for inspiration and illumination.

Note: Theory of Willing Suspension of Disbelief by Coleridge is additionally provided for the further reference.

### **Willing Suspension of Disbelief (Additional):**

All through the Neo-classic era the question of dramatic illusion and credibility had exercised the mind of critics. As the observance of the unities was considered to be very essential and was practiced, almost mechanically, consequently, dramatic illusion was violated.

Both Dryden and Dr. Johnson have expressed their views on this hotly debated topic. However, it was Coleridge, who opined the last word on the subject, and finally put the controversy at rest.

Coleridge writes in chapter XIV, that his endeavours should be, as he agreed, directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; so as to transfer from the reader's inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth,

*“Sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.”*

Hence, Coleridge suggests that by this ‘willing suspension of disbelief’, a poet or a dramatist makes their reader/spectator believe, those supernatural or at least romantic characters, which are incredible and improbable, and which under normal circumstances reader/spectator would not believe in. But, it is because, a poet-dramatist, treats these sort of characters, in such a way that as long as they (reader-spectator) are reading his poem or witnessing a drama, there would be a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’, and they would believe for the moment in what is essentially incredible and improbable.

Thus, the poet doesn't ask his reader to believe in what is presented to them, he only requires that they should not disbelieve. Only a momentary suspension of disbelief is required for an enjoyment of imaginative literature.

In other words, the poet, if he is sufficiently skillful, sends his reader's judgments to sleep, so that they neither believe nor disbelieve it to be reality, but merely enjoy what is presented to their minds eyes.

#### **Dr. Johnson's View**

Coleridge's view on the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ is often compared with Dr. Johnson's view. Dr. Johnson was of the view that the reader or the spectator knows,

*“from the first to the last that the stage is only a stage, and the players are only players.”*

But, unlike Johnson, Coleridge is of the view that it is not in this state that a tale or play is enjoyed, or that a spectator allows himself to be deluded even temporarily, to be able to enjoy it.

On the contrary, he just takes leave of his judgment for the time being,

*“The true stage illusion consists not in the mind's judgment it to be a forest, but in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest.”*

Thus, Coleridge holds that the spectator or reader does neither actively believe nor disbelieve. His judgment is in a state of suspension, so to say, for the time being. Imaginative literature owes its appeal to such suspension of disbelief.

## Mathew Arnold

### “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”

Mathew Arnold is a celebrated critic poet of literature of the Victorian age. He was the first modern critic. He could be called the critic's critic, being a champion not only of great poetry, but of literary criticism itself. He had written some poetry before he turned to criticism. His criticism is the criticism of a man who had personal experience of what he was writing about. It was in the lectures delivered at the university that he proved his worth as a critic. His theory of poetry is opposed to romantic individualism, subjectivity or authority. According to him the purpose of literary criticism was ...

*“To know the best that is known and thought in the world and in its turn making this known to create a current of true and fresh ideas.”*

He was the founder of the sociological school of criticism. His evaluations about the romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats are landmarks in the descriptive criticism and as a poet-critic he occupies an eminent position in the rich galaxy of poet critics of English literature.

To Arnold, a critic is a social benefactor. Before Arnold, a literary critic called only for the beauties and defects of works of art but Arnold the critic chooses to be the educator and guardian of public opinion and propagator of the best ideas. Scott James comparing him to Aristotle says that while Aristotle analyses the work of art, Arnold analyses the role of a critic that is why James says ...

*“Mathew Arnold defined more clearly than any other writer before him the relation of the critic of literature to the society in which he lives.”*

In his own day and for Yeats after, he was respected almost like Aristotle. After him, the attempt for Yeats was to only way,

*“Arnold had said so.”*

As Scott James says ...

*“For half a century, Arnold's position in this country was comparable with that of the venerable Greek, in respect of the wide influence he exercised, the mark he expressed upon criticism, and the blind faith which he has trusted upon the votaries.”*

#### **Arnold's critic has a duty to society**

Arnold was a poet himself, 'SOHRAB AND RUSTAM' being his much celebrated poem. At the same time, Arnold was lucky to have the background of teaching in his family, which contributed a lot to molding his learning. He was the father of criticism because it was the first time that in his hand criticism had assumed a multifarious personality. On one hand, Arnold's critic is committed to readers; on the other hand he is accountable to the writer as well. Here, we remember Ben Jonson, who defended the critics in these bitter words,

*“Critics are not tinkers making more holes rather than mending them.”*

Ben Jonson honored the critic to this extent that he called him an artist. Apart from Ben Jonson, there have been long lists of critic lovers like Dryden, Sainte Beuve, Goethe and many more. Arnold has laid down like Sainte Beuve, a pinpointed effective method of criticism. Sainte Beuve called the critic an artist and a scientist while Arnold compares the critic with a farmer who prepares the ground for a new crop. Ben Jonson, way back in sixteenth century, had defended the critic in memorable words that ...

***“To judge a poet is the faculty of poets but not of all poets but the best.”***

In the beginning of the essay ‘The function of criticism at the present time’ Arnold quotes from one of his essays, ‘On translating Homer’, where he had said ...

***“Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in the general the main effort - for now main Yeats, has been a critical effort the endeavor in the branch of knowledge theology, philosophy, history, art, science to see the object as in itself it really is.”***

In the above mentioned sentence Arnold gives great importance to criticism Wordsworth also, for whom Arnold had the profoundest respect, said that the creative faculty was superior to the critical faculty. It is true than the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. The works of many writers show that they were far better in writing criticism than creative literature. For e.g. Dr. Johnson wrote a play entitled ‘Irene’ which was a creative work.

But everybody admits that the critical work, “The lives of the poets” is infinitely superior to his play ‘IRENE’. Similarly Wordsworth’s ‘Preface to the lyrical ballads’, a brilliant piece of critical writing, is far better than his rather dull ecclesiastical sonnets.

It is no doubt, true that the critical power is of lower rank than the creative. But Arnold accepts this proposition with some reservations.

***“The place of the man and the power of the moment and the man is not enough without the moment”***

Now it is the business of the critical power to create the right type of atmosphere for the exercise of the creative power.

According to Arnold, a poet must have enough knowledge of life and the world, before he can deal with them in the poetry. And the world and life are in modern times very complex and complicated things; therefore the creation of a good modern poet needs a great critical effort behind it otherwise his poetry will be comparatively poor and short lived.

The material of creative artist is ideas. Wordsworth read more books to enrich his mind with ideas. Books are no doubt a source of great ideas, but more reading is not always enough. Shelley and Coleridge had immense reading. But compared to them, the ancient Greek poets-Pindar and Sophocles had not read many books. The great English poet and dramatist Shakespeare was also not a deep reader. And yet he became a supreme artist. The reason was that in the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, and in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lives in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing in the creative power.

However we shall focus on Mathew Arnold who has given certain clear-out milestones to understand a critic. Arnold shines more clearly with his theories on critics rather than when he performs as a poet.

**(i) The critic's duty**

We have heard enough about an ideal critic right from Aristotle, Longinus, and Dryden up to Sainte Beuve. But the greatest contribution to enhance the image of a critic is by Arnold. Arnold prescribes a few pinpointing clear duties of a good critic. For e.g. he says that a new comer who has much to say and show needs someone to support. Every artist faces the negative response of the audience as John Keats was victimized by adverse criticism. Arnold is serious on this ground. He justifies the birth of a new writer. But the critic must prepare the ground for the healthy growth of a writer. He compares the society to a field which requires to be ploughed and manured; the seed to be sown; the sprouts to be protected and later appropriates people climatic environment to be given. A writer comes along with his thoughts and his books but readers are innocent and ignorant, not knowing how to receive the new writer, how to nourish them and later on trim them. For the enlightenment of the readers the critic helps by introducing the writer, discussing his positive aspect more than the negative one. For this serious function, Arnold's critic must have patient and deeper understanding.

**(ii) Answerable to others:- (A bridge between the reader and writer)**

Arnold's critic is superior to the reader. This reader is a very great authority because after all it is for him that the writer writes and it is for him that the critic criticizes. It is a double edged sword that Arnold's critic walks on one hand, he is answerable to the writer on the other hand to the reader. In a way he is sandwiched. He cannot escape either if the critic is myopic about the writer it he will be biased he will miss the hidden beauties of that writer. If he is prejudiced against society then he will underestimate it. The critic must strike balance between the writer and the reader. For this, he must have an open mind ready to receive new ideas.

It is often said that the traffic police is never found on the bridge. Either he is in the beginning or in the end. The critic too resembles this traffic officer. That he does not stand between the reader and the writer but he himself becomes the bridge to join the 2 persons who are otherwise poles apart. If the writer is north pole, the reader is south pole. This situation is highlighted in the case of a new writer. A new writer as always frightened of how he will be received and therefore the bridge is important. An ideal critic is certainly this bridge because he already knows his reader and he has enough sympathy for the new writer.

**(iii) Favorable Atmosphere :-**

Society is a mixed group. Therefore perfection cannot be expected from readers in general. A number of them are variety is formed in educated, semi educated, rich and poor, professional and non professional young and not so young. As if this is not enough, there are even expectations among the readers for such a rich variety. When he introduces a new writer, he must keep in mind the simple reader as well as the enlightened one.

**(iv) Disinterested Attitude :-**

Arnold is specially known for one word, he has given to the world of criticism "Disinterested Attitude". By this he implies that a critic must be detached, not indifferent. This situation is hard to understand because there is a very thin line of difference between indifference and disinterest. Arnold describes that his critic should love and respect the new writer in its due preposition. If he become sentimental towards the writer than he will lose necessary distance required for judgment by

disinterest. Arnold implies that the critic must neither negate the artist nor unnecessarily protect him. Detachment is a virtue whereas indifference is not indulgence by a critic. Just as in life, one must be disinterested knowledgeably so also in literature knowingly the critic must keep a safe distance. Arnold is known for one sentence which he wrote for the critic.

***“He must make the best ideas prevail”***

he stresses disinterested objectivity - the critic, after performing his task, must stand aside, leaving it to humanity to decide the uses, Arnold says....,

***“I wish to decide nothing on my own authority... to let humanity decide.”***

The main effort of critical intellect is...

***“To see the object as in itself it really is.”***

Without any religious or political consideration, this disinterestedness, however, does not mean criticism for criticism's sake. A critic has to keep aloof from the practical view of things and from political considerations. Disinterestedness in critical activity alone according to Arnold, would lead us to truth and high culture. Vernon Hall has observed....,

***“The critic must be disinterested not because he has no social function, but because he has one.”***

Judging is also one of the critic's duties. But his judgment to be really valuable should be based on fresh knowledge. The critic's great concern for himself therefore must be knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge.

Criticism can also become a creative (faculty) activity if it is sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, and ever widening in its knowledge. In certain ages, when creative literature is not possible, criticism not only powers the way for the creative artist, it itself becomes a creative art.

### **Touchstone Method:-**

Up to this time Arnold was speaking on the problems and functions of theoretical criticism, now he speaks on judicial criticism - how to judge the merits of a work of art. Arnold adopts in modified form the method suggested by Longinus and Addison - that the greatest test of excellence is the test of time. For Arnold the real test of excellence is the taste of people and the feeling of greatness in a work of art. For this reason, he suggests the touchstone method to remember great lines of writers and to apply them as touchstones for excellences in other works. If the work moves us in the same way, it is really a great work, otherwise not.

### **Comparative method of criticism:-**

Arnold repeatedly stresses that the critic must know the best that has been thought and said in ancient and modern times, not only in his language and literature, but also in the literature of other countries. Thus are laid the foundations of that comparative method of criticism. According to him, a writer should be judged not only in the light of the literature of his own country, but in the light of literatures of all the countries.

### **Estimates:-**

Arnold is very much concerned with the real estimate of a work of art. Historical estimate proves to be misleading while we deal with the ancient poets. Ancient poets are great but its greatness

would be confined to that period of time only. In seeing the work as a creation of time, we lose the universal importance of the work. Chaucer may seem to be great from the historical estimate he is not really a great classicist because he loves ‘high seriousness’.

Arnold suggests that our evolution of contemporary poets is likely to be colored by the personal estimate. These personal estimates are shaped by our own likes and dislikes; favours and prejudice, and also environment. We often judge a poem subjectively. So it appeals to us in some way. Both historical and personal estimates are “fallacious” because they blur the distance between the ordinary work of art and a real masterpiece. Both are false standards of judgment.

Arnold believes that critic’s duty is to have the real estimate of a work, to rise above the fallacies and to see the object as it really is. The real estimate helps us to discriminate a true classic from a false classic. A true classic of the very best poetry must “feel and enjoy as deeply as we can.” That Arnold prescribes the famous Touchstone theory which according to him is the surest way to the real estimate.

### **Limitations of Arnold:-**

For all his championing of disinterestedness, Arnold was unable to practice disinterestedness in all his ways. In his essay on Shelley particularly he displayed a lamentable lack of disinterestedness. Shelley’s moral views were too much for the Victorian Arnold. In his essay on Keats too Arnold failed to be disinterested Arnold sometimes became a satirist and as a satirical critic saw things too quickly. His ways are characterized by egotism. The touchstone method ignored in...

- (i) Structure of entire work.
- (ii) Places little emphasis on sound imagery and other methods of creating meaning.
- (iii) Ignores the fact that plot gives statements of meaning.
- (iv) Makes it difficult to interpret elements of drama and character.
- (v) Simplifies logical and intellectual content.

It has been pointed out that there is no system and logical arrangement of ideas in his criticism and that it suffers from inconsistency. He was not able to appreciate Chaucer and Burns properly. Arnold also has a habit of repeating certain phrases like criticism of life ‘high seriousness’, ‘grand style’ and so it becomes boring for this reason he called as a salesman of literature.

George Watson points out the oddity in Arnold’s criticism – He says that Arnold’s critical formulations always stress the significance of objectivity; the ‘real estimate’; the dangers of historical and personal estimate, but his own critical performance is hardly free from personal prejudices.

Arnold certainly has limitations yet in spite of them, he is a great critic. His contribution to English criticism is manifold. Prof. Sainsbury says...,

*“His services, therefore, to English criticism, whether as a ‘Preceptist’ or as actual craftsman, cannot possibly be overestimated.”*

As Sainsbury has remarked...

*“Arnold is one of the best and most precious of teachers on his own side.”*

Arnold wrote a century back but his criticism is still alive. The most attractive of his concepts is that the critic is expected to satisfy not one but 2 parties, the society on one hand and the writer on another.

New writers and sometimes even the old writers are often misunderstood but a good critic prepares the society to receive positive literature and welcome good writers. Arnold's critic therefore has a double duty to perform. On one hand he must love and respect understands and studies the writers and on the other hand he must prepare the society to receive the writers Scott James rightly mentions.....,

*“We find him new in the capacity of the critic of criticism or the critic who had a mission to the world to fulfill.”*

Arnold's position as a critic has thus been assessed by Herbert Paul,

*“Arnold's literary criticism has original and intrinsic value.”*

## On Style by Walter Pater:

[Walter Pater (1839-1894), English essayist and critic, born in London, and educated at the University of Oxford, where he spent most of his life. He concentrated on interpreting to his age the art and literature of the Renaissance, through historical novels, stories, and, mainly, essays. His attention to elaborate, exquisite phrasing reveals his preoccupation with perfecting prose style without neglecting depth of subject matter. Pater is remembered primarily as an innovator in aesthetics who celebrated the pleasurable effects of art on the viewer or reader. "Art for art's sake," a phrase taken from his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), was Peter's credo and became a rallying cry for the aesthetic movement of the 1880s. His hedonist philosophy greatly influenced his younger contemporary, the Irish-born writer Oscar Wilde. Pater is best known for his novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), a study of the "sensations and ideas" of a young 2nd-century Roman confronting Christianity. His other works include *Appreciations: with an Essay on Style* (1889), which includes discerning essays on the work of such writers as William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and others, helped to define Pater's position as an influential man of letters; and the autobiographical *The Child in the House* (1894), which contains sketches of Pater's early years.]

### Introduction:

Walter Pater, along with Oscar Wilde, was associated with a literary and artistic Movement, known as the Aesthetic Movement. The Aesthetic believed in the doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake'. The followers of this doctrine regarded that:

*"The worship of Beauty as the highest goal of life."*

Moreover, they believed that art should be completely dissociated from moral considerations. The function of art, according to them was...

*"...to provide exclusively pleasant sensations and the critic should enjoy these sensations."*

However, this movement failed to be popular and lasting in England, as it was dissociated from morality and also because of the outbreak of the World War I.

Like the 18<sup>th</sup> century writers (Neo-classical), the aesthetics believed that form in art is more valuable than content. Pater, too, lays much emphasis on form and his Essay On Style is the best example of it. However, the essay On Style is not merely a treatment of the qualities of good prose, it is also an exposition of his aesthetic creed, and his canon and principles of criticism.

### On Style:

In the beginning of his essay, Pater differentiates literatures into two categories.

- 1) Imaginative Literature,
- 2) Literature of Fact.

Imaginative Literature deals with a writer's 'sense of fact', that he conveys to his readers, where as Literature of Fact is a mere transcript of reality. And since both prose and poetry are the branches of Imaginative Literature, there cannot be any essential difference between them; both of them are concerned with a writer's expression of fact, feeling, emotion and experience of life.

### **Truth of Expression:**

Pater furthers his discussion and avers that, the modern age, his contemporary age is such a complex one that prose would be more suited to it. Here, Pater anticipates that,

*“Prose has a bright future in the age.”*

Moreover, he says that a work of art is beautiful in proportion in which it expresses truthfully the artist’s vision of life. Here, Pater stresses Truth of expression, rather than Truth itself. It is one of the chief attributes of the aesthetic moment that they lay emphasis on exact and truthful expression of a writer’s vision, not necessarily conveying moral conduct.

The implication is that, the style is priori than content; the style which enables the writer to convey his vision, exactly and truthfully. Thus, unlike Wordsworth, Pater lays emphasis on Prose-Diction. According to him, beauty of style needs these considerations.

### **A Prose-Writer:**

As choice of words is a great importance to style, which needs a good deal of vocabulary, wide reading, on the part of prose-writer is essential. Here, Pater mentions that a writer must be learned in various arts, science and philosophies, so that by naturalizing their vocabularies in his composition, he may enrich the language and increase its expressive power.

Moreover, variety in the use of words and sweetness and melody to language, may be imparted by mixing monosyllabic words with longer but sonorous words.

### **The Choice of Words:**

Hence, Pater considers the choice of words to be the most significant. According to him, a writer should be careful in selection of words and distinction between two similar words should be observed. Those words which are blurred in vulgar usage must be avoided. In short, selection and rejection should be done according to the appropriate distinction. Moreover, he suggests that a writer should avoid ...

*“many a neology (newly coined words) many a license, many a gipsy phrase.”*

Pater, further, suggests that, sensible and painstaking labour helps a writer to make such a choice that appeal to the scholars and not to the vulgar multitude. In other words, Pater plea is..

*“for high standards in art.”*

### **Economy of Words:**

The writer should use absolute economy of means and express himself in the fewest possible words. As,

*“All art doth but consist in the removal of surpulage.”*

Moreover, ornament, like figures of speech, should be used only when absolutely necessary; when they are really serviceable. Thus, self restraint, a skillful economy of means, with logical connectivity of words, is very essential to a prose-writer: as,

*“prose-writing is a scholar writing for scholar, a writer should fastidiously avoid all false ornaments and surpulage.”*

### **The Mind in Style:**

Next, Pater takes up the construction of sentences, which he refers to as the mind in style: sentences should follow each other in logical and natural manner. That is to say the structure should have logical coherence. A sound structure requires..

*“...an architectural design in which one sentence is joined to, or fits in, the other, like breaks in building.”*

Further, variety to the style may be imparted by a judicious combination of simple, short, crisp sentences, with long intricate sentences. Moreover, the mind in style can be further elaborated,

R. A. Scott James says,

*“The mind reveals itself in design in structure in careful adjustment of words to sense and of part to the world.”*

### **The Soul in Style:**

The logical coherence is the mind in style. But besides this,

*“...the style has a tone, a colour, atmosphere, certain subtle graces.”*

This is what Pater refers to as ‘the soul in style.’ The soul is the element of personality in style in a particular spirit of which the artist is made of. And it is from this quality, that we know a writer from his works. It is to be noted, here that because of the soul in style that religious writers and preachers are able to persuade and convert.

### **The Style is The Man:**

Pater, concludes his design or construction of style stating,

*“ words are the body, the structure is the mind and certain subtler graces are the soul of life.”*

Thus, style expresses ‘the real man’, i.e. not in his capricious aspects, but in his absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him. In all literature, one indispensable beauty is its truth, truth to fact in the other lower kind of literature; and truth writer’s sense of fact or his ‘ vision’ in the highest or imaginative literature. As there should be,

*“absolute accordance of expression to idea.”*

In the same way, there should be absolute accordance between the mind, that is construction of sentences and the soul that is term, a colour, an atmosphere, and certain graces. And it is in this sense, in which style is really ‘the man’.

### **Good Art and Great Art:**

Pater, at last, differentiates good art and great art. According to him, good art results when there is absolute correspondence of expression to the artists vision. But good art may not necessarily be great art. He remarks...

***“The distinction between great art and good art depending immediately as regards literature at all events not on its form, but on the matter.”***

Hence, great art depends not on manner but on matter. And it is on this quality of the matter, its alliance to great ends, that the greatness of literary art depends. Thus, for this reason, *The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Les Miserables, The English Bible* are great works of art.

Moreover, he says that, even good art can become great art, if it be devoted further,

***“...to men’s happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other.”***

Thus, a work of art, when, has a sound subject matter, the soul of humanity; when the vision of the artist has nobility in universal truth and universal validity, devoted to the service of humanity, it becomes a great work of art.

In fact, all arts are great in proportion as it is devoted to the service of man and the glory of God. As a matter of fact, the apostle of Art for Art’s Sake turns out to be a moralist, a humanitarian or to say Art for Life’s sake.

### **Summing Up:**

However, the aesthetic movement, that Pater belongs to failed very soon in England, but principles laid down by him are sound and valuable. His plea is for a painstaking, scholarly style, which he, himself practiced.

Moreover, the charge of intellectual pleasure seeking or Hedonism has been repeatedly brought against him. But the conclusion of his present essay-“on style”, is alone sufficient to disprove such a charge.

It can be summed up, best with Pater’s attitude towards beauty...

***“worship beauty by all means,  
but remember that beauty of  
the highest kind is moral beauty.”***

# T.S.Eliot

## **Life& Works**

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis in 1888 to a family with prominent New England roots. Eliot largely abandoned his Midwestern roots and chose to ally himself with both New and Old England throughout his life. He attended Harvard as an undergraduate in 1906, was accepted into the literary circles, and had a predilection for 16th- and 17th-century poetry, the Italian Renaissance (particularly Dante), Eastern religion, and philosophy. Perhaps the greatest influences on him, however, were 19th-century French Symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Stephene Mallarme, and Eliot's favorite, Jules Laforgue. Eliot took from them their sensual yet precise attention to symbolic images, a feature that would be the hallmark of his brand of Modernism.

Eliot also earned a master's degree from Harvard in 1910 before studying in Paris and Germany. He settled in England in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I, studying at Oxford, teaching, and working at a bank. In 1915 he married British writer Vivienne Haigh-Wood (they would divorce in 1933), a woman prone to poor physical and mental health, and in November of 1921, Eliot had a nervous breakdown.

By 1917 Eliot had already achieved great success with his first book of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (which included "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a work begun in his days at Harvard). Eliot's reputation was bolstered by the admiration and aid of esteemed contemporary poet Ezra Pound, the other tower of Modernist poetry. During Eliot's recuperation from his breakdown in a Swiss sanitarium, he wrote "The Waste Land," arguably the most influential English-language poem ever written.

Eliot was now the voice of Modernism, and in London he expanded the breadth of his writing. In addition to writing poetry and editing it for various publications (he also founded the quarterly *Criterion* in 1922, editing it until its end in 1939), he wrote philosophical reviews and a number of critical essays. Many of these, such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent," have become classics, smartly and affectionately dissecting other poets while subliminally informing us about Eliot's own work. Eliot declared his preference for poetry that does away with the poet's own personality and poetry that uses the "objective correlative" of symbolic, meaningful, and often chaotic concrete imagery.

Eliot joined the Church of England in 1927, and his work afterward reflects his Anglican attitudes. The six-part poem "Ash Wednesday" (1930) and other religious works in the early part of the 1930s, while stellar in their own right, retrospectively feel like a warm-up for his epic "Four Quartets" (completed and published together in 1943). Eliot used his wit, philosophical preoccupation with time, and vocal range to examine further religious issues.

Eliot continued his Renaissance man ways by writing his first play, "Murder in the Cathedral," in 1935. A verse drama about the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket, the play's religious themes were forerunners of Eliot's four other major plays, "The Family Reunion" (1939), "The Cocktail Party" (1949), "The Confidential Clerk" (1953), and "The Elder Statesman" (1959). Religious verse dramas cloaked in secular conversational comedy, Eliot belied whatever pretensions his detractors may have found in his Anglophilia. He leapt ahead with this anti-pretension with "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" (1939), a book of verse for children that was eventually adapted into the Broadway musical "Cats."

As one might expect from his work, Eliot was unhappy for most of his life, but his second marriage in 1957 proved fruitful. When he died in 1965, he was the recipient of a Nobel Prize (1948), the author of the century's most influential poem, and arguably the century's most important poet. Perhaps due to the large shadow he casts, relatively few poets have tried to ape his style; others simply find him cold. Still, no one can escape the authority of Eliot's Modernism -- it is as relevant today as it was in 1922. While Eliot may not have as much influence on poets today as some of his contemporaries, he has had a far greater impact on poetry.

## **T.S. Eliot's Tradition and the Individual Talent**

T.S. Eliot was a Nobel Prize winning poet and literary critic who purported the Modernist school of thought in the early twentieth century. To this day, Eliot's works are examined by literary enthusiasts in order to shed light on the worldly writer's insights with a modern perspective. In his critical essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, published in 1919, T.S. Eliot explores the practical side of the responsibility which befalls the successful poet and the means by which his work should be judged by critics. It is only fair, then, to review Eliot's ideas by his own rules to see how his own advice and guidelines help creators of art and critical deconstructionists today.

### **Shouldering the Responsibility of Literary Tradition**

According to Eliot, a successful poet is fully conscious of literary works created by past artists, ensuring that the modern poet continues the traditions set through literary history. Eliot explains:

*“the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the pasts' awareness of itself cannot show.”*

In other words, literary hindsight benefits the modern artist, and cultivates the idea of tradition. Eliot concludes that tradition “cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor.” It is as though previous literary works are a living and breathing force and it is the modern poet's responsibility to nurture this tradition through intense and respectful study.

### **The Balance between Individuality and Conformity**

It does not seem easy for any artist to conform to traditions created by their predecessors while declaring their individuality, but Eliot nonetheless deems it necessary. If an artist is able to follow a measure of conformity which bridges their work with that of established works, then they are a success. But Eliot warns that

*“to conform merely would be for the new works not really conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art.”*

And therein lies the rub. A successful artist cannot simply declare their individuality in their work, cross their fingers and hope for praise. It is the duty of the artist to express their individual viewpoints while simultaneously respecting their predecessors; failure to do so will mar the modern artist's uniqueness.

### **Flee the Emotional Scene**

While many literary enthusiasts turn to poetry as a means to examine their own feelings through the work of the poet, Eliot claims that the poet who sets out to captivate a reader through emotional rendering is wrong to do so.

*“Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.”*

That's a relief. It may be the goal of the reader to seek solace in great works of poetry, but great poets create these works only when they have abandoned their most humane traits.

### **To All the Critics Out There**

"Criticism is as inevitable as breathing," Eliot points out in *Tradition and Individual Talent*. Criticism and the creation of artworks go hand in hand; one could not exist without the other. Just as modern poets should ideally respect the roots of literature, so must literary critics respect the work of poets. Eliot insists that

***"honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry."***

The idea of the work itself and not the creator coming under scrutiny, for good or ill is almost hard to imagine in modern times, but it is also the only fair way to get the most out of art. T.S. Eliot may be a literary hero to many, but that is because works like *Tradition and the Individual Talent* highlight his modern genius.

***"The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates"***

– T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

### **Q-How does Eliot blend traditional and individual talent?**

"Tradition and Individual Talent" is one of the more well-known works that T. S. Eliot has produced in his critic capacity. It formulates Eliot's conception of the relationship between the poet and the literary tradition which precedes him.

In "Tradition and Individual Talent" Eliot presents his conception of tradition and the definition of the poet and poetry in relation to it. He wishes to correct the fact that, as he perceives it,

***"In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence."***

Eliot posits that, though the English tradition generally upholds the belief that art progresses through change - a separation from tradition, literary advancements are instead recognized only when they conform to the tradition. Eliot, a classicist, felt that the true incorporation of tradition into literature was unrecognized, that tradition, a word that "*seldom.....appear in phase of censure*", was actually a thus-far unrealized element of literary criticism.

For Eliot, the term "tradition" is imbued with a special and complex character. It represents a "simultaneous order," by which Eliot means a historical timelessness – a fusion of past and present – and, at the same time, a sense of present temporality. A poet must embody "*the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer,*" while, simultaneously, expressing his contemporary environment. Eliot challenges our common perception that a poet's greatness and individuality lies in his departure from his predecessors. Rather, Eliot argues that "the most individual parts of his (the poet) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously." Eliot claims

that this "historical sense," that is, not only a resemblance to traditional works, but an awareness and understanding of their relation to his poetry.

But, this fidelity to tradition does not require the great poet to forfeit novelty in an act of surrender to repetition. Rather, Eliot has a much more dynamic and progressive conception of the poetic process. Novelty is possible, and only possible, through tapping into tradition. When a poet engages in the creation of new work, he realizes an aesthetic "ideal order," as it has been established by the literary tradition that has come before him. As such, the act of artistic creation does not take place in a vacuum. The introduction of a new work alters the cohesion of this existing order, and causes a readjustment of the old in order to accommodate the new. Thus, the inclusion of the new work alters the way in which the past is seen, elements of the past that are noted and realized. In Eliot's own words:

***"What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it."***

Eliot refers to this organic tradition, this developing canon, as the "mind of Europe." The private mind is subsumed by this more massive one.

Despite the title of the essay, Eliot never directly mentions the word talent once. Instead, he seems to focus solely on the "tradition" aspect of his essay. This implies that the "Individual Talent" mentioned here is not what is conventionally considered to be talent, but instead, in Eliot's definition, it is in fact the ability to connect with Tradition (Eliot's definition), and create something which has the merit to become a part of it. The implications here separate Eliot's idea of talent from the conventional definition (just as his idea of Tradition is separate from the conventional definition), one so far from it, perhaps, that he chooses never to directly label it as talent. Whereas the conventional definition of talent, especially in the arts, is a genius that one is born with. Not so for Eliot. Instead, talent is acquired through a careful study of poetry, claiming that Tradition, ***"cannot be inherited, and If you want it, you must obtain it by great labour."*** Eliot asserts that it is absolutely necessary for the poet to be studied, to have an understanding of the poets before him, and to be well versed enough that he can understand and incorporate the "mind of Europe" into his poetry. But the poet's study is unique – it is knowledge which "does not encroach," and which does not "deaden or pervert poetic sensibility." It is, to put it most simply, a poetic knowledge – knowledge observed through poetic lens. This ideal implies that knowledge gleaned by a poet is not knowledge of facts, but knowledge which leads to a greater understanding of the mind of Europe. As Eliot explains,

***"Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum."***

Such is the essence of Eliot's widely influential argument. It is an argument that has given shape to large portions of subsequent literary critical awareness. Many more recent students of literature have taken their cues from this essay and other essays by Eliot. And Eliot's presence can be felt even in works that travel in other directions. For example, the basic tension between the individual writer and traditions, between the poet and his forbears, is read quite differently in Harold Bloom's "The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of poetry".

In short, Eliot's essay has been, in a current critical term, a seminal essay. That is, much has grown from the terrain cultivated by Eliot's spade in this work.

## **Tension in Poetry by Allen Tate:**

### **Introduction:**

Allen Tate belongs to the school of New-Criticism who believes that poetry is important by itself as a single, separate entity. He is against the theories that connect literature with History, Sociology or with any other of the science or which would like to use it for propaganda.

The critic should concentrate his attention on the poem and see how it has been done and not how it should have been done. The purpose of a poem is not that poetry has some moral and social ends. Poetry is communication and language is the medium of communication. Therefore New-Critics make a throughout study of the poetic language to understand the full meaning of a poem. They make close, objective and precise study of a poem. Tate, being a New-Critic, concentrates on the text of a poem putting aside all approaches suggested by different critics.

### **Tension in Poetry:**

In the essay, 'Tension in Poetry', he expects a critic to study the work by various approaches. He expects him to keep the entire door open for the complete derivation of meaning in a poem. He also criticizes the symbolist poetry and the metaphysical poetry for their penalty meaning respectively.

Allen Tate regards poetry as a separate entity from the poet and tries to define what good poetry is. To explain it, Tate gives some special terms such as, 'Tension', 'Extension', and 'Intension' According to him,

*“Good poetry is a unit of all the meaning from the farthest extremes of intension and extension.”*

Tate clarifies that there are many approaches to derive the meaning of poetry. But Tate observes that many a good poetry.

*“Have certain common features that will allow us to invent for their sharper apprehension the name of a single quality tension.”*

Tension is the life of the poetry. Tension is the entrance through which the complete meaning of a poem can be derived. He, by the term, 'tension' never prefers 'Psychological Tension. He clarifies that,

*“I am using the term not as a general metaphor but as a special one derived from lopping prefixes off the logic terms extension and intension.”*

### **Concepts : Intension / Extension:**

Tate makes use of the term 'Tension' apropos two terms of Logic: Intension and Extension. The daily denotative and indisputable logic form and substance of poetry is described by Tate as 'Extension', Intension stands from the connotative (implied meaning) aspect of the meaning of poem. Anything in poetry that intensifies the meaning is called 'intension'.

Thus, extension refers to logical surface meaning of a poem and Intension refers to implied or hidden meaning. Both in themselves are incomplete. But both lead to the complete meaning of a poem that is tension.

### **Against Symbolist Poetry:**

To show the fallacy of communication and lack of extension, Tate gives an example of Miss Millay's poem, 'Justice Denied in Massachusetts', which is written in mass language.

***“What from the splendid dead we have inherited-  
Furrows sweet to the grain, and the weed subdued  
see now the slug and the mildew plunder.”***

The above lines about the rotting crops suggest how social justice established by the ancestors is now denied to man. There is nothing within the lines themselves to bear those suggestions. There is no indisputable logical frame of what Ransom calls 'Prose-structure' of the poem. In different situations and by another community unaware of the mass experience or mass feelings of the poet the same lines would be out guessed differently.

The lack of denotative meaning and fallacy of communication remain just as a patriotic expression or patriotic sensibility. Thus, her poem lacks 'extension' and complete meaning. Tension is hindered ever here. Tate remarks.

***“Good poetry can bear the does literal examination  
of every phrase.”***

The symbolist poet Edmund Wilson indulges in pseudo-rationalism of social sciences. He is concerned with only the denotative meaning and so intension suffers, Tate explicates, 'extension' and 'complete meaning'. Tension is hindered even here. Tate remarks.

***“Sentimental intimidation has been so complete that  
however easy the verse looked on the page, it gives  
up all claims to sense.”***

Stating the example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'The Vine', by James Thompson,

***“The wine of love is music, and the feast of love is  
suns; when live sits down to banquet Love sits long.  
Sits long and rises drunken but, not with the feast  
and wine. He reelect with his own heart. That great  
rich vine.”***

The language here appeals to an existing affective state. It has no coherent meaning either literary or in terms of ambiguity or implication. It may be wholly replaced by any of its several paraphrases or intension. Thus, it lacks in tension.

### **Against Metaphysical Poetry:**

Against 'metaphysical' poetry, Tate opines that it is confined only to the logical meaning. There development of imagery is by extension only. He takes the example from Cow leys' "Hymn to Light" and finds it a failure in connotation. Hence, it communicates only the affective state. He remarks.

***“Logical extension of imagery is no doubt the key of  
meaning. But it should be accompanied by implied  
intension.”***

Thus, "The vine" is a failure in denotation and the language shows objective context "Hymn to Light" is a failure in commutation imparting no plurality of meanings.

## The Term 'Tension':

Tate construes 'Tension', (not in psychological terms),

*"What I'm saying, is that the meaning of poetry is its 'tension' the full organized body of all the extension and intension that we can find in it."*

So, both denotative and connotative meanings are equally important for good poetry, for the central achievement of poetry is 'Tension'. Also this 'Tension' should be a criterion of a poem. But, as he says, the meaning of a poem can vary with variations of,

*"Personal drive, interest or approach."*

For instance the platonic critics would insist to stay close to the extension (denotative) where morals are expressed. And they might find marvell's 'To his coy Mistress' immoral and would try to suppress the poem. But this would be one true meaning of the poem, not the complete meaning.

### **Examples:**

He gives example of Donne's poem wherein he says,

*"Intension and extension are one and they enrich each other."*

~"A Valediction Forbidding Mourning."

*"Our two souls therefore which area Though I must goes endure not yet A breach, but an expansion. Like gold to aiery thinness beate."*

The poem's logical contradiction of things, which embody unity the finite image of 'gold', is extension which logically contradicts the intensive meaning which it conveys but it does not invalidate that meanings. If one rejects 'gold', one rejects the meaning for the meaning is wholly absorbed into the image of the gold.

### **1. Webster's Duchess of Malf:**

*"Cover her face, mine eyes dazzle she died young"*

Again, the two layered meaning gives the complete image of sincere utterance on the death of duchess of malfi.

### **2. Dante's 'Divine Comedy':**

Provides another extract for his Touchstone,

*"The town where I was born sits on the shore where the Po descends to be at peace together with the streams that follows him."*

Francisca one, of the characters, lives her identification the first image is of geographical account 'the town', 'shore', river 'Po' are denotative. The line attempts to resample her with, 'stream' (of desire) flowing to ocean (Paolo-her lover) and hints at the same time about her unconsummated state.

Tate does not observe only defensive examples of the symbolist poets. He finds perfect harmony of intention and extension in poetry of Rimbaud, Yeats and others. He says,

***“It would be a hard task to choose between the two strategies, the symbolist and the metaphysical both at their best are great and both are incomplete.”***

In a good poetry of ‘tension’ the strategy is diffused into the unitary effects. So, decoding the code is ‘tension’ of the poetry. The above three examples are giving by Tate to substantiate this point.

**Conclusion:**

Like Eliot, he also agrees with the given importance of ‘tradition’. The poets should, by using tradition, try to modify it. Hence, in a work of great poet there is always a tension between tradition and experiments.

After Richards, Tate is the most significant critic to focus on the meaning of poetry. The contribution made has proved itself original to literary criticism.

The new critics, mostly the critics of poetry have one thing peculiar they are using different terms for the same thing. For instance the group’s like-

- *Denotative – Connective (Allen Tate)*
- *Literal – Metaphorical (Matthew Arnold)*
- *Referential – emotive (I. A. Richards)*
- *Abstract – Paradoxes (Brooks)*

## **Four Kinds of Meaning by I. A. RICHARDS (1893-1979):**

[I. A. Richards (1893-1979), English literary critic, semanticist, and educator, born in Cheshire, and educated at the University of Cambridge. He taught at Harvard University from 1939 to 1963. With the British psychologist and educator Charles Kay Ogden, Richards wrote *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), a modern study of semantics viewed from a historical and critical standpoint. *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1926), and especially, *Practical Criticism* (1929) changed radically the way English is studied and taught. Richards emphasized the importance of close textual reading and warned against the dangers of sentimentality, generalizations, and lazy, careless reading. His work led to the New Criticism, which shaped literary analysis for much of the 20th century. His other writings include *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934), a study of the famous poet's theory of the imaginative faculty; *Basic English and Its Uses* (1943), which proposed that the entire world adopt 850 English words to facilitate worldwide communication; *The Screens and Other Poems* (1960); *So Much Nearer* (1968), a book of essays; and *Internal Colloquies* (1973), a collection of poems and plays.]

### **Introduction:**

Ivor Armstrong Richards, born in 1893, educated at Cambridge, and was appointed as a professor of English literature at the same institute in 1919. He has lectured both at Cambridge and at Harvard and thus could influence the course literary criticism in both the countries.

As a matter of fact, T. S. Eliot and Richards are the pioneers in the field of new criticism. Richards is considered to be the only critic who has formulated a systematic and a complete theory of literary art. George Watson claims that Richards has pioneered Anglo- American new criticism and has...

***“provided the theoretical foundation on which the technique of verbal analysis is built.”***

### **Practical Criticism:**

Richards in his study-The Practical Criticism (1929), lays emphasis on close textual and verbal study and analysis of a work of art. While constructing this book, he sets three aims before him.

- (a) To introduce a new kind of documentation to those who are interested in the contemporary state of culture, whether as critics, as philosophers or merely as curious person.
- (b) To provide a new technique for those who wish to discover for themselves what they think and feel about poetry and why they should like or dislike it.
- (c) To prepare the way for educational methods more efficiently and to enhance the power to understand what is heard and read.

Further, he distinguishes two usages of language namely...

#### 1) Referential Language

By referential language, he means, that language which is spoken in the day to day life. It is also applied to language of science, where the words stand for their literal meaning. For instance, the word ‘moon’, in science stands for...’*a natural satellite of earth*’, and nothing else.

#### 2) Emotive Language

On the other hand, emotive language means, that language which is employed in poetry. Such expression, he says, effects the emotions. For instance,

***“ her face is like the moon”***

Here, ‘moon’ does not stand for its literal meaning, but it refers to the beauty of the girl’s face.

### **Four Kinds of Meaning:**

As a professor in Cambridge in 1920’s, Richards distributed copies of various short unidentified poems and invited his students to comment freely upon them. Later on, he compared his own conclusions with those written responses that were call ‘Protocols’. This collection of responses comes out in 1929 as *The Practical Criticism*. This present essay *The Four Kinds of Meanings* is the first chapter of the third part of this book.

Richards in this chapter reveals his great interest in textual and verbal analysis. Moreover, he considers communication as an integral part of the literary creation. A poet writes to communicate, and language is the means of that communication. Since, the language is made of words, a study of words is equally important to understand the meaning of poetry.

Words carry, as Richards says, four kinds of meaning. These kinds are: Sense, Feelings, Tone, Intention.

### **Sense:**

Sense is subject or topic referred, which has literal meaning that means to communicate something by plain literal meaning of the word. Unlike ‘feeling’, it refers to fact and factual matters. It could even be a piece of information. An utterance without sense will lead to miscommunication. As Richards puts it...

***“We speak to say something and when we listen we expect something to be said.”***

### **Feeling:**

Feeling refers to emotion, emotional attitudes, will, desires, pleasure, un-pleasure and the rest. When an author says something, he has an attitude towards his subject of expression, some direction, bias or...

***“...accentuation of interest towards it, some personal flavor or colouring of feeling.”***

Words, thus, expresses these feelings, these nuances of interest.

### **Tone:**

By tone, he means the author’s attitude towards his readers. The writer chooses and arranges the words according to the taste of his readers. It is not worthy that the tone of a speaker differs from listener as to listener, depending on his relationship with him. As, in conversation with his subordinate friends and with his equals, speakers tone varies. As Richards himself says...

***“ the tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of his relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing .”***

Hence, there is a relation between the writer and his reader, and ‘tone’ reflects the awareness of this relation. Further, he remarks that tone effects the structure, choice of words, and image. The composition would not be complete, if any of these aspects is missing.

### **Intention:**

Richards, further, says that, apart from what a speaker says literally (sense), his attitude to what he is talking about (feeling); and his attitude to his listeners (tone); this is speaker's intention, his aim conscious or unconscious, the effect he is endeavoring to promote.

The speaker/writer can have more than one intention. In fact, the success or failure of the writer cannot be judged without the knowledge of the intention of the writer. As Richards says..

*“the understanding of it(intention) is a part of the whole business of apprehending his (writers) meaning.”*

Further, it also plays an important part in deciding the plot or the design of composition. Richards says in this connection...

*“ it controls the plot in the largest sense of the word, and is at work whenever the author is hiding his hand.”*

And it is for the same reason that, it has special importance in dramatic and semi-dramatic forms of literature.

### **Predominance of Functions:**

Often, in the use of language, in certain typical forms of composition, certain aspects, functions are predominant. Richards cites out some of the predominant functions.

- 1 First of all, he says, in scientific treatise, 'sense' predominate the writer's feelings. For, here, the function of language is to convey the 'information, the 'literal meaning' only.
- 2 Secondly, when a writer is trying to popularize his findings, hypothesis or what he has found new; his sense and feelings are predominant here, for, he is making more lively exhibition to popularize his finding, and at the same time hiding his weakness.
- 3 Thirdly, in political speeches 'tone' is predominant. As speaker here, wants to influence his listener and as a result entire emphasis is laid upon 'tone'.
- 4 Fourth function, intention, what is instrumental in expressing the feeling and tone, is used for the establishment of favorable relation with the audience. Here, feeling is predominated, whereas sense is subordinated.

Furthermore, Richards says in a normal convention, the predominance of the function keeps on shifting. And for the same reason, it is the most living thing. Moreover, he says, in psychological analysis or in sophisticated conversations the balance between all functions can be seen.

### **In Poetic Discourse:**

Richards furthers his discussion and avers that in 'poetic discourse' the meaning is completely unique, for it is complex. When making out the poetic discourse, normal criterion would not help. In fact, it requires a very unique kind of treatment. Richards says in this connection,

*“...feelings and tone are two doors to enter the poetic discourse.”*

Hence, in poetic discourse, language has 'emotive' function and therefore, understanding becomes a difficult task.

### **Limitation:**

However, the classification of four kinds of meaning is not very specific. The meaning of the specified categories overlaps each-other and puzzles the readers. Sometimes the reader emotionalizes sense, distorts the feeling, mis-tells the tone and disregards the intention. Sometimes, all four fail together or a particular collapse effects the whole.

Moreover, to explain his theory of four kinds of meaning, he has given the examples from various fields, like communication skills, science, and political speech and so on; but not even a single literary example is given in the present essay.

Though, Richards' theory is not free from flaws, his contribution cannot be ignored. As he was the first who dictated:

*“the original difficulty of all reading is not the problem of making, but that of the meaning.”*

### **Summing Up:**

Thus, Richards made literary criticism factual, scientific and complete. And for the same reason, he can be called the father of new- criticism and that of Psychological Criticism. His evaluation has a considerable influence on the both sides of the Atlantic. To sum up, it can be said, that Richards theory and views pertaining to Practical Criticism,

*“...are the master keys to all the problems of criticism.”*

And by using these master keys, all the locked chambers and corridors of the theory of poetry, open to the reader of both, creative and critical works.

## Raymond Williams

### “Realism and the Contemporary Novels”

*“The novel is a picture of real life  
and manner and of the time in which  
it is written, the Romance on lofty and  
elevated language describes what never  
happened nor is likely to happen.”*

-Clara Reeve

The purpose of writing the novel is verisimilitude (mimesis a semblance of truth). Hazlitt calls it...

*“The close imitation of men and manners,  
the very texture of society as it really exists”*

There are many types of the novel like, Picaresque, Epistolary, Sentimental, Gothic, Historical, Regional Social, Adventure, Mystery, Science fiction, Psychological, Realistic, Naturalistic, etc. The tale of Genii’ is the first novel by Murasaki Shikibu.

Raymond Williams is one of the critics who wrote an essay on “Realism and Contemporary Novel”. He starts his essay with the course of a review of “the uses of literacy”...

*“We are suffering, obviously from the decay and disrepute of the realistic novel,  
which for our purposes ought clearly to be revived of course it cannot be George  
Eliot, again nor even Lowrence, though the roots are in both. But there I think, is the  
direction.”*

This review goes against most current critical thinking and provokes the reaction that the realistic novel,

*“went out with the hansom cab.”*

It is easy to declare in favour of the “word”-“realism” yet difficult to say what exactly is implied. Raymond William says,

*“I will try to say what I mean by the realistic novel  
and why I think its revival is necessary.”*

According to Williams,

*“The novel is not so much a literary  
form as a whole literature in itself.”*

Within its wide boundaries, there is room for almost every kind of contemporary writing. Great harm is done to the tradition of fiction and to the necessary critical discussion of it if “The Novel” is equated with any kind of prose work. Tolstoy says that “of war and peace”.

*“It is not a novel.”*

A form which in fact includes “Middlemarch” “Wuthering heights” “The Rainbow” “The magic Mountain” in indeed more like a whole literature Williams does not mean by the revival of the realistic novel that.,

***“the whole vast form should be confined to one particular kind of work.”***

He cited the examples of Eliot and Lawrence because he believes that there is a formal gap in the literature of their own times. To attempt at brief indication of the kind of experience he had in mind, he cited two examples.

There is a kind of novel which in fact creates and judges the quality of a ***“Whole way of living”*** in terms of the qualities of persons. “War and Peace” and “Middle March” does this. The distinction of this tradition is that it offers a valuing creation of a whole way of life, a society that is larger than any of the individuals. Neither element neither the society nor the individual is there as a priority. The society is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied, nor are the individuals merely illustration of aspects of the way of life. The realistic tradition seems to him to represent a particular kind of mature realism in experience.....,

***“Every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life and yet the general life is seen at its most important in completely personal terms.”***

Williams gave one example that transfer attention from the people to the things. It was actually this very feeling that in this kind of fully furnished novel everything was present but actual individual life that led, in the 1920s to the disrepute of realism. In extreme reaction is in Virginia Woolf’s “The waves” where all the furniture and even the ‘physical bodies’ have gone out of the window and we are left with voices and feelings.

Realistic novel is divided into the “social” and “personal” novel. In the “social novel”, there may be accurate observation and description of the general life, the aggregation. In the “personal novel”, there may be accurate observation and description of persons, the units. Each lacks a dimension, for the way of life, is neither aggregation nor unit, but a whole indivisible process.

He gives two other types of novels.

- 1 The descriptive social novel.**
- 2 The documentary.**

This creates, as a priority, a general way of life, a particular social or working community. If we want to know about life in a mining town or on a merchant ship or in a ballet school or on a patrol in Burma, this in the book many novels of this kind are valuable. The good documentary is nearly always interesting. The novels of this kind should go on being written and with the greatest possible variety in setting. But the characters are miners, soldiers, dancers-illustrations of the way of life. He does not mean,

***“Where persons are of absolute interest in themselves and we yet seen within a whole way of life.”***

The social descriptive function is in fact the shaping priority.

**(1) The future story :-**

A very lively kind of social novel is now significantly popular. Here are find the description of the finding and materialization of a formula about society, from the sum of social experience, a

particular pattern is abstracted and a society created from that. The simplest examples are in the field of the future story, where the “future” device removes the ordinary tension between the chosen pattern and normal observation such novels as “Brave new world” “Nineteen eighty-four” are powerful social fiction in which pattern taken from contemporary society is materialized, as a whole in another time and place. Other examples are Golding’s “Lord for the flies” and “The Inheritors” and nearly all serious “Science fiction”, most these characteristically are written to resemble realistic novels. The story of a virtuous individual or small personal group in opposition to a vile society, and much of the action of these stories is a release of existing personal and social tensions. The experience of isolation of alienation, and a self exile is a vital part of the contemporary structure of feeling. The novels are lively because they are about lively social feelings. The dimension they lack is that of a substantial, rather than formula, society. The persons are, also commonly lay figures defined primarily by their function in the formula.

Social novel has further divided into (i) society documentary and (ii) social formula. There are the novels which describe often subtly and carefully, selected personal relationships. Forster’s “Passage to India” is an example of this kind with the traces of the older balance still clearly visible yet belongs in a high place. Because of elements in the Indian society of the novel which romanticize the actual society in the direction of the needs of certain of the characters. This is quite common result in this ‘personal’ kind a society a general way of life is apparently there, but is in fact often a highly personalized landscape to clarify of frame an individual portrait, rather than country within which tie individuals are actually contained. Graham Greene’s social settings are obvious examples of this; his Brighton, West Africa, Mexico and Indo-China have major elements in common which relate not to their actual ways of life but to the needs of his characters and of his own emotional pattern. In the social descriptive novel the characters were aspects of the society. Here the society is an aspect of characters.

In many personal novels, the general way of life does not appear even in this partial way, but as a simple backcloth, of shopping and the outbreak of war and buses and odd minor characters from another social class. There are perhaps a hundred cases, where the restriction is simply a failure of consciousness, a failure to realize the extent to which the substance of a general way of life actively affects the closest personal experience. Here novelists insist on the people as people first and not as social units. The element of common substance is missed. We are people, just like that, the rest is the world or society or politics of something, dull things that are written about in the newspapers.

***“We are people and people within a society;  
that whole view was at the centre of the Realistic Novel.”***

## **(2) “Personal formula Novel”**

In the beginning Williams argues,

***“It is not all that are need.”***

Over the last generation, there has been a Suring away from this kind of personal novel to the other personal kind, the novel of the ‘personal formula’. As in the social novel, a particular pattern is abstracted from the sum of experience, and persons are created from that often this is the bass of powerful and in its own terms valid, fiction. This is usually the kind of novel which can be summed up by saying that it only takes one person seriously, though then often very seriously indeed. There has been fine work in this kind of personal novel, Joyce’s “Portrait of the Artist” and to mention this remarkable work is to remind ourselves of the actual gain in intensity, the real development of the

form, which this emphasis allowed. A world is actualized on one man's senses; not narrated, or hard at arm's length, but taken as it is lived. In *Ulysses*, Joyce actualized a world, not through one person, but through three there are three ways of seeing

*“Three words of Stephen,  
Bloom and Molly,  
yet the three worlds,  
as in fact compose one world,  
the whole world of the novel.”*

#### ❖ Amis and Wain

Since ‘*Ulysses*’ this achievement has been diluted, as the technique has been also diluted. The paradox of Amis ‘*Lucky Jim*’ and ‘*That uncertain feeling*, and Wain’s ‘*living in the present*’ novels is that on the one hand they seem the most real kind of contemporary writing—they were welcomed because they were so like our actual feelings. But their final version of reality is parodic and farcical. There writes start with real personal feelings and ends with caricature. It is not possible to set these feelings in our actual world. Those are our liveliest writers; they illustrate our contemporary difficulty most clearly. The gap between our feelings and our social observation dangerously wide.

#### ❖ Special Plead:

The fiction of special pleading can be seen in its clearest form in those many contemporary novels, which taking one person's feelings and needs as absolute, create other persons in their role terms. Bowen's “*Heat of the Day*” follows the same essential pattern of persons who exist primarily as elements in a central character's emotional landscape, although here there is no first person narrative, and there is even some careful descriptive realism, to make the special pleading less stark. Wilson's “*Anglo Saxon*” Where the broad intention of realism is obvious, yet where finally only one character is fully and consistently observed while the others fall away into graded levels of caricature according to their distance from him.

*“I offer this fourfold classification social description, social formula personal description, personal formula as a way of beginning any general analysis of the contemporary novel.”*

This question now is whether these kinds correspond to some altered reality, or whether in fact they are the symptoms of some very deep crisis in experience.

The realistic novel needs, obviously, a genuine community: a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship work, friendship, family but by many interlocking kinds. It is obviously difficult in our society to find a community of this sort where ‘*Middlemarch*’ is a complex of personal, family and working relationships the links between persons in most contemporary novels are relatively simple temporary, discontinuous. The ordinary Victorian novel ends, with a series of settlements, of new engagements and formal relationships, whereas the ordinary 20<sup>th</sup> century novel ends with a man going away on his own, having extricated himself from a dominating situation and found himself in so doing. In a time of great change this kind of extrication and discovery was necessary and valuable movement.

*“yet it is still the paradox of our generation that all call for community and yet praise the escape from it call for the feelings that unite yet find that unity only in the common desire to get away where social profession and individual record diverge,*

*there is a dangerous gap in consciousness and this in fact, is the present crisis of realism.”*

The gap might be filled by ideas by new interpretations, by the discovery of wile glances in the continuing transformation of society. This is not a gap that can be bridged by will. We are crippled by the in adequacies of our society, yet we will not give up for anyone, the breakaway values that are in fact our living experience. We need the realistic novel for the recovery of wholeness, for the most ordinary business of living. If the recovery could be set down here in a formula the position would be different. But it can be only be set down, if at all.

*“Where all the persons are of absolute value in themselves and where their qualities are the qualities of the common way of life.”*

The stages to this will be slow, but there is the direction, a direction in experience which may again transform the novel. For the novel is not dead, cannot be replaced by sociology on the one hand or psychology on the other or by combination of these in the head.

*“We have good novels of our own times recording feelings and description with the novel’s special immediacy, what we have to look for is the recovery of the interpretation, idea into feeling, person into community, change into resettlement, which George Eliot made living in “Middlemarch”, Tolstoy in “War and peace” and which we need as a growing point, in our own divided time.”*

## “From the prehistory of Novelistic Discourse”

(Written in 1940, published in Russian-1967)

### Mikhail Bakhtin

(17 November 1865--7 March 1975)

Roman Jakobson mentioned Bakhtin as,

*“One of the few intelligent critics of formalism.”*

Mikhail Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher, Philologist, literary critic, Semiotician and scholar who wrote influential works of literary and rhetorical theory and criticism. His works, dealing with a variety of subjects, have inspired groups of thinkers such as Neo-Marxists, structuralist and semioticians, who have all incorporated Bakhtinian ideas into theories of their own.

The Bakhtin School, though formalist in its concern was not interested in abstract structuralism. All of them were interested in language/discourse/text as social phenomenon.

At the time, when Romantics and formalist regarded text as organic unities, Bakhtin pioneered a problematic approach to the study of literary text. He developed dynamic view of language. His ideas came to known as ‘Dialogism’. His important work **“Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics”** (1929) shows how Dostoevsky develop a ‘Polyphonic’ (dialogic) form that does not attempt unification or subordination either with reference to the characters in the novel or with reference to the view points of the author.

**“The Dialogic Imagination”** is a compilation of four essays concerning language and the novel.

- 1 “Epic and novel”
- 2 “From the prehistory of Novelistic Discourse”
- 3 “Forms of time and of the chronotype in the novel” and
- 4 “Discourse in the Novel”

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the novel as a literary genre became increasingly popular but for most of its history it has been an area of study often disregarded.

It is through the essays contained within “The dialogic Imagination” the Bakhtin introduces the concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism, chrenotype, making a significant contribution to the realm of literary scholarship. Bakhtin explains the generation of meaning through the “Primary of context over text” (heteroglossia), the hybrid nature of language (polyglossia) and the relation between utterances (intertextuality).

Bakhtin is considered to be a significant thinker of 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a philologist, he was concerned with language, arguing that a struggle between forces simultaneously working to separate and unite those things existing in both nature and culture was at the very center of existence. According to him, examples of struggle are best reflected in human language and best recorded in the novel, a subject to which Bakhtin devoted a significant amount of time. Five different stylistic approaches to novelistic discourse may be observed.

**1 The Direct Approach:-**

In this approach, only the author's portions in the novel are analyzed.

**2 The Linguistic Approach:-**

This approach would exclusively concentrate on the neutral linguistic description of the novelistic language.

**3 The Literary Approach:-**

In a given novelist's language elements characteristic of his particular literary tendency are isolated (be it Romanticism, Naturalism, Impressionism).

**4 The Biographical Approach:-**

What is sought in the language of the novel is examined as an expression of the individual personality that is language is analyzed as the individual style of the given novelist.

**5 The Rhetorical Approach:-**

The novel is viewed as a rhetorical genre and its devices are analyzed from the point of view of their effectiveness as rhetoric.

Every novel is a dialogued system made up of the images of languages, styles and consciousness that are concrete and inseparable from language. **"Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation"**

Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself. It has a lengthy pre-history....

*"Going back centuries,  
even thousands of years."*

The difference between the novel and other genres-poetic genre in the narrow sense-is so fundamental, so categorical that all attempts to impose on the novel, the concepts and norms of poetic imagery are doomed to fail. Although the novel does contain poetic imagery in the narrow sense, it is of secondary importance for the novel. Bakhtin gave the example of Oregon's and Lensky and said that the author is considerably closer to the 'language' of Lensky. The author participates in the novel with almost no direct language of his own. The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interlaminates each other.

**"From the prehistory of Novelistic discourse"** is a less traditional essay in which Bakhtin reveals how various different texts from the past have ultimately come together to form the modern novel. The basic tasks for a stylistic in the novel as Bakhtin gives them in "prehistory..." are.....,

*"The study of specific images of language and styles,  
the organization of these images, their typology,  
the combination of images and languages within  
the novelistic whole, their dialogical interrelationships."*

The modern novel is thus irrupted on the medieval dialogic consciousness.

*"The novel ... is inherently dialogic or in  
alternative formalization polyphonic."*

There are references as well to Volosinov's, "**Marxism and the philosophy of language**". There has been a belief that this work was actually written by Bakhtin, whether it was or not, Bakhtin seems to share Volosinov's sense of the nature of language.

Language is learned through contextualized social interaction. It lives "**in a living impulse toward the object**", in a specific located social interaction.

Consequently, all language use is language use from a point of view, in a context, to an audience. There is no such thing as language uses which is not dialogic, which is not contextual, and which is not ideological.

Any language has certain centripetal forces which work to render it Monoglossic, a 'unitary language' forces of regulation, of discipline, this includes the literary.

Any language, however, as it is lived, socially over a variety of social, professional class and so forth positions, is really an interacting and at times contesting amalgam of different language uses. Hence, every language instance is marked by centrifugal heteroglossic, socially distinguishing as well as centripetal (monoglossic, societally unifying) forces.

Each of these 'languages' embodies a distinct view of the world; its own sense of meanings, relations, intentions. People of different generation classes, places, professions, have their own dialects, or idiolects, there are differences among genres, among activities even from day to day of genre in particular, he writes.....,

***“Certain features of language take on this specific flavor of a given genre; they knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristic of a given genre.”***

Bakhtin believes that one can think only what one's language allows one to think. The value of polyglossia, the contestation of languages, hence the ways of thinking and of Heteroglossia, the contestation of voices and dialects within a language. Infact as he writes at one point, monoglossia is always in essence relative as one's own language.

***“is never a single language in it there are always survivals of the past and potential for other languagedness .....**”*

In terms of both artistic and social expression the clearest way to achieve heteroglossia is through the periodic through a deliberate displacement and subversion of the ideological constraints of the system. In the middle Ages, the role of parody was extremely important. It paved the way for a new literary and linguistic consciousness, as well as for the great renaissance novel.

The novel is inherently heteroglossic, as it is made up of languages objectifying other languages and entering into dialogue with them. The novel opens up language and hence culture. The carnival performs the parodic function on the level of social life. Bakhtin's notion of "carnivalization" fits in very well with the post modern notion of "heteroglossia" (the multiplicity of interaction) his "carnivalization" has been taken as the folk energy the life enhancing force that debunks the standard and authoritative version or view point.

These dialects or monoglossic 'languages' can be internal as well, that is a person can speak from different social sites; infact the psyche is a made up of different social / cultural sites is inherently dialogic in itself consciousness is "inner speech", which like outer speech is a social formation. Bakhtin's position consequently sorts well with poststructuralist conceptions of the de-centered self.

Language is inherently ideological. It is material, historically located, performative as an interactive part of ongoing historical processes, language and hence ideology is open to change; and it is open to it through dialogue and narrative, heteroglossia and polyglossia, interaction, history and the parodic.

In the prehistory of novelistic discourse, one may observe many extremely heterogeneous factors at work. Two of these factors prove to be of decisive importance. One of these is laughter the ethos is polyglossia. The most ancient forms for representing language were organized by laughter. There were originally nothing more than the ridiculing of another's language and another's direct discourse.

Bakhtin found that in Dostoevsky's work, a true representation on polyphony. Each character in Dostoevsky's work represents a voice that represents an individual self, distinct from others. It is the unfinalizability of individuals that creates true polyphony.

Bakhtin concludes his way by saying that...

***“We wish to only emphasize that the novelistic word whose and developed not as the result of a narrowly literary struggle among tendencies, styles, abstract world views-but rather in a complex and countries long struggle of cultures and tendencies. The prehistory of the novelistic word is not to be contained within the narrow perimeters of a history confined to mere literary styles.”***

Bakhtin's work experienced surge of popularity in the west and he continues today to be regarded as one of the most important theorists of literature and culture.

As his biographer and editor Michael Holquist has said, he is ....

***“gradually emerging as one of the leading thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”***

## Gerard Genette, "Structuralism and Literary Criticism"

**1: The critic and the literary:** Genette first introduces the good structuralist conception of the *bricoleur* as opposed to the engineer; it will turn out that a critic is a bricoleur, working with what is to hand. Genette turns the artist into the engineer, a rather literary-critical thing to do.

Genette then makes the point that as literary criticism uses language to speak of language use, it is in fact a **metaliterature**, a literature on a literature. Poststructuralists will challenge the distinction between the two, and Genette here refers to Barthes distinctions to suggest that some literary criticism may be literature.

He then defines **literariness** in a way much like a formalist would: literariness is language production in which the attention is addressed to spectacle rather than message -- something one supposes like Jakobson's poetic function, or meta-poetic; in fact to put it right into Jakobson's terms, the attention is on the poetic rather than on the referential function, on medium rather than on message. Genette will later in the essay insist that this does not degrade the meaning-function of the language.

Genette as well refers to that aspect of literature which is so close to the New Critical understanding of **ambiguity**, the 'halt', the attention to the constitution of meaning under a different aspect, that also characterizes the literary; so it is that there is only a literary *function*, no literariness in any essential or material sense. Genette's sense of the ambiguity of literature is similar to Jakobson's in "Linguistics and Poetics", in which he writes that

*"Ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly a corollary feature of poetry...Not only the message itself but the addresser and the addressee become ambiguous."*

**2: The role of the critic:** The critic is secondary to the writer, a bricoleur to the writer's engineer, but in a position therefore to be primary in the analysis of culture. The critic treats as signs what the writer is creating as concept: the attitude, the disposition is different. The critic in reading literature as signs is reading it as a cultural production, constructed according to various preconceptions, routines, traditions and so forth of that culture. The critic does not ignore the meaning, but treats it as mediated by signs, not directly encountered. Where the post-structuralist will differ is in their denial that anything can be transparent: all concepts are themselves constructed of signs, there is no unmediated thought, all mediated thought is social thought, and there is no attachment to anything beyond the sign.

**3: Structuralism is more than a linguistic exercise.** While structuralism historically (in Europe) is a linguistic phenomenon, and it would seem reasonable to assert that structuralist criticism would then be linguistic in its nature, this is too simple an assumption.

- First of all, literary language is language used to certain ends, having a certain function and therefore featuring the qualities of linguistic production and the relationships of sounds and meaning in a particular way. The ends then are important. As he writes on page 66, structuralist method as such is

constituted at the very moment when one rediscovers the message in the code, uncovered by an analysis of the immanent structures and not imposed from the outside by ideological prejudices.

- Second, there is a homology, a structural relationship, between the way language cuts up the world of meaning, and the way literature and literary genres do. There is an analogy between literature and linguistics not only because they are both involved in language but because both deal with:
  1. the relation between forms and meanings,
  2. the way reality is culturally defined by the segmentation and identification of experience,
  3. the cultural perception of reality, and
  4. the systemic relationships of signs which underlie those cultural perceptions.

Genette writes on p. 67 about the idea of a table of concordance, variable in its details but constant in its function: it is the function, not the detail that concerns structuralist thought. One of the elements of literature that Genette deals with later is genre, which segments experience in certain ways, and controls the attitudes towards it. What is the place of this individual work in the systems of representation? That is a key question.

**4: Structuralism is about meaning, not just about form.** Genette is at pains to point out that structuralism is not just about form, but about meaning, as linguistics is about meaning. It is a study of the cultural construction or identification of meaning according to the relations of signs that constitute the meaning-spectrum of the culture. (67 ft) When Jakobson writes of the centrality of tropes to imaginative writing, he places the categories of meaning at the heart of the structural method, as tropes, including metaphor and metonymy, are the way we say something by saying something else, figures of signification. Ambiguity, which is a meaning-function, is at the heart of the poetic function, as we saw in #1 above. Finally in this section, Genette looks forward to structural analysis at the more macro level of the text, of the analysis of narratives, for instance -- "an analysis that could distinguish in them [that is, larger units], by a play of superimpositions [and hence knowledge through difference], variable elements and constant functions, and to rediscover in them the bi-axial system, familiar to Saussurean linguistics, of syntagmatic relations (real connections of functions in the continuity of a text) and paradigmatic relations (virtual relations between similar or opposed functions, from one text to another, in the whole of the corpus considered)

**5: Structuralism is a general tendency of thought** (Cassirer) Structuralism is, however, not necessarily an intrinsic fact of nature but rather is a way of thinking; structures are "systems of latent relations, conceived rather than perceived, whose analysis constructs as it uncovers them, and which it runs the risk of inventing while believing that it is discovering them" -- that is, structures are explanations of coherence and repetition, they appear in what they seek to explain, they in a sense provide the terms and the vehicle of explanation. As we can only know through knowledge frames. Structuralism is the explanation of texts or events in their own terms (as those terms are conceived), **not** in relation to external causes.

When one turns to the internal dynamic of a text as an object, a field of meanings, and to the coherence of it as a text, rather than as biography or sociology, one reads structurally. Structuralist reading abandons psychological, sociological, and such explanations. One can see New Criticism as a

structural methodology, although it is not structuralism: in structural analysis of theme, for instance, theme would be seen in the context of the *relations* of themes, that is, of certain elements of filaments of the configuration, or network or matrix of, of social meanings, which meanings constitute culture.

**6: Structuralism is however not merely intrinsic criticism, the criticism of the thing itself.**

Genette mentions the other form of intrinsic criticism, phenomenological criticism, in which one becomes in touch with the subjectivity of the creative voice of the work. Ricoeur refers to this, Genette writes, as the hermeneutic method: the intuitive convergence to two consciousnesses, the authors and the readers. This is a little confusing, because this is not hermeneutics properly speaking, but rather phenomenological hermeneutics. When there is hermeneutics, Genette says, when the text is available to us in that immediate way, then structural reading fades; but whenever we have to look more objectively, when we are transversing barriers of time, say, or of culture or interest, then the structural method, the search for principles of order, coherence and meaning, becomes dominant -- literatures distant in place and time, children's literature, popular literature. Genette goes on to suggest that the difference between hermeneutic and structural reading is a matter of the critical position of the critic -- (between identity and distance, say). Structuralism is an intrinsic reading free from subjectivity, when we become the ethnomethodologists of our culture.

**7: Structuralism ties the meaning of the work to the meanings of the culture.** Genette suggests that *topics* is an area of study that structuralism can bring us to -- the traditional subjects and forms of the culture (from the Greek *topos*, 'place'; I prefer to refer to culturally-constructed sites of meaning as *topoi*, to try to retain the full meaning of the idea). *Topics*, or *topoi*, are structural in that they underlie the way we talk and think about things in our culture. They are in a sense psychological, Genette says, but collectively so, not individually. Throughout, in writing of the cultural knowledge that structuralism provides, Genette has been suggesting that 'high' literature is not the only, perhaps not the primary, location for the study of cultural meanings: the serious study of popular culture has begun.

**8: Structuralism opens the study of genre to new light.** Different genres predispose the reader to different attitudes; different expectations [cf. the saying, attributed to Voltaire, that life is a comedy to him who thinks and a tragedy to him who feels, which suggests a way in which genres might look differently at experience]. Different genres lead to different expectations of types of situations and actions, and of psychological, moral, and esthetic values. Without conventional expectations we cannot have the difference, the surprise, and the reversals which mark the more brilliant exercise of creativity. Hence creativity is in a sense structural, as it depends on our expectation, which it then plays upon.

**9: Structuralism can be applied to the study of literature as a whole, as a meaning system.**

Structurally, literature is a whole; it functions as a system of meaning and reference no matter how many works there are, two or two thousand. Thus any work becomes the *parole*, the individual articulation, of a cultural *langue*, or system of signification. As literature is a system, no work of

literature is an autonomous whole; similarly, literature itself is not autonomous but is part of the larger structures of signification of the culture.

**10: Structuralism studies literature synchronically, but with diachronic awareness.** Structuralism studies literature historically by studying it as it were in cross-section at different times, by seeing in what way literature divides up the traditional topics of the cultural imagination. Change is intrinsic to literature, as the Russian formalists thought; what the change registers is the alterations of the relations of meaning within the culture. Structuralism can then yield a fruitful approach to the history of literature, not as a series of great works, or of influences of one writer upon another, but more structurally, more systematically, as the way in which a culture's discourse with itself alters. The meaning of an individual work is ultimately and inevitably only the meaning within a larger frame of cultural meanings, and these meanings change in relation to one another across time and cultures. As well, the addition of other signifying systems, such as cinema, alters but do not disrupt the system of literature. A structural analysis of the construction of cultural meaning can thence replace the meaning of the individual instance, the particular work, while the meaning of the individual work is illumined and rendered more fully significant by being read in the context of its full systemic, cultural meaning.

## Jacques Derrida

Derrida begins his essay by noting that structures have always informed Western thinking but have not been paid sufficient attention due to the very nature of the structure themselves: because they are essential to the very process of thought, they have been viewed as natural and inevitable and therefore more or less unquestionable. Derrida takes up as his subject matter the largely unexamined structurality of these structures, and he begins by noting that “By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the centre of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form... Nevertheless, the center also closes off the play, which is opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible” (196).

This notion of the center is essential for Derrida’s analysis of the structure of language (which Derrida argues is the structure of all existence). However, because “the center, which is by definition unique, constituted the very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality,” Derrida asserts that, within classical thought, “the center is, paradoxically, within the structure and outside it... the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center” (196). Derrida pushes this destabilized notion of the center to the point of a “rupture” in the history of thought on structurality where “it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play” (197). This rupture, this deconstruction of the center thus created a world where “the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (197). In this move, Derrida has not just taken a new step in a known field but has invented a new way to walk on a piece of land that is both undiscovered and omnipresent.

Therefore, even the most radical thinkers in the past – Derrida cites Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger – have offered only limited critiques of operations within the traditionally centered structure. Derrida asserts that “there are two heterogeneous ways of erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified: one, the classic way [of the aforementioned thinkers], consists in reducing or deriving the signifier, that is to say, ultimately in *submitting* the sign to thought; the other, the one we are using here against the first one, consists in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction functioned” (198). This second way is ultimately characteristic of all of Derrida’s work in this excerpt: without fail, he seeks to move to a new and entirely different *mode* of thinking instead of simply moving to new thoughts within the same old system.

Derrida goes on to consider a number of areas in which this destabilization, this internal decentering takes place. He first demonstrates how “the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he denounces them” as a general illustration of his principle that the application of his critique to the sciences “is a question of explicitly and systematically posing the problem of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself” (199). In short, he seeks “to preserve as an instrument something whose truth value he criticizes” (201), which is exactly what Derrida has done with language and discourse (and in so doing has done to every other field, scientific, linguistic, philosophical or otherwise, because, after all, *everything* is discourse). Or, rather, what Derrida has shown language and discourse to be doing to themselves: “No longer is any truth value attributed to [these old concepts of empirical discovery]; there is a readiness to abandon them, if necessary, should other instruments

appear more useful. In the meantime, their relative efficacy is exploited, and they are employed to destroy the old machinery to which they belong and of which they themselves are pieces. This is how the language of the social sciences criticizes itself” (201).

The remainder of the essay consists of Derrida explaining three key terms that flow from his deconstruction of the structure of discourse: bricolage, play, and supplementary.

Bricolage is a technique that “uses ‘the means at hand’, that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which that are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appear necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous – and so forth” (202). That is, because any sort of concrete link between signifier and signified has been shown to be impossible, one is therefore free to use whatever tools in whatever ways and in whatever combination one wishes to discuss the matter at hand.

Bricolage is permitted by that which Derrida terms “play,” and which he explains in the following quote: “If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field – that is, language and a finite language – excludes totalization. The field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite... instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions” (206). Play is Derrida’s way of simultaneously recognizing the infinite range of deconstruction is possible not because there is an infinite range of information but because the inherent quality of all information is to be lacking and for there to be no suitable material (information) with which to fill that lack. This leads to the notion of the supplementary: “The *overabundance* of the signifier, its *supplementary* character, is thus the result of a finitude, that is to say, the result of a lack which must be *supplemented*” (207). Because positive, concrete definition is impossible for any term, every term necessarily requires a supplement or supplements, something or some things which help(s) it exist and be understood. Yet, at the same time, the object(s) which the supplement is (are) supplementing is (are) (a) supplements itself. Extend this web in all directions and the relationship between bricolage, play, and the supplementary begins to make sense.

And there you have it: discourse, destabilization, language critiquing itself, bricolage, play, the supplementary. Of course, the discussion here barely begins to scratch the surface of the implications made by Derrida, for within not even a full fourteen pages of text, has established the foundation of one of the most significant revolutions in the history of thought. Of course, saying that Derrida demonstrated how the history of thought contradicted itself and in so doing imploded the foundation of Western philosophy would certainly fit better with a deconstructionist view of the world. Yet, there is scant little chance of denying that Derrida himself holds some special place in this development: if not as its father then at least as its catalyst.

-Alan Bass

## **Structure sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences**

The essay “Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the human Sciences” was a paper contributed to a conference held at Johns Hopkins University in 1966. Derrida has in this paper attacked the systematic, quasi-scientific pretensions of the strict form of structuralism that originated with Saussure’s concept of the structure of the language, and later was represented by the cultural anthropologist, Levi-Strauss. Derrida’s paper attempts to subvert classical structuralism as well as traditional humanism and empiricism.

Deconstruction has its origin in Derrida’s assertion in this paper that language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique. Deconstructive criticism based on this assertion, attempts to show that no text has a determinate meaning, or the text itself subverts the possibility of determinate communication and the reader can have his meaning out of the text. This paper may be considered the manifesto of post structuralism and of the indeterminacy of meaning and the idea of free play.

### **Structurality of structure**

Derrida’s essay begins with the word ‘perhaps’ which signifies that in deconstruction everything is provisional, you cannot make positive or definitive statements in these area of criticism but we will proceed as we can. This is another key to deconstruction even as you come to understand that nothing is stable that meaning is always contingent and ambiguous you continue to as if nothing is wrong.

Derrida introduces the idea that some event has occurred; this event is some sort of rupture or break in the fundamental structure of western philosophy. This break is a moment where the whole way philosophy thought about itself shifted. That shift or rupture, was when it became possible to think about the structurality of structure .Thus, it became possible to think about the idea of structure itself and how every system whether language or philosophy itself had a structure .The moment when philosophers began to see their philosophical system, not as absolute truth, but as systems as constructs.

### **The concept of centre**

The concept of centre has been practiced in structuralism as well as in western thought, mainly to push the play of signs to the background .All western discourses and thinking tend to be centered on the author or other external factors without any freedom of interpretation.

A structure is made up of several components, it has a centre .It is the function of the centre to give direction, organization and balance. In Saussure’s theory of language this centre is assigned the function of controlling the endless differential play of internal relationships while it remains outside that play.

The hypothetical centre of structure makes it problematic in the sense that it is supposed to control the structure and at the same time is not part of it. The absence of the transcendental signified expands the scope of the domain of interpretation or the play of signification endlessly.

All the structures depend on two aspects (i) they are the relationships of parts and (ii) the structure is organized around a centre. A structure presupposes relationship of parts organized around a centre. It is the central principle that defines its essential nature; this principle is seen in the wholeness of the structure. A building is a building because of the joining together of its constituent parts. But the parts taken separately does not give its wholeness. The wholeness of the building cannot be identified with any of its individual parts. So the centre of a structure is not specific and present in it.

### **Play and presence**

Stability or fixity caused by centre is what Derrida calls presence; something is fully present when it is stable and fixed, not provisional and mobile. Play is the disruption of presence. There can be two attitudes towards the idea of play. One is you can mourn for the loss of fixity of meaning or rejoice in multiplicity. Derrida says enjoying play is better.

### **Bricolage**

Once you deconstruct a system by pointing out its inconsistencies, by showing there is play in the system, Derrida says we have two choices. One is that you can throw out the whole structure as no good. The other option is to keep using the structure and recognize that it is flawed. This means to stop attributing truth-value to structure or system, but rather to see that system as system, as a construct, as something built around a central idea, even though the central idea is flawed or even an illusion. Derrida calls this method bricolage. The person who does it is a bricoleur. This is somebody who does not care about the purity or stability of the system he uses, but rather uses what is there to get a particular job done.

Derrida in this essay attempts a definition of his concept of what a structure is. He uses the metaphor of the centre in his definition of a structure. He regards the passage from structuralism to post structuralism as a passage from centered to decentred or centreless structures. There are no fixed points or absolutes in the universe, everything is relative and the universe we live in is decentred. All we have is free play. In other words, Derrida rejects the structuralist belief that texts have centers of meanings.

## Feminism by Elaine Showalter:

[Elaine Showalter (b. 1941). Along with Nina Baym's, *Woman's Fiction*, (1978), Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism*, (1985) and *Speaking of Gender* (1989) have argued for, a specifically, 'female framework for the analysis of women's literature. Her book, *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), quickly established itself as an authoritative study of its subject and a standard text book in the rapidly burgeoning field of women's studies. Showalter's work has pioneered frame work on creating a woman-centered literary history as well.]

### Introduction:

Feminist literary criticism is essentially linked to the political movement for the sexes and an end to discrimination against women. Feminist criticism seeks to uncover the ideology of patriarchal society in works of art. It pleads for the representations of women and argues that these representations mask socio-political oppression of the category of women, by justifying these oppressions and naturalizing them. For feminist, the text is a battle ground where actual power relations between men and women are played out.

### Origins and Historical Background:

Writers like Marry Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, (1792), male authors like J. S. Mill in *The Subjection of Women*, (1869), and Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family*, (1884), wrote of the need to rethink the role of women and social oppression against them.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf and later Simone de Beauvoir have written on the gender questions from the perspective of women and oriented women towards issues like education, marriage, economics, sex and morals.

With 1960s the women's movement became a major political force, while the movement took various issues for the gender debate, including science, politics, economics, cultures, and epistemology. Literary critics influenced by the movement undertook a whole new project. This included re-reading the canons on English literature to expose the patriarchal ideology that informed the construction of the canon in the first place, and which made male centered writing possible. The influences were many; philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, Marxists and others. Feminist thinkers borrowed and adapted numerous, modes of critical thoughts to frame new theoretical positions.

### Feminist Criticism in Wilderness:

In *Feminist Criticism in Wilderness*, first published in *Critical Inquiry*, in 1981, she finds feminist criticism no more unified, but more adventurous in assimilating and engaging with theory;

*“it now appears that what looked like a theoretical impasse was actually an evolutionary phase.”*

She sub-divides her essay into six sub-divisions, and each division has subtitles also. In these, six divisions she discussed, at length, the various aspects of women writing. They are as follows:

➤ Pluralism and the Feminist Critique:

Showalter begins with quoting Louise Bogan's *Women*, which suggests the very title of the essay; lines read thus,

***“Women have no wilderness in them, they are provident instead, content in the tight hot cell of their hearts, to eat dusty bread.”***

Further she says, referring to Arnold that literary critics might perish in the wilderness before they reached the promised land of disinterestedness. According to her, feminist literary critics are still wandering in the wilderness. Here, she mentions Geoffrey Hartman's, *Criticism in the Wilderness*, (1980), where no women critics are discussed, but Hartman does describe a feminine spirit called, “the muse of criticism.” Moreover, she suggests that the wilderness of theory lies between feminist ideology and the liberal ideal of disinterestedness. Until very recently she says:

***“feminist criticism has not had a theoretical basis; it has been an empirical orphan in the theoretical storm.”***

Showalter argues with Koloduy's point of view that feminist criticism must altogether abandon its hope...

***“...of establishing some basic conceptual model.”***

Showalter avers that if women critics see their critical job as interpretation and reinterpretation, they must be content with ‘pluralism’ as their critical stance. But if they wish to ask questions about the process and the contexts of writing, if they genuinely wish to define themselves to the uninitiated, they cannot rule out the prospect of theoretical consensus at this early stage.

She concludes the first portion with assumption that, feminist criticism must find its own subject, its own system and its own voice.

➤ Defining the Feminine – “Gyno-critics”:

Showalter believes that Feminist Criticism has gradually shifted its centre from revisionary reading to a sustained investigation of literature by women. Here, calling for new models based on the women's experience rather than a blind addiction to and adaptation of masculine theories and models. Showalter launched the search for “gynocritics”. Gyno-criticism should, in Showalter's descriptions, look at

***“the history, style, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity”***

She argues that it is this kind of criticism that reinforces patriarchal structures of powers. The 1970s have been marked by a shift of critical attention from such evidently patriarchal and androtexts to ‘gynotexts (i.e. text by women).

➤ Women's Writing and Women's Body:

***“...more body, hence, more writing.”***

– Cixous.

Showalter asserts that feminist criticism which itself tries to be biological to write from the critic's body has been intimate, confessional, often innovative in style and form.

Further, she states that the process of literary creation is analogically much more similar to gestation, labour and delivery than it is to insemination. Here, Showalter radically asks:

***“If to write is metaphorically to give birth from what organ can males generate texts?”***

However, she concludes this portion of the essay by quoting Miller's words, who sought the difference of women's literary practice in,

***“...the body of her writing and not in the writing of her body.”***

➤ Women's Language:

Showalter, here puts linguistic and textual theories of woman's writing asking, whether man and women use language differently? Whether sex differences in language use can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization or culture? Whether women can create new language of their own, and whether speaking, reading and writing are all gender marked?

On the one hand, Nelly Furman explains that:

***“It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity.”***

On the other hand, Annie Leclere in *Parole de Femme*, calls on women,

***“...to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that doesn't leave speechless but that loosens the tongue.”***

Rather than wishing to limit women's linguistic range Showalter says that feminist critics must fight to open and extend it. She concludes with saying that women's literature is still haunted by ghosts of repressed language and until those ghosts would be exorcised it ought not to be the language on which feminist critics base their theory of difference.

➤ Women's Psyche:

Psychoanalytically oriented feminist criticism locked the difference of women's writing in the author's psyche and in the relation of gender to the creative process.

She suggests that in psychoanalytic terms 'lack' has traditionally been associated with the feminine, although Lac(k)ian critics can now make their statements linguistically. In Gilbert's and Gubar's view, the nature and difference of women's writing lies in its troubled and even tormented relationship to female identity; this woman writer experiences her own gender as,

***“...a painful obstacle or even a debilitating inadequacy.”***

On the one hand, Freud maintained that the unsatisfied dreams and desires of women's are chiefly erotic; these are the desires that shape the plots of women's fictions in the contrast, the dominant fantasies behind men's plots are egoistic as well as erotic.

On the other hand, referring to Nancy Chodorow, Showalter says that child develops core gender identity concomitantly with differentiation but the process is not the same for boys and girls. A

boy must learn his gender identity negatively as being not – female, and this difference requires continual reinforcement. In contrast, a girl's core gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity and identification with the mother.

Showalter suggests that to consider all these issues, feminist critic must go beyond psychoanalysis to a more flexible and comprehensive model of women writing, which places it in the maximum contexts of culture.

➤ Women's Culture:

*“I consider women's literature as a specific category, not because of biology, but because it is, in a sense, the literature of the colonized.”*

- Christiane Rocheford.

A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers; class, race, nationality and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women's culture forms a collective experience within a cultural whole: an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space. It is in the emphasis on the binding force of women's culture that this approach defers from Marxists theories of cultural hegemony.

Gerda Lerner explains the importance of examining women's experiences in its own terms:

*“Women have been left of history not because of the evil conspiracies of man in general or male historians in particular but because we have considered history only in male centered terms.”*

Further, Lerner raises the central question – ‘what would history be like if it was seen through the eyes of women and which Showalter redefines women's:

*“...activities and goals from a woman centered point of view... The term implies an assertion of quality and an awareness of sisterhood, the communality of women.”*

**Summing Up:**

Showalter sums up her essay with humble confession that the Promised Land that a few years ago feminist critics were finding in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels; feminist critics may never reach the Promised Land at all. It is because feminist critics misperceived their destination, she realizes that the land promised to them is...

*“...not the serenely undifferentiated, universality of texts, but tumultuous and intriguing wilderness of difference itself.”*

## **Jacques Lacan “The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious”**

### **Q: ‘Nature and Culture’ in the study of Unconscious as projected by Jacques Lacan in his essay “The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious”**

Jacques Lacan, being influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic structuralism and psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud, gives insistence on the projection of the unconscious in a linguistic framework. It is Freud who summarizes the unconscious as chaotic and indefinable; Lacan starts his investigation from this point and interprets the unconscious in terms of letter or utterance. Lacan analyses the unconscious through a linguist’s methodology and considers the unconscious as a structured system like language. His procedure is to recast Freud’s key concepts and mechanism into a linguistic mode, viewing human mind not as pre-existent to, but as constituted by language we use. Lacan also follows Roman Jakobson’s theory of metaphor and metonymy to stimulate and validate his argument. Lacan analyses the entire process of metaphor and metonymy from psychological point of view and re-defines the signifier-signified in the light of human a psychology. In the essay, Lacan emphasizes on the exposition of words or letters considering as the realm of truth. Saussure has established the doctrine that language is a structured system and it has a one to one relation with the human brain. To study the workings of brain we should take the help of language expressed through letters and words. By letter, Lacan designates that material support which concrete speech borrows from language.

Lacan’s entire study of the unconscious is based on verbal signs. His theory explores that verbal signs are the valid methodology for investigating the unconscious state of mind. Verbal signs, letters, or signifiers are a revelation of the human mind, both conscious and unconscious. Our utterances, working in a metonymic process, give adequate representation of psychology, as letters are a creation of mind/brain. Lacan states in this context:

*“...realm of truth is in fact the word,  
when his whole experience must find  
in the word alone its instrument,  
its framework, its material, and even  
the status of its uncertainties.”*

In doing so, Lacan denies the arbitrariness of sign, having a constant signified that is well celebrated by Saussure. According to Lacan, there is no constant meaning of a sign, and one signifier leads to another signifier. The very process of signification is operated with a mental process. In Lacanian terms, the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification. Lacan insists that the mental condition gets illustration through words and phonemes that carry within it the signifying chain. Through the utterances, we can be familiar with the state of psychology and hence the modern psychologists after Freud insist on the letters, phonemes or signifiers as tools for analyzing the unconscious. Lacan, in his investigation, revises the Freudian concept of unconscious and Saussure’s theory of signifier and signified. Lacan seems to insist on the metonymic process in his projection and exposition of the unconscious. Lacan believes that the unconscious is structured like language and can be interpreted from a semiotic viewpoint. He defines and interprets the relation between signifier and signified in terms of human psychology. Lacan is of the view that the workings of the unconscious are expressed through the letters and the repetition of the letters.

In his essay “The Insistence of the letter in the Unconscious”, Lacan exposes the key concept of nature and culture in the formation of unconscious. Nature and Culture take a crucial part in the formation of human character, as human beings are both natural and a cultural product. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, psychosexual development and Oedipus complex is discussed in terms of pre-linguistic stage of development that he calls the imaginary and the stage after acquisition of language that he calls symbolic. Descartes speaks that there are some innate ideas, which we inherit at the time of our birth that are considered as natural instincts to our character. The infant’s gradual discovery of his self and the competence of the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ at the ‘mirror stage’ try to know the ‘other’. The infant gradually develops a longing to know the opposite sex, and feels attractive and constructs the Oedipus complex. Attraction towards opposite sex is very natural to everyone. But these natural instincts are suppressed and dominated by the cultural forces and social taboos and one has to store these desires and feelings in the unconscious. Suppression of natural instincts, desires and fantasies in the unconscious get outlet in the form of hallucination, nightmare, hysteria, mental imbalance and neurotic disease. Moreover, the unfulfilled desires and fantasies stored in the unconscious effect the conscious mind too. In the mirror stage, the infant discriminates between ‘I’ and ‘other’, and become curious to know and see the body of opposite sex in the heyday of life. But socio-cultural taboos and education restrict all these desires. In the later stage of life some fearful incidents or some happenings lay crucial impact in the development of psychology and create further troubles. Lacan speaks about desire and its efficacy in the construction of the unconscious and dreams. While Freud says that distortion is the general precondition of for the functioning of dreams, Lacan says that within this precondition there is a sliding of signified under the signifier that is always active in speech and projects the unconscious stage of mind.

Lacan illustrates the working of unconscious in the conscious state of mind, which is exposed in terms of letters and utterances. To validate his point Lacan mentions one example of a couple of siblings who were travelling by train, sitting face to face near the windows, and when the train had stopped at one station they had seen two urinals, dividing one for gentleman and another for ladies. ‘Look’, says the brother, we’re at the Ladies!’ “Idiot”, replies the sister, “can’t you see we’re at Gentleman.” Through this instance, Lacan projects the working of the unconscious on the conscious. The working of the unconscious is exposed through the letters they uttered. The two words-‘ladies’ and ‘gentleman’-do not represent the doors of urinal as ladies and gentleman, but rather shows how human desires discriminate in terms of dividing the urinal. Sexual division of the urinal divides the needs of both the gender. The instance is the perfect representative of the working of culture and social taboos in the formation of psychology. The two words represent the suppressed desires of the boy and the girl, which get expressed in their conscious state of mind. From their utterance, we can get a familiar idea of their unconscious. Lacan believes that words and letters provide a clear view of the unconscious without knowledge of the speaker. Here in this process one signifier leads to another signifier. The letter ‘gentleman’ signifies the gender discrimination, socio-cultural taboos and the working of unconscious in the conscious. Derrida later studies this theoretical process of signification and he propagates the doctrine of ‘plurality of meaning’ and considers it as the **‘free play of signs’**.

Lacan alters the whole concept of signifier-signified established by Saussure and redefines the arbitrariness of sign where ‘tree’ is not only a signifier of ‘plant’; it signifies more than one signified. Likewise, letters and words or verbal icons, lead to a signifying chain and explore psychology. In this context, we can allude to the fictional works of Poe, especially “The Fall of the House of Usher” where the protagonist suffers from hysteria and mental illness caused by the suppressed desires and fantasies. The gloomy and uncanny atmosphere and his deeds are the revelation of his unconscious in the story. Lacan celebrates the postmodern concept of referentiality. He interprets dream as a signifier and emphasizes upon the study of memory in psychoanalytical criticism.

## **Orientalism by Edward Said (1935 - 2004):**

[Edward Said (1935-2003), Palestinian American writer and educator. In his writings and lectures, Said was highly critical of Western portrayals of Arabs and of United States foreign policy in the Middle East. For much of his life he was a passionate advocate of the cause of Palestinians displaced by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. His outspoken views gained him both admirers and fierce critics.

Said was born in Jerusalem into a prosperous Palestinian Christian family. With the partition of Palestine in 1947, his family moved to Cairo, Egypt. He studied at the American School and Victoria College in Cairo before being sent to the United States to complete his education. After receiving an A.B. degree from Princeton University in 1957, Said studied English literature at Harvard University. He earned an M.A. degree in 1960 and a Ph.D. degree, with a dissertation on Polish-born writer Joseph Conrad, in 1964. Said identified with Conrad's sense of being an exile and took inspiration from Conrad's exploration of colonialism. He joined the faculty of Columbia University in 1963 and remained there for the rest of his life, teaching English and comparative literature.

Said is best-known for his book *Orientalism* (1978), which discusses the attitude of Western intellectuals towards the East, and in particular towards the Middle East. Said argued that Westerners have a limited, oversimplified concept of the Middle East and its history. This view, he said, goes hand in hand with political imperialism.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Said drew similar perceptions from works of Western literature—perceptions of the East as the “other,” of peoples barbaric and limited, of Oriental despots, and of cultures both exotic and degenerate. Said argued that these perceptions remain influential today and have an impact on politics, particularly on policies towards the Middle East and on views of Arabs. Said's ideas influenced a rising generation of educators in former colonies and formed the main foundation for the new field of postcolonial studies. His other books include *Covering Islam* (1981), *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), a memoir of his early years called *Out of Place* (1999), and a collection of essays entitled *Reflections on Exile* (2001).

On the political front, Said was a powerful voice expressing the plight of the Palestinians as a people dispossessed of their homeland. Although critical of Israel and Israeli policy in the occupied territories, he recognized Israel's right to exist. Elected in 1977 to the Palestine National Council (PNC), the parliament of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Said supported a Palestinian state and helped pave the way for secret peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Oslo, Norway. However, he became deeply critical of the Oslo Accords, a declaration he felt was heavily biased in Israel's favor. Said resigned from the PNC in 1991.

Said was diagnosed with leukemia (cancer of the blood cells) in 1992. In the late 1990s, as he grew frail, he turned to music. An accomplished pianist, he had a passion for classical music. With his close friend, Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim, Said established a summer programme to bring together young Arab and Israeli musicians. A collection of conversations between Said and Barenboim was published as *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2002)]

## **Introduction:**

Said, Edward (1935 - 2004), an American literary critic, post-colonial theorist and political commentator, was born in the Middle East. In 1963, he was made par Professor of English and Comparative literature, at Columbia University, New York, where he had remained till 2004. Said's interests span the realm of cultural and critical theory and literary criticism. He has also actively engaged in contemporary political and cultural debates.

Said's orientalism is perhaps one of the most influential texts of 20<sup>th</sup> century, which Spivak calls, '*a source book*', whereas, Bhabha refers to it as,

***"Inaugurating the post-colonial field."***

His path breaking work in this book and later ones such as, *Culture and Imperialism*, (1993), his activist writings on the Palestine cause have made Said the leading intellectual of the post colonial and marginalized people of the world.

## **Crisis (in Orientalism):**

The present extract, called simply 'crisis' in the original text, concludes the first section of the book, entitled, *The Scope of Orientalism*

## **What is Orientalism?**

Said's argument borrows from Michel Foucault's dual notions of discourse and knowledge as inextricably linked to power. To recapitulate Foucault:

- a) Discourse is the conceptual terrain of thought, a system of ideas and opinion that sanctions certain forms of (knowledge) knowing and expression of certain knowledge.
- b) All 'will to knowledge' is tied up with will to power without prior knowledge about the subject of power.

Said argues that knowledge about the Orient (Asia the East and non European cultures) was not disinterested or knowledge for the sake of knowledge; it preceded actual colonial practices. In fact, colonial practices (political, economic) necessitated the production of such knowledge. Hence, Orientalism, was caused and was a by-product of colonization. Then, the question would be, what is colonization? Colonization is ...

***"Settlement on a new land far off... established control over the indigenous people of the colony."***

Now, the question would be, why, would one seek settlement in a new and far off land? The reason is simple: to exploit resources like, natural resources, human resources, intellectual resources and so on. Now the moot question is that, will natives, allow such exploitation? The answer is certainly 'No'. There would be good deal of resistance and protest against such exploitation. To cope with protest and resistance of natives the colonizer applied two main strategies:

- 1) First, to defeat natives politically, and establish their control over administration.
- 2) Second, by making colonized (natives) feel inferior (socially, culturally and so on).

And to inject this inferiority in natives, colonizers constructed, 'an objective and linear discourse'. where they proclaim that native was 'an area of darkness', and colonizers invaded natives not for themselves but to enlightened their ignorant natives.

Such body of knowledge, to orient the understanding in a certain way, is called 'orientalism'. Hence, Orientalism is...

***“a body of knowledge, (or discourse) about the orient by the people of occident.”***

It was considered as a kind of favour to colonized (natives). This view of Orientalism was deconstructed by Edward Said. He, for the first time, stated that the Orientalism is not an objective or linear discourse, but 'a political discourse'. David Lodge defines the term Orientalism as...

***“the discourse of the West about the East, a huge body of texts literary, topographical, anthropological, historical, sociological – that has been accumulating since the Renaissance.”***

### **Orientalism overrode the orient:**

Said avers that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century orientalism produced a great many things, so far as its strictly scholarly work was concerned; it produced scholars, it increased the number of languages taught in the West and the quantity of manuscript edited, translated and commented on; in many cases, it provided the orient with sympathetic European studies – students, genuinely interested in such matters as Sanskrit grammar, Phoenician, numismatics, and Arabic poetry.

On the other hand, Said observes orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient absolutely different from the West. Said goes to extend,

***“Orientalism overrode the orient.”***

As a system of thought about the orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one. Said, here gives the instance that of the tenth century Arab poet to justify the oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq or Arabia. Similarly, a verse from Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality.

### **Anthropocentrism in Alliance:**

Said states further that, almost without exception, every Orientalist began his career as a philologist that produced, Bopp, Sacy, Burnout, and their students, was a comparative science based on the premise that language belongs to families, of which the Indo-European and the Semitic are two great instances.

Moreover, he observes that the great philological discoveries in comparative grammar made by Jones, Franz, Bopp, Jakob Grimm and others were originally indebted to manuscripts brought from the East to Paris and London.

According to Said, Orientalism carried forward two traits from the outset:

- 1) A newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the orient to Europe.
- 2) A proclivity to divide, sub-divide and re-divide its subject matter without ever changing its mind about the orient as being always the same unchanging uniform and radically peculiar object.

Said then gives the instance, of Friedrich Schlegel, who learned his Sanskrit in Paris. When Schlegel said in 1800,

*“it is in the orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism.”*

He meant the orient of the Sakuntala, the Zend-Avesta, and the Upanishadas. Nowhere does Schlegel talk about the living, contemporary orient.

**Summing Up:**

Hence, the crisis in Orientalism dramatizes the disparity between texts and reality. In his study of orientalism, Said wished not only to expose the sources of Orientalism’s views but also to reflect on its importance. Here, Said says that Humanities have neither watched nor learned from disciplines like Orientalism, whose unremitting ambition was to matter to the entire world, not some Easley delimited part of it, such as an author or a collection of texts.

Said is uniquely qualified to undertake such a study and therefore David Lodge praises it as...

*“Orientalism impressively combines political passion with wide ranging scholarship.”*

## Oration on the Dignity of Man

**Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola** (1463-1494), Italian humanist philosopher, born near Ferrara, and educated at the University of Bologna. Instead of completing his studies at Bologna he visited famous universities in Italy and France, astonishing scholars with his precocious learning. At the age of 23 he settled in Rome and there publicly posted a list of 900 theses or propositions about all subjects, offering to defend them publicly. The pope deemed that some of his theses dealing with cabalistic magic were heretical and forbade him to carry on his projected discussions. In 1489 Pico completed the *Heptaplus*, a mystical account of the creation of the universe. His library was one of the largest and most comprehensive of his day. A wealthy man, he eventually decided to give away all his possessions and become a wandering preacher, but he died before he could carry out his plan. The year before his death Pope Alexander VI absolved him of any imputations of heresy.

### Q-STYLE OF PICO DELLO MIRANDOLA

#### INTRODUCTION:-

*“ style is the structuring of  
choices made within the  
frame work of a literary  
language and of a literary  
form.”*

-Gleason

By choices Gleason means choices of types of sentences, clauses, phrases, words, metaphors, tunes, images and graph logical markers. So it is quite clear that through the style we can classify the work of a particular writer. According to Walter Pater,

*“to arrive at a great style  
the first step that a writer  
should take is to be careful  
in his selection of words.  
secondly, to make a work  
grand and great an authors  
should keep the theme of the  
work in mind and should use  
the style favorable to his  
style.”*

#### Pico's style:-

Pico belonged to the age and country from where the Renaissance took its birth. And his work ‘Oration...’ has been considered as the manifesto of the Italian Renaissance. It has been described as the most elegant ‘Oration...’ which was published in 1496, with the added elegant phrase,

*“on the Dignity of Man.”*

In this oration he is at his best as far as his style is concerned. In this oration we find that he has poured in his mind manifold writing gifts. He brought to this project an immense mind, insatiable curiosity, infallible memory and a confidence in his intellectual capacities that few if any have ever matched before or since. His large project was the synthesis of all human knowledge into a single whole.

The title itself suggests that the style of this book is oration, rather it is a lecture delivered at Rome by Mirandella, and the theme of his oration is to celebrate the dignified status of man. The language, sentence and statements he is using now and then is of oration. Pauses are also found spread around. Paragraphs and sentences are very long. Phrases like...

*“so to say,  
I ashes.”*

Etc leads us to the conclusion that it is an oration and this style reflects throughout the book. He ends his oration in typical style of an orator saying...

*“let us now with the prayer  
that the outcome may be  
fortunate as to the sound of  
war-trumpets, join battle.”*

After this, there may be some question and other observations too.

#### **Typical Renaissance style:-**

The style which has always been with Renaissance writers was ‘self confidence’, self pride and ‘I’ at the centre, being formed in the text here and there. In the first paragraph is the proof itself. He expresses his view on human beings. ‘I’ is dominant. The sentence below reflects his opinion about the status of man which is the theme of his project ...

*“I feel that, I have come to  
some understanding of why  
man is the most fortunate  
of living things...how  
marvelous and splendid  
creature a man is.”*

So he throughout presents a signature, a style of Renaissance writers that has ‘self’ at the centre.

#### **Confidence in tone:-**

It can be realized that while going through the oration one can realize that there is crystal confidence in his tone, arguments and voices. He puts forth the arguments then argues it and then comes to the conclusion. If he opposes something he gives enough support to his arguments by opposition because the age in which he was living was an age of debate and discussion. Because he was strongly of the opinion that

*“the greatest dignity of  
Humanity is the boundless  
Power of self-transformation.”*

His ‘oration’ gives an ardent support to his belief of self-confidence. Such examples would be found when Pico goes against the philosopher of his age. Though philosophy at that time was being

considered as an important branch of knowledge, but he very confidently declares that he isn't against philosophy but so called philosophers who by using the mask of philosophy wrongly philosophized the people. However, he at the same time eulogized philosophy by saying that...

*“philosophy has taught me  
to rely on my own conviction  
rather than on the judgment  
of others.”*

So one can safely declare that it is philosophy and its interest in it which gave him such a confidence. His style of writing is no doubt clearly apparent in his oration.

#### **Prescriptive style:-**

It is well known to the reader that Pico is also known as a renaissance spiritualist. He was of the opinion that it is the spiritual faculty of man which makes the man the angel. He says the individual human beings are the microcosm. That is, the individual human being can express the whole of creation and can express the whole of divine. If one wants to find God then one can look into one's own soul for the individual perfectly express the whole of divinity. For this reason he argues that human beings can become any aspect of the universe. So being a spiritualist by nature he gives tips to the human beings in order to enrich the people spiritually.

#### **Use of symbols:-**

According to Aristotle,

*“only that writer may be  
deemed as a great one who  
has got a mastery over  
images and symbols.”*

Actually speaking, however profound the idea may be, it has no value in the realm of art and literature unless it is woven into the fabric of art and beauty. The *Mirandola* project is also rich in beauty because of its daring use of symbols.

This use of chameleon as a symbol of man is a genial one. Here though he uses symbol of chameleon, but he becomes propitious in his argument that man is by nature mutable and capable of transforming itself. His argument is symbolized in the figure of speech where he says,

*“who then will not look  
with awe upon this our  
chameleon or who at least  
will look greater with admiration  
on any other being?”*

Another interesting use of symbol is found in his argument about the true place of god and man. He says in this whole universe god is at the centre and in the universe on earth man is at the centre, there he presents a symbol of ladder to give vitality to his arguments. He says...

*“in the bosom of the father  
who reigns above the ladder,  
we shall find perfection and peace...”*

He only means to say that between man and god there is a ladder, (spiritual faculty). God is, who reigns above the ladder; so in order to reach god we are supposed to make use of the ladder. Many other symbols are also used in the text, through which Pico gives us direction, a broad area of reference, rather than like an item in an allegorical.

### **Demerits:-**

There is saying in Sanskrit that,

*“Sampurna Keval Hari”*

Every human being has some demerits. It is universally acknowledged that ‘oration’ by Pico is the most read of the Renaissance and no work more forcefully, eloquently affect the reader but oration. However, this masterpiece of his is also not free from its juvenility. Because the reader can notice that in the beginning of the oration, author is very confident clear presenting self opinion but as the project goes forward, he seems somewhat dizzy. He quotes more and more example from other philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and other. In the field of religion, he frequently takes help of his argument already put forth by Parsi Zoroastrian and pagan culture ending portion of the oration is the proof of his dazzled status.

### **Conclusion:-**

In spite of some demerits his oration stands out like a beacon among other renaissance works. This has the entire characteristic, favorable to its style.

## **Q-ORATION ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN as a Renaissance Text:**

### **About the Author:-**

Goivanni Pico Della Mirandola, a Neo-Platonist, and a humanist was a scintillating star among the group of renaissance writers. He, a son of the princely house of mirandola, was one the most read of the renaissance philosophers because his work is an amalgamation of all the strains of renaissance and late medieval thinking-that is Neo-Platonism, humanism, Aristotelism, AND MYSTICISM. AS John Addington avers....

*“the enduring value of Pico’s  
work is due not to his  
quixotic quest of an accord  
between pagan, Hebrew and  
Christian tradition but to  
the noble spirit of confidence  
and humane sympathy  
penetrates it.”*

The ‘oration’ which was dashed down before authority, lives as the most to the pointed expression of the mind of the renaissance.

### **About the Book:-**

Richard Hooker, commenting on it asserts, thus,

*“if there is such a thing as  
a manifesto of the renaissance,  
Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola’s  
‘oration’ is it.”*

Not other work more forcefully, eloquently or thoroughly remaps the human landscape to centre all awareness on human capacity and human perception. Out of the bulk of the count, Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola who challenged the doctors of schools to heated discussion with him on a 900 copse question, the only production widely read nowadays is this belief discourse ‘the dignity of man’ delivered by him in 1486 at Rome when he was only 20 years old.

The whole of the ‘oration’ was first published in the collection of Pico’s works edited and published by his relative, Gian Franco Pico in 1496. The qualifying phrase ‘on the dignity of man’ is a later toting up and has become particularly identical with the ‘oration’.

### **Oration On The Dignity of Man As a Renaissance Text:**

The core of renaissance ‘oration’ is a stupendous text so far as the renaissance tone is concerned. But before going deep in search of renaissance trinkets on text, it is equally important to understand what the renaissance is all about.

### **What is Renaissance:-**

Many attempts have been made to define the renaissance. The Italian term ‘Rinascita’ means rebirth or awakening is the name applied to the period of European history following the middle ages.

It is commonly said to have began in Italy in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and to have continued in Western Europe through the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover it has been described as the birth of the modern world out of the ashes of the dark ages. The discovery of the world and the discovery of man in the era of untrammelled individualism in life thought, religion and art.

Now this oddball genius of a work is the manifesto of humanism. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the word humanist was coined in the ‘studio humanitatis: or humanities’. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century new word humanism came to be applied to the view of man- the general values and educational ideas common to many renaissance humanists as well as the later writers in the same trait.

Typical renaissance humanism assumed the ‘dignity...’ and central position of man in the universe and emphasized upon the study of classical imaginative and philosophical literature as against natural science but with emphasis on its moral and practical rather than purely aesthetic values.

In the words of Egon Freidell renaissance humanism is the rebirth of man in the likeness of god. The man of the middle ages was a self-effacing conscious man; always aware of his fallen and sinful nature; feeling himself a miserable foul creature watched by an angry god.

Through pride the angels fell but Pico and his brother humanist declared that man was only a little lower than the angels being capable of descending to unclean depths indeed but also having it within his power to become god like.

Pico heightened man by saying ‘how marvelous and splendid a creature is man.’, and to prove dignity of man is nothing but the very theme of his project. However, he has no touch of the modern notion that ‘man makes himself’ but he believes that an honest god’s noblest work is man. It is only because man has been created in the image of god that man is angelic.

In the beginning of the text he by quoting the celebrated exclamation of ‘Heremes Trimejistus writes,

***“what a great miracle  
is man?”***

He further says that why do we admire man not angels? For this he is strongly of the opinion that man is the most opportune living thing and consequently deserving of all admiration. More over man lives in the hierarchy of beings assigned to him, and if he desires for good things he can become an angles or lead himself to the level of brutes. But here in this matter Pico introduce the ‘almighty’ that is the spirit that speaks of godhood, which is above all creation and makes him distinct in kind from all other living things. He calls god, a divine artificer and responsible for the glorification of man and it is god’s generosity god might have said to man...

***“we have made neither  
of heaven nor of earth,  
neither mortal nor immortal  
so that with freedom of  
choice and with honor as  
though the maker and molder  
of thyself, though mayest  
fashion thyself in whatever  
shape thou shall prefer.”***

Angels are always good and divine while ‘devil’ is always bad; but man can both good and bad. Commenting the author writes...

***“thou shall have power to  
degenerate into the lower  
forms of life, which are brutish  
thou shall, have the power of  
thy soul’s judgment to be  
reborn into the higher forms,  
which are divine.”***

This then is the essence of humanism which spread out of Italy into whole of Europe. A world of wonder and discovery lay before the renaissance humanists. However, they all believed that this dignity of human nature is the gift of god. The supreme maker decreed that this creature man whom he could give nothing but his own self can also have a share in the particular endowment of every other creature. The creature called man was set in the centre of the world means he is the centre of god’s creation.

The author then in a flurry of argument tries to prove the grand and worthy status of man. He says...

***“god the father, oh wondrous  
and unsurpassable felicity  
of man to whom it is  
granted to have what he  
chooses to be what he wills  
to be.”***

By this he means to say that man is able to be what he likes to be. The other creatures do not have this characteristic. They are same from the birth to the end. In the words of ‘Lucilius’ who says,

***“from their mothers womb”***

But man is not in his genre because god has given him great powers and those powers of “free will” man may rightly take pride of his higher nature. Pico believes that,

***“if vegetative, he(man) will become  
a plant if sensual he will become  
a brutish, if rational he will  
reveal himself a heavenly  
being if intellectual he will be  
an angel and the son of god.”***

He endorses that man is such a creature that can attract the attention of other beings, so every one has a look upon, “this chameleon” with awe. By comparing man with a chameleon, Pico expresses the mutable nature of man, who is capable of transforming himself. However, many critics consider this comparison ambiguous. Chaldean is one of them who says,

***“man is living creature  
varied multiform and ever  
changing nature.”***

But Pico believes that man is born into a condition of being what he chooses to be, so he has to change his nature to be fit in different circumstances.

God has given us the form of saving or a gift. One can achieve it with all efforts but the effort should be positive that can lead us to astral orders. Here the example of ‘Dr.Faustus’ is worthy to mention. He achieves knowledge-the gift of god-but he used it in such a way that this gift of knowledge becomes ‘a damning gift’ for him. At the end, misuse of knowledge leads him to his tragic doom...

***“things that are to be  
achieved by human are the  
same but they differ in only  
way that is the different  
ways of having it.”***

Then Pico uplifts man by comparing him with Seraphim who is the chief angel, always in the presence of god, he is a winged angel. Cherubim, - he is the symbol of intellect, one of the chief angels and usually found in a godly place e.g. Church and Thrones- with Seraphim and Cherubim. He occupies the first place. He stands for god’s unshakable justice. By comparing man with this purified angel, Pico has put man and angel near god.

If we start burning passionately for the love of creator only, his obsessive fire will quickly transform us into the flamingness of the Seraphim and Cherubim; whoever is Seraph i.e. a lover is in god and god is in him. And the Powers of Thrones are great which we attain by right judgment and the highest of all the sublimity of the Seraphim which we attain by loving. All this will be possible only when shall penetrate being from its

***“centre to its surface and  
From its surface to its centre.”***

Hence, centre obviously means god, so our journey should be from man to god from earth to heaven.

***God... Heaven/cosmos  
-God at the centre,  
Man- Earth/universe  
-man at the centre.***

Pico continues his arguments very gallantly. He again presents a model that of Empedocles, who teaches us that,

***“in our souls there is a  
Dual nature.”***

Our souls' have two sides. One leads us upward to heaven and the other one drag in downwards through friendship and discord and through war and peace. So it is man who will have to decide where to go in order to achieve peace which must establish us finally among the exalted of god. This theory of his echoes the famous theory of purification published in an essay called 'On Nature and Purification'. By going one step ahead he talks about mans nature and an appetite of knowing which is always lying in the immune chamber of man's inner self. And before his excessive desire to know things many aphoristic phrases came in utterance.

***“nothing is too much.”***

According to him man is such an animal, who believes in,

***“ know thyself ”***

For he who knows himself knows he can finally be enlightened by this knowledge through the aid of natural philosophy. Man can thus become angelic:

***“ thou art “***

To give support to his own argument he quotes an opinion of Pythagoras, who commands great respect in the field of philosophy. He says,

***“ never to sit in a bustle “***

That is man should not have laziness; he should not stop his intellectual faculties to work because if he examines, judges, measures all things, he would always try to achieve something. And this was the thinking of the Renaissance man through which he could achieve a glorious success in each and every field. The insatiable desire for knowing things is the signature characteristic Pythagoras, aphoristic phrase is,

***“ Feed the Cock “***

That is one should enlighten one's self by knowledge. Cock is the metaphor used for the soul. We should feed our soul with divine knowledge. Now the project turns towards a new as well as an exiting mode. When Pico being a typical renaissance man puts himself ('I') at the centre, he is expressing his disgust for philosophy and the so called philosophers of his time, who only for the sake of being called philosophers wrongly philosophized the people. He eulogized philosophy by saying that...

*“philosophy has taught me  
to rely on my own convi-  
ction rather than on the  
Judgments of others.”*

In his ‘oration’ he gives enough support to his arguments by opposition because the age in which he lived was an age of debate and discussion. According to him one finds that nothing remains stable. No faith, no philosophy, no world view ever remains static the only eternal thing is the human ability and freedom to change and express themselves in different ways. The greatest dignity of humanity is the boundless power of self transformation.

**Conclusion:-**

This oration no doubt commands a great respect as far as the Renaissance elements are concerned. It is typically a Renaissance text having many glimpses of other religions, cultures and philosophy. It is rich not only in tone but also in structure and texture. This project establishes him as a Platonist, Christian, Sorcerer, Rhetorician and mystic as he designs his 900 questions as an irrefragable proof of man’s uniqueness. Here he does not put forth his favoritism towards Renaissance man only but he says,

*“a real man in any age  
Is dignified and noble.”*

## THE PRINCE-NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Italian historian, statesman, and political philosopher, whose amoral, but influential writings on statecraft have turned his name into a synonym for cunning and duplicity.

Born in Florence on May 3, 1469, Machiavelli entered government service as a clerk and rose to prominence when the Florentine Republic was proclaimed in 1498. He was secretary of the ten-man council that conducted the diplomatic negotiations and supervised the military operations of the republic, and his duties included missions to the French king (1504, 1510-11), the Holy Sea (1506), and the German emperor (1507-8). In the course of his diplomatic missions within Italy he became acquainted with many of the Italian rulers and was able to study their political tactics, particularly those of the ecclesiastic and of a soldier named Cesare Borgia, who was at that time was engaged in enlarging his holdings in central Italy. From 1503 to 1506 Machiavelli reorganized the military defense of the republic of Florence. Although mercenary armies were common during this period, he preferred to rely on the conscription of native troops to ensure a permanent and patriotic defense of the commonwealth. In 1512, when the Medici, a Florentine family, regained power in Florence and the republic was dissolved, he was deprived of office and briefly imprisoned for alleged conspiracy against them. After his release he retired to his estate near Florence, where he wrote his most important works. Despite his attempts to gain favor with the Medici rulers, he was never restored to his prominent government position. When the republic was temporarily reinstated in 1527, he was suspected by many republicans of pro-Medici leanings. He died in Florence on June 21 of that year.

### The Prince:

Throughout his career Machiavelli sought to establish a state capable of resisting foreign attack. His writings are concerned with the principles on which such a state is founded, and with the means by which they can be implemented and maintained. In his most famous work, *The Prince* (1532; trans. 1640), he describes the method by which a prince can acquire and maintain political power. This study, which has often been regarded as a defense of the despotism and tyranny of such rulers as Cesare Borgia, is based on Machiavelli's belief that a ruler is not bound by traditional ethical norms. In his view, a prince should be concerned only with power and be bound only by rules that would lead to success in political actions. Machiavelli believed that these rules could be discovered by deduction from the political practices of the time, as well as from those of earlier periods.

### Machiavelli as political thinker:-

Supreme among the political of all time, Machiavelli, in common with the greatest politician-who, like him, so resemble the artist in that their logic and their dogma are completely subordinate to their intuition- has what may literally be termed initial inner "illuminations,"- immediate intuitive visions of events and their significance.

The prince has been read as if it were a treatise on political theory, instead of being considered an impassioned answer to a particular historical situation. Admittedly, Machiavelli believed that historical situations repeat themselves, and that a good solution may be repeated. This does not

however, alter the fact that The Prince was written at the time of grave national and personal crises and must be understood in the light of such events.

Machiavelli's intention was not the study or the creation of that particular science which we today call political science. It is important that we should come to his work as historians, not as theorists who hanker after synthesis. The science, which he is regarded as having invented, is a particular policy that he was commending for adoption by the practical statesman; or it was an element conditioning political action that he was subjecting to analysis. His teaching is a collection of concrete maxims-warnings and injunctions with regard to certain points of policy, rules of conduct for specified emergencies and expositions of tactical moves.

#### **A negative view of Machiavelli's:-**

Ever since Niccolo Machiavelli's day The Prince has been considered by some to be a diabolical production, and its authors name has been synonymous with Satan (hence, according to Samuel butler, "old nick."). Passages have been quoted out of context to prove their author depraved and immoral.

Although such a practice is unfair and does not do justice to Machiavelli's whole thesis, it must be admitted that he exalts the state above the individuals; that the most enthusiastic exponents of his theories have been Napoleon, Bismarck, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin; and that his state is exempt from the obligations of "religion" and "morality".

#### **On politics:-**

Machiavelli inevitably had felt a need for the formation and expression of the political will of the community. Despite the fact that he lived in and worked for one city-state while spending his leisure time pondering over the fate of other city-states, Machiavelli has proven to be vitally relevant to those living in the era of emergence and spread of the national state system and the rich and tumultuous development of the internal political life of the western people; at least in part because of his insistence upon viewing the political life of people as the highest expression of its culture.

#### **On religion:-**

One significant way in which Machiavelli contributed to the new confidence in man was in his separation of politics from religion and his challenge to the secular authority of the church. The human activity of politics Machiavelli believed can be isolated from other forms of activity and treated in its own autonomous terms. In a word, politics can be divorced from theology, and government from religion. No longer is the state viewed as having a moral end or purpose. Its end is not the shaping of human souls, but the creations of conditions, which would enable man to fulfill their basic desires of self- preservation, security, and happiness. Religion has the vital function of personal salvation, of serving as an important instrument of social control- a basis for civic virtue rather than moral virtue.

#### **On fortune:-**

Machiavelli totally ignores the orthodox Christian injunction that a good ruler ought to avoid the temptation of worldly glory and wealth in order to be sure of attaining his heavenly rewards. On the contrary, it seems obvious to Machiavelli that the highest prizes for which man are bound to compete are "glory and riches"- the two finest gifts that fortunes has it in her to bestow.

He, therefore states in chapter 25, rather jocularly, which, perhaps a feminist would oppose bitterly,

*“For fortune is a woman,  
And in order to be mastered’ she must be jogged and  
Beaten.”*

## **Q-THE MACHIAVELLIAN IN MACHIAVELLI:-**

### **INTRODUCTION:-**

The Renaissance, though it produced no important theoretical philosopher, produced one man of supreme eminence in political philosophy: Niccolo Machiavelli’s. It is the custom to be shocked by him, and he certainly is something-sometimes shocking. His political philosophy is scientific and empirical, based upon his own experience of affairs, concerned to set forth the means to assigned ends, regardless of the question whether the ends are good or bad. Much of the conventional obloquy that attaches to his name is due to the indignation of hypocrites who hate the frank avowal of evil-doing. There remains, it is true, a good deal that genuinely demands criticism, but in this he is an expression of his age. Such intellectual honesty about political dishonesty would have been hardly possible at any other time or in any other country.

When he was in his twenties Savonarola dominated Florence: his miserable end evidently made a great impression on Machiavelli, for he remarks that,

*“All armed prophets have  
Conquered and unarmed  
Ones failed.”*

Proceeding to give Savonarola as an instance of the latter class and on the other side he mentions Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus. It is typical of Machiavelli that Christ is not mentioned.

### **The purpose behind the text:-**

His most famous work, ‘The Prince’, was written in 1513, and dedicated to Lorenzo the second. Since, he hoped to win the favour of the Medici, its tone is perhaps partly due to this practical purpose; his longer work *The Discourse*, which he was writing at the same time is markedly more republican and more liberal.

He says at the beginning of ‘The Prince’ (in chapter 2) that he will not speak of republic in this book. Since, he has dealt with them elsewhere. Those who do not read also The Discourse are likely to get a very one sided view of his doctrine.

### **The Prince:-**

‘The Prince’ is concerned to discover from history and from contemporary events, how principalities are won, how they are held and how they are lost. The rules for achieving success was not quite the same as they became when times grew more settled, for no one was shocked by cruelties and treacheries which would have disqualified a man in the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps, our age

again can better appreciate Machiavelli for some of the most notable successes of our time have been achieved by methods as base as and employed in renaissance Italy.

Cesare Borgia, son of Alexander 6, comes in for high praise. His problem was a difficult one: first by the death of his brother (Duke of oandia), to become the sole beneficiary of his father's dynastic ambition , second to conquer by force of arms, in the name of the pope, territories which should, after Alexander's death, belong to himself and not to the papal states; third to manipulate the college of cardinals so that the text pope should be his friend. He pursued this difficult end with great skill: from his practice, Machiavelli says, a new prince should derive precepts. Cesare failed, it is true, but only,

*“By the extraordinary  
Malignity of fortune.”*

### **His views on papacy:-**

There is an interesting chapter, “of ecclesiastical principalities” , which, in view of what is said in the Discourses, evidently conceals part of Machiavelli's thought. The reason for concealment was no doubt, that The Prince was designed to please the Medici, and that, when it was written, a Medici had just become pope (leo 10). with regard to ecclesiastical principalities, he says in ‘The Prince’, that they are,

*“Exalted and maintained by god.”  
“It would be the work of  
a presumptuous and  
foolish man to discuss  
them.”*

Nevertheless, he continues, it is permissible to inquire by what means Alexander 6 so greatly increased the temporal power of the pope.

The discussion of the papal powers in the discourses is longer and more sincere. He begins by placing eminent men in an ethical hierarchy. The best, he says, are the founders of religions; then come the founders of monarchies or republics, then literary men. Those who establish tyrannies are wicked including Julius Caesar. On the other hand Brutus was good (the contrast between this view and Dante's shows the effect of classical literature. Dante's divine dream of the “due- soli” –the twin sons, emperor and pope, regulating the world together- did not touch Machiavelli. Machiavelli is the European to state the need of a nation for an independent life; bulwark against the anarchy of feudal society and- for Italy-against the intrigues of the popes. Up to this time no one had dared to challenge or contradict Dante, who, in his book ‘De Monarchia’, offered the people only one single possibility for happiness; one emperor, master of a universal monarchy, respectful to the pope of Rome, but independent of him.) He holds that religion should have a prominent place in a state, not on the ground of its truth, but as a social comment. This criticism of church in his days is expressed with great vigor.

*“ The nearer people  
are to the church of Rome,  
which is the head of our  
religion, the less religious  
are they.... Her ruin and  
chastisement is near at  
hand.... We Italians owe  
to the church of Rome  
and to her priests our  
having become irreligious  
and bad: but we owe her  
a still greater debt and  
one that will be the  
cause of our ruin, namely  
that the church has kept  
and still keeps our country  
divided.”*

In view of such passages, it must be supposed that, Machiavelli's admiration of Cesare Borgia was only for his skill, not for his purposes, admiration of skill, and of the actions that lead to fame, was very great at the time of the renaissance. But in the Italy of Machiavelli the quasi-artistic admiration of dexterity was much greater than in earlier or later centuries. It would be a mistake to try to reconcile it with the larger political aims which, Machiavelli considered important. The two things, love of skill and patriotic desire for Italian unity, existed side by side in his mind. Thus, he can praise Cesare Borgia for his cleverness, and blame him for keeping Italy disrupted.

**His political views:-**

In the 'Discourse' he explicitly sets the forth doctrine of Checks and Balances; princes, nobles and people should all have a part in the constitution;

*“then these three powers  
Will keep each other  
Reciprocally in check.”*

It is to be noted that Machiavelli never bases any political argument on Christianity or biblical grounds. In, Machiavelli, unlike the medieval writers there is no conception of 'legitimate' power. Power is for those who have the skill to seize it in a free competition. His preference for popular government is not derived from any idea of 'rights', but from the observation that popular governments are less cruel, unscrupulous, and inconstant than tyrannies.

### **Machiavelli: a synthesized persona:-**

Let us make a synthesis (which Machiavelli himself did not make) of the ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ parts of his doctrine. In what follows, are opinions, which are explicitly or implicitly his.

There are certain political goods, of which three are specially important: national independence, security and a well – ordered constitution. The best constitution is one, which apportions legal rights among prince’s, nobles and people in proportion to their real power, but for consideration of stability, it would be wise to give more power to the people.

But there is also, in politics, the question of means. It is futile to pursue a political purpose by methods that are bound to fail; if the end is held good, we must choose means adequate to its achievement.

The question is ultimately one of power. To achieve a political end, power of one kind or another is necessary. It is true that power often depends upon opinion, and opinion upon propaganda: it is true also; it is an advantage in propaganda to seem more virtuous than your adversary. For this reason it may sometimes happen the victory goes to the side which has the most of what the general public considers to be virtue.

### **Summing up:-**

Machiavelli’s political thinking like that of most of the ancients is in one respect somewhat shallow. He is occupied with great lawgivers, such as Lycurgus, who are supposed to create a community all in one piece, with little regard to what has gone before.

It might, however, be maintained that the evolutionary view of society, though true in the past, is no longer applicable, but must, for the present and the future, be replaced by a much more mechanistic view. The ancient lawgiver was a benevolent myth; the modern lawgiver is a terrifying reality. The world has become more like that of Machiavelli that it was, and the modern man who hopes to refute his philosophy must think more deeply than seemed necessary in the last century.

# **What are the attributes of an ideal prince, according to Machiavelli?**

## **[Machiavellian Prince]**

### **Introduction:**

The prince as the bible for princes.

*“to know well the nature*

*Of the people one must*

*Be a prince, and to know*

*Well the nature of princes*

*One must be of the people .“*

Niccolo Machiavelli was an Italian statesman and a political philosopher. After holding high office in Florence, he was exiled by the Medici on suspicion of conspiracy but was subsequently restored to some degree of favor. His works includes Discourse upon Livy history of Florence, dialogue on language, mandrigola and clizia which are under rated plays and a mass of other work in verse and prose but THE PRINCE carries the burden of representing his genius which contains the essence of his political thought, The Prince, a treatise on statecraft advises rulers that acquisition and effective use of power may necessitate unethical methods but that is not in themselves desirable. He is thus often regarded as the originator of a political pragmatism in which

*“the end justifies the means.”*

The nation of history as a great teacher was common in the renaissance and is to be found again and again in the 16<sup>th</sup> century European literature. The prince embodies the renaissance interest in the didactic aspect of history, in the study of the past as the proper education of a prince, teaching him by example what to follow and what to avoid. He also takes the contemporary political affairs in his stride. The work is concerned with the proper behavior of a prince and the relationship between rules and ruled. Through the great number of examples he illustrates a broad spectrum of virtues that aspiring leaders should possess, continually stressing pragmatism ruthlessness and above all cunning.

Through a combination of experience, logic and imagination, he wrote one of the most intriguing handbooks of western civilization-The Prince. The rulers, he uses as examples fall into a very diverse group of categories from the character of classical mythology to the leading figures at the time The Prince was written. This vast cast of characters falls into two categories. Individuals Machiavelli admires and those he feels merits pure contempt. Although no particular ruler obeys all of Machiavelli’s guidelines, he esteems most those who are fully conscious of their surroundings make resourceful decision and have the ruthless determination to preserve and expand their power. Those who met contempt are those whose lusts took the place of ‘virtue’ and who in turn squandered the opportunity that fate had dealt them.

His suggestions on leadership are ground on three central ideas. First: a successful ruler cannot be bound by moral concerns. Bloodshed and deceit are important tools which must be used under proper conditions and not to excess. Second, a commendable ruler must emulate at different times the fox and the lion- symbols of cunning and strength. Finally, he says that a ruler should be feared by all and get hated by as few as possible. Being loved is unimportant compared to being respected. He found this soon to become famous in Cicero's De officiis but he changes Cicero's arguments completely, Cicero had maintained that both farce and treachery were inhuman and therefore contemptible policies. Machiavelli sees the majority of man as sheep and instead of certain popular religious similes; his heroes are anything but shepherds. Instead, he sees great man- a amalgamation of lion and fox-an example of this attitude resides in one of his references to the classics. At a very young age Achilles and many other ancient rulers were given into the care of Chiron, Machiavelli sees this combination of man and beasts as the ideal leader or man of virtue. A fierce ruler must be noble and rule abiding. He takes this argument from Cicero's De officiis but changes it quite hastily. His strange allegorical interpretation of Chiron's dual nature was probably a product of his own fantasy.

Ferdinand of Arajona, the contemporary king of Spain, is one of Machiavelli's clearest examples of what he had no other problem to face at home, because his military forces, the Church and his subjects were eager to pledge their aide for his noble cause. Machiavelli admires Fardinand due to this masterful tactics. The Spanish king lets ambitious internal rivals join in an external venture. That he controls and afterwards he is left with lines of controls into their resources. Here is an example of a man who plays Machiavelli's lion and fox at the same time. In addition, Ferdinand follows the rules of being feared but not hated. His subjects are kept in a dual state of awe and trepidation by his...*"lions cruelty"*

In contrast to the glowing example of king Ferdinand, is that of the Roman emperor Antoninus. As an emperor he was excessively violent and though his soldiers first loved him for his military skill and rejection of useless luxury, they soon came to want his incredible violence says Machiavelli;

*"he did not only kill vast  
Numbers of individuals but  
On one occasion a large  
Part of population of Rome  
And on another the whole  
Of Alexandria."*

The first impression any one may get when these words of Machiavelli struck to his ears is the image of an immoral, cunning anti-social person. This is not because that the person himself was such, but on account of the misinterpretation of his work. The Prince led one to this conclusion. It is true however that many chapters of The Prince in the beginning itself shows his sincere concerns of morality and repentance over the society of his time which was looking of everything that is moral. As for instance in the beginning of the chapter on generosity and parsimony he says,

*“it would be good to be  
Considered generous; never-  
theless generosity used in  
such a manner as to give  
you a reputation for it will  
harm you.”*

Whereas in the very next chapter in the first line he says,

*“every prince must desire to  
Be considered merciful and  
Not cruel; nevertheless he  
Must take care not to  
Misuse this mercy.”*

One may find plenty of such citations all over the book which synthesized his concerns for morality as well as cold practically.

Thus, The Prince is an ingenious fascinating study of art of practical politics. It is holy Bible, or Koran, the Gita of real politics. It guides and instructs the politicians. And at last I would like to sum up my paper with the words of Francesco auceiardini-friend and a critic to Machiavelli, who says for him.

*“He laughs at the failings  
Of man because he cannot  
Cure them.”*

## MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS

**Michel de Montaigne** (1533-92), French writer, who introduced the essay as a literary form. His essays, which range over a wide variety of topics, are characterized by a discursive style, a lively conversational tone, and the use of numerous quotations from classical writers.

Montaigne was born on February 28, 1533, in the Château de Montaigne (near Libourne) of a wealthy family, and educated at the Collège de Guyenne. He studied law, probably in Toulouse. His first literary undertaking was a translation, published in 1569, of *Theologia Naturalis* by the Spanish theologian Raymond of Sebond.

In 1571 Montaigne inherited the family estate, including the Château de Montaigne. He spent most of his life there, following the pursuits of a country gentleman, studying his favorite classical authors, and writing the essays that constitute his great collection, *Essais*. The first two books of his work appeared in 1580. Subsequently, Montaigne traveled in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. After his return, he served two terms (1581-85) as mayor of Bordeaux. He wrote a third book of essays, which was included in the 1588 edition of *Essais*. During his last years Montaigne remained in retirement except for visits to Paris and Rouen. His only other work is an account of his travels that appeared in 1774.

As a thinker Montaigne is noted for his investigation of institutions, opinions, and customs and for his opposition to all forms of dogmatism that have no rational basis. Montaigne observed life with philosophical skepticism; he emphasized the contradictions and incoherences inherent in human nature and behaviour. His basic morality tended towards Epicureanism, however, revealing the attitudes of a scholar and humanist who refused to be enslaved by passions and desires. His longest essay, *Apologie de Raymond de Sebond*, is an inquiry into the rational powers and religious aspirations of the individual.

Montaigne's view on most subjects is conservative. In literature and philosophy he admired the ancient writers, and in politics he preferred monarchy as the form of government most likely to ensure peace and order. On education, Montaigne, who was interested in the training of the aristocrat, held that the pupil should be taught the art of living. This art is mastered through developing the powers of observation and conversation and through travel. Reading should serve to aid in arriving at correct judgments and not in merely improving the memory. Montaigne insisted on rigorous physical training as part of the development of the whole person, mind and body.

Montaigne's essays were first translated (3 books, 1603) by the English lexicographer John Florio. The definitive English translation, by the American scholar Donald Frame, of the complete works and letters of Montaigne appeared in 1957.

### **That our actions should be judged by our intention:-**

The title of this essay deals with the Montaigne's philosophy of life, and the essay also speaks for his vision of world. He initiates that our action should be motivated by our intention. To prove this point he gives different allusions from English literature and society. He gives core of this essay in these lines,

*“men cannot work beyond his  
Limit and its result is also  
Not in his hand, he has only  
His will-power in his hand  
So he has to utilize it  
Properly.”*

He gives two instances to prove his point.

→ In the first instance he refers us to an incident of English king Henry the seventh. He had promised Don Philip that he would not kill his enemy Duke Suffolk, if Philip would deliver duke to him, but he did not keep his promise and commanded his son to kill don after his death.

→ The second instance is about Count Horn and Count Egmont. Count Horn surrendered to duke upon count Egmont's pledge. Count Egmont felt so he wished to die earlier than count Horn to release from obligation.

Montaigne juxtaposes two contrary things. In the first Henry's intention was bad so his action certainly would have been worst. These instances justify the title that...

*“our action should be  
Judged by our intention.”*

In the second case Count Egmont's intention was not bad but circumstances led it to an opposite action. This instance does not justify the title but Montaigne gives views in favour of this case.

He says that when good intention leads to bad action, it can be excused but ill-intention cannot be excused. He further applies this thing to the both instances and says count Egmont can be excused despite his good intention.

Montaigne believes that in day to day life it one's conscience has been towards ill practice and later on if he tries to set things right at the moment of death, it does not make difference.

*“more distressing and in-convenient  
the payment, more meritorious and*

*just the restitution.”*

Montaigne wants to say by these words that repentance gives you proper and praise worthy reward. He gives his own views different from conventional views that...

*“death releases us from  
Our entire obligation.”*

He gives a fresh idea that if you once. Don't pay the penalty for your mistake then even death cannot rid of one's obligation.

He embellishes his diction by making use of different analogies. His style of writing in this essay is not aphoristic rather descriptive. The essay is simple to understand but complex to put into practice in life.

### **On Idleness:-**

He commences this essay by personifying mind as a land on which useful things can be grown by one's wishes. The importance of aim is given. He recites his wish but ultimately he changes his mind. He describes in the beginning that our mind is a fertile and rich land. It is up to the person to provide the useful ideas and direction to the mind to make it serviceable, shapeless and intimate. To describe this, he uses allusions from Greek literature. He also points that in a restless state one can make any mistake, he says...

*“there is no folly or fantasy  
That they will not produce  
In this restless state.”*

He is of the view that there should be a proper path in the mind to follow. He quotes...

*“To be everywhere is to  
be nowhere.”*

First he shows his wish of being idle and remaining in rest but gradually with the passing of time with more prime of life he finds that idleness creates other dangerous problems.

At last he in a way thanks his mind for showing in time the right path of writing. Montaigne's point of view is clear but presented in an indirect manner. His philosophy that 'Leisure is curse on life' is related in embellished language. His condensed ideas show his mastery over language. He uses figures of speech like simile, metaphor etc. for example,

*“like a runaway horse  
Chimeras and imaginary  
Monsters.”*

Thus, he dwells on the disadvantages of idleness. So according to Montaigne, it is the person who makes himself idle or active.

## **On Liars:-**

He starts his essay entitled 'On Liars' by giving us a back drop of what is memory from Plato's point of view...

*“memory is a great and  
Powerful goodness.”*

And then he agrees with the fact that lack of memory is an excruciating defect in any one who takes on the burden of the world's affair. Though he accepts his own lack of memory and tells us...

*“if my memory had been  
Good I should have defended  
All my friends with my  
Chatter.”*

He, on the other hand tells us how good memory sometimes can be tedious especially in the case of old men who retains the memory of past events but do not remember how often they have repeated them. He after preparing this background comes to his main concern i.e. how one comes to be liar...

*“not without reason it is said  
That no one who is not  
Conscious of having a sound  
Memory should set up to be  
A liar.”*

He then distinguished 'lie' and 'untruth' by giving a grammarians opinion. Untruth is to say something that is false but that we suppose to be true and lie is to go against ones knowledge. For him lying is an accused vice that one should justifiably punish with fire than any other crime because once the tongue has got the knack of lying it is difficult to imagine how impossible it is to correct it. In the end he remembers words of an ancient father that one is better in the company of a dog one knows than in that of a man whose language is unknown/ un- understandable. This is how he develops his thought regarding liars and lie. His style and language are simple and direct. And development of thought is logical, direct and convincing. He first gives a background of what is memory and then gives a reason why and how one comes to be a liar. He shows different ways of lying and the results of each way. And finally speaks about his own experience...

*“I am by no means sure that  
I could induce myself to  
Tell a brazen and deliberate  
Lie even to protect myself  
From the most obvious and  
Extreme danger.”*

So he discusses each aspect of lying methodically. His essay becomes very interesting because of all the above reasons.

## **On Friendship:-**

At the very outset of the essay he remembers his friendship with Etienne De La Boetie. According to him this was a complete and perfect friendship. He says...

*“so many circumstances are  
Needed to build it up that it  
Is something if fate achieves  
It once in three centuries.”*

In natural relationship friendship is compulsory by natural law and obligation. There is less of our own choice and free-will in them. Friendship is fed on familiar intercourse. But a father cannot be in touch with his children, sharing all his secret thoughts. It is no wonder that brothers struggle and clash with one another because they have to pursue the advantage of their fortunes along the same path and the same pace.

It is true that the affection that we feel for women is born out of our own choice. Yet it cannot be placed in the same class. Because its aim is sensual, and subject to satiety, whereas friendship is a spiritual thing. In friendship there is general and universal warmth. Marriage, according to him is a bargain commonly made for other ends. There occurs in it much complication which has to be solved. Whereas in friendship there is no other business with anything but itself. Friendship demands a perfect union and harmony.

He also discusses the academy's conception of friendship which says that it is a love which terminates in friendship. According to him what we commonly call friends and friendship are no more than acquaintanceship and familiarities. He says ...

*“in the friendship i speak  
Of they mix and blend one  
Into the other in so perfect  
A union that the seam  
Which has joined them is  
Effaced and disappears.”*

Then again he speaks of his friendship. It was such a friendship that can only be compared to itself. He gives an example of friendship between Laius and Caius Blossius. He says that friends' action must fit together. To everyday friendship he applies Aristotle's habitual phrase...

*“o my friend, there are  
No friends! “*

Service and kindness keep friendship alive. But they do not deserve even to be taken into account in a noble relationship. Because one's own love for him is not augmented by the help he gives himself. Perfect union of friends hate and banish from thought the words like: 'benefit', 'obligation', 'gratitude', 'request', 'thanks' etc. According to Aristotle's definition, friends can neither lend nor give one another anything. They have nothing to divide.

To show such a friendship he gives an example of three friends : Eudaminvas, Charixems, and Arethens. The example is quite complete because a perfect friendship is indivisible. But cannot help or run for two of your friends all the same time. It is easier said than done to find a man who commits himself from the depths of his heart and keeping nothing back.

In the end Montaigne once again remembers his friend. Now his friends are dead. He passed four years with him in spiritual tranquility. He misses him in his each and every action and thought.

## **On Repentance:-**

The essay deals with Montaigne's philosophy of life and the essay also speaks about his vision of the world Montaigne begins his essay 'On Repentance' by giving us the background of what is man and life. He says:-

*“every man carries in himself  
The complete pattern of  
Human nature.”*

He talks about the knowledge and understanding of man and tells us...

*“no man ever came to a  
Project with better knowledge  
And understanding.”*

He further says about learned persons that a learned person is not learned in all things but a man of talent is accomplished in every respect. Even in his ignorant talk about vice he says that vice lives in the soul, like an ulcer in the flesh; a remorse which is always scratching itself and drawing blood. He opines of life that one use one's own judgment about oneself. Montaigne after preparing this background comes to his main concern, 'On Repentance' he says ...

*“Repentance is simply a recanting  
of our will and opposition  
to our fancies. It may shifts  
us in any direction. It makes  
one man disavow his past  
virtue and continence.”*

Man is not born with vice and virtue. He prepares himself to meet outstanding occasions rather than glory for conscience's sake.

Montaigne divides the soul into two parts

- 1) → Wicked Soul
- 2) → Virtuous Soul

Wicked souls are often driven by some external impulse to perform a good deed so are virtuous souls to do wrong. He disagrees with The Pythagorean sect that man takes on a new soul when they approach the images of gods, to receive their oracles. Moreover he says that repentance does not properly apply to things that are not in our power; though regret certainly does.

Then he says that he does not know superficial, middling, or formal repentance. Further he tells us that the importance of any decision depends on the hour; circumstances and things are always moving and changing. He had committed the same serious and grievous errors in his life not for lack of good judgment but for lack of good fortune. He says,

*“I blame my fortune not my  
Performance and this cannot  
Be called ‘repentance’.”*

He talks about his ideas of a happy life which is made with good and bad deeds like fruit and flowers. He says...

*“They have come at the proper  
time and also because they  
make me remember more  
kindly the long happiness  
of my past life.”*

He further says that man moves onward as a whole towards his growth and towards his decay. Montaigne portrays himself in his essay as a memorial of his friend and relatives. All the time he is making a trail of himself and his opinions in an endeavor to see which of them are permanent and which temporary. He mostly refers in his writing to Plato Seneca, Cicero and Plutarch. His style of writing is not aphoristic but rather descriptive and subjective. The essay is simple to understand but complex to implement in life.

### **On The Art of Conversation:-**

In his essay ‘On The Art of Conversation’ he condemns himself and not others. He had said...

*“The qualities that I most  
Value in my life  
Derive honor from self  
Censure than from any  
Self-praise.”*

Montaigne says man’s nature learns more by evasion than imitation. For this he quotes...

*“wise men have more to  
learn from fools than  
fools from wise men.”*

He then comes to his main concern that is conversation, he has said....

***“conversation is most fruitful and natural exercise for our minds.”***

He finds the practice of conversation more pleasant than anything else in life. To prove this he gives an example of ‘Athenians and Romans academies’. Montaigne then says that our mind is escalated by communication with vigorous and orderly intellect not with stupid. He says...

***“stupidity is a bad quality.”***

He advised not to argue with foolish people because it leads to us quarrels and contradiction only. He says...

***“the fruit of disputation is a loose destruction of the truth.”***

Therefore even Plato does not allow people in his ‘Republic’. He does not allow fantasy, frivolity and extravasance in conversation, so he says...

***“conversation is not Natural product of the Human mind.”***

For him truth is more important in conversation. He honors knowledge and says the proper use of knowledge is better. So, he hates people without book knowledge. Montaigne has given method of victory by argument in conversation with an example of Plato and Socrates.

He once again deals with truth in conversation and considers the world as a school of inquiry. He gives more importance to manners of speaking than matter. He says that very few people speak methodically and ably because,

***“No man is blameless.”***

He has given a beautiful example. He says that, even if we have good noses our dung smells the worse to us for being ours. Montaigne favours quality of argument once in conversation and says...

***“an instrument, man do not Hear the lute, or flute but Hear full harmony.”***

He on the way discusses this role of fortune that is of two kinds good and bad. Mind is subject to change so, Thucydides says...

***“Those dull minds are generally more successful in this than the clever.”***

And Plutarch also has said...

*“when fortune raises a man  
To the top rank, we all  
Conclude that he has wisdom.”*

Some people show their cleverness by reading books and by this displaying their ignorance. On the other hand there are people who understand and judge their reading, and finally recognize them. Montaigne agrees with the fact that all are not perfect, he says...

*“One may not immediately  
become a musician by  
listening to a fine song.”*

One needs some guidance and are the surest proof of stupidity.

To bring to a close we can say that Montaigne begins his essay with condemning himself. In his essay he deals with uncertainties. He talks about subjects and deals with the reputation of learning and good memory of people judges these parts which are more valuable and individual. He has given more honors to Tictus, a French historian because he deals his own unfairly kind of ability so Montaigne says about Tictus' style

*“his way of writing is not  
Much unlike Senecan's he  
Seems to his the wordier  
And Seneca the more concise.”*

Montaigne has presented his life laid down from front and back. He has said all judgment sare weak and imperfect.

### **On The Power of Imagination:-**

He opens this essay saying...

*“a strong imagination brings  
On an event say scholars.”*

He means to say if the power of imagination is intense it can make things come true. He says everybody feels the impact of imagination but some are just overtaken by it. He further goes on to say that the force of imagination in him is so intense that his body often takes over the sensation of someone he is accompanying therefore he wishes to be associated with people who are healthy and cheerful. The Power of imagination works so intensely on him that as soon as he observes a disease he catches it and makes his body its new home. So he prefers to avoid it rather than think of resisting it. He says if we allow free play and encourage imagination it can be death. Montaigne talks of Simon Thomas, a great physician of his patient suffering with lungs that the best way to get cure is to imagine the healthy, youthful and flourishing state of the man who is treating him i.e. the physician imagining the better condition of someone, one might get cured of his disease but it's also possible that the health of that healthy youthful person might at the same time depreciate says Montaigne.

Imagination as said before can knock over someone. One might completely lose his senses if consumed by his Imagination like Gallu Uibius who strained his mind to understand the nature and period of insanity to such an extent that he becomes a learned mad. Imagination of any event to happen makes it come true before its actual time. A man predestined to death anticipated the executioner is hand and was found completely dead fallen on the ground when his eyes were unbound to read him his pardon. He was slashed by no stroke than that of his Imagination of the executioner's hand that he anticipated out of fear.

Montaigne says that our Imagination cannot only heal us from disease but makes us insane and even kills us. It also satisfies our unfulfilled desires. He says...

*“we sweat, we tremble, we  
Turn pale, we flesh beneath  
Our feather-bed, we feel our  
Bodies shaken by its on slught  
sometimes almost  
To the point of death and  
Fervent youth grows so  
Heated in its sleep that it  
Satisfies its amorous  
Desires even in dreams.”*

There are many unbelievable effects of the power of Imagination. People say scars of King Dagobert and St. Francis were caused due to the power of Imagination. Imagination has power to lift body from their body and when they come to their senses of their own accord they get so bluntly transported that they cry and hurt themselves and when back to sense they are surprised to see their bruises. Montaigne says this is no pretence and this was shown by the fact that the entire person had neither pulse nor breath.

According to him the belief in miracle, vision, enchantments and extraordinary occurrences are a product of Imagination. They effect mainly on the mind of the common people who get easily impressed and their beliefs are so strongly devoured that they think they saw what was actually not there. Misadventure and incapability are also at times due to imagination that plays strongly on human minds. Others misadventures and incapability take over our mind so much that we too experience the same misadventure and incapability when in a similar situation. A man heard of an extraordinary loss of manhood from his friends the full horror of the story was intensely struck by his Imagination that he suffered a similar loss himself and later this incapability so consumed and tyrannized him that he became subject to this mental trick and then was completely cured of his infinity. Amasis King of Egypt who pretends to be a gallant everywhere married a beautiful Greek girl Laodice but was found himself unable to love her. Suspecting some sorcery in this he threatened to kill her understanding his trouble to be of the Imagination. She asked him to pray to Venus, He made his promise and after making sacrifice he found his potency divinely restored.

Montaigne is of the opinion that it's not only the doctors prescribed drug that cure a patient but it's their belief of being cured by that particular medicine or by being treated by a particular doctor. A

doctor does not treat his patient with medicine only but they provoke their power of Imagination also to come to their aid Montaigne says...

*“they knew as one of the  
Masters of their craft have  
Given it to them in writing  
That there are many on whom  
The mere sight of medicines is  
Operative.”*

A woman screamed and cried imagining that she had swallowed a pin with her bread though there was no sign outwardly she felt pain in her throat as it was striking. A clever man makes her vomit and surreptitiously threw a bent pin into what she threw out; believing that she had thrown out the pin the woman was immediately relieved of her pain. Even animals are subject to the power of imagination, dog barks and tremble and in their dream for the loss of their master.

Montaigne says that if the imagination is violently disturbed it can hit a distance object like spear. He says that an event believed of a woman who if aroused to anger could kill one with a mere glance. He says it is same with animals. Someone in Montaigne's house saw a cat watching a bird; they gazed at one another for some time and after a while the bird dropped at me dead between the cat's paws.

At last Montaigne says that all the anecdotes that he has used in his essays to make his point clear are borrowed. He says that inferences are his own that demands common reasoning and not experience. He has used a variety of anecdotes but the reader is always free to add his own examples. He also gives freedom to comment on behalf if one does not find his comments sound enough. He says he has used as extended narrative style. He says he has no proper skill in composition and therefore he has tried to say only what he can say which would suit his subject matter. He says if Plutarch was to judge his essay he would praise all from whom he has borrowed anecdotes but he would praise and credit only Montaigne if these anecdotes were of any use to future generation and were found to be presented with a brilliance that leads to virtue.

## **On The Education of Children:-**

In the beginning of the essay he discusses his own interest in Plutarch and Seneca. Montaigne writes that when he compares his work with Plutarch and Seneca he then realizes that how weak and poor he is in comparison to them. Then he describes about his dearth of proper ideas which are so shabby and trivial to form a work. Some writers of his age stuff their works with the passages which are originally written by ancients and by doing so they lost their decorum then to gain something. Montaigne continues this argument and says that some writers compose their works directly from the ancients and then hide in such a way as if it is his own. According to him it is a foolish kind of act done by scam and discrediting oneself in this eyes of the intelligent. On the part of Montaigne he accepts that he also quote a from the ancients to make his ideas clear. Further he adds to this and says that if he borrows any ideas or thought then he should not try to conceal it but to reveal as it is his own beliefs. Here Montaigne says,

*“I have no authority to  
Exact belief nor do I desire  
If for I do not feel myself  
To be well enough instructed  
to instruct others.”*

Then he comes to the main topic is the education of children. He confesses that the most difficult and the important problem with human knowledge is regarding the right way to bring up the children and their education. He compares this process with agriculture which also need so much care and little skill. And when a plant grows it requires more care.

According to him it is very difficult to bring out the natural bent and interest in the children. So he gives advice that the children should be directed towards what is best and most profitable and for this we have to pay attention towards childish action and guess from it.

Good education requires good tutors. Montaigne prefers great care in the selection of the tutor. The parents who really want to give their children learning then to profit should look for a guide who is well in formed rather than an intellect; who can use good moral and understanding before book learning. The tutor should give his pupil freedom to think in his own way. Then he sees that the tutor has to make his pupil analytical in everything and give him freedom to choose what he wants. By this exercise he can make somebody else’s passage entirely his own by his judgment though it is borrowed from others.

Montaigne does not give importance to knowledge and teaching but also says that a child is also given the lesson for exercise; to toughen his muscles. With this a child should train to be accomplished as a lover of brevity and truth. Further he adds that he should be curious to know what is interesting to learn. He believes that the pupil should be given the lesson of philosophy from which he can learn the righteous conduct and the aim of study; the difference between ambition and greed and the difference between servitude and submission and to what extent we should fear death. If the pupil absorbs the ideas to regulate his behaviour and morals; then he should be taught how to die well and teach well. The pupil should be concise to choose his study and avoid those studies which are lacking in utility. By these many lessons he tries to raise the importance of philosophy.

Montaigne gives his view on the profession of the children. He suggests that,

*“children should be placed not  
According to their fathers  
Qualities but according to the qualities  
of their own minds.”*

Montaigne strengthens and put stress on the study of philosophy. A tutor has to teach his pupil just for the sake of a rule of life, but teach him for the right of knowledge Montaigne says that,

*“the conduct of our lives  
Is the true reflection of  
Our thoughts.”*

After this he talks about speech and gives his own example as to how his father laboured to make him learn Latin, and gradually how it helped him in many ways.

In the last paragraph he says that knowledge is not only to preserve or to protect it but to make use of it. It cannot be kept within. It is that thing which cannot be destroyed and it should be devoted to mind.

## **SKEPTICISM AND STOICISM IN MONTAIGNE’S ESSAY:-**

The third book is more confident and balanced attaining a doctrine of acceptance of natural perfectly expressed in these *essais*. As, David Engel states,

*“Montaigne essays perceive  
A central admission of much  
Renaissance thinking: to make  
A human kind the focus of  
Study, to research earthly  
And everyday matter; and  
Not to argue about blueprints  
For heavens.”*

### **The term Essais:-**

The modern meaning of the word “essay” Derives from Montaigne: he is the creator of the new literary genre. However he does not himself apply the word ‘essai’ to the separate chapters. There has been discussion about the exact meaning from which he starts, but examples in the text show clearly enough that he is ‘testing’ or “trying out” His judgment and opinions.

The term ‘essai’ meaning trial is more appropriate to his own work than to that of the most subsequent essays. He called his works *essais* because he thought of them as trials or test of his own character and opinions. Montaigne’s trials of himself did not result in talking about himself all the time. It is true that in each *essai* he is always present, but as the shrewd, inquiry observer and commentator, tolerant of all oddities except his own failings. In fact the *essais* were full of the books he read, the sights he saw, the collected experiences and anecdotes and reflections of the most civilized and inquisitive of man. His *essais* may be called,

*“thinly disguised auto-  
Biography.”*

### **His Philosophy:-**

Montaigne wrote, on many diverse topics such as ‘On Liars’, ‘On the Education of Children’, etc. since, these are issues related to life it is natural for us to think in terms of . Montaigne the philosopher. . Montaigne however was neither a philosopher nor did he lay down only claim to it. It however does not mean that he did not have any philosophical influence or had no concept of

philosophy. He was influenced by pyrrhonism or skepticism, the natural mental strain of the Renaissance period and stoicism that suited the temperament of Montaigne. Essentially fideism is a strategy which uses skepticism in order to clear the ground for the entrance of Catholicism.

The Renaissance was a period of horizons, in which there was a vast increase in knowledge of the world and its inhabitants. At the same time Europeans were recovering Latin culture and a much more complete grasp of Greek literature. Science was developing new horizons made previous truths seen wrong or parochial. The discoveries provided Montaigne and other skeptics with a treasure chest of new facts which they used to increase our sense of relativity of all man's beliefs about himself and the world in which he lives...

### **Stoicism:-**

Stoicism was founded by Zeno after Aristotle. The stoics mentioned that the only person, who is unafraid of death, is free to live. They apply the principle of resignation to every aspect of human life marked by the principle of moderations of passions and desires by enduring suffering patiently, and not by worrying about what cannot be prevented. His attitude to philosophy is in the essay entitled "To Philosophize is to learn to die." Knowing it full well it becomes the only way out is resignation to it. He says,

*"what does it matter when  
It comes, since it is  
Negligible.?"*

David Engel says,

*"stoicism is diminishing  
Undercurrent in Montaigne's  
Thought, but his skepticism  
Becomes stronger as if he  
Proceeds until it finally  
Affects his subject matter  
And style."*

Although pyrrhonian skepticism advocated the suspension of belief in matters that go beyond appearances, it is possible to embrace the skeptics arguments without adopting their prescription. This is the tactic used by Montaigne in defense of the teachings: the skeptical arguments show that the human faculty of sense and reason cannot be used to show true nature of things. Because of the infirmity of our natural faculties, we should not use them to judge of matters divine. Instead, we should give up the pretence of natural understanding and yield to the authority of church which is supernaturally inspired. A passage from I Corinthians cited by Montaigne is representative of St. Paul's attitude,

*"For it is written, I will  
Destroy the wisdom of the  
Wise, and will bring to  
Nothing the understanding*

*Of the prudent where is  
The wise? Where is the  
Scribe? For after than in  
The wisdom of God the world  
By wisdom knew not God,  
It pleased God by this  
Foolishness of preaching  
To save them to believe.”*

Montaigne seeks to humble man's pride:

*“...there is a plague on  
Man, the opinion that he  
Knows something.”*

The skepticism is connected with the doctrine of Christian “folly” which says that God's wisdom is to be found in the lowly and meek, and that the belief that one has knowledge prevents one from accepting the truths of religion. Montaigne is famous for arguing that man is not in any way superior to the beasts, in fact quite the contrary.

The attack on the reliability of human knowledge takes three forms in Montaigne:

- 1) The first mentions that anything we can do, the animals can do better and in fact our action is probably a bad imitation of theirs.
- 2) The second, more conventional doubt arises from the defects of five senses as sources of knowledge. The skeptics argue that if people perceive things differently then they perhaps see things differently.
- 3) The third argument is pertaining to his own best reason as it emanates from the Socratic question: how can human beings know anything if they do not know themselves?

The answer in Montaigne is that they cannot as he said in an essay.

*“if the world complains  
That I speak too much of  
Myself, I complain that it  
Doesn't even think of itself.”*

Montaigne's goal was to promote the view that the human being is entirely ignorant and in this state, has only faith as a basis for belief. The senses yield conflicting appearances, and there is no way to decide the conflict who is the judge of the reading of appearances, the sick judge by the feeling of the sick, and the healthy by the feeling of the healthy. Montaigne then rehearsed the problem of the criterion as showing the hopelessness of resolution. As he says,

*“there is no way out of this  
Dilemma. Since the senses  
Cannot decide our dispute,  
Being full of uncertainty*

*Themselves, it must be reasoning.  
But no reasoning can  
be established without a  
prior reasoning and here  
we are proceeding back-  
words without any possible  
stopping place.”*

After having disparaged the use of the senses to discover the nature of things, Montaigne advances a metaphysical argument to show that it is unknowable. Citing a number of Greek philosophers he maintains the ceaseless change that exists in the sensible world, so that we cannot say of any sensible thing that “is”. Following the Greek philosopher, Plutarch he adds that. He, and he alone, “is”

Finally, following the stoic philosopher, Seneca, he concludes that it is only through our belief in God, through faith that we can overcome the deficiencies of our natural faculties. He says,

*“he will rise of God by  
Special grace helds out  
To him his hand; he will  
Rise abandoning and re-  
nouncing his own menans,  
and letting himself be raised  
and lifted up by purly  
divine means.”*

Montaigne could embrace Christian faith on pyrrhonion grounds. His skeptical prescription was to live life on the basis of the customs in the place one finds one’s self. David Engel is of the opinion that skepticism influenced Montaigne’s perception of the world. In the course it attracted to the disapproval of church that’s all some of these opinions as in indirect opposition to his beliefs, for instance, Montaigne quotes Seneca, who conditions his attitude, subject-matter and style.

*“O, what a vile and object  
Thing is man if he does  
Not raise himself above  
Humanity.”*

David Engel concludes his study of’s skepticism in the following words:

*“Montaigne skepticism was a  
Negative philosophy; it relatives  
everything he saw even  
In its purely negative form  
This relativism bears some  
Worth while proof. But it is*

*Understandable that Montaigne's  
Attacks on reliability of all  
Human beliefs and on the  
Ability to humanity to  
Perceive and attain the  
divine to offer his work  
To the charges of irreligion."*

**Conclusion:-**

In the four centuries since he wrote, views of Montaigne have changed much as he did himself. His contemporaries deplored his self-portrait and admired his stoical sentential. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw mainly the skeptic, and gentleman adhering to the rules of good manners. Jean Jacques Rousseau and later Romantics were drawn to his self portrait and his free pre-Neoclassical style saint Beave in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was struck by his natural independent morality: this and the universality of his self portrait have impressed the last century of readers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he is fully recognized in all his aspects as a great writer, and his public is world wide. Most of his readers see him as friend, mentor and master of the essay of the "art of being truthful" and of the art of loving. To conclude it would be congruous for me to quote, F.P.Bowman,

*"he was the 16th century Man,  
and his problems Concerns  
and patterns Of thoughts  
are those His century...  
Montaigne Was not a  
Transcendent a historical thinker."*

**MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA(1547-1616)**  
**“DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA” BOOK-1-(1650) BOOK-2-**  
**(1615)**

**Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra** (1547-1616), Spanish writer, considered by many to be the greatest Spanish author, whose novel *Don Quixote* (Part I, 1605; Part II, 1615) is regarded as one of the masterpieces of world literature. Because of his eloquent style and remarkable insight, Cervantes has achieved acclaim comparable to that given to such literary greats as Greek poet Homer, Italian poet Dante Alighieri, and English playwright William Shakespeare.

Cervantes was born in Alcalá de Henares. In 1568, when he was a student, a number of his poems appeared in a volume published in Madrid, Spain, to commemorate the death of the Spanish queen Elizabeth of Valois. In 1569 Cervantes went to Rome, where in the following year he began working for Giulio Cardinal Acquaviva. Soon afterward Cervantes joined a Spanish military regiment in Naples, Italy. He fought in 1571 against the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Lepanto, in which he lost the use of his left hand. While returning to Spain in 1575, Cervantes was captured by Barbary pirates. He was taken to Algeria as a slave and held there for ransom. During the next five years he made several heroic but unsuccessful attempts to escape before he was finally ransomed in 1580 by his family and friends.

Returning to Spain at the age of 33, Cervantes, despite his wartime service and misfortunes in Algeria, was unable to obtain employment with a noble family, the usual reward for veterans who had distinguished themselves. Deciding to become a writer, he produced poems and plays at a prodigious rate between 1582 and 1585, but few of these works have survived. His pastoral novel *La Galatea* (1585) gained him a reputation, but the proceeds from its sale were insufficient to support him. Cervantes then took government jobs, first furnishing goods to the fleet of the Spanish Armada and later collecting taxes. The government imprisoned him several times because he failed to give a satisfactory explanation of his tax-collecting activities.

Probably during his time in prison Cervantes conceived the idea of a story about a man who imagines himself a knight-errant (a knight who seeks out adventure) performing the splendid feats described in medieval tales of chivalry. In 1605 the first part of his tale was issued under the title *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha). It became such an immediate success that within two weeks after publication three unauthorized editions appeared in Madrid. Partly because of these unauthorized editions and partly because of his lack of financial management skills, Cervantes never gained substantial wealth from the enormous success of the work. *Don Quixote* was first translated into English in 1612.

Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* (Exemplary Novels, 1613), a collection of 12 short stories, includes romances in the Italian style; descriptions of criminal life in Seville, Spain; and sketches of unusual events and characters. One of these stories, “El coloquio de los perros” (The Talking Dogs), is particularly renowned for its satirical prose style. The second part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1615 and translated into English in 1620. In 1616 Cervantes completed the allegorical novel *Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617), four days before his death. The book was published the next year.

*Don Quixote*, Cervantes's most important work, describes the adventures of an idealistic Spanish nobleman who, as a result of reading many tales of chivalry, comes to believe that he is a knight who must combat the world's injustices. He travels with his squire, Sancho Panza, an uneducated but practical peasant. Don Quixote's mount is an old, bedraggled horse named Rocinante. Don Quixote travels in search of adventure, dedicating his actions of valor to a simple country girl whom he calls Dulcinea, seeing her as his lady. He sets himself the task of defending orphans, protecting maidens and widows, befriending the helpless, and serving the causes of truth and beauty. His imagination often runs away with him, so that he sees windmills as giants, flocks of sheep as enemy armies, and country inns as castles. Don Quixote's romantic view of the world, however, is often balanced by Sancho Panza's more realistic outlook.

*Don Quixote* was originally intended as a satire on medieval tales of chivalry. The completed work, however, presents a rich picture of Spanish life and contains many philosophical insights. Don Quixote's quest has been seen as an allegory of the eternal human quest for goodness and truth in the face of insurmountable obstacles. His idealism seems to be madness in a world that sometimes views heroism and love as forms of insanity, and this has led many readers to consider *Don Quixote* a tragedy despite its satirical style and many comical episodes.

*Don Quixote* has had a tremendous influence on the development of prose fiction. It has been translated into all modern languages and has appeared in several hundred editions. It has also been the subject of a variety of works in other fields of art, including operas by Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello and French composer Jules Massenet; a symphonic poem (a musical piece meant to evoke images of other artistic, but nonmusical, pieces) by German composer Richard Strauss; motion pictures by German director G. W. Pabst and Russian director Grigori Kozintzev; a ballet by American choreographer George Balanchine; and a musical, *Man of La Mancha* (1965), with music by American Mitch Leigh. The theme also inspired works by 19th-century French artists Honoré Daumier and Gustave Doré.

## Q-DON QUIXOTE AS A MEDIEVAL ROMANCE:

### INTRODUCTION:-

*Don Quixote de la Mancha* is a parody of the medieval romance genre: a type of literature that flourished from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Don Quixote was written when this genre was already in decline (15<sup>th</sup> cent.) but a detailed knowledge of the characteristics of the ‘medieval romance’ is necessary for a profound understanding of the work.

### WHAT DOES ‘MEDIEVAL’ MEAN? [A brief history of the middle ages]:-

The Roman Empire started declining towards the AD 300’s and its crumbling gave rise to the Medieval Ages, or Middle Ages. This period lasted from AD 500 to 1500 and is referred as ‘middle’ because it was the time when the European nations began to form. Since the borders of present day European nations were being set, the middle Ages were a period of great warfare. The initial lack of strong government divided the people into feudal states. Because of the constant warfare between these states, the concept of the knight came into being. A knight is simply a mounted warrior. Young men were taught to wear heavy armor, ride a war-horse, and fight with sword and lance. With the rise of the knight came the rise of chivalry, the knightly code of behavior. The chivalrous knight was supposed to be loyal to his feudal state, virtuous, brave, selfless, and protector of the weak.

### WHAT DOES ‘ROMANCE’ MEAN? [The beginnings of the genre]:-

In the beginning of the middle Ages, the word “Romance” (in old French “romanz”) was a term used indiscriminately to any kind of long narrative in French verse. “Romanz” meant,

*“the speech of the people”*

*Or “the vulgar tongue.”*

For instance, the “Roman de la Rose” a chronicle of aristocratic courtship and “Roman d’Alexandre”, a semi fantastic chronicle of the adventures of Alexander the Great, are two romances that were known by the vulgate. By the end of the Middle Ages the term “romance” had been narrowed down to describe a kind of knightly prowess, usually set in remote times or places, and involving some element of the supernatural.

Several factors contributed to what “romance” meant during the Middle Ages: legends of the now deceased Roman Empire, the curriculum of rhetoric used by the Catholic Church education system, and the transformation in perception that man was not a static object but a mobile one in a continuous spiritual journey. The classical Roman poet Ovid had postulated during his lifetime that love was a “restless malady”. Medieval writers took this concept of love and interwove it into romantic classical stories by such greats as Virgil and Homer. Virgil’s “The Aeneid” was transformed into the ‘Roman d’Eneas’ and Homer’s tale of ‘Troy’ was transformed into the, “Roman de Troie”. They in turn would copy classical stories, like the ones mentioned above, into the medieval romance format (described below) where exactly these writers got the idea to interweave them with classical stories is still a mystery.

Finally, there occurred a change in perception about man during the middle Ages. Towards the end of the Roman Empire, man had been perceived as a mobile object, one that would accrue spiritual meaning. Instead of being “hit” by random life events, man would be in search of these “hits,” therefore becoming the architect of his own spiritual world. For this reason, the imagery of “journeying” and the “Knight errant” became popular during the middle Ages. The Knight is in search of spiritual meaning. In Arthurian romances, this spiritual meaning is usually portrayed as the

unattainable Holy Grail. It is for this reason that Don Quixote leaves his home by emulating medieval Knights, he is in search of spiritual meaning. In the middle Ages, action was only a means to a spiritual end.

### **The Characteristics of a Medieval Romance:-**

We have talked much about the origins of medieval romance, but we have not touched upon the common characteristics, which make up such a work. Here are then, the characteristics and themes that are found in most medieval romances.

#### **Journeying:-**

The journey is a metaphor for the quest of man during the Middle Ages. In Arthurian romances, all of King Arthur's Knights are in search of the Holy Grail, a metaphor for spiritual fulfillment. In the medieval romance of Tristan and Isolde, a story of young star-crossed lovers, Tristan and Isolde are in a continuous journey trying to escape situations that try to keep them apart and fulfill their romantic destiny.

#### **Love:-**

The medieval Knight usually swears his undying love to a beautiful maiden. (Don Quixote swears his undying love to Dulcineo del Toboso.). It is this love which keeps the Knight alive in the course of his wanderings and also keeps him from entering into any relationship with women he encounters along the way. The maiden may sometimes submit the Knight to "feasts" so that she can be sure that he loves her. For instance, in Arthurian romances, Lady Guinevere, King Arthur's wife, is actually in love with one of her husband's Knight's Sir Lancelot. In Sir Thomas Malory's romance "le morte D'Arthur," Guinevere MAKES Lancelot undergo perilous tests at a tournament to see if he really loved her.

#### **Virtue:-**

A medieval Knight has to prove his virtue, specially his purity of heart and purpose, time and time again during his journey. This purity of heart will give the Knight fame and respect back at home. But most importantly, it will make it easier for him to find spiritual fulfillment. In the romance *Queste del Saint Graal*, we learn of sir Galahad, the perfect Knight. His perfection lies in his perfect morality and physical virginity, two Christian values. It is his perfection in virtue that allows him to find the Holy Grail and die in ecstasy. No other knight had ever or will ever achieve this accomplishment in medieval literature.

#### **Man and God:-**

In their journey knights have to prove that they are pure of heart, specifically by not succumbing to any temptations or abstinence which will save the knight's soul when he dies. This theme of abstinence becomes more and more prevalent as medieval romances came to be influenced by Christianity. For instance: when Arthurian romances became impregnated with Christian ideals, the illicit love affair between Lady Guinevere and Sir Lancelot came to be seen as the ultimate sin which leads to a falling out between Lancelot and King Arthur; a breakdown between the knight of the Round Table, and finally to the destruction of King Arthur's Kingdom. It also puts Sir Lancelot's soul in a perilous situation with God.

#### **Supernatural:-**

Medieval romances are ridden with supernatural beings such as dwarves, fairies, magicians, and giants, to name a few; these beings were created by the author themselves to add excitement to the story but also to test the knight's virtue. In *Don Quixote*, the protagonist encounters some windmill,

which he believes to be a giant. Although funny, this scene shows that elements of the supernatural are an integral part of medieval romances.

### **Amadis de Gaula: The Spanish Medieval Romance:-**

In reading Don Quixote, you have probably already encountered the continuous reference to Amadis de Gaula. Many people have never heard of this man and usually continue reading without paying much attention. But, sure enough, the name pops again and attention must be given to understand why Gaula is always being mentioned and why Don Quixote is always comparing himself to him.

Amadis de Gaula is the product of Arthurian romances. Gaula is the Spanish medieval knight, who like any Arthurian knight encounters supernatural adventures in his journey. For Spain, Gaula was the epitome of what a perfect knight should be. This work first appeared towards the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. But it was finally published in 1508 by Garci-Robriguez De Montalvo. This work revolved around the concept of chivalry and the exercise of such a concept. After being published it was translated into many languages and it is said to have affected the concept of chivalry which we have today. Don Quixote adopts Amadis' habit because he wants to become a perfect knight. Today the term chivalry connotes virtuousness, honor and gallantry.

### **“DON QUIXOTE” AS PARODY OF ROMAN:-**

#### **INTRODUCTION:-**

Miguel De Cervantes saavedra was a Spanish novelist and dramatist. He was an outstanding genius and supreme innovator of Spanish literature. Along with being a playwright, poet novelist, he was also the inventor of the psychological short story in Spain. His influence, on the English novel was profound, especially of Fielding, Sterne and Smollett. From the long record of struggle and achievement in the face of consistently hostile circumstances he emerges as one of the noblest characters in his country's story. Cervantes's writing reveals his insights into the nature of reality and the meaning of life in general. Even his fame is as assured and universal as that of the hero of his great novel, 'Don Quixote'. The popularity and the universality of the book can be assumed by reading the following words,

*“except for the bible,  
No book has been so  
Widely diffused into  
Many different languages  
In addition to ‘Don Quixote’.”*

#### **Don Quixote:-**

“Don Quixote” is a novel whose full original title “EL Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote De La Mancha.” It is one of the earliest novels in a modern European language and many people consider it the best book in Spanish. The novel actually consists of two parts: the first was published in 1605 and the second in 1515.

The imagination, satirical spirit, humanistic culture and many colored genius of Cervantes all met and found their highest expression in it. He gave to this work the form of a burlesque of the romances of chivalries, which was already losing its popularity with his countrymen. But along with its parody, the work also becomes a criticism of life which Spaniards accept as permanent and universal. It has also the element of picaresque, heroic and romantic novel.

### **What's a Romance?**

Oxford English dictionary defines the term 'Romance' as:

*“A Romantic imaginative  
Unrealistic story.”*

In the beginning of the middle ages, the word 'Romance' (in old French "Romanz") was a term used indiscriminately for any kind of long narrative. In French verse "Romanz" meant,

*“The speech of the people- or  
The vulgar tongue.”*

Romance were at first written in verse but later in prose as well according to M.H Abrahams,

*“The romance is distinguished  
From the epic in that it  
Represents not heroic age  
Of tribal wars, but a,  
Country and chivalric  
Age; its standard plot is  
One of quest and adventure  
Undertaken by a single  
Knight.”*

By the end of the middle ages the term "Romance" had been narrowed down to describe a tale of Knightly process. Several factors contributed to what 'Romance' meant during the middle ages; it carries the legend of the now deceased Roman Empire and the transformation in perception that man was not a static object but a mobile one in a continuous spiritual journey. For this reason the imagery of "journey" (ing) and the "Knighterrants" became popular during the middle ages. It is for this reason that Don Quixote leaves his home by emulating medieval knights, he is in search of spiritual meaning.

### **Parody of Romance:-**

Cervante's narrative technique and style reveals Don Quixote as more of a parody than Romance itself. He rather mocks at the knighthood and chivalry of medieval romances by blending the comic aspects with a touch of exaggeration.

The imitation using exaggerated means is found in the name of the character itself. For instance, Don's real name is Alonso Quejana, but he called himself by the noble name of Don Quixote de la mancha. The name was updated by Don himself as he was under the influence of romances he

had read which had described the place where they belonged; so he also fused 'De la mancha' to his name to show his patriotic feelings.

Ironically, like a true knight he also selected a horse and gave his horse a reverential name "Rocinante" though the description of the horse, is the parody of horse that are formed in real romances. His armour is in a way exaggerated to create a comic effect because the armour of the Knight of popular romances was not rusty and makeshift as that of our Knight Don Quixote.

As a true Knight, he (Don) also thought that he must have a fair lady and so he selects a humble farm girl, Dulcinea del Toboso.

Book I expresses the note of 7 criminals who are punished for their crimes like making love, singing, bankruptcy and so on. The very description bears that this is nothing but a parody of knighthood.

Don's tumbling down when he reached his village falls in this type. Like other romances there is not as such presence of supernatural elements but they are only mentioned. For example Quixote misunderstands Dulcinea as changed into a peasant girl by some evil spell (in chap, 4 book 1). He also assumed windmills as the giants; this arouses only mirth comedy for readers instead of terror and suspense.

Cervantes intermingles the romantic and the comic. Though no longer into our taste these tales are well told and reveal his (Cervantis's) mastery of narrative techniques. Indeed the handling of suspense, paces style, effect dramatic immediacy and plot in this romantic fiction have notable repercussions on his comic fiction; manifest in the fact that the comic and the romantic strands are inseparably intermeshed in Don Quixote.

Hence, Cervantes's standpoint was, in attacking chivalry which has lowered public taste.

**Summing up:-**

Thus, it can be said that indisputably Spain's greatest work 'Don Quixote de la mancha' has been the beloved of readers because of its parodying style which is the genre of medieval romances. Cervantes intensely imitates to attack on chivalry and knighthood of the age by using comic aspects. Even while translating it many translators keep in mind this genre and try to maintain it in their own language. As in 1687, John Milton's nephew John Philip retranslated 'Don Quixote', and announced that it was,

*“made English according  
To the humor of our  
Modern language.”*

## THE CID

**Pierre Corneille:** (1606-84), French dramatist, whose plays are masterpieces of classical French literature.

Corneille was born on June 8, 1606, in Rouen, Normandy (Normandie), the son of a government official. Educated in Jesuit schools and in law, he held minor public offices in Rouen from 1629 to 1650. His career as a dramatist began when *Mélite*, a comedy of love, was successfully produced in Paris in 1630. The tragicomedy *Clitandre* (1631), as well as other comedies and his tragedy *Médée* (1635), an adaptation of classical Greek and Roman plays, followed.

In 1636 or 1637 Corneille produced the tragedy *Le Cid*, based on a Spanish play about the legendary medieval hero. Although critics bitterly condemned the play because it did not adhere strictly to the classical rules of construction that require unity of time, place, and action, it was a triumph. The theme, the conflict between love and duty, characterizes many of Corneille's subsequent tragedies. In them, however, he observed the classical unities. His finest tragedies, after *Le Cid*, are *Horace* (1640), *Cinna* (1641), and *Polyeucte* (1643), all set in ancient Rome. These four plays, imbued with strength, dignity, and elegance, created the standards of French tragedy, which were further developed by his younger contemporary Jean Baptiste Racine.

Corneille was also a master of comedy. *Le menteur* (The Liar, 1643) is considered the best French comedy before those of Molière. Like his earlier *Mélite*, it is a comedy of manners, a form he originated.

In 1647 Corneille and his large family, including that of his brother Thomas Corneille, who was also a successful playwright, moved to Paris. Established as a major dramatist receiving a government pension, Corneille was elected to the French Academy in that year. His next productions, *Don Sanche d'Aragon* (1649), *Andromède* (1650), and *Nicomède* (1651), were well received. After *Pertharite* (1651) failed, however, he stopped writing for the stage for eight years. Later, with government encouragement, he wrote many plays, chiefly complex tragedies, which declined in quality. He died in Paris on October 1, 1684.

Corneille's best work won him the approbation of his contemporaries Racine and Molière. He is regarded as one of the greatest French playwrights; his dramas are maintained in the repertoire of the Comédie Française.

## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LOVE AND DUTY IN “THE CID”.

OR

## CORNEILLE’S TREATMENT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LOVE AND DUTY IN ‘LE CID –THE CID’

### INTRODUCTION:-

*“Corneille was the beaux  
Espirit and bel-espirit of  
The 17<sup>th</sup> century  
France.”*

Indeed, no other man was responsible for the rise of French tragedy as Corneille. Pierre Corneille has dominated the French arena of literature in general and plays in particular. His brother Thomas Corneille was also a leading playwright of French. Hence, Corneille’s literary inclinations were revealed early and were nurtured by his surroundings.

### Corneille’s oeuvres:-

Corneille the first of the French neo-classical dramatist, wrote as many as 34 plays, 3 less than Shakespeare, comedies, tragic-comedies, heroic comedies, tragic ballet etc.

His real career as a playwright started with the publication of his first play ‘Melite’ or ‘The False Letter’. The play was an immediate success on the stage. Moreover his plays like, ‘Horace’, ‘Polyeucte’ and ‘Cinna’ respectively depict the conflict between domestic love and devotion to the country: conflict between the attachment to a creature and the exclusive claim of heaven; and an option of a lower or a higher conception of political expediency.

Most of the plays have secured a place in the entire oeuvres of French literature. He has rightly been called...

*“ the French Shakespeare”*

### As a critic:-

Apart from being a dramatist, Corneille was a critic, who goes against Aristotle’s definition of tragedy and subscribed his own. He expounded his theories of tragedy and drama in his, (work) “Discourse on Dramatic Poetry” (1660). Tragedy for Corneille, required as its subjects.....

*“a renowned  
extra-ordinary serious  
action “*

Taken from history of legend. The main character must be noble in rank or of heroic stature; (main character i.e hero). Tragic action, according to Corneille should have,

*“some great interest of state,  
some passion i.e. noble  
and more virile than love.”*

In many of his tragedies he applied these theories. For instance in ‘Horace’, ‘Cinna’, ‘Polyeucte’, ‘Rodogune’, ‘Le Menteur’ and in ‘La Cid’.

### **The cid:-**

Corneille, between 1630-1636, wrote seven plays. During this period, he started taking interest in Spanish literature because of the contact with the colonies around him. He read the contemporary drama of Guillen de Castro’s, “The youthful Adventure of Cid.” This Spanish play inspired him to write. ‘The Cid’, which came out in the year 1636-37.

It is a tragic-comedy-Romantic tragedy, depicting two young lovers in tension between love and duty. For some critics it is a non-academic work, which partially observes the classical dramatic rules. The play was directed to the general public rather than the learned elite class. But this no way diminishes Corneille’s place in French literature. The play has all its freshness and beauty like “Romeo and Juliet.”

### **Conflict in the play:-**

Love in Corneille’s plays is frequently based on mutual reason and when linked to honor is related to the ideals of medieval chivalry. Consequently, love plays a lesser role in Corneille’s drama than in that of Racine. Corneille himself admits that, tragic conflict must put,

*“impetuosity of passion against the laws of duty”*

In almost all his plays, Corneille depicts the dilemma between duty and love.

### **Conflict between love and duty :-**

Like his other plays ‘The Cid’ too carries the conflict between love and duty in the minds and hearts of the hero and heroine Roderick and Chimene resemble the Homeric heroes and heroines in their passion for personal honor and fame, Both are ready to sacrifice their love to the beauty Other than these two characters, Infant, the daughter of the king has the same problem, to choose Roderick cavalier as her husband or to be faithful to the honor of the king and his family, In fact, the whole play has an underlying thread of conflict between love and honor or duty.

### **Dilemma of hero:-**

Roderick the son of Don Diegue, is in love with Chimene, daughter of count de Gormas-the captain of Spain. A complication soon arises at court. In a bitter quarrel Gormus unjustly accuses Don Diegue of gaining the king’s favor through flattery and deceit. Moreover, he slaps his elder rival. Don Diegue feels insulted and calls upon, Roderick to uphold his family’s honor. Don Diegue has pride on the bravery of his son. He in the very beginning makes it clear that he wants revenge. He advises his son thus:

*“go my son, my true son,  
Bolt out my shame,  
Avenge me, show that,  
Thou art thy father’s  
Worthy son.”*

Roderick is torn between love and duty. His friction of mind is clearly revealed in his very long speech of act 1 scene 4, where he says,

*“mid conflict wild I stand;  
I lift my arms to strike,  
My fathers foe.  
But love with mighty  
Impulse urges ‘No’.”*

Thus, Roderick was told to avenge his father by killing his beloved- Chimene’s father. He loves Chimene like anything. Now he is trapped between the two polarities of love and duty.

Roderick, after a long interval of conflict with his own self bends towards filial duty. He is ready to avenge his father’s honour. It becomes clear when he utters...

*“come, let me save my honor!  
My father’s claim  
Stands first, I’ll not  
Bring upon our ancient  
Name disgrace.”*

He, eventually, challenges Don Gromas, Chimene’s father for duel. They meet and prepare to duel and in a combat Roderick kills Don Gormas.

### **Chimene’s Dilemma:-**

Chimene burst with tears when she heard that her lover Roderick himself has killed her father. The unexpected death of her father makes Chimene abhorrent. She instantaneously decides to take revenge upon Roderick after hearing the news. But because of her love for Roderick her mind wavers. She also undergoes the same conflict which Roderick had faced. Don Fernand, the king, is forced to hear her plea as she seeks, for justice...

*“I plead for vengeance  
For him.  
The death of one like  
Him, is harm to all  
Avenge it by another’s  
Blood for blood.”*

She again laments,

*“T is justice, sire a  
Murderer should die.”*

Corneille has excellently handled the situation and has ably brought out the dreadful dilemma in the mind and heart of Chimene when she says,

*“I find my lover in my enemy,  
Roderick is very dear to me...  
But despite its struggle,  
I forgot not that  
I am my father’s daughter  
And that he is dead.”*

However, as it turns out that Roderick has won the affair by rendering Sancho defenseless. She still hesitates to take Roderick as her husband though and persuades her to forget and forgive. He knew that the time would heal the ditch between the lovers. She obeys the king’s desires and says...

*“since he is what he is !  
I cannot hate him,  
And thou, thou art my king,  
I must obey thee.”*

From now love lives long and duty died in their heart, Roderick also gives his consent to accept her hand. As it is said; all’s well that ends well.

#### **Infanta’s note of love and duty:-**

Other than the two main characters Roderick and Chimene, Infanta too is torn between love and duty. On the one hand, she loves Roderick who is a cavalier and on the other hand she has to follow the tradition of her family by not marrying a lower rank noble but one of her own rank. For that reason she wants Roderick and Chimene to be married quickly so that her love for Roderick can be quenched she like all the characters places duty higher in her heart than love.

Thus, it can be said that the whole play is woven with the thread of love and duty through the hearts of all the major characters in it.

#### **Summing up:-**

Conflict be it inner or external, is the heart of the play which Corneille has aptly placed in the play. The inner conflict between love and duty through the characters of Roderick, Chimene, and Infanta and the outer conflict with human nature in totality-such a theme has always captured the hearts of the people all over the world.

One can conclude with what a well known praise for Corneille.

*“No other man was  
Responsible for the  
Rise of French  
Tragedy as corneille. ”*

## RENAISSANCE WOMEN WRITERS

Renaissance, series of literary and cultural movements in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. These movements began in Italy and eventually expanded into Germany, France, England, and other parts of Europe. Participants studied the great civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome and came to the conclusion that their own cultural achievements rivaled those of antiquity. Their thinking was also influenced by the concept of humanism, which emphasizes the worth of the individual. Renaissance humanists believed it was possible to improve human society through classical education. This education relied on teachings from ancient texts and emphasized a range of disciplines, including poetry, history, rhetoric (rules for writing influential prose or speeches), and moral philosophy.

The word *renaissance* means “rebirth.” The idea of rebirth originated in the belief that Europeans had rediscovered the superiority of Greek and Roman culture after many centuries of what they considered intellectual and cultural decline. The preceding era, which began with the collapse of the Roman Empire around the 5th century, became known as the Middle Ages to indicate its position between the classical and modern world.

Scholars now recognize that there was considerable cultural activity during the Middle Ages, as well as some interest in classical literature. A number of characteristics of Renaissance art and society had their origins in the Middle Ages. Many scholars claim that much of the cultural dynamism of the Renaissance also had its roots in medieval times and that changes were progressive rather than abrupt. Nevertheless, the Renaissance represents a change in focus and emphasis from the Middle Ages, with enough unique qualities to justify considering it as a separate period of history.

This article begins with a brief overview of the characteristics of the Renaissance and then discusses conflicting views on how to define and interpret the Renaissance. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the economic, social, and political changes that began in the 14th century and contributed to the development of the Renaissance. The ideas of the Renaissance, particularly of humanism, are then explored, and their impacts on established religion, on science, and on the arts are examined.

### INTRODUCTION:-

Renaissance is a French word which means re-birth, revival or re-awakening. It was a revival of ancient classical literature and culture. It was also a re-awakening of the human mind. The people revived their interest in the beauty of the human body and the world of Nature. It was rediscovery of man himself. It was a revival of the beauty of woman, the beauty of nature and the beauty of art and literature. It began in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the works of Petrarch. The people had a deep interest in all the possibilities of human experience. They took life as a glorious adventure. About the literary spirit of the Renaissance, one can quote this line,

*“tongues in trees,  
Books in running brooks,  
Sermons in stone and Good  
in everything.”*

### Women's status:-

But one question always reoccurs every now and then-that is to say the consciousness of the feminists and the question of women's status during the Renaissance. This question has been pondered over by many feminist critics down the ages, that was there anything like 'Renaissance' as far as women are during 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Joan Kelly is one of them who in her essay raised the question,

*“did women have a  
Renaissance.”*

She puts forwards many arguments regarding this matter. The testimony of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century's women writers is one of the elements of the complex realities of Renaissance civilization that sheds significant light on the question of,

*“whether or not and if so  
In what manner women  
Did have a Renaissance  
During the Renaissance.”*

### Women's Endeavour:-

Many women have shown their talent in many fields and “writing” is one such field. Many women during the Renaissance in Italy or France used to write but they have always been marginalized. It's like saying that as time has its two aspects day and night; society also has its two sections, man and woman. In a natural condition of society women's work is done unobtrusively behind the scene. Where society has become unnatural there might usurp the province of day, and both work and frivolity are carried on by artificial light.

The same thing happened with the Renaissance women writing, who have shown their aptitude in the field of writing but their works have been destroyed. But the works of Gaspara Stampa, Vittorria Colonna and many more are still available to us translated by many scholars. Their writings are the proof of Renaissance women's talent and contribution, as Lonaise Labe expresses by saying that...

*“when the strict law of man  
No longer prevent women  
From applying themselves to  
The sciences and other  
Disciplines, it seems to me  
That those of us who can,  
(should) use this long craved  
Freedom to study and to  
Let men see how greatly  
They wronged us when  
Depriving us of its honor  
And advantages.”*

They are able to impart the sense of individuality and authenticity to their voices in spite of the fact that their work incarnates much of conventional Renaissance thought. They all had unique characteristics in their writing, and in expression of thought such as cult of antiquity, the concomitant predilection for ornate expression; the use of conventional topic and forms a love of balanced and polished diction, rare words, mythological reference and ideals of ancient moral philosophy, history and letters.

The works of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries women have not been incorporated into the main stream of literary tradition, the Renaissance fortunes of their works range from best seller's to 'prohibited

texts', their own fortunes range from general acclaim and literary success to rejection and even persecution and their voices belie traditional assumption concerning the homogeneity of women's literature.

### **Age of Reformation:-**

The age in which these women writers were writing was an age marked by various changes, social, religious and moral, it was a period of stories replete with new opportunities of which Renaissance men and women were joyfully aware. In such an age- How did women writers of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries avail themselves of these new opportunities? They have contributed unimportantly and prodigiously to Renaissance letters and that many of them enjoyed contemporary literary success. However, while many women profited greatly from the availability of the new learning. It is also evident that the full ranges of opportunities opened by the humanist movement were not available to them in the same extent as to men clearly; the social and economic mobility made possible for males through the pursuit of the professional careers was not an available option to women.

However, literary endeavors of woman are not the result of poetic success alone. Education for some financial independence; either in the form of personal wealth, individual or institutional patronage, access to the source materials and books, some form of encouragement is also a significant import. However, there are many other women who did not have, even a sight of Renaissance... as Ruth Kelso observes,

*“the training of the well born  
Girl was directed in every  
Respect... toward fitting her  
To become a wife... marriage  
Alone was held the proper  
Vocation for woman mainly  
Because she was fitted only to  
Learn the duties that belonged  
To her as a sort of junior  
Partner to her husband.”*

### **Education:-**

Education was of central interest to the Renaissance humanists and their great contribution of making learning available to women cannot be denied. Theoretically, equal education was advocated for both the sexes and for all social classes. Many scholars of that time emphasized on women's education. Erasmus was one of them who was opined that

*“education should be for moral  
Goals because study builds the  
Entire soul. It is not only a  
Weapon against idealness but  
Also a means of impressing  
The best precepts upon the  
Girls mind and of leading  
Her to virtue.”*

Thomas Moore, similarly joins moral probity with woman's learning, as he avers....

*“it is a women of eminent  
Virtue of mind should add  
Even moderate skill in  
Learning.”*

According to Agrippa,

*“education is useful for  
Women in high position, but  
Rather dangerous to women  
Of less elevated birth and  
In domestic sphere.”*

So it is clear that we do not have women writers better than ‘man’ writers because as Laura Cereta remarks...

*“the true reason that  
Woman are not learned is  
Lack of opportunity, not  
Lack of ability.”*

Gaspara Stampa, and other women writers had to face this distinction of education as the lack of opportunity to become writers. If Gaspara had not been a person having relations with aristocratic people, she would not have become a famous writer of her age. So during that period of time noble status was indeed necessary to be a writer because of the class difference in education.

Vittoria Colonna being a child of ‘The Colonnas’ a noble Roman family received a comprehensive humanistic education. Just like these two women writers Louise Lave also received an excellent education. That is the reason why she became an elegant original and highly accomplished writer.

### **Conclusion:-**

Thus one can find the typical Renaissance elements in the poems of these writers. They very keenly expressed the female situation and sensibility of the Italian Renaissance. Therefore Colonna’s very close friend Michelangelo, who wrote about her...

*“if your face and in your  
Beautiful eyes  
Full of every salvation  
I aspire to all that  
Heaven promises.”*

## Godan – Premchand

### Q-Epic Struggle of Man

*“He is the greatest Indian writer who has intimately studied the life of the peasant and portrayed with such powerful imaginative art that it stands supreme in the history of Hindi fiction.”*

... Says Indra Nath Madan about Premchand. Premchand (1880) was a great novelist, short story writer and also a good human being. His real name was Dhanpat Rai Ajaiblal Munshi. Premchand was his pen name. He wrote his first novel in Urdu ‘Asrave-Mabid’. In 1917, there came his great novel ‘Seva-Sadan’. It was followed by number of novels like ‘Rang Bhoomi’, ‘Karma Bhoomi’, ‘Nirmala’ etc...

In ‘Godan’ (1930) Premchand gives a realistic portrayal of the Indian peasantry and presents a portrait gallery of contemporary Indian society. Premchand reveals the pitiable condition of the poor farmers. In ‘Godan’ Hori is such a victim of this cruel and heartless system.

Novel tends to assume the form of an epic of common man and everyday life. It realistically describes the various aspects of life. It is rich in social awareness. It is a vehicle to express the rapid socio-cultural changes in modern society Godan has epic dimensions as it deals with the epic struggle of the Indian peasantry against an established social order. A famous critic Francis Stoddard remarks in this respect....

*“A novel is a narrative of human life under stress of emotion. It differs from the epic in that it is a narration of human rather than super human life.”*

In this sense, the modern novel is closer to the epic in its endeavour of a hostile environment.

#### **(1) Struggle of individual in a social set up :-**

Hori is the main protagonist in the work who is also a representative of the Indian peasantry. He possesses a blind faith in age old traditions and religious beliefs. He is the living embodiment of ideas and selfless service. He is a much tradition loving and tradition bound man that he can never stand against the exploitation by the rich. Throughout his life he has been exploited and wronged by the money lenders but he bears all acts of injustice and exploitation silently.

Hori is an idealist who can never think of going against society and religious beliefs. Premchand has ironically used the title of the novel in the end of the narrative to intensify the tragic affect. Hori and his life remains. “A TALE OF HELPLESS MISERY.” Throughout the novel he suffers without any hope of redemption and release from his condition.

#### **(2) “Godan – A picture of Indian farmers :-**

Hori, a unique creation of Premchand is a great sufferer with all the basic human weaknesses of rural peasants. It is ironical as well as tragic that the farmer works hard on the dry soil but he cannot harvest crops because the money lenders have their claim upon it. A character like Hori can easily be found among Indian farmers. He is an epitome of Indian farmers. Thus, a critic like I. N. Madan remarks.

*“The Indian farmers have been robbed of his death,  
his honour, his spirit and his very life.”*

Here Premchand emerges as a major crusader against the feudal system in pre independent India. The novel also deals with the impact of industrialization on villagers.

**(3) “Godan” - a criticism on social evils :-**

Premchand seems to agree with Mathew Arnold when he considers literature as a criticism of life has to be lived and understood in relation to society. He considers social environment as the most crucial factor shaping human destiny. As a writer he is more interested in the outer side of life and its graphic details.

In his novel, he attacks prevalent society change and reform instead of revolution. Hori represents suppressed society with evils made against it. The novel thus became a ‘tale’ of epic struggle by Indian peasantry.

It is also an unforgettable story of a long cherished dream of an ordinary farmer. The evils of society have made the farmer unable to yearn for riches and the pleasures of a cow. His inability to achieve this much makes the life of a farmer tragic.

**(4) Realistic characters of contemporary society:-**

In Godan Premchand introduces Hori the main protagonist who represents the wronged and exploited Indian peasantry. In his personal life Premchand himself had suffered the economic crisis and that is why, he has portrayed the conditions of persons in debt very realistically;

*“In this last novel of Premchand is present every personage that has lent its characters to traditional rural India.”*

He introduces various characters in accordance with their status and background. His characters with rural background include Hori, Dhania, Juynia, Godan, Bhola etc.

Other characters with urban background are Mr.Mehta, Miss Malti, Mr.Khanna, Mirza Khurshid etc.... The characters look life like (drawn from real life). They are men and women of flesh and blood.

**(5) ‘Godan’ – a social document :-**

The present work is an important document of Premchand’s contemporary society with its problem. The Indian farmer is in the centre of the narrative. He is not aware of rights and importance in society.

Premchand’s novel has a very important social purpose. For him, society is not a reflection of the temperament of the age and its people but also serves as a yard stick to judge their action and conduct. A change in social set up is sufficient to transform the lives of the individuals.

The novel also shows the feudal lords like Raisaheb and Hori the poor. It shows the distance between two worlds and life styles. The farmer is bound within the geographical as well as socio-cultural limits. Hori cannot force Gobar to take the initiative to cross the boundaries of religion and society.

Premchand also portrays city life and its people with penetrating insight. Characters like Mr. Mehta and Miss Malti represent modern life and new thinking. Mr. Mehta says that marriage is advisable from social point of view but for an individual, it is an obstacle in the path of his evolution Miss Malti also agrees with him. Their love relationship symbolizes the changing trends.

# Gora-Rabindranath Tagore

## Introduction

*“Gora is more than a mere novel; it is an epic of India in transition at a crucial period of modern history, when the social conscience and intellectual awareness of the new intelligentsia were in the throes of a great churning.”*

-Krishna Kriplani

Rabindranath Tagore was versatile writer. Tagore produced many great novels like ‘Naukhadubi’, ‘Ghare Bhaire’, ‘Char Adhyay’, and ‘Gora’. These novels gradually deal with social political problems of contemporary Bengal.

‘Gora’ has been admired as the best novel dealing with the religious controversy between the Hindus and the Bramhos. Tagore’s art of characterization stands supreme in comparison to his contemporary novelists. The character of Gora and Binoy can be better called the supplements and complements of each other. Each one supplies what is lacking in the other.

### (1) **Outward Appearance:-**

Gora is truly a gigantic character physically as well as from the point of his personality. Even in his college days his professors had called him “The snow mountain”. Binoy is a good and pleasant young man but when placed besides Gora he appears like the moon by the side of the sun. He can be called a far more typical Bengali young man than Gora. While Binoy was small in stature, delicate and rather dark in complexion.

### (3) **Determinations and shyness:-**

Gora had even greater strength of will and determination. This made him very assertive and even arrogant and intolerant. In this respect he is a perfect contrast of Binoy. Binoy was rather weak in will and determination. Binoy was rather sentimental and indulged in fancies. Whereas Gora was a man of determination and did not allow any sentiments to move him away from his ideas and ideals.

Gora had great strength of will and even arrogant and intolerant that is why Binoy argues with him that....,

*“You have great fault Gora, you seemed to believe that all God’s strength has been given to you alone, and the rest of us are weaklings.”*

### (4) **Gora’s courage Vs Binoy’s sentimentality.**

Gora was a man of courage. He did not allow his sentiments to move him away from his ideas. We see Gora when he rushed to the help of school boys who were being beaten by some policeman. Binoy would never have shown such courage at such a short notice. On the contrary Binoy went to see Gora to request him to allow him to engage a lawyer and to get bail. This shows his mild practical

nature. In the novel Sucharita correctly remarks that “*Gora was a man of extremes*” Even Binoy agreed and says that.....

*“Any one who wanted to agree with Gora on any subject had to humble himself completely to his will.”*

On the other side we note that Binoy has a broad and far more liberal attitude and he is much acquainted with the sentiments of Gora. We find Binoy lacking determination and courage. He meekly accepted Baroda’s warning not to visit her house and even went away without speaking a word to Lolita. We cannot think of Gora acting in this way.

❖ **Some similarities.**

**(1) Patriotism:-**

In spite of these differences there are some common qualities between two friends. Both are patriots and staunch Hindus. Binoy was a patriot like Gora, but he was easily persuaded by Baroda to take part in a play to be staged at the house of an English man.

**(2) Love and respect:-**

Both Gora and Binoy, find honour, love and respect for all other characters. At the end, we find Gora saying about Anandmoyi that....

*“The mother for whom I have been searching all day, you have no caste, you make no distinction and have no hatred. It is you who are India.”*

Similarly we also find Binoy’s love and respect for Anandmoyi.....

*“The mother had died when I was born but I have never felt that my mother is no more.”*

❖ **Conclusion**

To sum up we can say that Gora is by no means a perfect character but he is strong, sincere and patriotic. Binoy too is young, gentle and attractive. Thus the characters of Gora and Binoy can be better be called the supplements and complements of each other.

## **Q: Compare and Contrast the character of Sucharita and Lolita**

Like Gora and Binoy, Sucharita and Lolita can be called the supplements and the complements of each other. They have some points of similarity but more of contrast. To start with their common features, they are young, pretty and educated. Both of them have good manners and both are staunch Brahmos. Both move easily in mixed circles and can talk with men without undue shyness. They have great friendship and love for each other though they are not sisters. Both are full of love and respect for Paresh Babu and both are accomplished girls interested in music, poetry and drama.

But here their resemblance comes to an end. They are quite different in their temperaments and their attitudes to life. In the beginning, both are attracted towards Binoy. Sucharita turns to Gora when she meets him, but Lolita finds gentler Binoy more to her taste and temperament. This is in keeping

with their characters. Gora demanded utmost obedience and submission. Lolita was too independent by nature to submit slavishly to anybody, however great. Sucharita was gentler and more passive. She was ready to offer her heart to Gora like placing an offering of flowers at his feet. Lolita plainly says that she does not like Binoy's submission to Gora. Another incident which illustrates the difference of temperament is the party at the house of Mr. Brownlow. When Gora was convicted, Sucharita merely sat weeping, and had not even the courage to tell Baroda that she would not take part in the party. When Lolita proposed the boycott, Sucharita asked her to remember what Paresh Babu might feel if they did so. Lolita on the other hand, never cared for such distinctions. She boldly walked out of her lodging, even without informing others and traveled to Calcutta by boat. We can never think of gentle Sucharita doing such a thing. Thus, Sucharita seems to be a woman of thought and discretion while Lolita is a woman of emotion and impulse. Lolita's self confidence is seen even on the boat where Binoy appears to be more than a girl like Lolita. It is Sucharita who is more hurt than Lolita by the violent propaganda of Haran. She thinks that even if Binoy is allowed to marry Lolita, he must be a Brahmo. This shows her conventional attitude to life. Lolita shows her rebellious nature by declaring that she is ready to marry Binoy even if he continued to remain a Hindu.

This difference of temperament is clearly seen in their love affairs. Lolita boldly accepts the love of Binoy when she feels that she loves Binoy and finds his temperament suitable to her. On the other hand, even when Sucharita realizes that she is in love with Gora, she is too shy even to accept his possibility of her marriage with Gora. She tries to get a promise from Lolita. That she would never speak of such a thing anymore and simply runs away to avoid further discussion. She is ready to submit her whole personality before Gora and make a humble offering of her heart to him. Lolita would never have accepted such a meek submission even to a person with whom she was deeply in love. In the scene of Haran's proposal, Sucharita does not speak even a single harsh word to Haran and humbly accepts all responsibility. She goes out of her way to say that the fault lies with her and that Haran can tell others that she was too young, unworthy and too unfit to marry a man like him. Lolita however tells him plainly that he has lost Sucharita through his own harshness and wrong kind of treatment. The same boldness is shown by her disregard for the scandal about her and Binoy raised by Haran. She has the courage to quarrel with her mother for sending away Binoy. Sucharita, on the other hand is so meek and gentle that she avoids all clash, all quarrels with everybody. She goes to live with Harimohini when Baroda finds her presence disagreeable in her house. She quietly leaves the house and goes to stay with Harimohini in a separate house so as not to trouble Baroda. Lolita shows equal boldness in leaving her house even before her marriage and in going to stay with Anandamoyi when Baroda made her house too disagreeable to her.

In short we can say that the chief qualities of Sucharita are her reasonableness her serenity thoughtfulness, seriousness, gentle manners and her devout and humble nature. The chief qualities of Lolita are her boldness, fearlessness, outspokenness, her lively and playful nature and energetic temperament. Both the girls are good and attractive, but Sucharita leans more towards the older traditional type of Indian womanhood while Lolita seems to represent the New Woman, an example of the modern, educated, bold women of India ready to face life independently, shouldering the responsibilities of life equally with men.

## Mrichchhakatikam-King Shudraka

### Q-The state of society in “Mrichchhakatikam”

#### ❖ Introduction:-

*“Mrichchhakatikam stands apart as a unique play in the entire range of the Sanskrit drama. It has won a place for itself which time cannot blur, not clime can touch.*

- G.K.Bhatt.

King Shudraka (2<sup>nd</sup> Cent.B.C) was one of the best Sanskrit dramatists who was probably born in south India. The drama itself tells of him as a Brahmana who was well-versed in many sciences and as one who died by self immolation at the age of over hundred years. He was known to be the author of at least half a dozen Sanskrit works, but nothing definite can be said either about his authorship. He has written many plays like ‘Padmaprabhritaka’, ‘Vina-vasavadatta’ ‘Mrichchhakatikam’.

Mrichchhakatikam is a play in ten acts with a social theme set in a realistic atmosphere. The play is full of varied interests which show the nobility of Charudatta’s mind and the selfless love of Vasantsena. The drama gives a faithful picture of the everyday life of the people in those days and is regarded as the most Shakespearian of all Sanskrit plays. The author’s style is simple and effective. His utterances are full of wisdom.

#### ❖ Description of Ujjayni : or The realistic picture of Ujjayni

Ujjayni is described as a gay prosperous city like modern Paris. It attracts people from far and near. For instance Samvahaka comes here from Pataliputra. Trade both inland and maritime was in flourish condition. Shudraka defines the city in the following manner.

*“Ujjayni is known as a gay and prosperous city attracting people from all places including Pataliputra trade both inland and maritime, flourished.”*

The rich courtesans like Vasantsena were the objects of envy even for kings. The city was beset with gamblers, loafer parasites and dare devils; people took deep interest in music and other fine arts.

#### ❖ The caste system :-

The caste system had a great hold on the people. The Brahmins and the cows were given high respect and they were ‘Avadya’. The Sudras were not allowed to recite the Vedas. The kayasthas were compared to serpents. However, the people of different castes could follow various professions; Charudatta himself a Brahmin was a merchant by profession.

Viraka and Chandanaka who are respectively a barber and a shoe maker occupy the responsible post of Balpati or Senapati. The Brahmanical religion was very popular along with its God and Goddesses; Vows and fasts; ideas about heaven and hell.

Buddhism also flourished side by side along with its beliefs in Bhiksus, their peculiar method of wearing; avoiding all contacts with women; addressing the commoner as ‘Upsaka’. The state had

the power of appointing the head of a religious order as today the states have a power to select a Sankaracharya for a math.

❖ **Evils of society (slavery) :-**

There was the evil of slavery in this society. A slave could be bought and could be made a free person on payment. The state could also grant freedom from slavery.

Samvahaka in this play offers himself for sale in Act II and Shavarka becomes free by an order of the state.

There are many evils in the society like gambling, drinking etc... Shudraka describes the evils in this respect....

***“The city was infested with gamblers and loafers  
who fomented disturbance; gambling was regulated  
under state control.”***

There are also superstitions that have a firm hold upon the people. The evil omens such as throbbing of one's own eye; the there are other beliefs such as crowing of a crow facing the sun, the sight of a serpent; the eclipse of the sun; the belief in astrology; the influence of the stars are also referred in the play in Act V and VII

The another notable thing is from the study of this play it appears that the state was very particular about the safety of the people against thefts - night patrols and sentry posts are mentioned many times by the author. The common people of the city took part in street quarrels very freely.

❖ **The Judicial System :-**

We get a very clear idea about the judicial system of Hindu law from the play. The judge was appointed by the king and held the office till the king's pleasure. Anyone could file a complaint at the court, and judge was bound to pay attention to it. As the judge says in the IX<sup>th</sup> Act...

***“A judge is the worst sufferer he must reserve the judgment  
until all the evidence is presented and sifted;  
nothing may corrupt him; he must project  
the innocence and punish the guilty.”***

The judge's decision was only a recommendation to the king who was the final authority to decide the punishment. When a criminal was given the punishment of hanging, he was taken in a procession. The criminals could be killed with a sword or eaten by dogs or tortured by a saw. The accused was given full liberty to argue in his favour. And his confession was necessary before the judge declared his decision.

Shudraka has depicted the realistic picture of contemporary – judicial system where no innocent was being killed. We can find an ideal judicial system in the play.

❖ **Food Habits :-**

Shudraka describes the minute details of contemporary society. He also mentions the food habits, their life style, clothes in a very exalted manner.

Here the author describes the food habits of the people of his age. They ate cooked food with curd or milk. They were very much fond of sweet balls and cakes. Vegetables soups were an important part of their food most of them were addicted to wine.

### ❖ **Conclusion:-**

Shudraka gives a faithful description of the life and the manners of the people of his society. There is nothing improbable about them except some exaggerations which are inevitable in such plays. That way like 'Dasa Kamaracharita', 'Mrichchhakatikam' gives us a fair picture of the contemporary society in various aspects.

### **Q- The Prakarna or Plot in Mrichchhakatikam:**

Mrichchhakatikam is one of the best dramas in ten acts composed by Shudraka with a social theme set in a realistic atmosphere. Technically it is a 'Prakarna' Natya.

### ❖ **Characteristic of Prakarna :-**

There are some characteristics which forms a 'Prakarna Natya' the following characteristics should be followed by a dramatist while forming the Prakarna Natya.

- (1) The Prakarna should be based upon worldly life. It should not be imaginary.
- (2) The hero must be a Brahmin or the merchant of a minister. It should not be a low character.
- (3) The heroine must be a courtesan or a lady of noble birth. The heroine should be of a good nature.
- (4) The number of acts usually should be ten. Not less than five nor more than ten.
- (5) Sentimental love should be its prominent feature. There should not be any other theme than love.
- (6) Rest of the features should resemble a 'Natya'
- (7) Plot should be divided into two parts

(1) Adhikarik (main plot)

(2) Prasangik (sub plot)

The Prakarna play has all these qualities otherwise it cannot be called as Prakarna. Now let us discuss Mrichchhakatikam as a Prakarna play.

### ❖ **Mrichchhakatikam as a Prakarna play:-**

Mrichchhakatikam follows all the characteristics of a Prakarna play. It can be called a perfect Prakarna. Let's study Mrichchhakatikam as Prakarna play.

- (1) A Prakarna should be based on worldly life. King Shudraka has chosen a subject which resembles the daily life of Ujjayni. The story also deals with the worldly life of the people of the society.
- (2) The hero, Charudatta is a Brahmin by birth but a merchant by profession. He fits in the characteristic of a Prakarna.
- (3) The heroine is Vasantsena a courtesan; but there is also a kulastri - the wife of Charudatta - Arya Dhuta. As required in theory, Shudraka keeps them apart.
- (4) Mrichchhakatikam consists of ten acts. The formation of act is also kept.
- (5) The play has the central theme of sentimental love between Charudatta and Vasantsena. It is the core feature of the play. The story is woven around the love between these two characters.
- (6) The plot has two acts which is divided as
  - (1) Main plot
  - (2) Sub plot

The main plot refers to love of Charudatta and Vasantsena while the sub plot refers to the revolution which ultimately places Aryaka on the throne after the murder of King Palaka.

The main plot as depicted by Shudraka has a vast, canvas and presents a complex plot. The main plot presents the love between Charudatta and Vasantsena. It consists of the deposit of the ornaments; their theft and the part they play in establishing the guilt of Charudatta's and the various occasions when the nobility of Charudatta mind and heart is revealed to Vasantsena.

There are also the unforgettable characters of Sakara and Maitreya and the trial scene are all entirely original. The idea of a courtesan falling in love with a poor Brahmin is found in the story of Kumbhilaka and Rupanika in the "Bharatkatha".

The construction of main the plot reveals the reality of the author and mastery over plot as such. At first sight it looks complex but the way Shudraka depicts the love affair of Vasantsena and Charudatta and with together the events concerning their sentimental love is remarkable.

The two sub plot refers to the love affair of the Brahmin youth Sharvilaka and Madanika-Vasantsena's maid whom Sharvilaka is trying to buy off in order to marry her. The other sub plot concerns a political revolution in Ujjayni in which the rebels are attempting to overthrow the tyrant king Palaka and install Gopaldwarka - Aryak on the throne. Despite the complicated plot structure, the three threads are skillfully interwoven and the story is well organized and unified.

In such cases, is very difficult for a dramatist to keep the balance between the two plots. For example Malti-Madava the sub plots almost over shadow the main plot.

It is also well constructed in acts. Samvahaka's admiration for Charudatta, Charudatta's nobility of heart; Vasantsena's love for Charudatta every king reaches its climax in the V<sup>th</sup> Act. The blind love of her kicks Sakara and invites trouble upon herself. In this way the two subplots are also woven skillfully by the dramatist Shudraka.

On account of its perfect plot construction this play is the most enjoyable of all plays in the Sanskrit language. The author himself proudly refers to the plot as something 'unique' the skill with which the events are constructed in the main plot and sub plot is simply marvelous.

## THE MAHABHARATA

**Rishi Veda Vyasa** is a Hindu figure of yore, a divine guru, a luminary of spirituality whose status in Hinduism is equal to that of the gods. Appearing anachronistically in numerous texts from the Classic to early Modern period of Hinduism, he plays an important role in not only the literature but the belief of many Hindus. His name means "splitter," as in "Veda Vyasa," or "Splitter of the Vedas," a feat that, according to Hindus, allowed mere mortals to comprehend the grandeur of divine Vedic knowledge.

He is purported to have written the Mahabharata. He is also known as *Krishna Dvaipayana* (the dark one born on an island) and in many languages (Sanskrit, Hindi) as *Rishi Veda Vyaas* or, more simply, *Vyaas*.

### **Vyasa: a 'history'**

By most accounts of yore, Vyasa was the grandfather of both the warring parties of the Mahabharata, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He is also the narrator of the story and is said to have asked Lord Ganesh to aid him in writing it down for posterity. Vyasa was the son of Satyavati, a ferryman's daughter, and the wandering sage Parashara. He was born on an island in the River Yamuna. The father of the princes Dhritarashtra and Pandu (by Ambika and Ambalika, the wives of King Vichitravirya), he also had a third son, Vidura, by a serving maid.

According to some accounts he is supposed to have sectioned the Vedic scriptures into appropriate format for the rest of humanity. His knowledge was supposed to be unique and whatever he knew could only be partially learnt by anyone else, whether by meditation, study of the Vedas, fasting, self improvement, etc. He is deemed to be the ideal Brahmarishi, omniscient, truthful, purest of the pure and possessor of knowledge of the essence of Brahma.

### **The Greatness of the Epic**

MAHABHARATA—the very mention of the name gives a thrill of holy ideas. This is a great epic heroic poem. It contains one hundred thousand verses. It contains the essence of all scriptures. It is an encyclopedia of ethics, knowledge, politics, religion, philosophy and *Dharma*. If you cannot find anything here, you cannot find it anywhere else.

It contains eighteen *Parvas* or sections viz., *Adi Parva*, *Sabha Parva*, *Vana Parva*, *Virata Parva*, *Udyoga Parva*, *Bhishma Parva*, *Drona Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Shalya Parva*, *Sauptika Parva*, *Stree Parva*, *Shanti Parva*, *Anushasana Parva*, *Asvamedha Parva*, *Ashramavasika Parva*, *Mausala Parva*, *Mahaprasthanika Parva* and *Swargarohanika Parva*. Each *Parva* contains many sub-*Parvas* or subsections.

This wonderful book was composed by Sri Vyasa (Krishna Dvaipayana) who was the grandfather of the heroes of the epic. He taught this epic to his son Suka and his disciples Vaisampayana and others. King Janamejaya, son of Parikshit, the grandson of the heroes of the epic, performed a great sacrifice. The epic was recited by Vaisampayana to Janamejaya at the command of Vyasa. Later on, Suta recited the Mahabharata as was done by Vaisampayana to Janamejaya, to

Saunaka and others, during a sacrifice performed by Saunaka in Naimisaranya, which is near Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh.

It is very interesting to remember the opening and closing lines of this great epic. It begins with: "Vyasa sang of the ineffable greatness and splendour of Lord Vasudeva, who is the source and support for everything, who is eternal, unchanging, and self-luminous, who is the Indweller in all beings, and the truthfulness and righteousness of the Pandavas." It ends with: "With raised hands, I shout at the top of my voice; but alas, no one hears my words which can give them Supreme Peace, Joy and Eternal Bliss. One can attain wealth and all objects of desire through *Dharma* (righteousness). Why do not people practise *Dharma*? One should not abandon *Dharma* at any cost, even at the risk of his life. One should not relinquish *Dharma* out of passion or fear or covetousness or for the sake of preserving one's life. This is the Bharata Gayatri. Meditate on this daily, O man! When you retire to sleep and when you rise from your bed every morning. You will attain everything. You will attain fame, prosperity, long life, eternal bliss, everlasting peace and immortality."

### **The Epic in a Nutshell**

The Mahabharata is the history of the Great War of India between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The two brothers Dhritarashtra and Pandu were born through sage Vyasa after the death of Vichitravirya. Dhritarashtra being blind, Pandu succeeded to the throne but he entrusted the kingdom to his elder brother and himself proceeded to forest where his five sons Yudhishtira, etc., were born and were called the "Pandavas." Dhritarashtra also had one hundred children in Duryodhana and others, who were called the "Kauravas." Pandu died during the infancy of his sons and Dhritarashtra continued to rule the kingdom with the help of their granduncle Bhishma, who had pledged himself to lifelong celibacy. The Pandava and Kaurava princes were brought up together and also educated and trained alike through Dronacharya. Both sets of princes considered them entitled to the kingdom and looked upon the other with hostility and their feelings and relations grew strained from day to day. On account of persecution by the Kauravas, the Pandavas left their home and suffered much hardship and pain, but on their marriage with the daughter of Drupada, king Dhritarashtra sent for the Pandavas and made over half the kingdom to them. The Pandavas improved their country and established their capital at Indraprastha and then performed the horse-sacrifice with great pomp. The Kauravas were also invited there but on seeing the good fortune of the Pandavas and being offended by jokes made at them, they were overcome with jealousy and resentment and returned home with feelings of enmity and revenge. They then conspired against the Pandavas and invited them to gamble and thereby they won all their wealth, kingdom and their person and also insulted and ill-treated their wife, Draupadi, in the presence of all. In the end, it was settled that the Pandavas should go out in exile to the forest for twelve years and pass another year in secrecy and on return from the exile be entitled to get back their lost kingdom. The Pandavas did all this but on their return the Kauravas refused to return the kingdom. This gave rise to the great family war in which all the Kauravas and the two armies were annihilated and the Pandavas alone survived and got the victory.

The Pandavas were assisted by Sri Krishna and other relations, Drupada, Virata, etc., and their forces numbered seven battalions (Akshauhinis). The Kauravas were also assisted by their relations and friends and their forces numbered eleven battalions. The Pandavas were successful on account of their righteous cause and divine grace.

The blind Dhritarashtra represents *Avidya* or ignorance; Yudhishtira represents *Dharma*; Duryodhana *Adharma*; Draupadi *Maya*; Bhishma dispassion; Dussasana evil quality; Sakuni jealousy and treachery; Arjuna the individual soul; and Lord Krishna the Supreme Soul. *Antahkarana* is the Kurukshetra.

## Heroic Characters

The Mahabharata war was a just war. If you go through the speech given by Bhishma to Yudhishtira, you will know the usages of righteous war. A brave hero would fight only with an enemy of equal strength and on equal vantage. This was the motto of every brave soldier who engaged himself in warfare in days of yore in India. Perfect justice and fairness in everything was rigidly observed on both sides. There was no fighting during nights; when the enemy had no arms in his hands, no arrows were aimed at him.

The Mahabharata, the most renowned epic of India, is the only book of its kind in the whole world. It contains countless stories besides the main episode—the *Mahabharata*—which teach moral lessons or illustrate distinguishing characteristics of the ancients of India. It contains the history of ancient India and all the details of its political, social and religious life. The stories, songs, nursery tales, anecdotes, parables, the discourses and sayings contained in this epic are marvellous and highly instructive. It contains the brilliant records of mighty heroes, warriors of great prowess, deep thinkers, profound philosophers, sages and ascetics and devoted wives of chastity. The beauty and charm of the language is extremely striking and attractive.

One is struck with amazement and becomes tongue-tied when he reads the marvellous strength of Bhima, of the wonderful skill in archery and bowmanship of Arjuna, of the dexterity of Sahadeva in the use of swords and of the profound knowledge of Nakula in astronomy, and of the extreme righteous conduct and justice of Yudhishtira in all matters. The deeds of heroism done by Bhishma, Karna, Drona, Parasurama, Jayadratha, Dhrishtadyumna and many others are superhuman. These heroes did severe Tapas and obtained rare boons from the Lord. That is the reason why they did marvellous heroic deeds which baffle description.

Yudhishtira did not wield arms. He did not take active part in the war-front. He did not use bow and arrows. He had neither the strength of Bhima nor the skill of Arjuna in archery. But he was an embodiment of righteousness. He was an incarnation of *Dharma*. That is the reason why he was called as *Dharmaputra*. He was a wise and ideal king. He established peace and order. He guided his brothers in the path of truth and righteousness and checked them whenever they went astray. Arjuna bore manfully the insults which Draupadi was subjected to before his eyes. He could not disobey Yudhishtira or show him the least disrespect. All the brothers were meek and submissive before Yudhishtira, however mighty and heroic they were. They could crush mountains and dry up oceans with their arrows. They were terrible before their opponents but they were mild and gentle before Yudhishtira and were ever ready to obey his commands. They would never speak a word in opposition. Such was the awe-inspiring personality of Yudhishtira. Had it not been for Yudhishtira, Arjuna and his brothers would not have won the war. Yudhishtira was the founder of an empire. He is in an inspiring example, even now, for the rulers of kingdoms and states. He was an embodiment of justice, patience, steadiness, purity, truthfulness and forbearance.

The kings had a complete knowledge of the scriptures and of right and wrong. They practised rigid austerities also. That is the reason why Yudhishtira and Nala were able to bear the privations and hardships. They rolled in wealth and yet they had the strength and power of endurance to walk barefooted in forests and sleep on a bed of stones. They had such a rigorous training and discipline in suffering.

Draupadi, Savitri, Kunti, Madri and Damayanti were highly devoted to their husbands. They were bold and fearless when they were under extreme difficulties, hardships, sufferings and privations. They were pious. They bore the sufferings through the force of their chastity and moral strength. They

were ideal wives and ideal mothers. That is the reason why they have left an immortal name behind them.

The Mahabharata still exerts a marvellous influence over the millions of Hindus. The lustre and high renown of these brilliant personages of Mahabharata has not suffered a diminution, in spite of the ravages of cruel time. Their character was untainted and sublime. Hence their deeds also were admirable, laudable and sublime. Determination has ever been the key to success in the lives of great men of all countries. Heroes would not move an inch from the path of their duty when they are called upon to perform it. They were fiery in their determination. They had iron will.

The noble and heroic grandsire Bhishma—who had control over his death and who was unconquerable in war even by the gods—still inspires us with the spirit of self-sacrifice, undaunted courage and purity. Yudhishtira is still a model of justice and righteousness. Remembrance of his very name generates a thrill in our hearts and goads us to tread the path of truth and virtue. Karna still lives in our hearts on account of his extreme munificence and liberality. Karna's name has become proverbial. People even now say, whenever they come across a very generous man, "He is like Karna in gifts."

Arjuna was the bravest of all the five Pandavas. Arjuna had got Draupadi by winning in the selection match and he had defeated the Kauravas on several occasions. He was a devoted friend of Sri Krishna who had him married to his sister Subhadra, even against the wishes of his elder brother Balarama. Sri Krishna assisted the Pandavas in the Great War on account of Arjuna and by acting as his charioteer, led him to victory.

Even now, we admire Arjuna as a perfect man and worship Lord Krishna as our Protector and Saviour. Whenever we are in trouble and distress we pray to Him, "O Lord! Save us just as you saved Draupadi and Gajendra in days of yore."

### **The Message of the Mahabharata**

The sufferings of the Pandavas and Draupadi, Nala and Damayanti, Savitri and Satyavan, clearly explain to us the fact or hard truth that the goal of life or perfection can only be attained through pain and suffering. Pain is the means through which man is moulded, disciplined and strengthened. Just as impure gold is turned into pure gold by melting it in the crucible, so also the impure and imperfect weak man is rendered pure, perfect and strong, by being melted in the crucible of pain and suffering. Therefore, one should not be afraid of pain and sufferings. They are blessings in disguise. They are eye-openers. They are silent teachers. They turn the mind towards God and instill mercy in the heart, strengthen the will and develop patience and power of endurance, which are the pre-requisites for God-Realization.

The message of the Mahabharata is the message of Truth and Righteousness. The great epic produces a moral awakening in the readers and exhorts them to tread the path of *Satya* and *Dharma*. It urges them strongly to do good deeds, practise Dharma, cultivate dispassion by realising the illusory nature of this universe and its vainglories and sensual pleasures, and attain Eternal Bliss and Immortality. It induces people to do what Yudhishtira did and abandon what Duryodhana did. Stick to *Dharma* tenaciously. You will attain everlasting happiness and Moksha, the *summum bonum* of life. This is the final purport or central teachings of the Mahabharata.

May the teachings of this illustrious and ancient epic guide you in every walk of your life. May you stick to Dharma. May the great characters of the Mahabharata inspire you! May you imbibe the righteousness of Yudhishtira, the purity of Bhishma, the courage of Arjuna and the liberality of

Karna! Glory to Sri Bhagavan Vyasa, the grandsire of the heroes, the author of the Mahabharata, a Chiranjeevi and an Avatara of Lord Hari. May His blessings be upon you all!

## **Krishna**

In the long history of almost last 5000 years there has been no equivalent to such a great Householder soul like Krishna in India or even elsewhere on this Earth. The myth goes that before the birth of Krishna, his parents (Devaki and Vasudeva) were kept behind the bars at Mathura by King Kansa. But the moment Krishna was born, the doors of the jail suddenly (automatically) opened and was safely shifted to Gokul. It is entirely needless to probe into this myth for its veracity. But one can easily imagine that when the jail shackles were all of a sudden got cut asundered at the time of the birth of this superhuman, how many miserables must have been rescued by him throughout the lifespan of this divine towering figure! It is so stunning that this child born in the walls of the prison grows into a savior later in his life and relieves the entire world from the jail of engulfing unrighteousness and sins. The baby deprived even of the privileges of his mother's milk right from the moment he was born, anchored the salvation of innumerable mothers.

### **Historicity**

Historically Krishna belongs to the end of Dvapara Yuga. The position he occupies and the role he plays in the great war of Mahabharata is extremely important and significant. The Mahabharata war itself gave birth to Gita, the divine celestial speech (Devavani). The Indologists in the light of available historical records and literary documents, astronomical references (the positions of constellations) have concluded that the war of Mahabharata broke out on 12th November 3143 B.C, which means almost 5152 years back. Now any historian or any research worker should have no doubt or prejudice of any order in this regard. Before the British Rule in India, in the pre-historic period, time was measured astronomically in terms of Kalpas and Yugas. (aeonic temporal cycles) The beginning of the new era was called Yugabda. Astronomically speaking the present Kaliyuga started 5109 years ago. Krishna lived till the initial few years of Kaliyuga.

### **Childhood**

The Childhood of Krishna was spent in Gokul, Vrundavan area. The foster parents Nanda - Yashoda nurtured him with great zeal, love and care. It is said that Nanda had the herds of 10000 cows in his possession. Even if we consider it to consist only of 1000 cows for a time being, why should then their beloved son go to others' houses and that too for stealing and enjoying the butter stolen? Nanda and Yashoda were so pure-hearted couple that they would have never hesitated and would have easily agreed to give away their baby-girl to replace and save the sibling of their friend Vasudeva, so how was it possible that they would allow any bad habits like that of stealing and telling lies to get inculcated in the exceptional child of their bosom friend? This is nothing but a utopia or wild imagination of poets like Surdasa and others, - and factually there is no substance in all such stories.

Granted that there could be some childhood anecdotes associated with Krishna, natural to the age under the caption Balalila (Childhood amusements). But these poets and followers went to the extreme by converting them into Rasalila (amorous youthful sports.) – An act of spiritual distortions of Krishnalila.

### **Radha and Gopis**

Some poets from rhetoric school and bhakti cult accepted Lord Krishna as a God, worshiped him, adorned him as blind devotees and followers on one hand, and on the other the Western scholars

and their self-esteem, the so called Indian scholars, following their footsteps merely depicted him in various ways with low level intentions and sensual impulses. Krishna to them was one who played in the group of Gopis under the sacred name Rasalila, as one stealing the garments of the women, the one engaged and indulging in youthful activities with the damsel by name Radha, making uncourteous hideous gestures with dwarfed maiden Kubja.

The rhetoric school poets wanted to hide their sensual impulses and writings from the indignation of common people in the society. The blind and self-titled devotees wanted to escape themselves from the scornful attitude of common man towards them, their selfish and voluptuous behavior or actions and their luxurious and lavish life style made under the pretext of divine justification and conformation. The Western scholars and others belonging to different religions than that of Hindus, and not to speak of other pseudo scholars wanted to devaluate and bring down the supreme Indian culture and Indian religion – a sort of burning example for all. Thus they mutilated the very noble character of Lord Krishna into an ignoble and scandalous one.

In the whole of Mahabharata, there is no mention even of the name Radha. We first get glimpses of her, in Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, in the Bhagvat of Bopadeva, his real brother and also in other literary description in the works like Brahma Vaivarta Purana, etc. One comes across in Brahma Vaivarta Purana the illicit love affairs of Radha with Krishna. In the same Purana also many contrary types of relations are allowed regarding the relations between them. Somewhere she is depicted as the daughter of Krishna. Some where she is related as Krishna's aunt (wife of Rayana, brother of Yashoda), sometimes as his daughter-in-law and sometimes as the sister of Krishna. (If someone has any doubts, or wants to know any further details, then all references can be made available).

### **Noble Character**

**Bankimchandra Chattopadyaya, the author of "Anand math" who carried out research on Mahabharata continuously for about 36 years and also composed thereafter the biography of Shrikrishna, states that according to Mahabharata Shrikrishna had only one wife namely Rukhmini - neither two nor four and of course not at all 16000.** According to Mahabharata immediately after getting married both Rukhmini and Krishna went to Badrikashrama and led a pious life there for 12 years. They used to sleep on ground, ate only roots, tubers and fruits and observed strict celibacy. Thereafter Rukhmini gave birth to the first child named Pradhumna. *It is sheerly disgusting to stigmatize this noble character shown indulging in love-affairs with and in romance with Radha and Gopis.*

Bankimchandraji has stated “Bhagwan Shrikrishna in all respect was free from all blemishes and was of very pure conduct. Such an ideal character endowed with all virtues, free from all sins never did exist and would exist at anytime, anywhere, neither in this country nor anywhere in the world. He was a multi-faceted, accomplished and pure soul. (Krishnacharita).” Swami Dayananda states that Shrikrishna was the best of all the characters in the epic Mahabharata. His qualities, deeds, nature and character all are similar to those of accomplished persons (apta or siddha), and were simply magnanimous. He never committed any sin or any impious act right from his birth till his death. Whatever aspersions, thrown on Krishna are all just because of Bhagvata only (Satyarthprakash).

There is a clear and categorical statement in Mahabharata (Sabha-parva) that in Indraprastha at the time of Rajsuya yagna, performed by Yudhisthira amongst all the invitees like hundreds of Kings, Monarchs, Rishi - Munis and scholars Krishna by all means was considered and reckoned as the wisest, strongest, most valorous and the most distinguished figure of the world and was honoured by Agrapuja (foremost felicitation) and was offered in Arghya(respect) . But behold his unassuming gentle nature! At the time of yajna, he modestly offered himself to welcome the Rishi - Munis and

scholars by washing their holy feet - the highest token of selflessness. The real wisdom can be so simple and so modest. He was just the role - model.

### **Unfaltering Faith**

When Krishna completed his studies in the Sandeepanee Ashrama at Ujjayani Guru Angiras Ghora gave him a final instruction: "O Krishna! when you will reach the last moment of your life, when the death will be knocking at your door, recite the following sentences" 1) Tvam akshitamasi - Hey Almighty thou art eternal, non decayable 2) Tvam achyutamasi -Thou art infallible /non-deviating 3) Tvam prana sanshitamasi - Thou art the minutest and life infusing, similar to the prana. And the author of Upanishads says that Krishna was fully contented and appeased on getting this message. There is then no need of any instruction or advice, as Krishna knew that one can remember at the last moment only that which one follows or observes throughout his life.

And this is exactly why Krishna used to get up early at 3 am - the Brahma-muhurta (auspicious time) and used to repeat the Gayatri mantra thousand times. The Author of Mahabharata (the Vyasa Muni) writes that when Krishna went to Hastinapura as a messenger of peace, at the sunset, he would stop his chariot, take a pause, release the horses from chariot and sit for meditation on the way. During the war, when Abhimanyu was killed, Arjuna was in deep sorrow in the evening. Krishna was also very much grieved as Abhimanyu, the only son of his sister Subhadra and his bosom friend Arjuna was killed. But behold the stable - minded (sthitaprajna i.e. unification of grasping sustaining and recollecting faculties of knowledge – dhi, dhirti & smriti) Krishna. He instructs Arjuna to join him in evening prayers after which they could come back to this issue as well as the plan for next day's war.

In Gita, for great happiness and serenity, (Prasannatva) Krishna again and again invites you to seek shelter and protection of that which is perfect and unchangeable Almighty, free from the shackles of birth and death, with His abode in the heart of every being, who controls everybody like the parts of a machine and bestows us the fruits and rewards of our deeds. He advises us to pray, repeat and recite Omkar for worshipping that Almighty who is praised by all Vedashastras and whom all the Rishimuni's try to attain by penance and austerity. And even when death (Lord Yama) in the form of an arrow of a hunter (Vyadha), approached and knocked his door, Krishna was engrossed in meditation of the Almighty. Wasn't it totally and completely following the last instructions given to him at the end of his studies by his Guru.

### **Opposing injustice**

Throughout his life, Krishna kept on awakening and evoking everybody against injustice. His birth itself is known for breaking off the shackles of jail. Krishna who was born in the filth of injustice kept on fighting for it throughout his life. Even his childhood was not so easy and comfortable like other children. On the contrary he grew up bearing all atrocities of Kansa. Right in the adolescent stage Krishna took some strategic steps like organizing people from Gokul, Vrindavana and Mathura and gave them training in arms. He did all this not only to liberate his parents from jail but also for opposing and fighting the injustice and to end up the pitiable conditions and cries of people. Even after killing Kansa, as he was fighting with the other cruel kings like Jarasandha and that was the strategic action and mission of his life. Doing all this, though he had to flee from the land of Mathura and Vrindavana, had to go very far and had to establish and settle down in Dvaraka, but he never and nowhere compromised with injustice. The entire great war of Mahabharata, the whole sermon of the Gita, is nothing but the veritable invitation to get armed to fight against injustice. If we win while fighting the injustice then only we can enjoy the riches of this planet Earth and if we meet death on the battle field then we will win the Heaven this is what Krishna says.

***"hato va prapyasi svargam jitva va bhoksyase mahim"***

When and while he was being prevented by the situation from participating in the war with his arms and weapons he even accepted to become the charioteer of brave archer (Dhanurdhari) Arjuna only for ending the injustice. He never wanted to get away from the war against injustice. To fight against the injustice and profanity and finish it from this world was the mission and goal of his life. All advices and sermons he laid down in Gita, every word that he uttered, whether he was talking of Yoga or of stable genius (sthitaprajna), wisdom, always gave inspiration to fight and propelled them against the injustice. The perishability of the body, immortality of the soul, concentration of the mind, and undisturbed equanimity, calm and peaceful disposition of mind - all was to be described and explained in detail by Krishna so that Arjun, caught in the bewitching trap and completely at his wit's end should pick up his arms and pounce upon injustice, otherwise all these utterances were unnecessary right at the beginning of the war of Mahabharata, certainly not so important as to attract the attention of a magnanimous personality like Krishna.

Krishna did not become Lord Krishna just because he was the son of Vasudeva, Devaki or not even because he was brought up in the riches of Yashoda mata and father Nanda. He was laid to the position of the Lord because directly or indirectly his Sudarshana-chakra, (Divine beautiful disc or wheel) his special weapon, kept on defeating injustice. Years ago a statue of Krishna in stone was found during the excavation at Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh). The English version of Sanskrit write up found on it was as below.

When there are clouds of hypocrisy and when the sins turn into the storm, then - my melodious flute takes a form of small spear.

The whole life of Krishna was like a roaring sound of a conch. The vow he took for wiping out the profanity and injustice from this Earth and the establishment of religion and justice instead.

There is always something very special about every eminent personality of the society and this world. Some of them were the founders of new religion or religion reformists, some were profound scholars or scientists laying bare the secrets of nature, some dispellers of ignorance, some were worshippers of gallantry, or visionary of independence, freedom or even liberty, some unattached Yogi or some discriminative statesmen, some destroyer of social injustice and some ardent proponent of justice. But in the history of the whole world, Krishna is the only greatest personality whose character encompasses together all these diverse ideals. Dear readers, devotees of Krishna, let us take a pledge today, let us make a resolution that we will not allow even advertently any blemish to defame the noble life of that spotless, innocent, virtuous and realized soul. Let us follow the footsteps of the ideals of great people. Following are the words of Krishna

***yad yad acarati shresthasthat devetaro janah***

***sa yat pramam kurute lokas tadanuvartate***

This is thus the preaching of life and the simple solution of finding happiness, peace and prosperity in life.

## **The Mahabharata-style, structure and narrative technique.**

The Mahabharata is one of the two oldest literary masterpieces of India. It is breathtaking in not only its length but also in its poetic and intellectual quality. It is precisely because of this reason that scholars differ on what genre does the Mahabharata belong to. In English, the genre given to it is that of an epic. Epics are long tales developed through oral culture, myths and legends. They are usually based on themes of love and war. Epics are stories about princes and princesses; its diction is exalted and dignified. In Indian context, the Mahabharata belongs to the genre of 'itihasa'. The word breaks up into 'iti'+ 'ha'+ 'asa'. In Hindi, the word simply means history, but in Sanskrit, it means, "So indeed it was".

Here, the idea of history is connected to the idea of time. Time was perceived in two different paradoxical ways in ancient India. One was that time is never ending entity which never comes to a halt. The second concept is paradoxical to the first. It says that time is continuously completed, that is, a single moment is complete in itself. In the Mahabharata, time that has gone by is critically analyzed to see its universal significance and also learn from it. The Mahabharata has been accorded several names by various scholars. It is also known as 'Akhyana', 'purana', 'dharmashastra', 'arthashastra', 'nitish astra' and 'mokshashastra'. It is an 'akhyana' because it deals with many myths like those of shakuntala, nala and damyanti, vidula, prahlada and others. As a purana, it deals with creation and also with genealogies and geographical lists. Dharma is extensively dealt with in the text, making it a dharmashastra. Similarly artha, niti and moksha are also dealt in detail. Therefore, the Mahabharata is all of these and not any one of them. Sukhthankar abstains from giving it any genre, but discusses the three-dimensional view of the Mahabharata—it's an epic on the mundane, ethical and metaphysical planes.

On the mundane level, it's a fratricidal war. On ethical level, it's a war between dharma and adharma. On the metaphysical, it is just a process of cosmic evolution, of time being in its flow. The Vedas and the upanishads are the major source of Indian philosophy, ethics and morality. However, they were accessible only to the elite who knew sanskrit. Some critics say that the Mahabharata was created to bridge the gap between the lower classes and the Vedas. It simplified the meaning of artha, dharma, kama and moksha through the story of a feuding family. It is profoundly clear and scholars agree that it is a text beyond any one definition or a genre. Each genre becomes partial when applied to a text of such magnitude. The Mahabharata's narrative technique matches its complexity and depth of philosophy. The technique of narration is that of a story within a story. The main account of the puru dynasty begins after several small stories. The narration happens at many levels. Vaismpayana narrates the tale to janmajeya at the snake ceremony. Another sage who heard the story at the ceremony narrates it to the bhrigu brahmins whom he meets in the naimisha forest.

Finally, there is vyasa, the overarching narrator, who is telling the tale to lord ganesha, the penman of the Mahabharata. Such an intricate and elaborate narrative structure prepares the readers for further framings. Hegarty says that the narrative structure of the text is so complex because of the "dialogic relationship among voices" in the Mahabharata. To illustrate, he says that the sage brihadhasva narrated the story of nala and damyanti to yuddhishtira in the forest to console him for his loss in the dicing match. It also serves the purpose of comparing the results of dicing for yuddhishtira and nala. Such narratives are spread all over the text and they all add to its encyclopedic quality. Various responses to a particular vent of a specific problem add to the comprehensive dimension of the text. Let's discuss the embedded narrative in the dicing with the story of prahalada. The tale gives comparative insight to the present happening of the dicing sequence. It is ironical when compared to draupadi's question. Prahalada always knew who the better man was—his son or

sudhanvan angrars. He was not able to decide whom should he favour because of his parental love. This story does not explicate the issues raised by draupadi, but emphasizes the breach of duty by the elders who did not follow the dharma codes.

The backbone of the Mahabharata is its dialogues. These dialogues bring out the various ideologies and view points to a particular situation. Nonetheless, it is not necessary that they reach a conclusion. To any question of dharma, several answers are given and no answer is adjudged supreme. Everyone answers according to his dharma and the reader has to choose according to his own dharma. That is why, the Mahabharata is considered to be a text of debates. The most important function of the dialogues is that it provides a meditative moment to characters to explore various moral options available to them for a given situation. Therefore, we can see how complex is the style, structure and narrative technique of the Mahabharata is. However its language is so free flowing and rhythmic that the philosophies that are really hard to understand are made easy to read.

## **Significance of the Mahabharata**

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the basis of Indian culture. These texts are gems of Sanskrit literature and are a goldmine of Indian literature. In the form in which it survives today, it is the world's longest poem and indeed its longest literary work. It containing one lac verses is several times..... Length of the Bible and is about eight times longer than the Iliad and the Odyssey put together. According to Indian tradition:

*GDo ;JLJN[ T:D{jIF;FI SLJJ[W;[ F*  
*Rk[ 5]^I ;Z:JtIF IM JQFF"IDJ EFZTDÿ FF*  
*IFJ6FF\Hl,5]85[I\ LJZRTJFGÿ EFZTbIFD'T\ Io F*  
*TDCDZFUT'Q6\ S'Q6á{5FIG\ JgN[ FF*  
*jIF;lUZf\ lGIF";\ ;FZ\ lJP:I EFZT\ JgN[ F*  
*E}56TI{J ;\7F\ IN\lSTF EFZTL JCIT FF*

Fdwing Arnold appreciates it in the following words:

*“An original anterior to writing, anterior to Puranic theology,  
 anterior to Homer, perhaps old muses.”*

## **Literary significance**

The Mahabharata is an epic. Hence it is of great importance from the point of view of literature. All poets have more or less depended on it and drawn inspiration from it. Perhaps there is no poet in Sanskrit literature who has not taken any help from the Mahabharata. Indeed, its lucidity has invited the attention of the poets. Hence later literary figures have been greatly influenced by the Mahabharata. For all these qualities, the Mahabharata has become the most reliable of epics.

The Mahabharata is an epic in the true sense. It maintains all the traits and possesses all characters that an epic should contain. Consequent upon this, we have said that so many good poets in India have made their names renowned by composing wonderful Kavya by resorting to this great Kavya.

## **An encyclopedia**

The Mahabharata is the encyclopedia of that age, but it is not the collection of day factual statements like our modern encyclopedia. In it we find all the knowledge and science of those far-off days. It contains the principles of religion, moral and ethical science, laws and canons of life, worldly stories, mythological and legendary fables, popular beliefs, customs and social practices, doctrines about human knowledge and gospels of life.

It contains the methods and modes of living, family happiness as well as one's spiritual aspirations. One should be astonished to find all these combined together in a single text. Indeed, it is gigantic text full of descriptions, fables, codes of conducts, religion and culture.

A Western scholar Dr. Winternitz says about the significance of the Mahabharata as: "we find, then, in this the most remarkable of all literary productions side by side and intermingled, warlike heroic songs with highly colored descriptions of bloody battle scenes; pious priestly poetry, with dissertations which are often tedious enough, upon philosophy, religion and war; and mild ascetic poetry full of edifying wisdom and full of love overflowing towards man and beasts." So we can safely say that it is an encyclopedia, a national history and a socio-religious document of that age.

## **Historical significance**

The Mahabharata is significant historically also. This provides mainly the history of Chandravanshi kings, the warrior princes called the Pandavas and the Kauravas. These were two branches of the royal clan of the kurus who lived in northern India thousands of years ago.

The Mahabharata describes not only the history of the Pandavas and the kauravas, but also the history of the contemporary Janapada also. Hence it is the most sacred scripture of the Hindus and a national history of those far-off days.

## **Cultural significance**

The Mahabharata is the most important of books from India's cultural point of view. The genuine portrait of culture and civilization, which the Mahabharata provides is not seen anywhere else.

In the Mahabharata, the culture and cultivation of good qualities and behavior were placed in a high position in social life.

The real cultural significance of the Mahabharata is due to the Bhagwad Gita. The Gita is the essence of the Mahabharata and the centre of devotion of the Indians.

Moreover, the Mahabharata is a combination of many different cultures. On the one hand it gives the code of conduct for the ruler and on the other it provides a way for salvation. It is a happy co-ordination of Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

The Mahabharata has beautiful ascertainment of the discipline of the four Varnas. Moreover, Purushartha Chatushtaya has been described in a very noble manner. Almost all subjects and all kinds of knowledge have been included in the enormous compendium of the Mahabharata. Vyasa himself has claimed:

*“Whatever is available here  
is found nowhere else”*

## **Religious significance**

In the Mahabharata may be found nearly every branch of religion knowledge. In India, it is often called "the fifth Veda"

Vyasa with his extraordinary divine power acquired by strict celibacy and asceticism compiled the Vedas in four volumes. Besides this, he composed this great text with the extended thoughts of the Vedas. In that sense, it is called the fifth Veda.

The Mahabharata has described in nice details of the places of pilgrimages in India. The text makes us believe that we have been acquainted with these sacred places. These places have been intimately linked with the Hindu religion. The divinity of gods is closely related with these places.

An Important trait in the Mahabharata is the dealing of Dharma and Adharma. Along with the flow of the main plot these two aspects of human life have been dealt with very comprehensively and with all their complexities. Their traits and qualities have been described in minutest details conveying all aspects – religious, moral, ethical, political and so on. Its subject matter includes the religious attitudes of Hinduism. We do not find a single chapter in the Mahabharata wherein the question of Dharma has not been discussed.

### **Social significance**

The Mahabharata is a book of social science. It practically covers all aspects of social life. The fine picture of the then society has been visualized in it, in the minutest detail.

The social problems relating to morality, ethics, education, sex and psychological views and soon have been discussed elaborately.

### **Political Significance**

The Mahabharata is both economical and political science. Both of them have been discussed and analyzed. In Shanti Parva the religions of a king have been nicely and in detail described.

It is really a surprise to observe the high thinking powers about political and economical sciences of the people of those days. The war tactics and strategy as we find in the Mahabharata are unique in nature and character.

It has practical demonstrations of awareness to one's rights, giving away the feeling of frailty in women; it also provides solutions to all around, ascertainment of duties of a sovereign and the four Varnas in Hindu mythology.

### **Geographical significance**

It is a geographical science also. In Vana Parva, we find a clear indication that the poet had an extensive and thorough knowledge of topography of the entire Bharata. Herein, we see the names of rivers, mountains, lakes and places of pilgrimages. We have to admit to the extensive geographical knowledge of the people in those days.

In conclusion, we can say that the Mahabharata is a very significant epic from many points of view. Mr. Winternitz says about the style of the Mahabharata as:

“But in this jungle of poetry, which scholarship has only just begun to clear, there shoots forth much true and genuine poetry, hidden by the wild undergrowth. Out of the unshapely mass shine out of the most precious blossoms of immortal poetic art and profound wisdom.

## MiraBai

MiraBai (1498 - 1547) was a Rajput princess who lived in the north Indian state of Rajasthan. She was a devout follower of Lord Krishna. MiraBai was one of the foremost exponents of the Prema Bhakti (Divine Love) and an inspired poetess. She sang in vraja-bhasha, sometimes mixed with rajasthani, in praise of Giridhara Gopala (Shri Krishna), her lord for whom she developed in her heart the most intense love and devotion.

MiraBai was born in 1504 AD at Chaukari village in Merta District of Rajasthan. Merta was a small state in Marwar, Rajasthan ruled by the Ranthors, great devotees of Vishnu. Her father, Ratan Singh, was the second son of Rao Duda ji, a descendent of Rao Jodha ji Rathor, the founder of Jodhpur. MiraBai was raised and nurtured by her grandfather. As customary with royal families, her education included knowledge of scriptures, music, archery, fencing, horseback riding and driving chariots – she was also trained to wield weapons in case of a war. However, MiraBai also grew up amidst an atmosphere of total Krishna consciousness, which was responsible in molding her life in the path of total devotion towards Lord Krishna.

When she was just four years of age, she manifested her deep devotion to Krishna. MiraBai watched a marriage procession in front of her residence. MiraBai, the child, spotted the well-dressed bridegroom and asked her mother innocently, "Dear mother, who will be my bridegroom?" MiraBai's mother smiled, and half in jest and half in earnest, pointed towards the image of Sri Krishna and said, "My dear Mira, Lord Krishna - this beautiful fellow – is going to be your bridegroom". Soon after, MiraBai's mother passed on. As MiraBai grew up, her desire to be with her Krishna grew intensely and she believed that Lord Krishna would come to marry her. In due course, she became firmly convinced that Krishna was to be her husband.

MiraBai was soft-spoken, mild-mannered, gifted, sweet, and sang with a melodious voice. She was reputed to be one of the most extraordinary beauties of her time with fame spreading to several kingdoms and provinces. Her fame spread far and wide. Rana Sangram Singh, commonly known as Rana Sangha, the powerful King of Mewar, approached Rao Duda for MiraBai's hand in marriage to his son Bhojraj (also known as Rana Kumbha or KumbhaRana). Bhojraj wanted to marry MiraBai for her pious nature and divine intent. Rao Duda agreed to the union. However, MiraBai could not bear the thought of marrying a human being when her heart was filled with thoughts of Krishna. But unable to go against her beloved grandfather's word, she finally consented to the marriage. MiraBai was wed to Rana Kumbha in 1513, before she turned 14. As ordained, MiraBai was dutiful. She left for (Chittorgarh) Mewar with the Rana Kumbha.

After her household duties were over, Meera would go to the temple of Lord Krishna, worship, sing and dance before Lord Krishna Idol daily. Kumbha Rana's mother and other ladies of the palace did not like the ways of MiraBai, as they were worldly-minded and jealous. MiraBai's mother-in-law forced her to worship Durga and admonished her often. But MiraBai maintained, "I have already given up my life to my beloved Lord Krishna". MiraBai's sister-in-law Udabai formed a conspiracy and began to defame the innocent Meera. She informed Rana Kumbha that Meera was in secret love with some one. She said that she had witnessed Meera talking to her lover in the temple, and that she would show him the persons if he would accompany her one night. The ladies further raved that MiraBai, by her conduct, had brought a great slur on the reputation of the Rana family of Chittor. The enraged Kumbha ran with sword in hand towards Meera, but as luck would have it Meera had gone to her Krishna temple. A sober relative of the Rana counseled him, "Rana! You will forever repent for your

hasty behavior and consequences. Enquire into the allegation carefully and you will find the truth. Meera bai is a great devotee of the Lord. Remember why you sought her hand. Out of sheer jealousy the ladies might have concocted (pretended) scandals against Meera Bai to incite you and ruin her". Kumbha calmed down and accompanied his sister who persistently took him to the temple at dead of night. Rana Kumbha broke open the door, rushed inside and found Meera alone in her ecstatic mood talking and singing to the idol.

The Rana shouted at Meera, "Meera, show me your lover with whom you are talking now". Meera replied, "There sits He—my Lord—the Nanichora who has stolen my heart". She went into a trance (state of unconsciousness). The ladies floated other rumors that Meera was mixing very freely with Sadhus. Meera was unaffected by such scandals and continued to invite Bhagavathas to join her in Krishna bhajan at the temple. She stood unruffled in the face of accusations from the royal family. When questioned about her marital responsibilities, Meera responded that it was Krishna to whom she was married. KumbhaRana was heart-broken but remained a good husband and sympathizer of Meera until his death.

Rana's relatives began persecuting Meera in various ways, even though Meera had no desire for the throne. Meera was sent a basket with a cobra inside and a message that the basket contained a garland of flowers. Meera, after meditation, opened the basket and found inside a lovely idol of Sri Krishna with a garland of flowers. The relentless Rana (her brother-in-law) sent her a cup of poison with the message that it was nectar. Meera offered it to her Lord Krishna and took it as His Prasad. It was real nectar to her. The bed of nails that the Rana sent transformed into a bed of roses when Meera reposed on it.

When the torture and scandals continued, Meera sent a letter to Goswami Tulsidas and asked for his advice. She wrote, "Simply because I am constantly tortured by my relatives, I cannot abandon my Krishna. I am unable to carry on with my devotional practices in the palace. I have made Giridhar Gopala my friend from my very childhood. I feel a total bondage with him. I cannot break that bond".

Tulsidasji sent a reply: "Abandon those who cannot understand you and who do not worship Rama or Syama, even though they are your dearest relatives. Prahlada abandoned his father; Vibhishana left his brother Ravana; Bharata deserted his stepmother; Bali forsook even his Guru; the Gopasthrees, the women of Vraja, disowned their husbands to get to their Krishna. Their lives were all the happier for having done so. The relation with God and the love of God are the only elements that are true and eternal; all other relationships are unreal and temporary". Meera met up once again with her Guru and mentor Raidas, who is said to have lived to a ripe age of 118 years. She went into the slums often to be in the satsang of this great teacher. This was the impetus and inspiration behind the many queries and controversies that she raised about Kulam in her songs.

The turning point in Meerabai's life occurred when once Akbar and his court musician Tansen came in disguise to Chittor to hear Meera's devotional and inspiring songs. Both entered the temple and listened to Meera's soul - stirring songs to their heart's content. Before he departed, he touched the holy feet of Meera and placed a necklace of priceless gems in front of the idol as a present. Somehow the news reached the KumbhaRana that Akbar had entered the sacred temple in disguise, touched the feet of Meerabai and even presented her a necklace. The Rana became furious. He told Meerabai, "Drown yourself in the river and never show your face to the world in future. You have brought great disgrace on my family".

Meerabai obeyed the words of King. She proceeded to the river to drown herself. The names of the Lord "Govinda, Giridhari, Gopala" were always on her lips. She sang and danced in ecstasy on her way to the river. When she raised her feet from the ground, a hand from behind grasped her and embraced her. She turned behind and saw her beloved Giridhari. She fainted on him. After a few minutes she opened her eyes. Lord Krishna smiled and gently whispered: "My dear Meera, your life with your mortal relatives is over now. You are absolutely free. Be cheerful. You are and have always been mine."

Meera walked barefoot on the hot sandy beds of Rajasthan. On her way, many ladies, children and devotees received her with great hospitality. She reached Brindavan (or Vrindaban). It was at Brindavan that she again met and was inspired by Sant Raidas. She went about Brindavan doing Oonchavritti and worshipped in the Govinda Mandir which has since become famous and is now a great place of pilgrimage for devotees from all over the world.

A repentant Kumbha came to Vrindavan to see Meera and prayed that he may be forgiven for all his previous wrongs and cruel deeds. He begged that Meera return to the kingdom and was assume her role as the queen once more. Meera said to Rana that Krishna is only one King and my life belongs to him. The Kumbha Rana, for the first time, truly understood Meera's exalted state of mind and prostrated before her in reverence. He then promptly left Vrindavan a changed soul.

Jiva Gosain was the head of the Vaishnavites in Brindavan. Meera wanted to have Darshan of Jiva Gosain. He declined to see her. He sent word to Meera that he would not allow any woman in his presence. Mirabai retorted: "Everybody in Brindavan is a woman. Only Giridhar Gopala is Purusha. Today only I have come to know that there is another Purusha besides Krishna in Brindavan". Jiva Gosain was put to shame. He at once went to see Meera and paid her due respects.

Meera's fame spread far and wide. She was immersed in satsang day in and out. At the request of Kumbha Rana, Meera returned to Mewar and Kumbha agreed to her request that she would reside in the temple of Krishna but would not restrict her movements and wanderings. From Mewar, she once again returned to Brindavan, and then went on to Dwaraka. The King went with her.

On Krishna's Janmashtami at the temple of Krishna. There was much happiness all around in the abode of the Lord. The light of the lamps, the sound of the bhajans and the energy from the devotees' ecstasy were filling the air. With Tamburi in one hand and cymbals or chipla in the other the great tapasvini was singing ecstatically with her Gopala smiling in front of her closed eyes. Meera stood up and danced with her song 'Mere Janama Maran ke sathee', and when the song ended, Kumbha gently approached her and requested her to come back. Meera said, 'Ranaji, the body is yours and you are a great devotee, but my mind, emotions and the soul are all his. I do not know what use am I to you in this state of mind'. Kumbha was moved and he started singing with her in unison (harmony). Meera rose up abruptly, stumbled and fell at the flowers on the feet of Giridhari. 'Oh, Giridhari, are you calling me, I am coming'. When Kumbha and the rest were watching in awe, there was a lightning which enveloped Meera and the sanctum doors closed on their own. When the doors opened again, Meera's saree was enveloping Lord Krishna's idol and her voice and the flute accompaniment were the only sounds that could be heard.

## **Meera Mahotsav (Mira Mahotsav)**

Meera Smrithi Sansathan (Meera Memorial Trust) along with the Chittorgarh district officials organise Meera Mahotsav every year on Sharad Purnima day (On Mirabai's birth anniversary) for 3 days. Many famous musicians and singers get together to sing bhajan's in this celebration. The 3 days celebration also features puja's, discussions, dances, fireworks etc.

## **Meera Bhajan (Bhajans of Mira Bai)**

Meera is known for many beautiful bhajans that she sung in praise of lord Krishna. Few of the famous bhajan lyrics are as below:

### **Aisi Lagi Lagan, Meera Ho Gai Magan ...**

Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan  
Wo to gali-gali hari guna ganne lagi  
Mehlo mein pali, ban ke jogun chali  
Meera rani divani kahane lagi  
Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan – 2  
Koi roke nahi, koi toke nahi  
Meera govinda gopal-e ganne lagi  
Baithi santan ke sang, rangi mohan ke rang  
Meera premi pritam ko manane lagi

Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan  
Wo to gali-gali hari guna ganne lagi  
Mehlo mein pali, ban ke jogun chali  
Meera rani divani kahane lagi  
Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan – 2

Rana ne vish diya, mano amrit piya  
Meera sagar mein sarita samane lagi

Dukh-e lakhon sahe, mukse govind kahe  
Meera govinda gopal-e ganne lagi

Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan  
Wo to gali-gali hari guna ganne lagi  
Mehlo mein pali, ban ke jogun chali  
Meera rani divani kahane lagi  
Aisi lagi lagan, meera ho gayi magan – 3

### **Paayoji Maine Shyaam Ratan Dhan Paayo ...**

Paayoji maine shyaam ratan dhan paayo - 2  
Janam janam ki punji paayi,  
Jag me sabhi khovaayo,  
Paayoji maine shyaam ratan dhan paayo – 2

Kharch na laage koi chor na loote,  
Din din hot savaayo,  
Paayoji maine shyaam ratan dhan paayo – 2  
Satki naav khevaaya sat guru,  
Kari kripa apanaayo,  
Paayoji maine shyaam ratan dhan paayo – 2  
Mira ke prabhu giridhar nagar,  
Harshi harshi jas gaayo,  
Paayoji maine shyaam ratan dhan paayo – 2

**Jo Tum Chhoodo Piya, Main Nahi Chhodu re ...**

Jo tum chhoodo piya  
Main nahi chhodu re  
Tosai preet joudi Krishna  
Kaun sang joudu re...

Meera nai toe keh daala  
Main kya boolu mere Ram,  
Is kalyug ke bhoolbhilaiya mein khoye  
Mere who sawarai, sunder Shyam

Janam sai he, iss vyakkol mann mein,  
Ek pyaas ajeeb samayee hai  
Mein bhi banoo ek din piya ki pyaree  
Yeh tujhe se duhai hai

Itna toe batla de o Bhagwan  
Is bhanwar mein jo tune utaara hai  
Mere Kanha ko bhi is kalyug mein  
Behshaque tone kahin banaaya hai

Mann main bassi hai moore Prabhu  
Meera ki he madhoor vani,  
Tann mein agann jale hai morai  
Radha se mai prem diwane

Iss matwali kaari duniya mein  
Morai Kaanha, tohe kahan dhoondhu mai,  
Mein tori raah ektook ho dekhoo  
Bus aur kuch bhi naa janoo mai

Pal bhi yeh aass nahi mitt-paatee  
Ke ek din tu bhi aayeega,  
Is bawari, akeli bairagan ko he  
Tu saprem apni Radha banayega

### **Barasai Badariyaa Saavan Kii ...**

barasai badariyaa saavan kii,  
saavan kii man bhaavan kii.  
saavan me.n umagyo mero manavaa,  
bhanak sunii hari aavan kii..  
uma.D ghuma.D chahu.n disase aayo,  
daamaNa damake jhar laavan kii.  
naanhii.n naanhii.n buu.ndan mehaa barasai,  
siital pavan sohaavan kii..  
miiraa.N ke prabhu giradhar naagar,  
aananda ma.ngal gaavan kii..

### **Herii Mhaa Darad DivaaNaa**

herii mhaa darad divaaNaa.N  
mhaaraa darad n jaaNyaa.N koya.  
ghaayal rii gat ghaayal jaaNyaa.N  
hiba.Do agaN sanjoya..  
jauhar kii gat jauharii jaaNai  
kyaa jaaNyaa.N jaN khoya.  
miiraa.N rii prabhu piir miTaa.Ngaa  
jab vaid saa.Nvaro hoyaa..

### **About Meerabai**

Mirabai, or Mira Bai or Meerabai, was a 16th century princess whose life is known more through legend than verifiable historic fact. The following biography is an attempt to report those facts of Mirabai's life which are commonly accepted.

Mirabai's Rajputi grandfather, Rao Dudaj, created the fortress city of Merta, where Mirabai's father, Ratan Singh, ruled. Mirabai was born in Merta about 1498. The family worshipped Vishnu as their primary deity.

Her mother died when Mirabai was about four, and Mirabai was raised and educated by her grandparents. Music was stressed in her education.

At an early age, Mirabai became attached to an idol of Krishna, given to her (legend says) by a traveling beggar.

At age 13 or 18 (sources vary), Mirabai was married to a Rajputi prince of Mewar. Her husband died only a few years later.

His family was shocked that, first, she did not commit *sati*, burning herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre, as was considered proper for a Rajputi princess (rani). Then they expected her to remain secluded as a widow, and to worship his family's deity, the goddess Durga or Kali.

Instead of following these traditional norms for a widowed Rajputi princess, Mirabai took up enthusiastic worship of Krishna as part of the Bhakti movement. She identified herself as the spouse of Krishna. Like many in the Bhakti movement, she ignored gender, class, caste, and religious boundaries, and spent time caring for the poor.

Mirabai's father and father-in-law were both killed as a result of a battle to turn away invading Muslims. Her practice of Bhakti worship horrified her in-laws and the new ruler of Mewar. The legends tell of multiple attempts on her life by Mirabai's late husband's family. In all of these attempts, she miraculously survived: a poisonous snake, a poisoned drink, and drowning.

Mirabai returned to her home city of Merta, but her family also opposed her turning from traditional religious practices to the new Bhakti worship of Krishna. She later joined a religious community in Vrindaban, a place holy to Krishna.

Mirabai's contribution to the Bhakti movement was primarily in her music: she wrote hundreds of songs and initiated a mode of singing the songs, a raga. About 200-400 songs are accepted by scholars as being written by Mirabai; another 800-1000 has been attributed to her. Mirabai did not credit herself as the author of the songs -- as an expression of selflessness -- so her authorship is uncertain. The songs were preserved orally, and were not written down for a long time, which complicates the task of assigning authorship.

Mirabai's songs express her love and devotion to Krishna, almost always as Krishna's wife. The songs speak of both the joy and the pain of love. Metaphorically, Mirabai points to the longing of the personal self, *atman*, to be one with the universal self, or *paramatma*, which is a poet's representation of Krishna.

Mirabai was a "loyal wife" according to her people's tradition only in the sense that she devoted herself to her chosen spouse, Krishna, giving to him the loyalty she would not give to her earthly spouse, the Rajput prince.

Mirabai wrote her songs in Rajasthani and Braj Bhasa languages, and they were translated into Hindi and Gujarati.

After some years of wandering, Mirabai died at Dwarka, another place sacred to Krishna.

Mirabai's willingness to sacrifice family respect and traditional gender, family, and caste restrictions, and to devote herself completely and enthusiastically to Krishna, made her an important role model in a religious movement that stressed ecstatic devotion and that rejected traditional divisions based on sex, class, caste, and creed.

## **Saint Kabir 1398 A.D - 1448 A.D**

Saint Kabir Das (kabir, Arabic for "great", dasa, Sanskrit for "slave" or "servant"), is widely acknowledged as one of the great personality of the Bhakti movement in North India. He was as is widely acknowledged born in the year 1398 A.D. (71 years before Guru Nanak). Kabirpanthis (followers of Kabir) say that he lived upto the age of 120 years and give date of his death as 1518, but relying on the research of Hazari Prasad Trivedi, we are inclined to lend credence to the fact that 1448 is probably the correct date of Saint Kabir's demise.

He is one of the medieval Indian saints of Bhakti and Sufi movement whose compositions figure in Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. From among all of them, Kabir's contribution is the largest, 227 Padas in 17 ragas and 237 slokas. Under each raga or musical mode marking a section of the Holy Book, Kabir's hymns appear at the head of Bhagat Bani, a generic name for the works of contributors other than the Gurus. The presence of a substantial amount of Kabir's verse in the Sikh Scripture and chronologically he being the predecessor of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith, led some Western scholars to describe him as the forerunner of Sikhism. Some have even called him the preceptor of Guru Nanak. There is, however, ample evidence to prove that Guru Nanak and Kabir had never met. Their periods of time in fact do not coincide. Kabir's compositions do figure in what are known as Goindval Pothis, They were included in the Guru Granth Sahib as well. But this happened much later when Guru Arjan, fifth in spiritual line from the Founder, compiled the Holy Book Besides his own works and those of his four predecessors, he entered in it hymns of some saints and mystics, both Hindu and Muslim and Kabir was one of them.

Kabir lived in the fifteenth Century after Christ, which was a time of great political upheaval in India. As is true of many contemporary religious teachers, very little reliable information concerning Kabir's life is available, though there is no dearth of legend gathering around him. Kabir's life was centred around Kashi, also called Banaras (Varanasi). Legend has it that he was actually the son of a Brahmin widow who abandoned him and that he was found by a Muslim weaver named Niru, who adopted the boy and taught him the weaver's trade. It is not clear whether he ever married, but tradition gives him a wife named Loi and two children. His caste was that of Julaha and from his sayings his caste's hereditary occupation was of weaving. On the basis of modern research, it seems probable that Kabir belonged to a family of non-celibate yogis converted, not long before and to a considerable degree superficially to Islam. From the writings of Kabir it seems that his knowledge of Islam was slight, rather in his poetical utterances (Bani) a wealth of Hathayoga terminology and a thought structure which bears obvious resemblance to Nath Yogis. Nath Yogis in addition to the yogic conception that all truth is experimental, i.e. to be realized within the body with the aid of psycho-physical practices, concentration, control of breathing and thus making the body incorruptible and the yogis immortal.

Bhakti movement was started by hindu saints while Sufi mysticism by Muslim saints in medieval India (1200-1700). Kabir immensely contributed to the Bhakti Movement and is considered a pioneer of Bhakti along with Ravidas, Farid, and Namdev. His concept of love as a path of suffering may possibly indicate, in some measure, a debt to the Sufis. These and other elements from Nath tradition, bhakti and sufism, kabir combined with his own mystical nature and produced a synthesis which is the distinctive religion of Kabir. Tradition tells us that Swami Ramanand was his Guru (a teacher).

In the fifteenth century, Benaras was the seat of Brahmin orthodoxy and their learning center. Brahmins had a strong hold on all the spheres of life in this city. Thus Kabir belonging to a low caste of Julaha had to go through an immensely tough time of preaching his ideology. Kabir and his followers would gather at one place in the city and meditate. Brahmins ridiculed him for preaching to prostitutes and other low castes. Kabir satirically denounced Brahmins and thus won the hearts of people around him. There is no doubt that the single most famous important person from the city of Benaras today is none other than Saint Kabir.

Kabir through his couplets not only reformed the mindset of common villagers and low caste people but gave them self confidence to question Brahmins. It was 100 years after him that Tulsidas broke the hegemony of Brahmins by writing Ram Charitra Manas, a poem of Ramayana at Benaras which went against the tradition of Brahmins. Kabir was, in fact, the first person to go against Brahmins and to be so successful. Benaras was devastated by an attack by a Muslim invader Tamur Lang or "Tamur the lame" during his time. Kabir also denounced mullahs and their rituals of bowing towards kaba five times a day. Because of open condemnation of established and popular religions, Kabir became an object of the wrath of both Hindus and Muslims in and around Benaras. Kabir travelled in and around Benaras to preach his beliefs.

Kabir believed in self-surrender and God's bhakti. The Kabirpanthis follow a rite of singing the praises of God, prayers and a simple and living pure life of devotion. Kabir recommends ceaseless singing of God's praises. He virtually suggests withdrawal from the world. He is against all ritualistic and ascetic methods as a means to salvation. It is true that Kabir refers to some yogic terms in describing the meditational and mystic methods of the yogis. But, there is no ground to suggest that he himself recommends the yogic path. In fact, far from recommending yoga, he is quite strong in condemning ascetic or yogic methods, and says that yogis, in their meditations, become prey to maya. The point will, however be considered further while comparing Radical bhakti with Nathism.

The moral tone is quite strong in Kabir's hymns. "Kabir deck thyself with garments of love. "Love them and give honour whose body and soul speak the truth." "The ruby of goodness is greater than all the mines of rubies, all the wealth of three worlds resides in the goodness of heart. When the wealth of contentment is won, all other wealth is as dust." "Where there is mercy, there is strength, where there is forgiveness there is He." "The man who is kind and practises righteousness, who remains passive in the affairs of the world, who considers creatures of the world as his own self, he attains the immortal Being; the true God is ever with him. Kabir suggests inward worship and remembrance of God. For him, true worship is only inwards. Put on the rosary inward. By counting beads, the world will be full of light. He clearly suggests moral discrimination between good and bad deeds. What can the helpless road do, when the traveller does not walk understandingly. "What can one do, if, with lamp in hand, one falls in the well." "Or goes astray with open eyes. Discern ye now between good and evil."

It is not surprising that Kabir's satire was brought to bear not simply on the vices and weaknesses of men but reached through and beyond them to the very system themselves. It was the authority of Vedas and Quran that more than the authority of Brahmin or Qazi which Kabir attacked. He rebelled against the pretension of resolving by the means of books or by way of authority, the mystery of human conditions and the problem of liberation (Moksha). He spent his last 40 days living in a place where it was believed that if you die you will be born as a Donkey in the next life.

Kabir is a firm advocate of ahimsa. His doctrine extends even to the nondestruction of flowers. " The life of the living you strike dead and you say your slaughter makes it dedicated. It is blood haunting you and those who taught you." "They fast all day, and at night they slaughter the cow; here murder, their devotion; how can this please God? O' Kazi, by whose order doth thou use thy knife." "When you declare the sacrifice of an animal as your religion, what else is sin. If you regard yourself a saint, whom will you call a butcher ?" "The goat eats grass and is skinned, what will happen to those who eat (goat's) meat? "Do not kill poor jiva, murder will not be forgiven even if you hear a million Puranas. Among the fifty commandments laid down for the followers of Kabir, vegetarianism is one of them. For Kabir, moral life involves adherence to ahimsa.

Kabir composed no systematic treatise, rather his work consists of many short didactic poems, often expressed in terse vigorous language in the form of Padas, Dohas, and Ramainis (forms of poetry in Indian languages). Besides his work recorded in 1604 A.D. in Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev, Nanak V, and preserved collections like - *Kabir Granthavali*, and *Bijak*. In his poems, he was quick to tell the illustrations of moral and spiritual truth in the incidents of everyday life , and many of his similes and metaphors are very striking.

**Narsinh Mehta** (1414? – 1481?) was a poet-saint of Gujarat, India, notable as a bhakta, an exponent of Hindu devotional religious poetry. He is especially revered in Gujarat, where he is acclaimed as its *Adi Kavi* (Sanskrit for "first among poets").

Narsinh Mehta (1414? - 1481? AD) is undoubtedly the most loved poet of Gujarat. Gujarati people have crowned Narsinh Mehta as their Adikavi - the first poet of Gujarat. It was not that they did not have poetry or poets before Narsinh, but because there was no poet before who had captured the imagination of the Gujarati people before him. The noted poet and critic, Umashankar Joshi (1975:73-167) has correctly pointed out that it is in Narsinh's poetry that Gujarati language finds its true voice for the first time. A great bulk of pre-Narsinh literature exists composed by the Jain Sadhus in the form of ras and fagu. Yet, all this exists only in the cloisters and bhandaras of monks rather than on the tongues or in the memory of people. Narsinh is preserved orally for over half a millenium and his songs are sung with devotion and love all over Gujarat even today and will undoubtedly continue to do so. It means that Narsinh's poetry hardly required any patronage other than people's love. Thus he is essentially a people's poet and belongs to the masses rather than just to the sects or bhandaras. His greatness lies not only in the fact that he wrote some of the most wonderful songs ever written in this country, but also in the fact that he was among the earliest poets to democratize the language of spirituality. One of his forte is the ability to express complex philosophical ideas in a simple, accessible and yet extremely beautiful language. The superb word music of his composition combined with his philosophical, ethical and social vision has also played an important role in securing his incontestable place as a poet in Gujarati literary tradition. The language of his compositions shows a remarkable synthesis of influence of the pan-Indian Sanskritic literature and the local folk idiom. Perhaps this is the reason why he appeals to the elite as well as the masses. As his poems were handed down from generation to generation orally, they were preserved in people's memory. Hence, these compositions have a definite place in the cultural memory of Gujarat. His poetry is an integral part of the historical evolution of the Gujarati language and the growth of the individuality of the language. He can be called one of the best representatives of bhakti movement in India. The movement was at once literary, philosophical and reformist and Narsinh can be placed besides Tulsidas, Kabir, Meera, Basavanna, Dyaneshhwar and other great saint singers of medieval India.

No composition is found 'written' by Narsinh and the oldest manuscript of a composition is dated 1594 AD (Shastri 1971: 214). The language of the composition too has evolved, as mentioned earlier, and the language in which they are found is today's Gujarati as they were preserved orally and handed down generation after generation in this way. Thus, Narsinh's poetry is an integral part of the historical evolution of the Gujarati language and the growth of the individuality of the language. It also has permanent place in the memory of the Gujarati culture. Many poems were written on various miraculous incidents associated with his life by later poets like Vishwanath Jani (1682 AD), Premanand, and Meera. His legendary life is depicted in many films and his poems have many imitators. His influence on the later poets is very great. Some of the incidents of his life have even become the names of some the welfare schemes of Government of Gujarat, for instance *Kuvarbai nu Mameru Yojna*. Not to mention the immense popularity of his Vaishnava Jana too, because of Gandhiji. The word Harijan promoted by the Father of the Nation for the neglected and the exploited sections of the society first gained currency due to Narsinh's poems. Whatever may be the political angle, it can hardly be overlooked that Narsinh is still alive in the memory of the Gujarati people. Besides the fact that he was a brilliant poet, leaves no doubt in our mind that he should be known as the Adikavi of Gujarat.

Indeed, Narsinh has always existed in popular imagination as a person in flesh and blood, close not only to the heart of his Lord, but also to the hearts of millions of Gujarati people. Yet, as in the case of most of the Indian poets of antiquity, there is hardly any definitive and concrete evidence about details of his life. Consequently, there is a wide divergence among scholars as to the poet's life.

Like most of the bhakta poets of India, Narsinh has become a legend. The narrative of his life is woven with many 'miracles' and has provided material for many later poets who have sung about many incidents of his life. Based on his autobiographical compositions like Putra No Vivah, or Mameru or Hundi Na Pado there are many later poems by poets like Vishwanath Jani (1682 AD), the famous Premanand (1636-1734 AD) and the great Rajastani poet Meera (1499-1547 AD).

Tradition places Narsinh's date of Birth as Margasira (Nov-Dec) in Vikram Samvat 1470, i.e. 1414 AD. The date has given birth to a very lively debate among critics some of them of formidable scholarship like K.M.Munshi, K.K.Shastri, and Umashankar Joshi. The details of the debate are too elaborate to be discussed here. However, a well accepted version of his life says that Narsinh was born in Talaja, Bhavnagar District of Saurashtra, in Nagar brahmin community. This community was well known for its scholarship, as well as for its rigidity, orthodoxy and exclusiveness. The poet always seems to refer to it with a touch of irony. His father's name was Krishnadasa and Narsinh was the youngest of the three brothers. He was born when his father was quite old and he lost him at the tender age of three. Then he went with his mother to live with his paternal uncle Parvatdas, a devout Vaishnava who probably lived at Mangrol. By then, Narsinh had taken to the company of sadhus and Saints. K.M.Munshi, who tried to shift Narsinh's traditional date of birth to somewhere between 1474 A.D. and 1522 A.D. is of the opinion that it was during these years that the young poet came into contact with sadhus from Vrindavan who lit the torch of sakhi bhava or gopi bhava, a kind of bhakti - a psychological stance of being a beloved of the God in Narsinh (1935:149). However, the critics who disagree with Munshi believe that Narsinh's kind of bhakti was derived directly from the Vaishnava Canon comprising of the Srimad Bhagwatam (between 500 & 900 A.D.), Srimad Bhagwad Geeta, Jayadeva's immortal masterpiece Geet Govind (twelfth century) as well as from Varkaris and Namdharis, wandering saint-minstrels from Maharashtra and other great poets like Kabir.

Whatever may have been the case; the young Narsinh danced and reveled in the company of Sadhus, saints, women, lower caste people, and, at times, even wore the clothes of women (Trivedi, 1938:43). The conservative Nagar community was shocked and his would-be father-in-law broke off his betrothal with his daughter, as he thought that his prospective son-in-law was no good in business or studies.

There is hardly any definite account of Narsinh's early life and his education. A small cave near Talaja, dating back to second century A.D. is called 'Narsinh Nishal' or 'Narsinh's school'. It is quite possible that the young poet went there for seclusion and reflection. From his compositions, we can make out that he had some knowledge of Sanskrit and a thorough knowledge of Vaishnava Canon. He is also deeply influenced by Vedantic philosophy. His handling of sringar -the erotic rasa- shows that he is also probably familiar with classical Sanskrit court-poetry - kavya Literature. He was also an excellent musician. Narsinh may not have been educated to be a businessman or a priest but he was certainly well equipped to be a major poet.

After the death of his mother (about 1425 AD), Narsinh married Manekbai probably in the year 1428 A.D. and soon he lost his uncle. Narsinh and his wife went to stay at his cousin Bansidhar's

place in Junagadh. However, his cousin's wife, his bhabhi, was a particularly ill-tempered woman, always taunting, and insulting Narsinh. When he could take it no longer, he left the house and went to a nearby forest where he fasted and meditated for seven days by a secluded Shiva Lingam until Shiva appeared before him in person. On the poet's request, the lord took him to Dwarka and showed him the eternal rasa leela of Sri Krishna and the gopis, the cowherd girls of Vrindavan. A legend has it that the poet transfixed by the spectacle burnt his hand with the torch he was holding but he was so engrossed in the ecstatic vision that he was oblivious of the pain.

***“My manhood dissolved and I became the Lord's lover.  
I lost the awareness of my body, I became his go-between  
and I mixed with the gopis to convince Radha to discard her pique...” (Putra Vivah)***

Then the Lord Krishna pleased with his devotee's love placed his hand on his head to bless his devotee. The poet says,

***‘My throat choked and I was speechless.  
I who was unconscious before became conscious  
The worldly sins receded and my primal speech  
awoke from its sleep`***

Narsinh, as the popular account goes, at Sri Krishna's command decided to sing His praises and the nectarous experience of the rasa in this mortal world. He resolved to compose around 22,000 kirtans or compositions. After this dream-like experience, the transformed Narsinh returned to his village, touched his bhabhi's feet, and thanked her for insulting him.

In Junagadh, Narsinh lived in poverty with his wife and two children, a son named Samaldas, and a daughter for whom he had special affection, Kunwarbai. He revelled in devotion to his hearts' content along with sadhus, saints, and all those people who were Hari's subjects -Harijans irrespective of their caste, class or sex. It also seems that he must have fallen into a somewhat ill repute for his close relations with Lord's sakhis and gopis, Narsinh's women followers, with whom he danced and sang (Trivedi, 1973: 33-34).

The Nagars of Junagadh despised him and spared no opportunity to scorn and insult him. Once during his regular visit to the holy tank of Damodar temple near the foot of Girnar Hills, some people belonging to the so-called lower castes, requested him to sing and dance the Lord's kirtana. The saint was very happy to accept the offer, for all who were Hari's subjects -Harijans- were beloved to him. Scandalized Nagars said:

***‘O what kind of person are you, O Mehta!  
You care not for caste, you care not for creed,  
and you care not for discrimination!’(5.3.4.1)***

To this Narsinh ironically replied:

***We are like that-yes we are like what you say!  
We are indeed base, baser than the basest in the world!  
Say what you will; we are neck-deep in his love!  
We are like that-yes we are like what you say!***

***I, Narsaiyyo, am a man of base deeds, for I love Vaishnavas  
Whoever distances themselves from harijans  
Have wasted their births!  
We are like that-yes we are like what you say!***

By this time, Narsinh had already sung about the rasa leela of Radha and Krishna. The compositions are collected under the category of sringar compositions. They are full of intense lyricism, bold in their erotic conception and are not without allegorical dimensions, this saves the compositions from being something of the erotic court poetry of medieval India.

Soon after his daughter Kunwarbai's marriage (around 1447 AD.) to Sringara Mehta's son, Kunwarbai became pregnant and it was a custom for the girl's parents to give gifts and presents to all the in-laws during the seventh month of pregnancy. This custom, known as Mameru, was simply out of the reach of poor Narsinh who had hardly anything except intransigent faith in his Lord. How Krishna helped his beloved devotee is a legend depicted in 'Mameru Na Pado'. This episode is preserved vividly in the memory of Gujarati people through compositions by later poets and films. Other famous legends include 'Hundi (Bond)' episode and 'Har Mala (Garland)' episode. The episode in which none other than Samalsha Seth (The Dark one as Seth) cleared a bond written by poverty stricken beloved, is famous not only in Gujarat but in other parts of India as well. The Har Mala episode deals with the challenge given to Narsinh by Ra Mandlik (1451-72 AD.) a local king and a vassal of Delhi's Sultan, to prove his innocence in the charges of immoral behavior by making the Lord Himself garland Narsinh. Narsinh depicts this episode. How Sri Krishna, in the guise of a wealthy merchant, helped Narsinh in getting his son married is sung by the poet in 'Putra Vivah Na Pado'.

Around 1451 AD, Narsinh lost his wife and his son. He took the traumatic losses in a philosophical way.

***My wife and my son died soon  
The people of the city wept and cried  
I said,  
'One whose moment has arrived departs  
My mind is not in the least grieved...'(Mameru).***

In his later life, Narsinh sang about renunciation, significance of bhakti and ethics. His later compositions show his real genius as they have a variety of metaphorical and allegorical dimensions as compared to the cloying monotony of his earlier erotic works. He has an uncanny knack for expressing abstruse metaphysical concepts in an amazingly simple language. His works are immensely popular in Gujarat and give Narsinh the unparalleled status he has in Gujarati canon of literature.

Mahmud Begada (Mahmud Shah I) 1458-1511 AD, invaded Junagadh in 1467 AD and soon after many a sporadic Muslim raid, the city was annexed to the Gujarat Sultanate. Perhaps to escape the consequences, he went to Mangrol where, at the age of 66, he is believed to have expired. The crematorium at Mangrol is called 'Narsinh Nu Samshan' where perhaps one of the greatest sons of Gujarat was cremated.

His was a life of poverty, of art, of visions, of love and of rebellion. It was also a life of intense music and immense passion; in short, a life meant to be a legend. Till today, one can still hear the voice of Narsinh Mehta, going for a holy dip in the sacred tank of Damodar Temple at the foot of Girnar Hills.

## **The Works of Narsinh Mehta**

One of the most important features of Narsinh's works is that they are not available in the language in which Narsinh had composed them. They have been largely preserved orally. The oldest available manuscript of his work is dated around 1612 AD, and was found by the noted scholar K.K. Shastri from Gujarat Vidyasabha. Because of the immense popularity of his works, their language has undergone modifications with changing times. This undoubtedly has problematized the notion of 'originality' as a quest and a privilege, as a central concern in traditional scholarship. That also means that Narsinh has been continuously 'translated' in newer and newer forms of Gujarati with the passage of time. Authenticity of many of his works has been questioned and some scholars have even suggested that there might have been more than one Narsinh. All this is of course very common in the case of ancient and medieval Indian poets.

For the sake of convenience, the works of Narsinh are divided into four categories:

### **I. Autobiographical compositions:**

Putra Vivah, Mameru, Hundi, Har Same No Pado, Jhari Na Pado, are compositions depicting acceptance of Harijans. These works deal with the incidents from the poet's life and reveal how he encountered the Divine in various guises. They consist of 'miracles' showing how Narsaiyya's Lord helped his devotee in the time of crises. Putra No Vivah (Son's Marriage) deals with the incident of his son's marriage and depicts how the poet, like Sudama, went to Dwarka to seek Lord's assistance and how Sri Krishna himself attended the marriage procession. Mameru depicts the incident in which the penniless father prayed to Lord Krishna, as he had no money to do 'Mameru' - the custom of giving gifts to the girl's in-laws by her parents in the seventh month of her first pregnancy. Krishna of course turns up and saves his devotee's honor. Hundi Na Pado describe the episode when some Nagar pranksters pointed out to Narsinh when some pilgrims bound to Dwarka wanted a bond (a hundi) which could be encashed at Dwarka as the journey was quite dangerous one. The poet who had full faith in his Lord wrote a hundi and, wonder of wonders, it was accepted by Samalsha Seth (The Dark One) in the guise of Seth. Jhari Na Pado depict an incident in Narsinh's life when, during one festival, he felt extremely thirsty and a woman named Ratnabai came to give him water from a Jhari (a water pot with a sprout). So fascinated was the sensitive poet by her beauty that he saw his own Beloved in His Mohini form or Vishnu in the form of an enchantress. Har Same Na Pado deals with the challenge given by the king Ra Mandalik to Narsinh on order to prove his innocence in the charges of immoral behavior by making Lord Krishna garland the accused poet in person. This work is of doubtful authenticity and probably interpolated later. Then there are compositions dealing with the episode of Harijans. These compositions deal with the conflict Narsinh had with his caste-men. Once Narsinh was invited to celebrate and dance kirtana by sweepers who belonged to a lower caste and the saint who believed that caste, class or gender is of no consequence in bhakti, readily accepted and thus invited the wrath of his Nagar community

## **II. Miscellaneous Narratives:**

Chaturis, Sudama Charit, Dana Leela, and episodes based on Srimad Bhagwatam. These are the earliest examples of akhyana or narrative type of compositions found in Gujarati. These include:

- (i) Chaturis, 52 compositions resembling Jaydeva's masterpiece Geeta Govinda dealing with various erotic exploits of Radha and Krishna.
- (ii) Dana Leela poems dealing with the episodes of Krishna collecting his dues (dana is toll, tax or dues) from gopis who were going to sell buttermilk etc. to Mathura.
- (iii) Sudama Charit is a narrative describing the well-known story of Krishna and Sudama.
- (iv) Govinda Gamana or the Departure of Govind relates the episode of Akrura taking away Krishna from Gokul.
- (v) Surata Sangrama, The Battle of Love, depicts in terms of a battle the amorous play between Radha and her girl friends on the one side and Krishna and his friends on the other.
- (vi) Miscellaneous episodes from Bhagwatam like the birth of Krishna, his childhood pranks and adventures.

## **III. Songs of Sringar.**

These are hundreds of padas dealing with the erotic adventures and the amorous exploits of Radha and Krishna like Ras Leela. Various clusters of padas like Rasasahasrapadi and Sringar Mala fall under this head. Their dominant note is erotic (Sringar). They deal with stock erotic situations like the ossified Nayaka-Nayika Bheda of classical Sanskrit Kavya poetics.

## **IV. Songs of Devotion, Philosophical poems and Didactic works.**

These are the works of a mature poet and bring out the best in him. He can express abstruse metaphysical concepts interwoven with traditional imagery in an amazingly simple language. This then is the secret of Narsinh's popularity. It is these poems that have earned Narsinh the place he has in Gujarati literature and religious life. They deal with stock themes of bhakti literature like the qualities of a true devotee, futility of scholarship, outward rituals and the worldly pleasures, importance of bhakti, ethical purity, renunciation and so on. While most of them are typical of Bhakti literature, some of them have a refreshing quality mainly because of the use of metaphors and allegorical treatment of material from daily life, e.g. Ram Nama Nu Aosad Mare (the Name of Rama is my medicine); or Ame Vehvariya Rama Nama Na.. (We are the dealers of Rama's Name...). Other excellent pieces are the dramatic lyrics dealing with metaphysical concepts. Vaishnava Jana to.. ? which is purely a didactic poem which is popular throughout India, mainly because it was the favorite of Gandhiji.

One of the most important features of Narsinh's works is that they are not available in the language in which Narsinh had composed them. They have been largely preserved orally. The oldest available manuscript of his work is dated around 1612 AD, and was found by the noted scholar K.K.Shastri from Gujarat Vidyasabha. Because of the immense popularity of his works, their language has undergone modifications with changing times. They have become an integral part of the historical evolution and the growth, identity and personality of Gujarati language.

For the sake of convenience, the works of Narsinh are divided into four broad and often overlapping categories: i) Autobiographical compositions like *Putra Vivah*, *Mameru*, *Hundi*, *Har Same No Pado*, *Jhari Na Pado*, and compositions depicting acceptance of *Harijans*, ii) miscellaneous narratives like *Chaturis*, *Sudama Charit*, *Dana Leela* and episodes based on *Srimad Bhagwatam* iii)

songs of *sringar* or erotic and love poems, and iv) songs of devotion, philosophical poems and didactic works.

Narsinh's poems are essentially songs and are meant to be sung. His grasp of the Indian classical music has given his songs permanence. Poetry and music are inseparable in Narsinh's compositions. While music may be one of the features that has kept Narsinh's poems alive, it has even played a significant role in keeping Gujarati language alive. Narsinh's rhetoric always foregrounds the musicality of compositions. His poetic diction profuse with figures of sound like alliteration, rhymes onomatopoeia is employed in a way to embellish the word music of his poems. His vocabulary shows the enriching confluence of two streams of tradition: one of Sanskrit heritage and other is the local folk heritage. As the musical effect is one of the prime considerations in Narsinh's poetry, he selects words that embellish these effects. In love songs, he is very fond of using 'sweet' words. This is very much in the tradition of Vaishnava *bhakti* which considers Krishna as *Madhuradhipati* - the Lord of Sweetness- about whom it is said *Madhuradhipati akhilam madhuram* (Everything is sweet about the Lord of Sweetness). This *bhakti* is *madhurya bhakti* - the sweet love for the Lord is a distinct characteristic of Narsinh's love songs.

Narsinh resourcefully handles an extensive range of poetic devices from both folk lore and the pan Indian Sanskrit literary heritage. His use of conventional symbolic imagery of the mango tree, the folklore motifs associated with spring for example, bees, flowers, honey, and blossoming trees is particularly striking:

***"In my garden the mango tree has blossomed  
And mangoes ripe are dripping with nectar!  
Wake up and relish them, my slender Lord,  
I'll pluck them for you and you enjoy!"  
Fair one, in the middle of the night,  
How your jingling anklets chime!***

"In my garden are juicy grapes, sumptuous citrus fruits, and betel vines,  
***O Narsaiyya's Lord come to my place  
For my heart is tender and mad!"  
Fair one, in the middle of the night,  
How your jingling anklets chime!***

The erotic undercurrent of the image is obvious. The fruits symbolize the libidinous pleasure. Indeed, it is an invitation to love. It is a very common device in folk and tribal literature. The image of the mango tree is one of the many recurrent motifs in Narsinh's poetry. In classical and medieval Indian literature as well as folk literature, the seasons function as signifiers for various moods, or to use Ramanujan's phrase, they function as 'correlative-objectives' which unlike objective correlatives are conventional and traditional (Ramanujan 1996:239) Spring is a well known signifier for erotic feelings and signals the celebration of life and desire. The other often-used motifs are also connected with spring; for example, bees, flowers, blossoming trees, and honey, which function to reinforce the erotic mood. Narsinh's dramatic love lyrics depict various vicissitudes of erotic encounters of Radha and Krishna. Depiction of *raas leela* itself carries suggestions of foreplay and the whole description becomes symbolic. In spite of frank eroticism, the songs never become crude as they involve a masterly artisanship. Yet, sexual love itself is symbolical of the metaphysical and the mystical Love in

Bhakti literature. Narsinh's final couplet in his love poems always reveals this allegorical aspect of the immortal love affair. The deep influence of the classical Sanskrit poetry or the *kavya* literary tradition on Narsinh is seen in his use of many conventions of *kavya* tradition, for instance, the convention of '*astanayika*' or eight types of heroines and the stereotyped descriptions of woman's body. This influence, though it has given Gujarati literature some beautiful love poetry, has made many of his compositions monotonous.

In the traditional Indian *rasa shastra*, the erotic *rasa* is divided into two major types of *shringar* on the basis of the situation depicted. The first type is called *viparalamba* or the erotic *rasa* of separated lovers and the *sanyog* or the erotic *rasa* of their union. Narsinh's poetry is replete with both these types of *shringara*. Narsinh's Radha sings about the pain and desolation of the separation from her beloved:

*Today, dear, this harsh winter closes in  
And scares the frail ones like me.  
My frozen little body sets our being ablaze!  
But for my love, who will slake me?  
Cold, cold is my bed in winter!  
But for my love, who will embrace me passionately?*

An interesting contrast between the fire of desire and the chill of desolation is depicted in the above *pada*. The paradoxical state is heightened when the very chill of desolation fans the fire of desire.

A good example of *sanjog sringara* is this *pada*:

*Don't wake me up vigorously, O Madhukar!  
You will break my delicate waist, my love!  
As if smeared with vermilion  
My lips have turned crimson with your bites!*

*I swear, I am exhausted and about to drop,  
But the wicked one does not listen to me!  
Don't wake me up vigorously, O Madhukar!  
You will break my delicate waist, my love!*

As is well known Krishna must be around the age of ten and Radha in her late teens, so the *sanjog shringar* in Narsinh becomes quite bold at times.

*Don't untie the threads of my choli, my love  
The fruits of my breasts are not good enough for you!*

*Ananga, the god of love, stirs not in the unbloomed youth  
There can be no ecstasy without lovemaking.'  
Don't untie the threads of my choli, my love  
The fruits of my breasts are not good enough for you!*

*Hearing the words of the dark girl,  
Narsaiyya's lord clasped her to his heart  
And played many love games with her during their first union.*

The frank depiction of eroticism in Narsinh has led many present day critics to grope for Metaphysical and occult explanations. Umashankar Joshi and others have rightly termed it as *ooghado Shringar* - 'Open Eroticism'.

His dazzling use of the form of *pada* has left a deep impact on the development of later Gujarati lyrical poetry. In the use of the *pada* form, Narsinh shows a distinct influence of Jayadeva (twelfth century AD) and his great *Geet Govind*, which was already popular in Gujarat before Narsinh. Jaydeva's is the most influential treatment of Radha-Krishna love story and it almost started a tradition of this theme with followers in almost all the major languages in India. Vidyapati in Bengali, Narsinh in Gujarati, Soordas in Hindi are some names in this great tradition of love songs of Radha and Krishna. This tradition was preserved and enriched by later Vaishnava poets in various languages.

Narsinh is also given credit for developing narrative poetry, though his narratives are not so elaborately crafted as those of Premanand and those who succeeded him. Krishna-Sudama legend and the autobiographical narrative poems of Narsinh have an important place in Gujarati literary tradition as they are the examples of the earliest narrative and autobiographical verse in Gujarati. Besides, his autobiographical poems also shed some light on the personality of Narsinh, though their authorship is not always considered authentic. Bhakti poetry was not a sacrifice of individual style at the altar of community style as is commonly believed because much of it is personal and abounding with autobiographical elements. If a genealogy of autobiography in Indian literatures is drawn up, bhakti poetry will have to be given an important place.

Yet, the real greatness of Narsinh Mehta lies in his sublime philosophical songs. The poems in which eroticism becomes mystical are extremely engaging. Narsinh was deeply influenced by the Vedantic philosophy of *advaita* or the non-duality between the soul and the lord, yet *bhakta* and the poet within him always got better of the philosopher. Even when singing about the Vedantic ideas of the God and the world, he never slips into arid philosophizing which he despises. Love, unconditional love for the divine, is what Narsinh values and not logical or rational wrangling and hence he is not worried whether he adheres to Shankaracharya's version of *advaita* or Ramanujacharya's version. His Vedanta is lovers' Vedanta and a *bhakta's* Vedanta.

Narsinh is not merely a philosopher, he is primarily a *bhakta*, and so he reminds his Lord that even His existence is dependent on His devotee's existence. *Bhakti* always has a subversive slant to it. The Self and the Other, the Devotee and the Lord, the Lover and the Beloved are mutually dependent on each other for their existence. The state of *advaita*, Narsinh says, is the indescribable state of Complete Bliss'. The metaphor used by Narsinh for describing the state of *advaita* is a popular one, known also as *luna-neer nyaya* or the illustration of salt and water where after dissolution one cannot know one from the other.

In *advaita* there is loss of the self as well as the other and Narsinh depicts this mystic state in one of his extremely beautiful 'Love Songs':

*The bliss of my lord's closeness lasted as long as the night.  
Then it vanished, my lord's bliss, when my arch enemy-the Sun did rise.  
I became indistinguishable from the light, and in no time, my beloved too was gone.  
In tracing his footsteps, in searching him, I lost myself.*

*The bliss of my lord's closeness lasted as long as the night.  
Then it vanished, my lord's bliss, when my arch enemy-the Sun did rise.  
In this seemingly strange play, my eyes turned inwards  
I left my small selfhood as I lay utterly vanquished.  
The words can't express this experience, which the scriptures call Ineffable.  
The bliss of my lord's closeness lasted as long as the night.  
Then it vanished, my lord's bliss, when my arch enemy-the Sun did rise.*

The state of *Advaita* is analogous to the orgasm; it cannot be described using words, for the human language is incapable of it. The sun is the arch enemy not only because he is the busy old fool and a spoil sport but as the sun is a symbol of knowledge, Narsinh seems to be pointing out that knowledge itself becomes a sort of impediment to attainment of the Knowledge. Reason and logic are not means to attain knowledge but hurdles in the path. This anti-scholastic, anti rational attitude is typical of *bhakti*.

*No one seems to believe the wonder of what I say, but those who have attained this state  
know it well.  
The sea of Being is of absolute Oneness, and Narsinh relishes it enrapt.  
The bliss of my lord's closeness lasted as long as the night.  
Then it vanished, my lord's bliss, when my arch enemy-the Sun did rise.*

This obvious closeness of the abstract metaphysical conception of *Advaita* with the concrete and physical experience of sexual union has helped many Indian medieval saint-singers sing of the former without going very far from the latter and the other way round. Narsinh indeed is no different. Yet, it is significant to note that this type of erotic allegory in the form of beautiful songs came into predominance only with Narsinh's poetry in the Gujarati literary tradition.

The philosopher in Narsinh also gave him insights into some of the philosophical problems of the classical *brahminical* system of thought, for instance, the problem of the One and the Many, the conflict between Monism and Pluralism.

*In this entire universe, you alone exist, Shri Hari,  
Yet, in infinite forms you seem to be!*

This composition is an excellent illustration of the essential Vedantic idea of underlying Unity behind the apparent plurality. This is one of the most popular songs of Narsinh. It is of course a statement made by a Vaishnava Vedantist but it is also in the form of a very beautiful lyric. The irreducible plurality and heterogeneity of the Cosmos can baffle even a layman. Nevertheless, Narsinh sees that the Lord creates this plurality Himself, as a part of His *leela*.

*Only to taste the nectar of being manifold,  
You created the jiva and the siva and countless other forms!*

***In this entire universe, you alone exist, Shri Hari,  
Yet, in infinite forms you seem to be!***

According to Narsinh, the Lord for His Enjoyment creates the world. In the same *pada*, he gives another classical Vedantic illustration, his personal favourite:

***Ornaments differ not from what they are made,  
As the Vedas and other scriptures truly say,  
Only their names differ once their forms are cast,  
Gold is always gold in the end!  
In this entire universe, you alone exist, Shri Hari,  
Yet, in infinite forms you seem to be!***

The conception of the ‘creation’ as sung by Narsinh is particularly significant, as it distinctly shows the influence of post-Sankara Vedantism, especially that of thinkers like Ramanujacharya and other *bhakti* saint-singers like Namdev and Dynaneshwar (see Y.J Tripathi. *Kevaladvaita in Gujarati Poetry*, 1958).

Sankara had distinctly rejected the idea of ‘creation’ because the world itself was nothing but an illusion arising out of *avidya* or ignorance. Narsinh frequently uses terms like *Satchiddananda*, which have lead many to believe that he was influenced by Vallabhacharya’s *Shuddhadvaita* though the time in which Narsinh composed his songs was much earlier than the time in which Vallabha preached his doctrine. Besides, Vallabha’s influence reached Gujarat even later. The critics who have given a thought to this problem draw attention to the fact that the germ of this version of Vedanta existed before Vallabha himself, especially in the compositions of Dynaneshwar and songs of Namdev. Yet what is still significant is that Narsinh was even influenced by Sankara as can be seen from some of his songs. He was not worried much about doctrines and seems eclectic in his philosophical thinking.

In his hauntingly beautiful song ‘*Jagi Ne Jou To Jagat Dise Nahi...*’ Narsinh sings about one of the Sankara’s favourite ideas - *Maya*:

***When I wake up, the world recedes from my sight.  
Only in sleep, its bewildering miseries and enjoyment perplexes me!  
My being is a play of the Consciousness:  
The brahman playing with the brahman!***

The metaphor of sleep and awakening has a crucial significance in the Vedantic thinking, especially that of Sankara. The plurality and the relativity of the phenomenal world arose out of ignorance hence was compared to the experience of dreaming where one mistook dreams for reality and once one is awake, one realizes that what one saw in sleep was unreal. Hence the knowledge that the *brahman* alone exists is compared to awakening.

The image of the *brahman* frolicking with the *brahman* is a strikingly original one. Another rather original image is in his famous song *Nirakh ne Gagan Ma ...*:

*Where the brilliant flame with effulgence of million suns is lit  
Which pales even the brilliance of gold,  
There Satchitananda frolics in joy  
And happily swings in the glorious cradle of gold!  
Look, who is roving in the sky!  
I am He, I am He, the echoing word replies!*

The poet is looking up in the sky and sees his beloved Lord in the brilliant sun rising in the morning. The composition evokes the ancient idea of Vishnu as the Solar God. He is also the Logos - the Word, the *Shabda*, who is chanting *So'ham, So'ham* or "He am I". A very original image is that of the *Satchitananda* in the form of Golden Child rocking in the cradle of gold. The rhetoric of the whole poem is very dramatic and reaches to the point of being sublime. These are the poems which express Narsinh's philosophy which is Upanishadic in its outlook.

Narsinh is too much of a *bhakta* to be a pure Sankaracharian. In another poem, he gives an important place to Radha in the form of *Shakti*, the Divine Creative Power.

*Yet he is not alone, he is not distinct from his creation,  
Which is his all-encompassing energy!  
Sri Krishna is without the beginning,  
Total bliss is his nature and Radha his ravishing beloved!  
You alone are the beginning, the middle, and the end!  
You alone, you alone, Sri Hari!*

As can be seen, the *bhakta* in Narsinh makes him see the whole philosophy of Vedanta in a different light. The concept of *moksha* is of considerable importance in the Vedantic thought. *Moksha* or the ultimate release from the bondage of this afflicted World and the cycles of births and rebirths, is one of the *purusharthas* or the purposes of being in the Hindu scheme of life. However, for a true *bhakta* like Narsinh, it is of minor importance, a by-product:

*Those who love Hari long not for the ultimate release,  
Instead, they desire to be born over again  
To sing forever, to dance forever,  
To celebrate forever and to gaze forever at Nanda's darling!  
Great is the wealth of bhakti found only on the earth,  
Not found even in the realms of Brahma!*

This utterance with rather Dionysian overtones is indeed a radical departure from the conventional Vedantic thinking which lays great emphasis on attainment of the *moksha*, from the cycles of births and rebirths. While the scholastic and conventional Vedanta is Apollonian in its outlook emphasizing *jnana* or knowledge, *dhyana* or meditation, control of emotions and senses and *karmakanda* or rituals, the *bhakti* is Dionysian with its rebellious, celebratory nature and its faith in unconditional love. Hence for Narsinh, *bhakti* is the key to the great metaphysical lock.

*Blessed is the land of Vraj, blessed is his eternal sport,  
Blessed are the people of Vraj as eight magical powers  
Wait at their doorsteps and Mukti becomes their maid!*

*Great is the wealth of bhakti found only on the earth,  
Not found even in the realms of Brahma!*

The eight *siddhis* are the eight types of magical powers which *yogis*, the adepts, are supposed to attain after rigorous discipline and austerity:

*True fulfillment of my birth is in loving my beloved forever!  
Never with dry rituals and harsh austerities  
Would I torture my tender body!  
All the time I'd play the games of love with my beloved!  
True fulfillment of my birth is in loving my beloved forever!!*

Rejection of austerities and rituals is one of the recurrent themes in *bhakti* literature:

*Yoga and austerities has he reserved for the detached yogis  
But sheer enjoyment has he in store only for his lovers.  
Penance and rituals he has reserved for the insensitive ones  
But the joy of singing our lord's praises, he has kept for Narsinh!  
The sap of the earth has spread through the branches  
The god of love in the eyes has come to dwell...!*

The *bhaktas* also reject bookish learning and armchair speculation of *pundits* and philosophers, for they are poor substitutes for Love. Narsinh admonishes the scholars :

**This is not the way to find the essence of Truth, O Pundits!**

**Even with all these heaps of bookish learning,**

*You won't fathom it at all without being truly pure!  
This is not the way to find the essence of Truth, O Pundits!  
You won't fathom It at all without being truly pure!  
You go for dry empty husk and cast away the grains!  
One cannot appease hunger by mere dry chaff!*

**This is not the way to find the essence of Truth, O Pundits!**

Experience of the *brahman*, first hand, and nothing else will work for Narsinh; everything else is sheer waste of time.

*So what if you have taken a holy bath or offered twilight prayers and worship?  
So what if you have stayed at home and given alms?  
So what if you keep matted locks and smear ashes?  
So what if you have plucked hair on your head?  
Unless and until you have grasped the essence of the Self  
Vain are all your efforts and like unseasonal rains, you have wasted your human birth.*

*So what if you indulge in recitation, penance or go on a pilgrimage?  
So what if you count beads and chants the holy name  
So what if you put on a tilak or worship Tulsi?  
So what if you drink the water of Ganga?*

*So what if you speak of the Vedas or grammar?  
So what if you enjoy yourself and have a good time?  
So what if you have grasped the distinctions between the six systems of philosophy?  
So what if you have adhered to the distinction of caste?*

*All these are worldly pursuits for filling one's belly  
Until you have seen the absolute brahman.  
Says Narsinh, without beholding the Essence  
One wastes his birth precious as Chintamani Jewel.  
Unless and until you have grasped the essence of the Self  
Vain are all your efforts and like unseasonal rains, you have wasted your human birth!*

Narsinh's bhakti rejects all austerities, rituals, bookish learning, and artificial divisions of caste, and creed. A true devotee never considers such divisions. This great idea of social equality, of *samdrishti* (lit. vision of equality) had a democratizing impact on society. This radical social outlook brought him into a bitter conflict with the *brahminical* establishment and he was ostracized. Narsinh Mehta the lover and the poet was a natural rebel. Poetry of Narsinh happens to be the poetry of an outcaste Brahmin. His didactic compositions display his moral seriousness and earnest desire to reform the society. His ability to express complex metaphysical and philosophical ideas in a melodious language that is extremely beautiful, simple and accessible to people has conferred immortality to his compositions.

Just as Narsinh repudiates all conventionality and artificiality of the social norms, he also seems to have questioned the norms of sexuality and gender. The legend has it that when Narsinh had the vision of the Divine *ras-leela* of his beloved Lord so engrossed and involved was he in that vision that he identified himself with the dancing milkmaids and even became the *Sakhi* or the girlfriend of Radha and Krishna.

*O torchbearer is Narsaiyyo!  
Torchbearer of Hari!  
With mind brimming with deep love  
And nectar on his tongue,  
O torchbearer is Narsaiyyo!  
Torchbearer of Hari!*

*The girls enjoy the very thing they so relish,  
And their glances are playful and inviting,  
In such an engrossing moment,  
Narsaiyya's manliness has vanished!  
O torchbearer is Narsaiyyo!  
Torchbearer of Hari!*

This dissolution of masculinity in *bhakti* is expressed elsewhere too.

*The Absolute Purushottama passionately plays as his lovers plead!  
And by being his girlfriend, Narsinh relishes the very nectar  
The women of Vraj so delightfully revel in!  
You alone are the beginning, the middle, and the end!  
You alone, you alone, Sri Hari!*

So many times in his love songs, the persona is that of a *gopi* or Radha, talking to her girlfriend. In one of his *padas*, Narsinh talks about the 'Fortune' of being a woman:

*Essence of essence is the birth of the weaker sex,  
For her strength alone can please the mighty hero!  
What's the use of this manliness, friend,  
When it is of no use to the lord at all?  
Essence of essence is the birth of the weaker sex!*

*A man might attain the ultimate release,  
If he sticks to the path of virtue,  
But to indulge in the scrumptious joys  
Of pretended anger  
And the lord pleading to make up and other such games,  
You simply have to be a woman!  
Essence of essence is the birth of the weaker sex!*

*For her strength can please the mighty hero!  
Even the gods like Indra and the great sages  
Revere the very dust of gopis' feet,  
Considering themselves lesser than the gopis  
As they find their manhood insipid!  
Essence of essence the birth of the weaker sex,*

*For her strength can please the mighty hero!  
Woman, the treasure trove of fortune  
Experiences and enjoys all day and night  
The very nectar, the Vedas and the Scriptures  
Struggle to express!  
Essence of essence is the birth of the weaker sex!*

*Let my dreams come true  
My dark one, my lifter of the mountain, life of my life!  
For just like the master dragging the meek beast  
The leash of love draws Narsinh!  
Essence of essence is the birth of the weaker sex,  
For her strength can please the mighty hero!*

This may seem to be one more expression of the hypocritical attitude of the patriarchal Indian society. Though the idea of 'woman' in these poems look stereotyped, Narsinh by upholding Woman

as a model and an ideal for *bhakti*, is actually subverting the monopoly of men in the field of religion. 'Manliness' for Narsinh is an impediment in the path of *bhakti*. In spite of the fact that Narsinh is upholding woman as a model for the relationship with the divine, his depiction of erotic in the poems is very much chauvinistic, one has only to consider the gross description of woman's body in his poems.

The language of his erotic and love poems can be deceptively simple. The closer attention to words at times reveals very rich ambiguities. For instance, Narsinh's very famous composition, '*prem ras paa ne...*' contains an interesting example of ambiguity. Narsinh says '*tatva nu tupanu tuchh a laage.*' in which the word '*tupanu*' is interpreted by the critics in two ways: i) as '*tu -panu*' as 'youness' to signify the otherness or separateness of the Lord as an entity in the conventional philosophical discourse and ii) as the noted critic Anantrai Rawal (96:1994) has observed it indicates the chaffing or producing useless husk which metaphorically denotes arid and futile philosophical debates disliked by Narsinh who lays great stress on affective rather than rational relationship with the divine. These interpretations are not mutually contradictory as both denote the things Narsinh disliked and hence have negative associations, but while the first one is distinctly Vedantic as well as erotic, the other interpretation is more appropriate in the context as the next line uses the metaphor of husk and grain, and had to be retained in translation.

*Serve me the draught of love's ambrosia  
One bedecked with peacock feathers!  
This futile threshing of arid philosophies tastes so insipid!  
These emaciated cattle crave merely the dry husk,  
They pine not for the ultimate liberation!  
Serve me the draught of love's ambrosia  
One bedecked with peacock feathers!*

Another interesting example of ambiguity arises from the clever use of the word *bhog* which can mean not just enjoyment but also suffering in the well known philosophical poem *Jaagi ne jou to jagat dise nahi, oongh ma atpata bhog bhaase*. It means that when I am awake spiritually I cannot see the phenomenal world, but only in sleep do I perceive the bewildering temptations/woes. Sleeping and awakening of course are used as metaphors for the states of ignorance and enlightenment respectively. It turns on the head the conventional belief that we can perceive the phenomenal world only when we are awake. The cognition of the phenomenal world and all its temptations and woes is actually a dream and illusion born out of the sleep of ignorance.

In the poem '*Sundariratna-mukhchandra avalokva...*' there is another instance of ambiguity. The composition borrows Sanskrit phrases from the Geet Govind. In the second stanza Narsinh puts a Sanskrit phrase *twamasi mam jeevan* in the mouth of the charming milkmaid, Radha, to which Krishna replies using Sanskrit phrases *twamasi shringar mam, twamasi mam*. Krishna is lavishly praising Radha through out the poem and in the end Narsinh Mehta says *Narsaiya no swami sukhsagar, eh ni stuti eh karta. Eh ni stuti eh karta* can mean two things first he is praising her and at the same time it can mean he is praising himself. This deliberate ambiguity suggests the fundamental oneness within difference between Radha and Krishna. They are separate yet they are one. Krishna in praising Radha is actually praising himself! This is due to the clever use of pronouns in Gujarati. Ambiguity, however it should be added, in Narsinh's poetic language is not merely a product of clever use of rhetorical devices or accidental vagueness but is product of his entire artistic vision.

The poetic language in most of his compositions remains very sweet, and melodious. However, in some of his other devotional and didactic poems the language tends to become harsh and rough:

***Wayward progeny of a lewd whore, what teaching will bring you to your senses?  
Blind teacher and on top of that, a deaf disciple, how on earth can they grasp the knowledge  
of brahman?  
Wayward progeny of a lewd whore, what teaching will bring you to your senses?***

Not very often does Narsinh refer to a guru and there is hardly any information about his guru or whether he actually had one.

At times, the language becomes bitter and ironic. In one allegorical composition, there is a disconcerting depiction of funeral procession of the human soul in terms of marriage ceremony. The comparison is elaborate and Narsinh creates the eerie effect by juxtaposing what is inauspicious and life-denying with what is erotic, auspicious and life affirming. This type of *pada* contains a rare feeling of bitterness which is unbecoming of poets like Narsinh.

***Girls merrily watch the procession of a handsome young groom!  
How pure and clean he looks with tilak adorning his forehead!  
How attractive are his consorts!  
How happily they sprinkle vermilion around!  
Girls merrily watch the procession of a handsome young groom!***

The *pada* goes on to describe one procession as if it is the other and tells us how the 'bridegroom' decides to stay at his in-laws, a thing that is looked down upon in the Hindu culture. Finally, Narsinh gives the key to the allegory:

***The Jiva is being whisked away by the heralds of Death!  
See how they have tortured his mortal remains!  
It is good if one meets Narsaiyya's Lord, for He alone can rescue you from the world of  
woes!  
Girls merrily watch the procession of the handsome young groom!***

His other didactic compositions are extremely popular. His *Vaishnava Jana To..* has earned a worldwide fame. It is a conventional *bhakti* poem enumerating the qualities of a true devotee and true saint in the manner of Kabir who had earlier sang of the qualities a true *sadhu* should possess. It is noteworthy that Narsinh's definition of the true Vaishnava begins not on a typically religious note. One who knows the pains and sufferings of others is a true Vaishnava not the one who is 'religious' in observing *karma-kanda*. Religion for Narsinh is humanitarianism.

Some of his poems at times have existential overtones. For instance his poem on the onset of old age and humiliation associated with it, has rare poignancy:

***Who has sent the old age? I thought youth was here to stay!  
Even threshold seems a mountain now***

*The outskirts of the village seem distant like foreign lands to me.  
Even the small pail is now the mighty Ganga for me  
And the hair on my body has irreversibly grayed!  
Who has sent the old age? I thought youth was here to stay!*

The poem goes on to recount more miseries one has to face in the old age. The tragic note is unmistakable:

*Nine ganglions have come away and my hour has finally arrived.  
Women disparage and children swear at me, such is the final moment!  
My sons have at last arrived at the door  
Only to take the purse from my chest and depart!  
Who has sent the old age? I thought youth was here to stay!*

The children come to meet the old man not to bid a loving farewell but to take his purse! The futility of *samsara*, the mundane world of attachment, miseries, and small pleasures is depicted with a rare feeling and insight.

His oeuvre has extraordinary range and originality. His innovative ability to bring the heterogeneous cultural heritage of our society into play in his extremely rich poetic language places him along with the best of the bhakti poets of our country. It is in Narsinh, we find that Gujarati poetry beginning to explore its potential and possibilities with remarkable energy for the first time. He seems to have laid a true foundation to the Gujarati literary tradition. Though a huge bulk of the Jain literature existed before Narsinh, it could not find a lasting place on the tongue of the Gujarati people, nor could it find a place in their cultural memory. Narsinh has found an abiding place in the hearts of people because he had fathomed the true roots of Gujarati culture - the roots which are deep into the elemental concoction of the erotic, the austere, the orality, the performativity, the metaphysical and the ethical dimensions of the human existence. This was something that the pre-Narsinh Jain literature could not completely do justice to. Because of his ability to express complex philosophical ideas in a simple language of the masses, and his radically democratic outlook towards caste, class, and gender, he caught the imagination of the illiterate, the poor and the neglected along with the elite minority. Narsinh indeed is the first poet of Gujarat, a pioneer of a tradition and a legend that has become an inseparable part of the Gujarati ethos.

## Translation Theory

*“Each society will interpret a message in terms of its own culture. The receptor audience will decode the translation in terms of its own culture and experience, not in terms of the author and audience of the original document.”*

### Introduction to Comparative Studies:

Comparative Literature implies a study of literature, which uses comparison as its main instrument. The word ‘Comparison’, however, has multiple layers of meaning that are given to it during its various stages of development. That is to say, there could be comparison between two different authors, two different languages, two different nationalities, culture and so on.

Matthew Arnold was the first to use the term Comparative Literature in English in 1848. He believed that every critic should try and possess one great literature at least, besides his own, and the more unlike his own, the better. His *Touchstone* theory in the field of criticism was also based on comparison. Matthew Arnold was convinced that:

*“...no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literature.”*

It is true that anybody, who wants to single out the special characteristics of a work of art, compares it unconsciously, almost automatically, with similar works. Whereas, for a Comparative Study, the conscious method of comparison becomes fundamental.

# TRANSLATION IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

## Introduction:

The activity of translation helps a lot in comparative Studies; unless the Comparatist is a bilingual or polyglot, no work of different languages could be studied or compared without translation. Moreover, to spread the tradition of one's own literature, an artist must be aware of the literatures of other languages. But the main problem is that no writer would know more than a few languages. Here, translation appears as a germane way out. By translating a work into the desired language, there would appear an opportunity of certain work or certain literature to reach other parts of the world.

## What is Translation?

Etymologically, the word translation is made of two terms – 'Trans' (over) and 'lation' (to carry). Hence, in its literal sense it means 'carry over' (i. e. from one language to other). Wilhelm von Humboldt called translation:

*“one of the labours most essential to any literature; partly because it introduces those ignorant of foreign languages to forms of art and humanity which otherwise they never come to know – and this is an important gain for any nation; but partly also, and especially, because it widens the capacity for meaning and expression possessed by one's own language.”*

In fact, translation is almost like a supplement of an original text. It provides the most important channel through which international influences can flow. And therefore its investigation is of the greatest importance to the Comparatist.

In Europe, two main sources have been distinguished for Modern Translation. The first of these is the Endeavour to translate the Bible. This Endeavour demanded highest respect before the word of God and the highest degree of selfless devotion on the part of the translator. The translator had to mediate between the revelation contained in the Bible and those of his fellow-countrymen, who could not understand the original Hebrew and Greek. The other source is, of course, translation from the ancient authors, in which every age could mirror itself and with which poets have tried in every generation to mingle their own spirit and that of their time.

There is no absolute distinction between the two modes represented by translation from the Bible and translation from the classics. In fact, they represent 'ideal types' of two approaches described by Goethe and Schleiermacher, who were both adept translators. Goethe in his eulogy of Wieland said:

*“There are two maxims for translators; one demands that the author belonging to some other nation should be brought over to us, so that we can regard him as our own; the other demands of us that we should go across to the stranger and accustom ourselves to his circumstances, his manner of speaking, his peculiarities.”*

Later, the response of Friedrich Schleiermacher is strikingly similar:

*“A translator either leaves the author as much alone as is possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader as much alone as is possible and moves the author towards him.”*

### **Stages of translation:**

In Theoretical Translation there are three stages that are manifested by the scholars of translators. They are as following:

- Pre-Translation:

Pre-translation is the first stage of translation which takes place before the process of actual translation. It deals with the questions such as: What work to be translated? Why should it be translated? What is the function/purpose behind it? For whom to translate? and so on. This process of selection defines the course of translation.

- Translation:

Second is the main area of translation, which is subdivided into three stages:

- *Codification: Of the source language.*
- *De-Codification: Interpretation of the translation.*
- *Re-Codification: In the target language.*

- Post-Translation:

This is the stage where the evaluation of the translation is made. It deals with the issues such as: Whether the translator has justified the source text or not? Whether the translation has reached to the level of satisfaction to its target language or not?

### **Strategies in Translation:**

Scholars have suggested four strategies to solve the difficulties and problems in the process of translation.

Substitution: It is to use a subordinate word in the other language, which may not be an exact translation but the closest or a kind of a synonym for the same.

Retention: It is to coin a word in the target language. This coinage is made primarily in order to maintain the cultural tone in/of a foreign language.

Deletion: In the process of translation there are certain words and phrases, which are difficult to translate into the other language. In deletion such words could be dropped.

Addition: In order to communicate properly certain words are added into the target text. The glossary or foot notes are provided in addition. S. S. Praver considers the use of glossary and foot notes as the worst kind of translation.

## **Classification of Translation:**

In simple terms translation refers to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (Source Language) to another (Target Language). However, this transfer can be classified into four types of translations based on the criterion focused by the translator. They are as following:

### ➤ Pragmatic Translation:

That is a translation of a message with an interest in accuracy of the,

*“Information that was meant to be conveyed in the source language.”*

It aims at utilitarian aspect of the SL. It is not concerned with “beauty” i.e. aesthetic aspect of SL version.

### ➤ Aesthetic - Poetic Translation:

Here a translator focuses on emotions, feelings and the effect of SL version which also includes the aesthetic form e.g. sonnet, dialogue, couplet along with the message in the passage.

### ➤ Ethnographic Translation:

Ethnographic is the branch of sociology. It aims at explicating the cultural context of the source and source language version.

### ➤ Linguistic Translation:

It is concerned with equivalence of meaning of the constituent morpheme of SL and with grammatical form that includes word formation, sentence structure that varies from language to language.

## **Two kinds of Translation studies - Pure and Applied:**

### ➤ Pure Translation Studies: Pure translation studies have two objectives:

#### (a) Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS):

It describes the phenomena of translation as manifested in the world of our experience. In simple terms it is a description of translation.

DTS can be further divided into three kinds, they are:

(i) Product Oriented DTS: (that is) Description of existing translation and comparison of translation.

(ii) Function Oriented DTS: Description of function of translation in the target socio-cultural situation study of context rather than texts.

(iii) Process Oriented DTS: Description of the process of translation.

#### (b) Theoretical Translation Studies (TS):

It tries to establish general principle by means of which these phenomena can be studied and anticipated (what happens in the “Black Box” of the translator). Theoretical translation studies are further sub-divided into two kinds, they are:

(i) General Translation Theories:

It includes broad inclusive explaining predicating all aspects of phenomena of translation.

(ii) Partial Translation Studies (Specialized Study):

Partial translation studies include six parts in it.

- a. Medium Restricted Translation Studies: That is human translation, machine translation mixed translation by the two in conjunction.
- b. Area Restricted Translation: That is restricted to the language and to the cultures concerned.
- c. Rank Restricted Translation: It is not concerned with discourses - texts as wholes, but with lower linguistic ranks or levels with the rank of the word sentence.
- d. Text or Discourse type Restricted: It deals with the problems of translating specific types or genre.
- e. Time Restricted Translation Theory: It is concerned with the translation of contemporary text and the translation of texts from an earlier period (cross temporal translation)
- f. Problem Restricted Trans Theory: It is concerned with one or more specific problems e.g. the problem of equivalence or variance hence it is theory about theory or in other words examining theory on the light of theory.

➤ Applied Translation Studies:

- It includes:
- 1] Translator – Training
  - 2] Translation – Aids
  - 3] Translation – Criticism

**The Function of Translation:**

The process of translation is concerned with world literature and hence with many languages as well as with many cultures and societies. It, therefore demands much attention on the both the ends of the source language and the target language. As translation serves multiple functions on these two ends it is of great significance.

Translation is a process of negotiating between two cultures. It shapes the tradition by way of interpreting one civilization into another; and same is the other way round. It serves the purpose of international mediator for the process of Influence and Reception.

There are two broad views prevalent about the function/nature of translation. Many critics are of the opinion that translation is an art, on the other hand many other believe that it is a science. So far as word to word translation is concerned it can be considered as science. For the discrimination between thin lines of difference in the given two languages, it is not merely a science but an art with an adept skill needed in the process. In this reference, Eugene Needa has observed:

*“...translation is more a science. It is also a skill and in the ultimate analysis, fully satisfactory translation is always an art.”*

### **The function of a Good Translator:**

After the ample discussion the function of translation, questions that are raised, such as: who could be a good translator? And what is a good translation/translator? Need to worked upon.

The good translator has to have knowledge of both source and target languages. Unlike the former in the later a translator has to have greater command. To translate one language into another, a translator faces great challenge because he has to convey the main or root ideas completely and carefully into another. Therefore I. A. Richards has said:

***“Translation may probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos.”***

Hence, the job of a translator is difficult and hard but at the same time it is of great importance in the present age of globalization that one cannot do without translation.

Moreover, to be a good translator, a person has not only to be a bilingual but also to be a bicultural. It is because the process of translation is not only the transformation of one language into another but also the transformation of one cultural discipline into another. In this respect, John Fletcher has observed:

***“The translator has been the ubiquitous in the emporium of culture.”***

Regarding the function of a good translator Goethe suggested two maxims for the same:

***“One demands that the author belonging to some other nation should be brought over to us (target reader) so that we can regard him as our own.”***

The other demands that with the help of translation, there would be opportunity for us to know about circumstances, manner of speaking and peculiarities of the author.

On the other hand, a Gujarati scholar, Prof. Chandrakant Topiwala has put the function of a translator in regional expression in the following manner:

***“Translator should not suffer from Narad syndrome and have to keep both the functions of text as well as of the reader.”***

Voltaire believed that word to word translation is not good:

***“It may indeed be said that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.”***

He thought that words are merely body of the work, but the ideas living inside are the spirit of the work and for a good translation the spirit should be alive.

### **Translation in Comparative Studies:**

Very often translation has been regarded as an activity involving little talent and a lesser degree of creativity. Hillarie Belloc has stated in this connection that:

***“The art of translation is a subsidiary art and derivative. On this account it has never been granted the dignity of original***

*work and has suffered too much in the general judgment of letter.”*

Besides, there are certain schools of thought that stood against the idea of translation. According to ‘The Binary Comparative Studies’ model, a good comparatist should read original texts in the original languages. A Binary model considers original text/language as an infinitely superior form of reading and form which considered translation as inferior and marginal

However, for the study of Comparative Literature the process of translation has its own importance. In Comparative Studies it helps to compare two literatures of different languages, authors, works and literary forms. Translation works as a guide for those who do not know other languages. It introduces the literary forms and humanity to the other people and widens the hidden meaning of language and the capacity of expression.

### **Summing up:**

The case for Translation Studies and for translation itself is summed up by Octavio Paz in his short work on translation. All text, he claims, being part of a literary system descended from and related to other systems, are ‘translations of translation of translation’:

*“Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is entirely a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text.”*

# **A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSLATION THEORY**

## **Introduction:**

The theory of literary translation by itself constitutes an interesting domain of much theoretical debate within the larger ambit of translation studies. The domain of literary translation involves a convergence of linguistic stylistics, critical theoretical creative practices in complex and unusual ways. Literary translations by their very nature raise questions fundamental to both language and linguistic, on the one hand and to wider literary and cultural issues on the other. They help to widen the scope of linguistic studies; and by their own merit, they may also find a specific place in literary studies and hence, exert tremendous influence as was done by the translations of the Bible and by the works of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, etc.

## **The Roman Translations:**

In the 'early period' it was with the Roman's translations and later on, the translations of the Bible that spurred on initial literary translation theory. The Romans translated well-known Greek texts without inhibition and Cicero and Horace were amongst the first theorists. Cicero's sensitivity to translation can be gauged from one of his remarks.

*“If I rendered word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I rather anything in the order or wording I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translation.”*

Horace, too, is aware of a similar dilemma when he advises a would-be translator to avoid being a slave to the original text though he did allow the use of a new expression. The Romans permitted the use of new words, expression etc in translations as one of their aims was the enrichment of their own literary tradition. They thus made a significant distinction between 'word to word translation' and 'sense for sense translation'.

## **The Bible Translation:**

The Bible translation in the early period saw the rise of vernaculars all over Europe. The translations were also used as a weapon against the dogmatic beliefs prevalent in church practices as well as, in the emergence of new nation's states. John Wycliffe, who was the first to translate the Bible considered comparison of complex meanings of words and grammatical structures as necessary steps in the translation process. These were the broad outlines accepted by translators in other languages. Some of them even wanted to produce an accessible and an aesthetically satisfying style in the target language text. It may be said that the chief aims of the Bible translations were both intelligibility and a gratifying style.

## **The Renaissance Translation:**

The Renaissance style of translation can be said to be one of creative appropriations. Mathiesson's (1931) study gives a number of examples of appropriation by the English translation/translators e.g. by North in his translation of Plutarch. Within the domain of poetry Wyatt and Surrey's translations reveal creativity. Wyatt in his translation of Plutarch's sonnets does much more than a 'line by line' translation. He enhances the sense of 'I' so that his translations have an immediate impact on the readers, and also look like contemporary poems.

## **Translation in Seventeenth Century:**

Mid-seventeenth Century onwards rationalism and inductive reasoning began to dominate literary criticism. Rules of aesthetic production began to be formulated by taking the classical texts as models (Neo-Classicism). Notions of imitation and decorum gained ground.

John Dryden in his preface to Ovid's *Epistles* (1680) outlined a rough theory of translation. He distinguished between:

- (1) **Metaphrase**
- (2) **Imitation and**
- (3) **Paraphrase**

The prescriptive approach, in fact downgraded both Metaphrase and imitation. Metaphrase according to Dryden, referred to a word-by-word and line-by-line translation of the text in one language into that of another; Imitation referred to a free translation. Dryden was critical of Ben Jonson's literal translation in *Art of Poetry* (exhibiting metaphrase) and also Cowley's *Imitations* of Pindar (1656) for while rendering the 'Pindarique', Cowley had indulged in free flights of verbal fancy. Dryden viewed such imitation as 'transmigration'. True to the Neo Classical spirit of 'Decorum' he favoured 'Paraphrase', which meant translation with some latitude, resulting in a 'sense for sense' translation. Like Cicero, Dryden's aim was to assimilate Virgil's Latin to the Restoration English and in the process to enrich it.

Dryden's views on translation were also echoed by Alexander Pope who too favoured the middle path and wanted the spirit of the original text to be captured in the translated text. He also laid emphasis on the stylistic details of texts.

### **Translation in 18<sup>th</sup> century:**

The precepts of Dryden and Pope were followed into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Pope* (1779-80) held the view that a translator has the right to be read in his own terms; justifying thereby Pope's translations addressed to his own time and country. There were also, around this time, large scale translations of already translated text in order to make them appropriate to contemporary taste and language.

By the end of the eighteenth century Alexander Fraser Tytler published, *The Principles of Translation* (1791) which was the first study of its kind in the English language. Amongst others, Tytler mentioned, three basic principles:

- (a) *The translation must retain the complete idea of the original work;*
- (b) *The style and manner of writing should be of the same type as the original; and*
- (c) *The translation should have the ease of the source language text.*

Tytler did not favour Dryden's concept of 'Paraphrase' for even this, according to him, led to loose translations. He, however, was in favour of 'Omissions' and 'Additions' in the translation to clarify ambiguities.

### **Translation in Romantic Age:**

The Romantics in the early nineteenth century were able to give the art of translation a new twist. They rejected the rationalism of the preceding century and emphasized the crucial role of imagination. Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* had distinguished between 'Fancy' and 'Imagination' giving the latter sole powers of creativity. Thus, translation too was viewed in terms of imagination i. e. as a higher creative activity. Webb (1976) showed from Shelley's writing that he appreciated translation for their ideas and other literary feature. The Romantics, too, favoured the use of a created language text an element of 'Strangeness'. Shelley aptly summarizes the Romantic predicament in *The Defense of Poetry*.

*“It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as to seek to transfuse from one language into the another creation of poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flowerer and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel.”*

### **The Victorian Translation:**

The Victorian translators were also concerned with the expression of the remoteness of time and place of the original text. In fact, they added a new dimension to the art of translation i. e. of archaism. This added an element of obscurity to literary translations. Matthew Arnold had delivered a series of lectures entitled *On Translating Homer* (1862). For him the true judges of texts are scholars and it is only they who can judge whether a translation has more or less the same effect as the original. His advice is:

*“Let him ask how his work affects those who both know Greek (the language of the original text) and can appreciate poetry.”*

According to Arnold a translator must serve the original text, and the target text reader must be brought to the source language text, through the transition. This view appeared to be close to the Neo-Classical perspective though unlike them the Victorian did not see translations as a means of enriching their own culture.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, around the same time, propagated a literal perspective of translation while discussing his own translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*; he considered rhyme to be more trimming. Thus, stylistic features were for him distinct from the spirit of the work.

In contrast to Longfellow’s view was that of Edward Fitzgerald. In his *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1858), he demonstrated that instead of leading the TL reader to the SL text, it was possible to bring a version of the SL text into TL culture as a ‘living entity’, for he preferred to have:

*“...a live sparrow than a stuffed eagle.”*

### **Twentieth Century Translation:**

The most far-reaching impact on twentieth century translation theory has been from the discipline of linguistics. In this century most linguistic theorist had developed in isolation from the main traditions of the literary stream. Hence, the late impact of these theories on the world of literary translation various theories like American Structuralism, Chomskyan ‘transformational theory’, Hallidayan ‘Systemic theory’ etc, had to interact with literary text and thinking. It was in the 1980’s that some attempts were made to combine both linguistic and literary theories of translation act. Language and literary texts are now seen to be rooted in the cultural matrices of a speech community. Thus the view is gaining ground that,

*“Each society will interpret a message in terms of its own culture. The receptor audience will decode the translation in terms of its own culture and experience, hot in terms of the author and audience of the original documents.”*

### **Summing up:**

Thus, till the 20th century, and well into it as well the translator either favoured literal translations or with some latitude or translation with maximum latitude. Through the centuries while speculation has been revolving around a literal or a free translation, the consensus and the commonsense approach appears to be favouring the middle course which would help refraining not only the sense but also the form of the original. Formal insides being provided by linguistic will go a long way in making art of translation a ‘Scientific’ one.

# TRANSLATION AS AN INTERPRETATION

## Introduction:

*“But what shall I say about those who really deserve to be called traitors, rather than translators, since they betray the authors they try to make known robbing them of their glory and at the same time, seducing ignorant readers by showing them black instead of white?”*

-Joaquin Du Belly

The ontology of work of art defies any dichotomy between form and content for what is communicated is the work of art itself. This is precisely the reason why in ancient times the ‘Translator’ was looked upon as ‘Traitor’.

Nevertheless, translation is an ongoing process and is practiced all over the world. It has a definite practical utility. It is not possible for anybody to learn all the languages of the world so one has to remain content with whatever is offered in the form of translation. But one should always bear in mind that what one gets is not the substance but shadow; which gives us only an idea of what the original work of art is like.

## Are Translation and Interpretation two different activities?

It has often been argued that Translation and Interpretation are two separate or different activities and that it is the duty of the translator to “translate” what is there and not to ‘interpret’ it. The fallacy of such an argument is obvious. As Montaigne aptly says:

*“We do not need interpretation, but we need interpretation of an interpretation”*

Since, each reading is an interpretation, the two activities of translation and interpretation cannot be separated.

## The Term - Interpretation:

In the narrow sense, to interpret a work of literature is to specify the meaning of its language by analysis, paraphrase and commentary. In a broader sense, to interpret a work of literature is to make clear the artistic features and purports in the overall work to which language serves as the medium.

Interpretation in this sense includes the analysis of such matters as the work’s genre, elements, component, structure, theme and effects.

## Two Outlooks for Interpretation:

There are mainly two outlooks for interpretation:

- Traditional outlook of Interpretation: According to the Traditional view of Interpretation, it is a sacred task of a highly learned mind. It needs preparation, especially in the context of Religious terms (i.e. symbols, pragmatic and mystic pronouncement etc.)
- Post-colonial outlook of Interpretation: Post-colonial view, on the other hand says there is nothing like fact or sacred about interpretation as fact itself is an interpretation.

*“There are no facts there are only interpretation” – Nietzsche*

For instance, in *The Tempest* Shakespeare interpreted his ‘ideas’. Ideas, that come out of experience, real or artificial intuition or observation. Now, as one tries to interpret *The Tempest*, he interprets the interpretation of Shakespeare. Thus, the text needs not be interpreted as it is already interpreted. Therefore, Derrida goes to the extent of saying that,

*“There is nothing outside the text.”*

Now, on the basis of the above discussion scholars have proclaimed that every work of art has to go through three filters of ideology. They are as follows:

1) Ideology of Language:

As every language has its own ideology; and a work of art written in that language is certainly influenced by that ideology.

2) Ideology of an author:

The author has his own ideology (that comes out of author's experience intuition etc.) that he reflects in his work.

3) Ideology of Reader:

The ideologies of language and author that are reflected in a work of art would be interpreted as per the ideology of its Reader.

The translator would fall under the third filter of ideology that is the Ideology of Reader. As it is said aptly....

***"... A translator is a reader first and whatever thereafter."***

Moreover as language is a product of culture, a literary work that was constructed by making use of language is also a product of that culture. Thus when a translator, translates a language into another language he / she would translate one culture into another. Hence, Translation as an interpretation is an interpretation of one culture into another culture.

1) **Poetry:**

Poetry is known, notoriously, for its untranslatability while the semantic content of a poem can be translated into another language; the sonic content of it can never be translated. Every poem has a definite sound pattern and in a good poem the sound pattern is integral to the poem. To change the sound pattern is to mutilate the poem. Even if one tries to replace one sound pattern by a closely similar or parallel sound pattern in the target language it would be in the words of Croce.

***"...a matter of faithless beauty"***

In his book *Translating Poetry* Seven Strategies and a Blueprint, Andre Lefevere catalogues, seven different strategies of translating poetry:

- (1) Phonemic Translation
- (2) Literal Translation
- (3) Metrical Translation
- (4) Poetry into Prose
- (5) Rhymed Translation
- (6) Blank Verse Translation
- (7) Interpretation

Lefevere comes to the conclusion, that all the six methods concentrates on one aspect of the SL text or the other at the expense of the text as a whole. Under the heading of Interpretation Lefevere discusses what he calls 'Versions' where the substance of the SL text is retained but form is changed and 'Imitations', where the translator produces a poem of his own which has:

***"...only title and point of departure, in common with the source text."***

Thus, in interpretation the change is so fundamental that it becomes well-nigh impossible to recognize the SL poem in the translated TL poem. For instance, here are the lines from Tagore's poem in literal translation and then the interpretation of it.

The literal translation:

*“The branch of a mango tree tells the branch of an acacia, why do you get burnt into cinders in an oven? Alas, alas! How grim is your destiny!” The acacia replies. ‘I am not at all sorry for that o branch of a mango tree your success lies in turning myself to ashes.’*

Interpretation:

*“The burning log bursts into flame and cries. This is my flower my death.”*

The theme is the same in both the poems, but it has taken on two completely different forms. The Bengali poem celebrates the idea of renunciation and luxuries on it. On the other hand, the English poem, by contrast, is marked by a tragic grandeur meant by ‘reincarnation’ when the poet said:

*“When poems are changed from one language into another they acquire a new quality and a new spirit the idea get new birth and are reincarnated.”*

## 2) Drama:

Drama is a form where much is not said but is seen and understood, unlike fiction; drama does not provide writer’s a presence to the reader as a tool to understand the play. Thus reading and understanding of a play which is basically a visual art is a difficult process. If this is the case with primary reading and interpretation of the drama, translation makes it all the more complicated. For instance, ‘Hayavadana’ is an out and out Indian text Girish Karnad, the writer himself has translated the text into English and he says in his note to the play,

*“In translating this play, I have not tried to be consistent while rendering the songs into English some have been put in a loose verse form while for others only a straight forward prose version has been given”*

K. Suneetha Rani in translating *Hayavadana* (English) into Telugu, she makes it clear that she has not taken the kannada text, of Girish Karnad himself, into consideration, as she is curious to know that:

*“What happens when a native culture told in English is translated into one of the native languages.”*

Further, she confesses that though the play offers a plethora of meaning and a range of interactions.

*“As a reader I could not understand or perceive those many multiple interpretations.”*

She discusses a few problems that she faces while translating. For instance, in Telugu, like in other Indian languages, to use plural for a single person is a respectable term and also a term that does not represent intimacy. Now, here in the play Devadatta and Kapila are bosom friends. Devadatta marries Padmini to whom Kapila is also fascinated. When these characters meet in intimacy, how would they address each other? In English that problem does not bother the reader but in Telugu it is one of the deciding factors.

Moreover with this minor change of singular and plural it becomes a discourse of caste and class politics as Devadatta, belongs to upper strata of society and Kapila to the lower. Here, the question of a writer’s intention fades away for a while and the translator’s interpretation becomes prominent (depending upon which interpretation of the play he/she wants to highlight). This is not because of the translator’s intention to take liberties with the source text, but in an anxiety to do justice to what the writer has tried to say.

## 3) Prose:

Unlike the translator of poetry or drama, the translator of prose needs not maintain the sonic effect as in the translation of poetry nor does he need to keep visual effect in mind as in the translation of drama. However, the complexities of prose translation and interpretation are not lesser. As worlds take different meanings and the

sentence structure differs from language to language. And in translating cultural terms from one language to another the task of interpretation becomes even more complex.

For instance, Narsihrav Diwveta, in his critical essay *Kavita ane Rajkiy Sanchalan (Poetical and Political Discourse)* writes a statement:

***“Eva Dushaasanone shasan aapanar Bhimsen kyare pragat thase?” [When shall Bhimsen - the provider of ‘shaasan’ to ‘dushaasan’ appear?]***

Here, the figures, of Dushasan and Bhimsen are taken from the *Mahabharat*, where Dushasan was killed by Bhima. Narshirav has given dichotomy of meaning to the figure of Dushasan. In its literal meaning ‘Dushasan’ stands for a villainous character as against Bhimsen; on the other hand he represents ‘Maladministration’ as against good administration. Hence, while translating the term Dushaasan, translator either shall have to go for word to a word translation, where meaning will be compromised or would have to retain the term, where the sense will not be conveyed.

**Summing up:**

Hence, in translation, the translator’s business is not just to...

***“...translate Language into Language, but posies into poesies...”***

That in pouring out of one language into another, it will be evaporable, and if a new spirit be not added in the translation, there will remain nothing but a caput mortem.

The issue of Translation as an interpretation can best be concluded, with what Shelley says very beautifully.

***“The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower.***

# Auchitya in Translation

## Introduction:

In I. A. Richards' article entitled *Towards a Theory of Translation* he observes that translation:

*"...may probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos."*

It is dangerous to fully disagree with Richards. However with affordable partial disagreement with him it can be said that translation is not 'probably' the most complex type of event but it, in fact is.

With the emergence of multilingual society all over the globe and reduction of the globe to a village, translation has emerged as,

*"An invisible yet indispensable bridge not only for literary but for socio-cultural and even commercial translation as well"*

Admittedly, translation has attained more importance than ever before and much has been said and written on this aspect. However in an almost free for all situations on transnational scenario, the question of 'Auchitya' (Propriety) of transnational operations has often remained unattended.

## The term Auchitya:

Indian poetics, on one hand has recognized the significance of pure literary elements and discussed and analyzed them purely subjectively. On the other hand, it has concentrated on their Propriety, in its *Auchitya* theory. Raghavan in *Some Concept of the Alankarshastra* remarks:

*"Auchitya is a very large principle within whose orbit comes everything else. All the other theories run at the back of Auchitya, which leads the van."*

Moreover, he says, if there is harmony or beauty as such, innate in every part of great poetry, it is this *Auchitya*.

Whereas Abhinavgupta criticizes those critics, who put *Auchitya* as more essential to poetry than even *Rasa*. He says that one cannot be indiscreetly using the word *Auchitya* by itself; further he defines *Auchitya* as.

*"A relation and that to which things are on should be in that relation must be first grasped."*

Hence, according to Abhinavgupta, *Auchitya* is understandable without something else to which things are 'Uchit' - appropriate.

Thus, Indian poetics related critical concerns to non-literary elements, special and temporal factors and their propriety. The western poetics however is almost silent on the question of *Auchitya*, but it should not be ignored here that Indian poetics did not consider certain non-literary elements like society and history as deeply and intensely as its western counterpart did with its sociology approach to literature in particular.

### **Auchitya In Translation:**

*Auchitya* in translation without moving too far from its meaning in Indian poetics should mean:

***“Propriety in selection of a text for translation, of methodology and strategy used for translation, and of placing the translated text in proper perspective.***

So, that the source writer's/text's intended and not merely articulated meaning finds its proper expression in the target translation.

The prime purpose of translation is furthered and even defeated when the foundation of translation of translation is laid on textual torture, and translation, instead of placing source writer's concerned feelings and thoughts in totality in proper perspective for its target readers, focuses on some particular and thus he either distorts the source writer's creative vision or misinterprets it.

That is why it becomes imperative to think of preservation of non-literary elements in the translated text along with the preservation of literary elements since the choice of translation rests with the translator, so it is naturally expected that the translated text, when it will emerge as a new creation in the target language, then it should unfailingly fulfill the social responsibility and contribute to the society in its own way. Therefore, if translation is a political activity in that case by associating it with social responsibility its political sensitiveness can be minimized to a large extent.

### **Translatorial Responsibility:**

The moot point is that translation is responsible to the society of which the source author, translator and reader are also integral parts.

Translator is not only responsible towards the source, the source text/writer and the asource culture but to the society also for which the translation is attempted. In a sense, if it is the responsibility of every writer and reader whether it is the translator or the reader of translations whom we have called “trans-reader”.

In this sense, both of them are readers. Since between translation and trans-reader only translated text and in a way a translator also exists, so it is obligatory on the part of the translator (a living agent) that the thoughts and feelings of the source writer find a judicious expression in the translated text through proper perspective. Translational act will attain propriety only after the fulfillment of this “translatorial responsibility”.

### **Appropriateness of Perspectives:**

In fact, a translatorial act does not come to an end with mere translation. It is imperative for a translator to see to it that his translations do not toy with the vision of source text/writer and the society for which the translation is targeted, and if it is so then he should court some more trouble, to aid to his already painful fate, and add on in the form of appendixes and footnotes everything that would put source textual / authorial intentions in proper perspective.

A perspective should not be used to gloss over the demerits of the source writer / text or to demolish or establish some writer / writing, because excessive use of historical and social references of many obliterate qualitative distinction between a good or bad, or between great or mediocre work of literature.

Contextually, it is possible that a perspeclity may succeed in presenting relatively weaker text as better than what it is, whereas the fact remains that,

*“...a good text is one which can stand on its own without any clutches of context or perspectives.”*

**Summing Up :**

Hence, propriety of translation demands that a translator should put the source authors views in proper perspective to do justice to the culture at least which deserve greater caution lest the writers, social reformers and thinkers should be misunderstood and hijacked by vested political interests.

However, the problem of Auchiya or responsibility has remained more or less unattended. But its negligence may lead to misinterpretation, distortion over/under/mis/ interpretation and ever to much social dis-sense.

It is true that a translator's competence should not be questioned but it shall also be erroneous to ignore the fact that at times a few people read and interpret for the whole trans-reader's community and all these reader's and interpreter's sincerity is limited to their trans-reader's community.

# CENRTAL ISSUES ON TRANSLATION:

[*Translation Studies* –Susan Basnett]

## ➤ Language and Culture:

The first step towards an examination of the processes of translation has a central core of linguistic activity, if belongs most properly to semiotics, the sciences that studies sign systems or structures, sign processes and sign functions (Hawker, structuralism and semiotics, London 1977)

Beyond the notion stressed by the narrow linguistic approach, that translation involves the transfer of ‘meaning’ contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of dictionary and grammar, the process also involves a whole set of extra linguistic criteria.

Edward Sapir claims that ‘language is a guide to social reality’ and that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. Experience he asserts is largely determined by the language habits of the community and each separate structure represents a separate reality.

*“No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different label attached.”*

Sapir’s thesis, endorsed later by ‘Benjamin Lee Whorf, is related to the more recent view advanced by the soviet semiotician, Juri Lotman that language is a modeling system. Lotman describes literature and art in general as secondary modeling systems, as an indication of the fact that they are derived from the primary modeling system of language and declares as firmly as Sapir or wharf that,

*“No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture, and no culture can exist which does not have as its center, the structure of natural language,”*

Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life energy. In the same way the surgeon operating on the heart cannot neglect the body that surrounds it. So the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.

## Types of Translation:

In his article *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* Roman Jakobson distinguishes three types of translation.

- I. Intra-lingual translation or rewording (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same languages).
- II. Inter-lingual translation or translation proper (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other languages).
- III. Inter-semiotic translation or transmutation (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems).

Having established these three types, of which (2) translation proper describes the process of transfer form SL to TL, Jakobson goes on immediately to point to the central problem in all types: that while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of code unit or message, there is ordinarily no full equivalence through translation even apparent synonym does not yield equivalence and Jakobson shows how interlingual translation often has to restore a combination of code units in order to fully interpret the meaning of a single unit. Hence a dictionary or so called synonyms may give a perfect synonym for an ideal or a vehicle as a synonym for conveyance but in neither case can there be complete equivalence, since each unit contains within itself a set of non-transferable association and connotations.

Because complete equivalence (in the sense of synonyms or sameness) cannot take place in any of his categories, Jakobson declares that all poetic art is therefore technically untranslatable.

*“Only creative transposition is possible: either intralingual transposition form one poetic shape into another, or interlingual transposition from one language into another, or finally inter-semiotic transposition form one system of signs into another eg, from verbal art into music, dance, cinema or painting.”*

What Jakobson is saying here is taken up again by Georges Mounin, the French theorist, who perceives translation as a series of operations of which the starting point and the end product are significations and functions within a given culture. So, for example, the English word ‘pastry’, if translated into Italian without regard to its signification it will not be able to perform its function of meaning within a sentence, even though there may be a dictionary ‘equivalent’ for ‘pasta’ as a completely different associative field. In this case the translator has to resort to a combination of units in order to find an approximate equivalent, Jakobson gives the example of the Russian word ‘syr’ (a food made of fermented pressed curds), which translates roughly into English as ‘cottage cheese’. In this case, Jakobson claims the translation is only an adequate interpretation of an alien code unit and equivalence is impossible.

### **Decoding and Recoding:**

The translator, therefore operates with a criteria that transcends the purely linguistic. Eugene Nidas’ model of the translation process illustrates the stages involved:

#### **SL Text → Analysis → Transfer → Restructuring → Receptor Language Translation**

As examples of some of the complexities involved in the interlingual translation of what might seem to be uncontroversial items, consider the question of translating ‘yes’ and ‘hello’ into French, German and Italian. This task would seem, at first glance, to be straight forward, since all are Indo-European languages closely related lexically and syntactically, and terms of greeting and assent are common to all three. For ‘yes’ standard dictionaries give:

French:           Oui; Si

German:           ja

Italian:           si

It is immediately obvious that there exist of two terms in French for ‘yes’, that does not exist in the other languages. Further investigation shows that whilst ‘oui’ is the generally used term ‘si’ is used specifically in cases of contradiction, contention and dissent. The English translator therefore, must be mindful of this rule when translating the English word that remains the same to all contexts.

When the use of the affirmative in conversational speech is considered, another question arises. ‘yes’ cannot always be translated into single words ‘oui’, ‘ja’ or ‘si’, in French, German and Italian all frequently double or ‘string’ affirmatives in a way that is outside standard English procedures (eg, si, si, si, ja, ja, etc). Hence the Italian or German translation of ‘yes’ by a single word can at times appear excessively brusque, whilst the stringing together of affirmatives in English is so hyperbolic that it often creates a comic effect.

With the translation of the word ‘hello’,-the Standard English form of friendly greeting, the problems are multiplied. The dictionaries give:

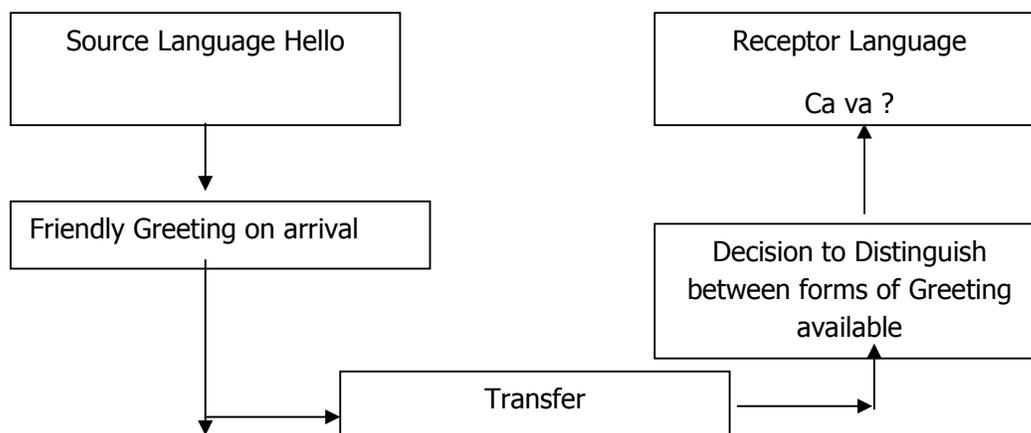
French:           ca va? hallo

German:           wie geht’s : hallo

Italian:           ola, pronto, ciao

Whilst English does not distinguish between the word used when greeting someone face to face or when answering the telephone, French, German and Italian all do make that distinction. The Italian pronto can

only be used as a telephonic greeting, like the German *hallo*, moreover French and German use forms of greetings as brief rhetorical questions, whereas the same question in English. ‘How are you?’ or ‘How do you do?’ is only used in more formal situation. The Italian *ciao*, by far the most common form of greeting in all sections of Italian society is used equally on arrival and departure; being a word of greeting linked to a moment of contact between individuals either coming or going and not to the specific context of arrival on initial encounter. So, for example, if the translator faced with the task of translating ‘hello’ into French must first extract from the term a core of meaning and the stages of the process, following which Midas diagram might look like this:



What has happened during the translation process is that the notion of greeting has been isolated and the word ‘hello’ has been replaced by a phrase carrying the same notion. Jakobson would describe this as interlingual transposition, while Ludskanov would call it a semiotic transformation:

*“semiotic transformations (T.) are the replacements of the signs encoding a message by signs of another code, preserving (so far as possible in the face of entropy) invariant information with respect to a given system of reference.”*

In the case of ‘yes’ the invariant information is affirmation, whilst in the case of ‘hello’ the invariant is the notion of greeting. But at the same time the translator has to consider other criteria, eg, the existence of the *oui / si* rule in French, the stylistic function of stringing affirmatives the social context of greetings whether telephonic or face to face, the class position and status of the speakers and the resultant weight of a colloquial greeting in different societies. All such factors are involved in the translation even of the most apparently straight forward word.

The question of semiotic transformation is further extended when considering the translation of a simple noun, such as the English ‘butter’. Following Saussure, the structural relationship, between the signified (signifier) or concept of butter and the signifier (significant) or the sound image made by the word butter constitutes the linguistic sign butter. And since language is perceived as a system of interdependent relations it follows that butter operates within English as a noun in a particular structural relationship. But Saussure also distinguished between the systematic (or horizontal) relations that a word has with the words that surround it in a sentence and the structure as a whole. Moreover, within the second secondary modeling system there is another type of associative relation and the translator, like the specialist in advertising techniques, must consider both the primary and secondary associative lines for butter. British English carries with it a set of association of wholesomeness, purity and high status (in comparison to margarine once perceived only as second rate butter though now marketed also as practical because it does not set hard under refrigeration)

When translating butter into Italian there is a straightforward word-for-word substitution; butter *burro*. Both butter and *burro* describe the product made from milk and marked as a creamy coloured slab of edible grease for human consumption. And within the separate cultural contexts butter and *burro* cannot be considered as signifying the same. In Italy *burro*, normally light coloured and unsalted, is used primarily for cooking and carries no association of high status, whilst in Britain butter, most often bright yellow and salted, is used for spreading on bread and less frequently in cooking. Because of the high status of butter, the phrase bread and butter is the accepted usage even where the product used is actually margarine. So there is a distinction both



points out directly linked to English social behavioral patterns, the translator putting the phrase into French or German has to contend with the problem of the non-existence of a similar convention. Likewise the English translator of the French *Bon appetite* has a similar problem for again the utterance is situation bound. As an example of complexities involved here, let us take a hypothetical dramatic situation in which the phrase ‘*Bon appetite*’ becomes crucially significant.

*“A family group has been quarreling bitterly, the unity of the farming has collapsed, unforgivable things have been said. But the celebratory dinner to which they have all come is about to be served, and the family sit at the table in silence ready to eat. The plates are filled, everyone sits waiting, the father breaks the silence to wish them all ‘Bon appetite’ and the meal begins.”*

Whether the phrase is used mechanically, as part of the daily ritual whether it is used ironically, sadly or even cruelly is not specified. On a stage, the actor and director would come to a decision about how to interpret the phrase based on their concept of characterization and of the overall meaning and structure of the play. The interpretation would be rendered through voice inflexion. But whatever the interpretation, the significations of the sample utterance cutting into situation of great tension would remain.

The translator has to take the question of interpretation into account in addition to the problem of selecting a TL, phrase which will have a roughly similar meaning. Exact translation is impossible; Good appetite in English used outside a structured sentence is meaningless. Nor is there any English phrase in general use that fulfils the same function as the French. There are, however, a series of phrases that might be applicable in certain situations the colloquia ‘Dig in’ or ‘Tuck in’ the more formal ‘Do start’, or even the ritualistically apologetic ‘I hope you like it’, or ‘I hope it’s alright’. In determining what to use in English the translator must:

- 1) **Accept the untranslatability of the SL phrase on the TL on the linguistic level.**
- 2) **Accept the lack of a similar cultural convention in the TL.**
- 3) **Consider the range of TL phrase available, having regard to the presentation of class status, age, sex of the speaker, his relationship to the listeners and the context of their meeting in the SL.**
- 4) **Consider the significance of the phrase in its particular context i.e. as a moment of high tension in the dramatic text.**
- 5) **Replace in the TL the invariant core of the SL phrase in its two referential systems (the particular system of the text and the system of culture out of which the text has sprung)**

Levy the great Czech translation scholar, insisted that any contracting or omitting of difficult expression in translating was immoral. The translator, he believed, had the responsibility of finding a solution to the most daunting of problems and he declared that the functional view must be adopted with regard not only to meaning but also to style and form. The studies on Bible translation and the documentation of the way in which individual translators of the Bible attempt to solve their problems through ingenious solution is a particularly rich source of examples of semiotic transplantation.

In translating ‘*Bon appetite*’ in the scenario given above, the translator was able to extract a set of criteria from the text in order to determine what a suitable TL rendering might be, but clearly in a different context the TL phrase would alter. The emphasis always in translation is on the reader or listener, and the translator must tackle the SL text in such a way that the TL version will correspond to the SL version. The nature of that correspondence may vary considerably but the principle remains constant. Hence, Albrecht Neubert’s view that Shakespeare’s sonnet,

*“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”*

cannot be semantically translated into a language where summers are unpleasant is perfectly proper just as the concept of God the Father cannot be translated into a language where the deity is female. To attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture on to the TL culture is dangerous ground and the translator should not be tempted by the school that pretends to determine the original intentions of an author on the basis of a self-contained text. The translator of the TL text has a clear moral responsibility to the TL readers.

## **Problems of Equivalence:**

The translation of idioms takes us a stage further in considering the question of meaning and translation of idioms, like puns, are culture bound. The Italian idiom *'menando il can per l'aia'* provides a good example of the kind of shift that takes place in the translation process. Translated literally, the sentence, *"Giovanni sta menando it an per l'aia"* becomes, *"John is leading his dog around the threshing flour."*

The image conjured up by this sentence is somewhat startling and, unless the context referred quite specifically to such a location the sentence would seem obscure and virtually meaningless. The English idiom that most closely corresponds to the Italian is 'to beat about the bush'. Hence, the sentence correctly translated becomes:

***"John is beating about the bush"***

Both English and Italian have corresponding idiomatic expressions that render the idea of preverication and so in the process of inter-lingual translation one idiom is substituted for another. That substitution is made not on the basis of the linguistic elements in the phrase, nor on the basis of a corresponding or similar image contained in the phrase, but on the function of the idiom. The SL phrase is replaced by a TL phrase that serves the same purpose in the TL culture, and the process here involves the substitution of SL sign for TL sign. Degut's remarks about the problems of translating metaphor are interesting when applied also to the problem of tackling idioms:

***"Since a metaphor in the SL is by definition, a new place of performance, a semantic novelty, it can clearly have no existing 'equivalence' in the TL, what is unique can have no counterpart. Here the translator's bilingual competence – 'le snes', as Mallarme put it 'de ce qui est dans la langue et de ce quin'en est pas'- is of help to him only in the negative sense of felling him that any 'equivalence' in this case cannot be 'found' but will have to be 'crated'. The crucial question that arises is thus whether a metaphor can, strictly speaking, be translated as such, or whether it can only be reproduced in some way."***

But Dagut's distinction between 'translation' and 'reproduction', like Catford's distinction between, 'literal' and 'free' translation does not take into account the view that sees translation as semiotic transformation. In his definition of translation equivalence Popovic distinguishes four types:

- 1) Linguistic equivalence where there is homogeneity on the linguistic level of both SL and TL texts, i.e. word for word translation.
- 2) Paradigmatic equivalence where there is equivalence of the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis' i.e. elements of grammar, which Popovic sees as being a higher category than lexical equivalence.
- 3) Textual (Syntagmatic) equivalence where there is equivalence of the syntagmatic structuring of a text, i.e. equivalence of form and shape.

The case of the translation of the Italian idiom therefore involves the determining of stylistic equivalence, which results in the substitution of the SL idiom by an idiom with an equivalent function in the TL.

Translation involves far more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages and, as can be seen in the translation of idioms and metaphors the process may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL text so as to achieve Popovic's goal of expressive identity between the SL and TL texts. But once the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence the problems of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to emerge.

Albrecht Norbert, whose work on translation is unfortunately not available to English readers, distinguishes between the study of translation as a process and as product. He states bluntly that; the "missing link" between both components of a complete theory of translation appears to be the theory of equivalence relations that can be conceived for both the dynamic and the static model. The problem of equivalence, a much-used and abused term in Translation Studies is of central importance, and although Norbert is right when he

stresses the need for a theory of equivalence relations, Raymond van den Broeck is also right when he challenges the excessive use of the term in Translation Studies and claims that the precise definition of equivalence in mathematics is a serious obstacle to its use in translation theory.

Eugene Nida distinguishes two types of equivalence, *formal* and *dynamic*, where formal equivalence ‘forces attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.’ Nida calls this type of translation a ‘gloss translation’, which aims to allow the reader to understand as much of the SL context as possible. Dynamic equivalence is based on the principle of equivalence effect, i.e. that the relationship between receiver and message should aim at being the same as that between the original receivers and the SL message. As an example of this type of equivalence, he quotes J. B. Phillips rendering of Romans 16:16, where the idea of ‘greeting with a holy kiss’ is translated as ‘as one another a hearty handshake all round’. With this example of what seems to be a piece of inadequate translation in poor taste, the weakness of Nida’s loosely defined types can clearly be seen. The principle of equivalence effect which has enjoyed great popularity in certain cultures at certain times involves us in areas of speculation and at times can lead to very dubious conclusions. So E. V. Rieu’s deliberate decision to translate Homer into English prose because the significance of the epic form in Ancient Greece could be considered equivalent to the significance of prose in modern Europe, is a case of dynamic equivalence applied to the formal properties of a text which shows that Nida’s categories can actually be in conflict with each other.

It is an established fact in Translation Studies that if a dozen translators tackle the same poem, they will produce a dozen different versions. And yet somewhere in those dozen versions there will be what Popovec calls the ‘invariant core’ of the original poem. This invariant core, he claims, is represented by stable, basic and constant semantic elements in the text, whose existence can be proved by experimental semantic condensation.

Transformations, or variants, are those changes which do not modify the core of meaning but influence the expressive form. In short, the invariant can be defined as that which exists in common between all existing translations of a single work. So the invariant is part of a dynamic relationship and should not be confused with speculative arguments about the ‘nature’, the ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ of the text; the ‘indefinable quality’ that translators are rarely supposed to be able to capture.

# **THE WAY IN WHICH CERTAIN BASIC LINES OF APPROACH TO TRANSLATION HAVE EMERGED:**

## **The 20th century translation:**

It is easy to see that we are living in a time of rapid and radical social changes. It is much less easy to grasp the fact that such changes will inevitably affect the natures of those academic disciplines that both reflect our society and help to shape it. Among these academic disciplines translation study stands not only as a part but as a 'jugular vein' of the whole academic arena. For which study *Today Encyclopedia Americana* says.

*“This art is as old as written language”*

Translation studies as being the “sap” of contemporary society, it is obvious to forecast that, by the twenty first century, translation studies will have forgotten its slightly apologetic beginnings, just as English studies has quite rightly forgotten its own not dissimilar beginnings. Indeed, now there are so many people working in the field of translation studies that some of the old assumptions about the marginality of this work have been radically challenged: principle among which is the notion that study of translation can be degraded to a sub-category of comparative literature. The current perspective reverse that assessment and proposes instead that comparative literature be considered as a branch of the much wider discipline that is translation studies.

The most important advancement in translation studies in the not cent derives from the ground work done by groups in Russia in the 1920s and subsequently by the Prague linguistic circle and its disciples. Volosinov's work on Marxism and philosophy; Mukarnsky's on the semiotics art; Jakobson, Prochazka and Levi on translation have all established new criteria for the foundation of a theory of translation.

## **Important Translation:**

In legacy, 20th century writers did not find a fertile land, but they ploughed with perspirations and as the result had a prosperous harvest. Amongst the stones of the farm there were British and American isolationism combined with anti theoretical development, which hindered in the filling. The steady growth of valuable works on translation in English, since the late 1950s has been noted. But it would be wrong to see the first half of the twentieth century as the waste land of English Translation Theory.

The lecture of Hilaire Belloc which is also known as 'tylorian' lecture on translation given in 1931 is a brief but highly intelligent and systematic approach to the practical problems of translations and to the whole question of the translated text. After him we can consider James Me Farlanes article “modes of Translation” (1953) raised to the level of the discussion of translation in English and has been described as the first publication in the west to deal with translation and translation from the modern interdisciplinary view and to set out a programme of research for scholars concerned with them as an object of study.

Some of the important translations are 'Rober Graves' translation of Dunean's *Pharsalia* (1957), Tagore's *Gitanjali*, Jackson Knight's *Aeneid* (1956) are the well-known British translations. When George Steiner taking a rather idiosyncratic view of translation history feels that although there is a profusion of pragmatic accounts by individuals the range of theoretic ideas remains small.

## **TRANSLATION IN INDIAN CONTEXT:**

*“The inmost creed of India is to find the one in the many, unify in diversity.”*

Whereas ‘other’ countries are places of enjoyment alone; Bharat-India is a holy land - the land of works.

*“In western metaphysics, translation is an exile and an exile is a metaphorical translation - a post Babel Crisis.”*

On the other hand Indian outlook for translation is inclusive because Indian has,

*“A culture that accepts metamorphosis as the basic principle of existence.”*

And its metaphysics is not haunted by the fear of exile. G. N. Devy notes that the whole *bhakti* movement of poetry in India had the desire of translating the language of spirituality from Sanskrit to the language of people.

### **Is There ‘An Indian School’ of Translation studies?**

Rebirth of a text in another language is the birth of a different species. The translated text is a different animal altogether. But the way of looking at this different animal in relation to earlier one in addition to its place and function in the territory it inhabits in the present birth depends greatly on frames through it is perceived. This framework is usually specific to culture metaphysics, history, politics and social institutions of the linguistic community which produces or receives translation. One wonders then, whether there are certain themes and concerns, which recur in writings on translation in India or more fashionably, whether there is some sort of ‘Indian School’ of Translation studies.

### **Translation-a Distinct Attempt to De-colonize:**

The increased interest seems to be symptomatic of a certain dramatic shift in academic values, concerns and mindset associated with English studies in India. This shift has been from uncritical acceptance of literatures in dominant western languages, their canons as well as their critical vocabulary, to historical and political context in which they are produced, circulated and consumed. There is a distinct attempt to de-colonize its outlook. The emphasis on translation, I feel is one of the cultured strategies for the agenda of de-colonization.

### **Choice of Source Language in Earlier Generation and Modernist Bilingual Poets:**

Closely allied with English studies establishment in India are the Indian writers writing in English. Many of them have traditionally been accomplished translators. ‘English studies’ has been one of the chief patrons of this species of writing in India. In the case of the earlier generation of writers like Sri Aurobindo or P. Lal, the source language was chiefly, Sanskrit and later on in the case of modernist bilingual poets like Dilip Chitre, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthashastry, and Arun Kolatkar, the source language is primarily their first language. The focus of these translators has been largely on medieval *bhakti* literature. Rabindranath Tagore’s translation of Kabir and Sri Aurobindo’s translation of ‘Vidyapati’ are the antecedents of these types of translations. Translation is deployed by the bilingual poet translator as a strategy to de-colonize their souls by translating what is considered as truly Indian. A noted poet and translator P. Lal has made a very significant comment about this strategic function of translation:

*“I soon realized that an excessive absorption in the milieu and tradition of English was discovered in me from the values that I found all round me as an experiencing Indian, so I undertook the translation of Indian in practice, mostly Hindu-sacred texts in the hope that the intimacy that only translation can give, would enable me to know better what the Indian myth was; how it invigorated Indian literature, and what values one*

*would pick up from it that would be of use to me as an ‘Indian’ human being and as an Indian using a so called foreign language, English, for the purpose of writing poetry.”*

In this light one can understand Dilip Chitre’s remark:

*“I have been working in a haunted shop ratted and shaken by the spirits of other literatures unknown to my ancestors... Europe has already haunted my house... I have to build a bridge within myself between India and Europe or else I become a fragmented person.”*

Many of these writers and translators grapple with the issue of identity and Indianness in their works and these themes very naturally emerge in their translation theory and practice. A. K. Ramanujan, who holds a unique place as a poet, translator and a theorist, and announced the great ambition to translate a non native reader into a native one as one of the main motivations behind translation, yet he too acknowledged that,

*“Every one’s own tradition is not one’s birthright; it has to be earned, repossessed. The old bards earned it by apprenticing themselves to the masters a part of one’s past to make it present to oneself and may be to others.”*

Translation becomes a strategy to give oneself one’s roots St. Pierre aptly observes that such an attitude...

*“...arise out of a desire to ground oneself more fully into the Indian source culture.”*

Comparable to what is happening in English studies, it’s alienated by products also have desire to de-colonize themselves. However a significant point is that of shifting notion of what is meant by truly Indian. In case of the older generation Indianness meant Pan-Sanskritic heritage and in case of modernists, Indianness means pro-colonial heritage in modern Indian languages. Translation thus becomes one of the inevitable and creative contrivances of giving oneself the sense of belonging and a nationality.

The main theorists from the English studies establishment are the reputed scholars like Harish Trivedi, G. N. Devy, Tejashwini Niranjani and Sujit Mukherjee. They are concerned with colonial history and its impact on practice and reflection on translation in India. They are chiefly concerned about what is called Indian Literature in English Translation or Indo-English Literature. The English studies connection of these scholars is reflected in the theorizing and the sorts of concerns typical to this church.

Harish Trivedi (1996) has provided a four-fold division of Indian literature translated into English.

- 1) Indic and Indological work-mainly translations of the ancient and medieval Sanskrit or Pali texts into English.
- 2) The translation of late ancient and medieval works, largely to do with *bhakti*, for instance, A. K. Ramanujan’s translations or Rabindranath Tagore’s translation of Kabir. Trivedi calls these two trends as Neo-orientalists or Post-orientalist trends.
- 3) Fictional works depicting various aspects of modern India realistically like the work of Tagore or Premchand. Trivedi remarks that this category broadly conforms to Fredric Jameson’s inadequate description of the Third world national allegory and...
- 4) Modernist or High modernist writers translated into English a category which Trivedi believes is contrary to Jameson’s thesis as it shows that internationalism / universalism cosmopolitanism can flourish in the Third world as well.

## **READING THE WASTELAND & MAROQBHUMI SOME OBSERVATIONS ON TRANSLATION:**

### **Life:**

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), American-born writer, regarded as one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. His best-known poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), is a devastating analysis of the society of his time. Eliot also wrote drama and literary criticism. In his plays, which use unrhymed verse, he attempted to revive poetic drama for the contemporary audience. His most influential criticism looked at the way the poet should approach the act of writing. Eliot won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, the youngest son in a large, prosperous, and distinguished family. Eliot's father, Henry Ware Eliot, Sr., was a successful businessman; his mother, Charlotte Champe Stearns, wrote prose and religious poetry. Eliot was educated at Milton Academy (a private boarding school outside of Boston, Massachusetts) and at Harvard University. He earned his undergraduate degree, after three years of study, in 1909. He then continued at Harvard, studying philosophy under George Santayana. Eliot received his M.A. degree in philosophy in 1910, after which he studied literature and languages at the Sorbonne in Paris, France; as a fellowship recipient in Germany; and at the University of Oxford in England.

After leaving Oxford, Eliot stayed in England. He became close friends with American poet Ezra Pound, who was also living abroad. In 1922 Eliot founded the literary journal *The Criterion*, which he edited until 1939. In 1925 he joined the publishing firm Faber and Gwyer, which later became Faber and Faber. Throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s Eliot wrote, lectured, and taught in Britain and the United States. In 1927 he became a British citizen and converted from the Unitarian Church to the Church of England.

### **Early Poetry:**

Eliot's earliest masterpiece, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," was published in *Poetry* magazine in 1915. Written as a dramatic monologue, the poem is an examination of the soul of a timid man paralyzed by indecision and worry about his appearance to others, particularly women. Anxious about becoming bald, and about his thin arms and legs, Prufrock hesitates in making even the smallest decisions or actions, wondering: "Do I dare / Disturb the universe? / In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." Eliot's first collection of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, appeared in 1917.

Two other well-known early poems are "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" (1919), which features an aggressive, fun-loving hero who is the opposite of Prufrock, and "Gerontion" (1920), which was originally designed as a prologue to the longer poem *The Waste Land*. "Gerontion" is a glimpse into the soul of an old man whose dreamlike memories wander through Western history from the 5th century BC to the 20th century.

### **Later Poetry:**

Eliot earned international acclaim in 1922 with the publication of *The Waste Land*, which he produced with much editorial assistance from Ezra Pound. *The Waste Land*, a poem in five parts, was ground breaking in establishing the form of the so-called kaleidoscopic, or fragmented, modern poem. These fragmented poems are characterized by jarring jumps in perspective, imagery, setting, or subject. Despite this fragmentation of form, *The Waste Land* is unified by its theme of despair. Its opening lines introduce the ideas of life's ultimate futility despite momentary flashes of hope: "April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / dull roots with spring rain." The poem goes on to present a sequence of short sketches following an individual's baffled search for spiritual peace. It concludes with resignation at the never-ending nature of the search. The poem is full of literary and mythological references that draw on many cultures and universalize the poem's themes.

*The Waste Land* draws much of its symbolism and narrative framework from the mythological story of the quest for the Holy Grail, the sacred cup that Jesus Christ drank from at the Last Supper. According to legend, only the pure of heart can attain the Grail. In the version of the Grail myth that Eliot draws on, a wasteland is awaiting a miraculous revival—for itself and its failing ruler, the Fisher King, guardian of the Holy Grail.

*The Waste Land* appeared in the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918), which was the most destructive war in human history to that point. Many people saw the poem as an indictment of postwar European culture and as an expression of disillusionment with contemporary society, which Eliot believed was culturally barren. His work *The Hollow Men* (1925), based partly on unedited portions of *The Waste Land* manuscript, takes a similar view.

Following Eliot's conversion to the Church of England in 1927, qualities of serenity and religious humility became important in his poetry. *Ash Wednesday* (1930) shows his sense of how emotionally destructive life can be, but also suggests that everyday suffering may have a purifying effect.

The volume *Four Quartets* (1943) consists of four separate poems: *Burnt Norton* (1935), *East Coker* (1940), *The Dry Salvages* (1941), and *Little Gidding* (1942). Each of these can be read on its own or as part of the whole. *Four Quartets* addresses love, justice, the problem of poetic creation, history, and time—both immediate and fleeting, eternal and repeated. *Little Gidding* opens with Eliot regarding both notions of time by observing a winter warming, which is both brief and individual, and yet like all winter warmings that have been before or will come after: "Midwinter spring is its

own season / Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown, / Suspended in time..." In these lines Eliot uses the word *sempiternal* to mean eternal or everlasting.

### **Plays and Literary Criticism:**

Eliot eventually turned from poems and essays to the more public art of plays, all of which he wrote in verse. He also began giving lectures. By 1943 Eliot had given up writing poetry altogether, and he devoted his last 20 years to other kinds of writing.

Eliot's earliest play, *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), has two verse scenes and a prose epilogue. In this drama, Apeneck Sweeney, who is the same character from "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," is a modern, brutish, incarnation of a mythic Greek figure similar to Hercules and Agamemnon. In this work, Eliot used elements of vaudeville, combining slang language and slapstick songs with his more standard theme of the hopelessness of modern life.

Two of Eliot's plays that examine religion are *The Rock* (1934) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), which was based on the 12th-century English Saint Thomas à Becket, who was killed at Canterbury Cathedral.

Like his poetry, Eliot's plays also incorporated ancient myth. *The Family Reunion* (1939) is a melodrama concerning a family curse. It draws on the Greek myth of the Eumenides, goddesses who are the guardians of justice. *The Cocktail Party* (1949), with which Eliot first won success as a playwright, explores the theme of salvation, but in the form of a modern *comedy of manners* (a play that satirizes social customs). Drawing on the play *Alcestis* by ancient Greek writer Euripides, *The Cocktail Party* presents a psychiatrist as an incarnation of Hercules, who rescued the princess Alcestis from the underworld.

In essays and lectures, Eliot profoundly influenced modern literary criticism. In the collection *The Sacred Wood* (1920), he contended that the critic must develop a strong historical sense to judge literature from the proper perspective, and that the poet must be impersonal in the creative exercise of the craft. As editor of *The Criterion*, he provided a literary forum for many prominent contemporary writers, including French writers Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust.

Sixteen years after he died, some of Eliot's poems appeared in the unlikely form of a Broadway musical, when British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber brought out *Cats* (1981). Lloyd Webber based his production on a book of poetry Eliot wrote for children, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). Eliot's other works include the nonfiction projects *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1940) and *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture* (1948). *Inventions of the March Hare: T.S. Eliot Poems 1909-1917* (1996) is a volume of 40 previously unpublished early poems. These poems include a fragment that Eliot had at one time included in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," but which he ultimately removed. In the 1980s and 1990s, Eliot and his poetry were increasingly criticized for elements of anti-Semitism, racism, and sexism. Despite these unfortunate prejudices, most people continue to regard Eliot as one of the most important figures in modern literature.]

### **Preface:**

Suresh Dalal and Jagdish Joshi were the persons who inspired Harindra Dave to translate T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" into Gujarati. Before he took decision of translating it he experienced Hamletian dilemma that whether he had enough capacity or not to translate such a work of art. Finally, he began his translation with,

***"Aprille ae krur mas..."***

His dilemma furthered, when the question of publication of *Maroobhumi* as an individual text arose. This time it was...

***"What should be written in the preface of a translated text?"***

Although, he began his preface with stating that he would narrate those difficulties that he faced while translating, he merely shows his gratitude towards distinguished critics whose criticism he had read and whose influence the reader might discern in the translation. Harindra Dave is primarily a poet rather than a critic. However, he received quite a few imageries in his translation. About the venture of translating *The Wasteland* he would agree with what Wyndham Lewis wrote about the fractured imagery of the poem...

***"This all integrated literary phenomenon is but an artificial word algebraic crossword puzzle."***

It's true to any reader, who reads the poem for the first time because it is framed in allusion and reference not only of ancient myth and legend but also of the contemporary European life.

## Whether Horizontal or Vertical Translation?

In his useful article on *Vulgarization and Translation* Gianfranco Folena suggests two types of translation...

- (1) Horizontal Translation and
- (2) Vertical Translation

By, vertical, he intends translation into the vernacular from a source language that has a special prestige or value (e.g. Latin or Sanskrit), or as Horizontal where both source language and target language have similar value. Now, on the basis of the above distinction, there could be good deal of discussion, on the topic that....

***“Whether the translation of *The Wasteland* into *Maroobhumi* would fall under the category of Horizontal or Vertical translation”***

Concerning the antiquity of language, both English and Gujarati tend to have the same periods of origin. It is with the *Apabhraṅś Vyākran* by Hemchandracharya that Gujarati came to be recognized as a language in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. On the other hand, English during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries was in its infancy and the father of English poetry was yet to come after almost three centuries. Hence the origin of both the languages is seminal and with this assumption *The Waste Land*'s translation into *Maroobhumi*, that is to say, from English into Gujarati would fall under the category of Horizontal translation.

On the other hand, it is prominent that along with many parts of the world, India was also once colonized by the British. And English, being the language of colonizers has certain predominance over Indian languages, particularly the regional language like Gujarati. Moreover, colonial influence plays a very vital role in creating Social, Political, Cultural and even literary hierarchy of English. Hence keeping in mind *Maroobhumi* would be an example of vertical translation.

### Translation of *The Wasteland*:

It is interesting to know how Harindra Dave translated the title and the various part of the poem as *Maroobhumi* from *The Wasteland*. In translation theory it is called word substitution. For instance, he translated *The Burial of the Dead* and *Marelaonu Datan*, while the third part of the poem *Fire Sermon* as *Agnibodh* with a purpose to make it more familiar to the Gujarati reader substituting the forth part *What the Thunder said* as *Prajapati Meghe su Kahyu*, it becomes more comprehensive and effective. It can be said in the words of Robert Frost,

***“Poetry is what that is lost in translation”***

While translating *The Wasteland*, he made certain changes, which at times harmed the structure and the theme of the poem. In the beginning the lack of punctuation marks can be seen perhaps suitable to poetic presentation.

Moreover, he replaced the word ‘lilac’ and ‘phool’ and tried to recontextualize. But in the fourth line he changed the word “dull roots” with ‘dephala-mool’. Here “dull” in literal Gujarati means,

<i>Niras</i>	:	<i>uninterested,</i>
<i>Susk</i>	:	<i>dry,</i>
<i>Niskriya</i>	:	<i>inactive.</i>

So, somehow here, he substituted the word.

In the later part of *Marelaonu Dafan* he changed the word “Starnbergsee” with “Sarovar”. In source text it means the lake near, Munich, which Eliot visited in 1911. In the tenth line also he replaced the word “Hofgarten park” as “Udyaan”. Hofgarten is a public park in Munich.

The use of retention would be also found in the translation which means lack of equivalence in target language. For example,

**“And when we were children, standing at the archduke.”**

He puts it as...

**“Ane ame nana hata tyare mara pitrai Archduke ne tya rheta”**

Archduke’s dictionary meaning is “a chief duke, in particular the son of the emperor of Australia”. So, he found retention to be better option.

The best example of substitution would be found in these lines where the sense is almost clear,

**“But dry sterile thunder”**

He puts it as,

**“Parantu varsad vinado suko vandhya megh che.”**

In the very third line of *Satranj ni Ramat*, he changed “goldencupidon” as “Suvarnano Kambev”; here the cultural issues in translation can be seen. Moreover in close observation of the poem, it can be found that, he uses “Machhali” for “Dolphin”. He deleted the word ‘George’ and translated it as:

**“Aane to paanch thai gaya are nanka naa janma vakhte to marata bachi”**

To make it more comprehensive and effective, he replaced the word ‘Irish child’ with ‘gaun’ in order to familiarize it to Gujarati reader.

In the later part of the *Marelaonu Dafan* we would find some substitution, which failed to reveal the actual sense. He replaced the word “hyacinth” with “phool”. But source text meaning of “hyacinth” is resurrection. And if one looks at its mythological background it is observed that Hyacinths was a boy loved by Apollo but unfortunately he was killed by Apollo after that from the blood of Hyacinths the flower hyacinths sprout. So here in target text somehow Harindra Dave failed to translate it. Further he added “hyacinth girl” as “phoolkanya”.

The problem arises only after close observation of the first part, because in it he changed the word ‘lilac’ with ‘phool’, and thus created a kind of chaos in the target text.

The third part of the poem has been marked by various changes, for instance, the third line where he replaced the word “nymph” with “apsara”. But if one looks at the literal meaning of these words, they are different. Clearly, he cannot escape from being a liar as said by Talmud...

**“He that translates a verse literally is a liar.”**

Further, he changed the word “Leman” with “Sarsi”. Eliot’s use of pun is revealed through the footnotes where another meaning of “Leman” is given as “mistress”.

The translator’s task becomes even more troublesome when he is called upon to translate myth and reality. For instance, Tiresias, Philomel etc are taken as they were in the original. Later he substituted the word “Ghanti-Gobalo” for “carbuncular”.

He made the mistake when he used the word “famphosavu” for “explore”. Lack of proper word can be seen here. The word “Hofgarten” is changed as “Udyaan”, but the words like “Highbury”, “Richmond” and “Kew” remained unchanged.

In the fourth part the process of translation runs smoother with an exception like, “Sagar Pankhi” for “Sea Gull”.

An addition would be found in the sixth line of the fifth part where:

*“of thunder of spring over distant mountains”*

He puts it as... *“sudur parvato gharna vaasanti meghna protidhwami”*

At this juncture, the word “gharna” would not be found in the source text. The word “hermit thrust” is replaced by “Van kasturo”. Further, in the later part his translation is to some extent non-understandable. For instance:

*“And crawled head down ward down a blackened wall”*

He puts it as... *“Kali divaale niche maatha raakhee sarakya”*

### **Conclusion:**

Hence, observing *Maroobhami* and keeping the translation theories and strategies in mind, these points occur on the surface:

- (A) First of all, one has to admit that Harindra Dave is primarily a poet, rather than a translator or even a critic.
- (B) Second, as a result of this fact, unlike a sheer translator Harindra Dave takes certain imaginative liberties suitable to a poet.
- (C) Thirdly, since, it is not known, whether, the translation theories and strategies that exist in the present times, were known to Harindra Dave or not; it cannot be said that Harindra Dave has followed or violated them.
- (D) Likewise his aim of translation seems more aesthetic and hence “sense for sense” oriented and not “word for word” oriented.

At last, it must not be forgotten that *The Wasteland* is translated from an out and out European text written for European locale; but its translation is not for a European locale not even for an Indian. *Maroobhami* tends to appeal to Gujarati readers who have keen interest and sensibility for poetry.

# THE MAJOR THEMES OF MANVINI BHAVAI

## Introduction:

Every work of art is a product of his age, as the writer whose personality is more or less affected by the society or the age to which he belongs. The social and cultural ethos carves his personality. Moreover, a writer is influenced by his contemporaries as well as by his predecessors. So it would become almost, necessary to know or study the age of the author.

Pannalal Patel was the scout in regional Gujarati Novels. His is the example of the writer who, while narrating the plight and misery of the brow-beaten, remains objective and does not get swayed by emotions. In fact he was praised by Ramanalal Joshi in the following words:

*“a major Gujarati novelist, is a re-creator of people’s life. He is the example of a writer, who is dedicated to man and woman”*

## Background:

He was born in a farmer family, in a village situated on the Gujarati Rajasthan border. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in this, area the darkness of illiteracy and superstition was widespread. The people suffered the injustice of “Darbari Shasan”. They were exploited by the autocrat and hardly got enough food and water. Life for them was as Willian Blake said....

*“... a texture woven by the will and woe.”*

Belonging to a farmer family, he saw all these sights of misery and hardship of life, very closely. All these sights got reflected in most of his works. Be it *Malela Jiv*, *Ghammar Valonu*, or his award-winning novel, *Manvini Bhavai* almost all his novels have a regional rural background.

## Manvini Bhavai:

*Manvini Bhavai* (1947), his magnum opus, that won him Jnanpith Award, is apparently the story of love between Kalu and Raju. But it is the hard and tragic life of farmers and their struggle for existence in an inhospitable land that runs throughout the novel. The pangs of hunger and worst of all, the utter humiliation during famine are brought out sharply and minutely. Rarely, the village life of Gujarat has been as artistically sketched as in this novel. His spiritual goal, in his own words, is to ...

*“Search for the sun, with the light of the lamp.”*

## Regional Novel with Universal Appeal:

Besides, being a regional novel that depicts every facet of the land and the people of the rural area of the North-eastern region of Gujarat, it has certain universal characteristic features as well. And for the same reason, some critics have called it a regional novel and some other a period novel; in the sense that there is a conflict between man and time. But it is not exactly a period novel as it depicts the conflict between man and Nature or the unseen forces that stand against mankind, which is a universal theme.

Moreover, the time line of the novel is the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, the conflict between good and evil is an eternal problem and the final victory of good is again a universal theme.

As seen above the present novel depicts both the inner and outer world. However, the incidents of the external world in the novel are important only, so far as they generate tension and inner conflict. Hence, there can be seen a correlativity of external world with the internal world in the novel.

### **Theme of Love:**

The theme of love is one of the themes of the present novel. Besides, the love of mother, father and wife, the love story of Raju and Kalu would be found. Kalu and Raju could not succeed in their marriage because it was broken by the perfidy of Mali and many others, who were not happy with the engagement of Kalu and Raju. The novel begins with it the reminiscences of the central character Kalu, sitting lonely in his field away from his all near and dear ones. In a way the story is told in flashback style adopted for first time in Gujarati fiction.

In childhood, he (Kalu) is engaged to Raju a talented girl; Valo's father of Kalu dies and then the bad days confront Kalu at every step. Young Kalu and Raju meet each other off and on but Mali, who setting of scores incarnate succeeds in breaking their engagement. In order to bring defame to Kalu, she tries to get her son Nano married to Raju, but her design is botched by a committee of the village headman. It is the same committee, which ruined the engagement of Kalu and Raju. So at this juncture it would be found that:

*“Those who do evil to others, God replies the same to them”*

Raju is married to an elderly person, Dayalji and Kalu to a plain simple girl Bhali. Both of them are in a way estranged because of marriage, hitherto, their marriage creates a new tangle. Raju is married to Bhali's uncle and consequently becomes Kalu's aunt-in-law. Like Oedipus, there the play of fate can be seen. But Raju's married life is no longer at ease, as Dayalji dies of a long drawn out ill health and as the talk spread in the village that Raju is going to marry Nano, Kalu on hearing the rumor goes straight to Raju and declared the words which are the very substantiation of his love towards Raju:

*“I will kill you, Nano and myself.”*

Raju appeases him assuring that she would not do such an act. She also does everything to rehabilitate Kalu by persuading him to have a cordial relationship with his wife Bhali. Kalu, on Raju's insistence goes to his in-laws to bring Bhali home. He behaves affably with Bhali, but his attachment to Raju, is as deep as ever. But at the end of the novel Raju's words also prove her love towards Kalu, when she confronts the God of Death.

*“The God of Death himself, could not kill off...had not the power to annihilate”*

### **Theme of Nature v/s Man:**

In the beginning of the novel when the central character or male protagonist Kalu is sitting forlorn in his field, there we find an awfully good description of nature,

*“In Greenfield the tender plant of wheat and gram were jostling one another trying to pierce each other's sides.”*

Such depiction of nature, furthermore, would be found in later part of the Novel. The life of village farmers was interwoven with season. Inconsistency in season makes their life inconsistent. Farmers' life is totally depending upon rain and without it they would be no more, when there was no drop of water and the whole village is swallowed by severe draught.

The draught instead of weakening them makes them stronger. The ghastly description of draught is one of the most powerful in Gujarati fiction. It would be found how the instinct of survivals uproots the ethical values and human consideration for fraternity, which human society has taken age to evolve. In the village there is no food and nomads from the outskirts of the village visit time and again. They first water the food and took away the cattle. Kalu went to rescue the animal with the drawn sword. He climbed the hill top and saw a ghastly sight. A group of nomads, including men,

women and children, were seen eating up a living buffalo to satisfy their hunger, whereas, the poor animal's scream was earsplitting. Kalu could not bear the ghastly sight and threw his sword towards them, to slash the animal and redeem it from torture. This was nothing but the law of nature, as Kalapi, a well known Gujarati poet said in his poem:

*“je posatu te martu ae dise kram kudarati”*

Moreover, the description of famine reaches at its highest point when in chapter 31<sup>st</sup>, titled as *Bhukhi Bhutoval*, Kalu utters,

*“No, no she was no witch nor a female ghost hang it...there is no such thing. It was a woman alright. But, heavens, what was that she was eating oh no, it was that she was eating oh no it was not that? Could not be? It must have been just a rabbit.”*

### **Good v/s Evil:**

Good v/s Evil is the universal theme that would be found in *Manvini Bhavai*. It was not the story about the jealousy prevailing amongst the cousin brothers but also about good and evil. Kalu the central character around whom the whole story of the novel is woven, his mother and father Rupa and Vala Dosa, Raju and many other stand for good while on the other hand Mali, wife of Parma Patel, her son Nano and many other stand for evil that never skip the opportunity to humiliate Kalu and his family. For instance, when Kalu was born, Mali taunted Vala by saying that...

*“Even the drinking water mug in his house is a broken one, what a wonderful present of the good news can be?”*

Here, goodness of good appears brighter in the presence of evil like gold against fire. It happened when Rupa was to pass through the plough, but fortunately the rain comes and Rupa becomes Rupama for the villagers. So, here Mali's design to kill Rupa ultimately failed. Hence, there can be seen constant conflict between good and evil throughout the novel. However, evil can never have their victory over good.

### **Conclusion:**

In this way, *Manvini Bhavai* as portrayed by Pannalal Patel is a world of people struggling against the tide of time and corrupt custom ridden society, weighed down by poverty, illiteracy, social relation and local politics and famine. Still there are men and women who err and yet assert their innate dignity in moments of crisis, they emerge fearlessly. For this most memorable work V. Y. Katak has rightly remarked...

*“Manvini Bhavai is the mature fruit of that earliest rebellious impulse. How assuring with complete artistic control, vistas of experience in a rustic setting, involving powerful probes into the basic of human condition.”*

## “Manvini Bhavai” Translated text by V.Y.Kantak

Pannalal Patel’s ‘Manvini Bhavai’ which won the Jnanpith Award in 1985 could be called a modern classic in Gujarati fiction. He got ‘Manvini Bhavai’ first published in 25<sup>th</sup> May 1947 when he was suffering from T.B. in Mumbai Hospital. The publication would have been impossible if Uma Shankar had not inspired him to write.

*“Write Pannalal”*

“Manvini Bhavai” is translated from Gujarati language into English by V.Y.Kantak as “**Endurance: A Droll saga**”. As I.A.Richards says...., Translation...

*“may probably be the most  
complex type of event yet  
produced in the evolution  
of cosmos”*

Pannalal, a farmer’s son writing in the native idiom of North Gujarati’s Sabarkantha district addresses the task of rendering into English idiom the speech tones of the well granded dialect of this novel of the Indian peasantry’s life style, with considerable trepidation. The attempt here has been to retain if possible something of the naive (lacking experience and judgment) simplicity and force of the direct immediacy of utterance implicit in it.

*“The art of translation is a  
subsidiary art and derivative  
on this account if has never been  
granted the dignity of original  
work and has suffered too much  
in the general judgment of letter”*

-Hillarie Belloc

But Kantak is a good translator. If we read his translated book “**Endurance: A Droll Raga**” we find he not only translated “Manvini Bhavai” into English language but the spirit remains in the English version too. We feel some feeling of love and pain in the characters of Raju and Kahi as we find in the original version. Kantak translated in such a manner that a picture gets created before our eyes. For e.g.

The conversation between Kahi and Raju in the 37 Chapter “Khandaniyama Matha Ram”! Which Kantak translated as “strike, strike, merciful God” is superb.

The original lines from “Manvini Bhavai” are as follows:

*Raju :- Tamne Khabar Che Dakan ma Dakan Kaun Che, Ae Jano Cho ?*

*Kahi :- Dakan ma Dakan to Bhukh che !*

When translated as the same lines read thus: .....,

**Raju :- Do you know, of all the most dreadful things in life what is the damnedest ?**

**Kahi :- The most dreadful thing in life is of course hunger !**

As Vertaire believed that a word to word translation is not good. Words are merely body of the work, but the ideas, for good translation spirit should be alive....,

***“It may indeed said that  
the letter killeth but  
the spirit giveth life.”***

Kantak has tried to avoid anything like as special stylistic feature. The “Englishing” conforms to the norm of the ordinary English that is current in “India” and that nonetheless it hasn’t altogether obscured the down to earth quality of Pannalal Patel’s art. A feature that presented a peculiar difficulty was the songs and festive occasions. These have been rendered in unrhymed iambic verse more or less in keeping with the singing quality of the original pieces. For eg...

***“Mee Janyu man kono mor lave che o Reshma!  
mee Janyu daladano chor aave che re lol !***

Translated as ....

***“And I know, the peacock of my hearts dear o eager one,  
yes, here he comes- the stealer of the heart, my dear !”***

Here we find a “word to word” translation as Robert Frost is very right here,

***“Poetry is what  
that is lost  
in translation”***

It is possible the some of the readership in English might not be familiar with the Indian cultural climate. The nature description that is given in the chapter-5 “mali nu bhut” which is translated as “The demon that possessed Mali”, does not make sense to the English reader....,

***“Shravana na ae aajvadi raat ghadikama chandani chamakavati  
to ghadika ma vadi andhara ma odhi leti jvahirahi hati.”***

Translated as.....,

***“It was night in August, one moment, resplendent  
with moonlight and smoothened in darkness, the next.”***

The Gujarati calendar is unknown to the English people so Kantak translated the Gujarati months according to the English calendar. For eg,

***“Vaishakh na vantod”  
as***

***“The whirl winds of summer.”***

It is difficult to translate proverbs and idioms from one language to another language. But Kantak tried his level best and succeeded in translating it. For eg.,

- 1 shamp tyan Jamp (c-25)  
“*Where there is concern there is bound to be peace*”
- 2 Lagam vagar no ghodo, ne laj vagar bairi. (c-7)  
“*An unbridled horse and a shameless woman are the same*”
- 3 Kanbi pachhad karod. (c-26)  
“*The varmer has backbone which is the mainstay of millions*”

Kantak used the strategy of “substitution” with a purpose to make it more familiar to the English reader so that it becomes more comprehensive and effective. For e.g. in Chapter 12 “*Bhunde Bhunda no Bhag Bhajavyo*” when translated as or substituted reads as “*The wicked play their cards*”

He also used the strategy of “Addition” in order to give perfect meaning. For eg., chapter-26 “*Parathami no pethi*” when translated reads as “*A beast of Burden altogether.*”

The use of “retention” would be found in a translated. To win a word means retention. For eg. In the “translated text, Kantak coined so many words....,

“Panchak”	“Sootak”	“Khichdi”	“Kansar”
“Purani”	“Bhajan”	“Kodhi”	“Kodra”
“Pagadi”	“Loo”	“Chula”	“Rotlis”
“Vaidya”	“Puja”	“Thali”	“Mama”
“Bhuvas”	“Dhoop”	“Gue”	“Barot”
“Vevan”	“Vevais”	“Barrot”	“Saree Pallav”
“Kadio” (earrings)	“Kediyun” (jacket)		

Kantak also kept the word “Sasu” as “Sasu” to give the regional effect.

*“A good text is one which can stand on its own  
without any clutches of context or perspective ?”*

But Kantak wrote footnotes in order to make the meaning clear in keeping the readership of English in mind for eg.,

- 1 “**Daridranarayana**” :-  
Daridranarayana is a god in the form of the poverty stricken masses.
- 2 “**Sootak**” :-  
Sootak is the period of ritual “segregation” of close relatives; observed when there is a death in the family.
- 3 “**Jagadamba**” :-  
Jagadamba is one of the forms of shakti in the Hindu pantheon.
- 4 “**Nadachedi**” :-  
Nadachedi is multicolored ritual worship of the plough.

- 5     **“The Dandia”** :-  
The Dandia dance is a community folk dance of Gujarat in which the singing and the dance movements are accompanied by rhythmical clashing of “dandias” or a pair of small batons that the performers carry in their hands.
- 6     **“Langot”**:-  
A narrow length of cloth hitched to the girdle and worn over a man’s private parts.
- 7     **“Indravarami”**:-  
Indravarami is a mythical fruit that is poisonous as it is beautiful.
- 8     **“Bhavai”** :-  
Bhavai is a folk drama of Gujarat with strong elements of farce and burlesque.

Kantak’s aim of translation seems more aesthetic and hence, ‘sense for sense’ oriented and not ‘word for word’ oriented. Though Kantak himself is of the opinion about his own translation...

*“I am aware that howsoever one may try,  
the brevity the compactness, the brilliant  
staccato effect, are inevitably lost.”*

## The Iliad –Homer

### Key Facts

**full title** · *The Iliad*

**author** · Homer

**type of work** · Poem

**genre** · Epic

**language** · Ancient Greek

**time and place written** · Unknown, but probably mainland Greece, around 750 b.c.

**date of first publication** · Unknown

**publisher** · Unknown

**narrator** · The poet, who declares himself to be the medium through which one or many of the Muses speak

**point of view** · The narrator speaks in the third person. An omniscient narrator (he has access to every character's mind), he frequently gives insight into the thoughts and feelings of even minor characters, gods and mortals alike.

**tone** · Awe-inspired, ironic, lamenting, pitying

**tense** · Past

**setting (time)** · Bronze Age (around the twelfth or thirteenth century b.c.); *The Iliad* begins nine years after the start of the Trojan War

**setting (place)** · Troy (a city in what is now northwestern Turkey) and its immediate environs

**protagonist** · Achilles

**major conflict** · Agamemnon's demand for Achilles' war prize, the maiden Briseis, wounds Achilles' pride; Achilles' consequent refusal to fight causes the Achaeans to suffer greatly in their battle against the Trojans.

**rising action** · Hector's assault on the Achaean ships; the return of Patroclus to combat; the death of Patroclus

**climax** · Achilles' return to combat turns the tide against the Trojans once and for all and ensures the fated fall of Troy to which the poet has alluded throughout the poem.

**falling action** · The retreat of the Trojan army; Achilles' revenge on Hector; the Achaeans' desecration of Hector's corpse

**themes** · The glory of war; military values over family life; the impermanence of human life and its creations

**motifs** · Armor; burial; fire

**symbols** · The Achaean ships; the shield of Achilles

## **Homer and The Iliad :**

It is assumed that Homer composed his famous epic poems, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, around 850 B.C. Since the fifth century B.C., the poems have been the subject of constant study. In spite of the scholarly attention, little is known for certain about the life of Homer, a famous poet of antiquity who greatly influenced all subsequent Western literature.

Ancient tradition says that Homer was the son of Maeon. Seven cities also claimed him as a citizen, including Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, and Athens. The claims of Smyrna and Chios seem to be the most reasonable, for ancient testimony indicates that Homer was an Asiatic Greek. Of the remaining information about his life, most is legend, including the belief that Homer became blind in his old age.

Most scholars agree that both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are compositions of Homer. Two other works, *The Margites* and *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, are also ascribed to him even though they are quite unlike *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and have been preserved only in fragmented form. Another group of works by the poet is known as the Homeric Hymns, but there is reason to believe that these hymns may have been composed by the descendants of Homer.

## **Principal Characters:**

### **❖ Greeks**

**Achilles:** Temperamental Greek warrior and king of the Myrmidons, who were soldiers from Thessaly in Greece. Achilles, the protagonist, leads the Myrmidons against the Trojans. He is revered as the greatest warrior in the world; no man can stand against him. Achilles is the son of Peleus, the former king of the Myrmidons, and a sea nymph named Thetis.

**Agamemnon:** Commander-in-chief of the Greek armies and son of Atreus, the king of Mycenae. He incurs the wrath of his greatest warrior, Achilles, by taking the latter's prize of war, the beautiful Briseis.

**Menelaus:** King of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon. After his wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, was taken by a Trojan named Paris, the Greeks declared war on Troy.

**Helen:** Wife of Menelaus, paramour of Paris, and the most beautiful woman in the world.

**Odysseus (Roman Name, Ulysses):** King of Ithaca and brilliant strategist. He is unsurpassed in cunning.

**Aias the Great (Roman Name, Ajax the Great):** Hulking giant who is second only to Achilles in battlefield prowess. Many translators of the epic use his Roman name, perhaps because of the force of its emphatic consonants.

**Aias the Lesser (Roman Name, Ajax the Lesser, or the Locrian Ajax):** Leader of the Locrian archers on the Greek side.

**Patroclus:** Greek warrior and beloved companion of Achilles.

**Diomedes:** Greek warrior of extraordinary valor and ability.

**Calchas:** Greek soothsayer who advises Agamemnon.

**Nestor:** Wise old king who advises Agamemnon.

**Diomedes:** Powerful Greek warrior.

**Idomeneus:** King of Crete, who leads a Greek contingent against the Trojans.

**Machaon:** Greek physician wounded by Paris.

**Automedon:** Chariot driver for Achilles.

**Phoenix:** Elderly Greek warrior and trusted friend of Achilles.

**Briseis:** Beautiful captive of Achilles.

**Chryseis:** Female captive of Agamemnon. He is forced to give her up.

**Eudorus:** Myrmidon commander under Achilles.

**Neoptolemus:** Son of Achilles. He arrives at Troy in the last year of fighting.

**Stentor:** Greek herald.

## ❖ Trojans

**Priam:** King of Troy.

**Hecuba:** Wife of Priam and queen of Troy.

**Hector:** Bravest and most accomplished of the Trojan warriors; son of Priam. Achilles slays him.

**Andromache:** Hector's noble and dedicated wife.

**Astyanax:** Son of Hector and Andromache.

**Paris:** Trojan who took Helen from Menelaus.

**Aeneas:** Brave and powerful Trojan warrior.

**Polydamas:** Wise Trojan commander.

**Glauco:** Great Trojan warrior.

**Dolon:** Trojan spy who reconnoiters the Greek camp.

**Pandarus:** Trojan archer.

**Antenor:** Advisor to King Priam. He argues that Paris should return Helen to the Greeks, but Paris will not give her up.

**Sarpedon:** Leader of the Lycian allies on the side the Trojans. He fights bravely but dies at the hands of Patroclus. Sarpedon was the son of Zeus and Laodameia, a human.

**Laocoön:** Trojan seer.

**Deiphobus:** Trojan warrior and son of Priam.

**Gorgythion:** Trojan warrior and son of Priam. He dies by an arrow meant for Hector.

**Cebriones:** Chariot driver for Hector.

**Helenus:** Trojan seer and son of Priam and Hecuba.

**Pandarus:** Trojan archer.

**Euphorbus:** Trojan soldier who wounds Patroclus.

## ❖ Gods

**Zeus (Roman names, Jupiter and Jove):** King of the gods, who prefers to remain neutral in the war but intervenes after a plea for help.

**Hera (Roman name, Juno):** Queen of the gods, who favors the Greeks.

**Athena (Roman name, Minerva):** Goddess of wisdom and war, who favors the Greeks.

**Poseidon (Roman name, Neptune):** God of the sea, who favors the Greeks.

**Hephaestus (Roman name, Vulcan):** God of the forge, who favors the Greeks.

**Aphrodite (Roman name, Venus):** Goddess of love and beauty, who sides with the Trojans.

**Apollo (or Phoebus Apollo):** Highly revered and feared sun god, who sides with the Trojans.

**Ares (Roman name, Mars):** God of war, who sides with the Trojans.

**Artemis (Roman name, Diana):** Goddess of archery and hunting, who sides with the Trojans.

**Hades (Roman Name, Pluto):** God of the Underworld.

**Hermes (Roman Name, Mercury):** Messenger god. He guides Priam to Achilles' tent to ransom the body of Hector.

**Thetis:** Sea nymph who is the mother of Achilles.

**Iris:** Messenger goddess.

## Mythology Background

In the ancient Mediterranean world, feminine beauty reaches its zenith in Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Greece. Her wondrous face and body are without flaw. She is perfect. Even the goddess of love, Aphrodite, admires her. While Aphrodite competes with other goddesses in a beauty contest—in which a golden apple is to be awarded as the prize—she bribes the judge, a young Trojan named Paris. She promises him the most ravishing woman in the world, Helen, if he will select her, Aphrodite, as the most beautiful goddess. After winning the contest and receiving the coveted golden apple, she tells Paris about Helen and her incomparable pulchritude. Forthwith, Paris goes to Greece, woos Helen, and absconds with her to Troy, a walled city in Asia Minor (in present-day Turkey).

The elopement is an affront to all the Greeks. How dare an upstart Trojan invade their land! How dare he steal the wife of one of their kings! Which Greek family would be next to fall victim to a Trojan machination? Infuriated, King Menelaus and his friends assemble a mighty army that includes the finest warriors in the land. Together, they cross the sea in one thousand ships to make war against

Troy and win back their pride—and Helen. But the war drags on and on. Weeks become months. Months become years. Years become a decade. It is in fact in the tenth year of the war that Homer picks up the thread of the story and spins his tale, focusing on a crisis in the Greek ranks in which the greatest soldier in history, Achilles, decides to withdraw from battle and allow his fellow Greeks to fend for themselves. It is Achilles who is the central figure in *The Iliad*.

Homer begins with a one-paragraph invocation requesting the Muse (a goddess) to inspire him in the telling of his tale. Such an invocation was a convention in classical literature, notably in epics, from the time of Homer onward.

## **Plot Summary**

Ten years have passed since the Greek armies arrived in Asia Minor to lay waste Troy and win back their honor. Yet in all those years, neither side has gained enough advantage to force surrender. The Greeks remain encamped outside the walls of the city, their nighttime fires mocking the glittering firmament while their generals plot stratagems and their warriors hone weapons.

Among the Greek leaders, bloodstained and hardened to war, are Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief; Menelaus, king of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon; Odysseus, king of Ithaca and a military genius of unparalleled cunning; and Aias the Great, a giant warrior of colossal strength. With sword and spear, with rocks and fists, the Greeks have fought the Trojans—led by the godlike Hector, their mightiest warrior, and Aeneas, a war machine second only to Hector on the Trojan side—to a standoff. In time, the Greeks believe, they will prevail. They have right on their side, after all. But even more important, they have Achilles. He is the greatest warrior ever to walk the earth—fierce, unrelenting, and unconquerable. When Achilles fights, enemies cower in terror and rivers run with blood. No man can stand against him. Not Hector. Not an army of Hectors.

But, alas, in the tenth year of the great war, Achilles refuses to fight after Agamemnon insults him. No one can offend the great Achilles with impunity. Not even Agamemnon, general of generals, who can whisper a command that ten thousand will obey. The rift between them opens after Agamemnon and Achilles capture two maidens while raiding the region around Troy. Agamemnon's prize is Chryseis, the daughter of a priest of the god Apollo. For Achilles, there is the beautiful Briseis, who becomes his slave mistress.

When Chryses, the father of Chryseis, offers a ransom for his daughter, Agamemnon refuses it. Chryses then invokes his patron, Apollo, for aid, and the sun god sends a pestilence upon the Greeks. Many soldiers die before Agamemnon learns the cause of their deaths from the soothsayer Calchas. Unable to wage war against disease, Agamemnon reluctantly surrenders Chryseis to her father.

Unfortunately for the Greeks, the headstrong king then orders his men to seize Briseis as a replacement for his lost prize. Achilles is outraged. But rather than venting his wrath with his mighty sword, he retires from battle, vowing never again to fight for his countrymen. On his behalf, his mother, the sea nymph Thetis, importunes Zeus, king of the gods, to turn the tide of war in favor of the Trojans. Such a reversal would be fitting punishment for Agamemnon. But Zeus is reluctant to intervene in the war, for the other gods of Olympus have taken sides, actively meddling in daily combat. For him to support one army over the other would be to foment celestial discord. Among the deities favoring the Trojans are Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, and Artemis. On the side of the Greeks are Athena, Poseidon, and Hera—the wife of Zeus. There would be hell-raising in the heavens if Zeus shows partiality. In particular, his wife's scolding tongue would wag without surcease. But Zeus is Zeus, god of thunder and lightning. In the end, he well knows, he can do as he pleases. Swayed by the pleas of Thetis, he confers his benisons on the Trojans.

However, when the next battle rages, the Greeks—fired with Promethean defiance and succored by their gods—fight like madmen. True, their right arm, Achilles, is absent; but their left arm becomes a scythe that reaps a harvest of Trojans. Aias and Diomedes are especially magnificent. Only interventions by the Trojans' Olympian supporters save them from massacre. Alas, however, when the Trojans regroup for the next fight, Zeus infuses new power into Hector's sinews. After Hector bids a tender goodbye to his wife, Andromache, and little boy, Astyanax, he leads a fierce charges that drives the Greeks all the way back to within sight of the shoreline, where they had started ten years before. Not a few Greeks, including Agamemnon, are ready to board their ships and set sail for home. Such has been the fury of the Hector-led onslaught.

Then Nestor, a wise old king of three score and ten, advises Agamemnon to make peace with Achilles. The proud commander, now repentant and fully acknowledging his unjust treatment of Achilles accepts the advice and pledges to restore Briseis to Achilles. When representatives of Agamemnon meet with lordly Achilles, the great warrior is idly passing time with the person he loves most in the world, his friend Patroclus, a distinguished warrior in his own right. Told that all wrongs against him will be righted, Achilles—still smoldering with anger—spurns the peace-making overture. His wrath is unquenchable. However, Patroclus, unable to brook the Trojan onslaught against his countrymen, borrows the armor of Achilles and, at the next opportunity, enters the battle disguised as Achilles.

The stratagem works for a while as Patroclus chops and hacks his way through the Trojan ranks. But eventually Hector's spear fells brave Patroclus with no small help from meddling Apollo. The Trojan hero celebrates the kill with an audacious coup de grâce: He removes and puts on Achilles' armor. Grievously saddened by the death of his friend and outraged at the brazen behavior of Hector, wrathful Achilles—with a new suit of armor forged in Olympus by Hephaestus at the behest of Achilles' mother, Thetis—agrees to rejoin the fight at long last.

The next day, Achilles rules the battlefield with death and destruction, cutting a swath of terror through enemy ranks. Trojan blood mulches the fields. Limbs lie helter-skelter, broken and crooked, as fodder for diving raptors. Terrified, the Trojans flee to the safety of Troy and its high walls—all of them, that is, except Hector. Foolishly, out of his deep sense of honor and responsibility as protector of Troy, he stands his ground. In a fairy tale about a noble hero with an adoring wife and son, Hector would surely have won the day against a vengeful, all-devouring foe. His compatriots—and the gallery of sons and daughters and wives peering down from the Trojan bulwarks—would surely have crowned him king. But in the brutal world of Achilles—whose ability to disembowel and decapitate is a virtue—Hector suffers a humiliating death. After Achilles chases and catches him, he easily slays him, then straps his carcass to his chariot and drags him around the walls of Troy. Patroclus has been avenged, the Greeks have reclaimed battlefield supremacy, and victory seems imminent.

However, old Priam, the king of Troy and the father of Hector, shows that Trojan valor has not died with Hector. At great risk to himself, he crosses the battlefield in a chariot and presents himself to Achilles to claim the body of his son. But there is no anger in Priam's heart. He understands the ways of wars and warriors. He knows that Achilles, the greatest of the Greek soldiers, had no choice but to kill his son, the greatest of the Trojan warriors. Humbly, Priam embraces Achilles and gives him his hand. Deeply moved, Achilles welcomes Priam and orders an attendant to prepare Hector's body. To spare Priam the shock of seeing the grossly disfigured corpse, Achilles orders the attendant to cloak it. Troy mourns Hector for nine days, then burns his body and puts the remains in a golden urn that is buried in a modest grave.

## **Themes**

### **❖ The Glory of War**

One can make a strong argument that *The Iliad* seems to celebrate war. Characters emerge as worthy or despicable based on their degree of competence and bravery in battle. Paris, for example, doesn't like to fight, and correspondingly receives the scorn of both his family and his lover. Achilles, on the other hand, wins eternal glory by explicitly rejecting the option of a long, comfortable, uneventful life at home. The text itself seems to support this means of judging character and extends it even to the gods. The epic holds up warlike deities such as Athena for the reader's admiration while it makes fun of gods who run from aggression, using the timidity of Aphrodite and Artemis to create a scene of comic relief. To fight is to prove one's honor and integrity, while to avoid warfare is to demonstrate laziness, ignoble fear, or misaligned priorities.

To be sure, *The Iliad* doesn't ignore the realities of war. Men die gruesome deaths; women become slaves and concubines, estranged from their tearful fathers and mothers; a plague breaks out in the Achaean camp and decimates the army. In the face of these horrors, even the mightiest warriors occasionally experience fear, and the poet tells us that both armies regret that the war ever began. Though Achilles points out that all men, whether brave or cowardly, meet the same death in the end, the poem never asks the reader to question the legitimacy of the ongoing struggle. Homer never implies that the fight constitutes a waste of time or human life. Rather, he portrays each side as having a justifiable reason to fight and depicts warfare as a respectable and even glorious manner of settling the dispute.

### **❖ Military Glory over Family Life**

A theme in *The Iliad* closely related to the glory of war is the predominance of military glory over family. The text clearly admires the reciprocal bonds of deference and obligation that bind Homeric families together, but it respects much more highly the pursuit of *kleos*, the "glory" or "renown" that one wins in the eyes of others by performing great deeds. Homer constantly forces his characters to choose between their loved ones and the quest for *kleos*, and the most heroic characters invariably choose the latter. Andromache pleads with Hector not to risk orphaning his son, but Hector knows that fighting among the front ranks represents the only means of "winning my father great glory." Paris, on the other hand, chooses to spend time with Helen rather than fight in the war; accordingly, both the text and the other characters treat him with derision. Achilles debates returning home to live in ease with his aging father, but he remains at Troy to win glory by killing Hector and avenging Patroclus. The gravity of the decisions that Hector and Achilles make is emphasized by the fact that each knows his fate ahead of time. The characters prize so highly the martial values of honor, noble bravery, and glory that they willingly sacrifice the chance to live a long life with those they love.

### **❖ The Wrath of Achilles**

The construction of the entire poem centers on the anger of Achilles. His wrath is really developed in two major cycles, both following the same pattern. The first cycle begins in Book I as Achilles quarrels with Agamemnon and withdraws from the fighting. Between Books II and VIII, the hero is not seen, but his absence from the battlefield has dire consequences. Without the leadership of Achilles and the help of the immortals, the Greeks' efforts are in vain. Knowing that they are losing the war, the Greeks send a delegation to Achilles, offering him gifts to return to the fighting. Bound by his

wrath, Achilles refuses the offer and threatens to sail for home. It is obvious that Homer does not approve of the excessive wrath and unrelenting nature of Achilles.

The Greeks have no choice but to return to the battle without their hero. As a result of Achilles' continued absence, the Greeks suffer even greater catastrophes. Hector and the Trojans breach their wall and set some of their ships on fire. Learning of the Greek devastation, Achilles agrees to send his men back into battle, but he still refuses to fight himself. It is only with the death of Patroclus, his closest friend, that he decides to re-enter the fight. His excessive anger, however, is simply replaced with an equally excessive grief and desire for vengeance.

The second wrath cycle follows the same pattern as the first. Achilles again begins in the right, as he seeks vengeance on the Trojans for the death of Patroclus. He fights blindly and bravely, filling the river with the blood and dead bodies of Trojans. He then seeks and finds an opportunity to kill Hector, the Trojan warrior responsible for his friend's death. In dishonoring the body of Hector, however, Achilles errs again and allows excessive vengeance to overwhelm his rationale. Dragging Hector's body around the walls of Troy for twelve days proves he has not mastered his excesses, which displease the gods.

Zeus intervenes to humble Achilles so he can be restored to his full heroic nature. In Book XXIV, he sends Priam to the Greek hero to beg for the body of his son, Hector. Achilles is fully touched by the old king's humility and weeps for Priam and himself. The tears are a symbolic baptism for him, breaking his cycle of wrath. Achilles emerges from the meeting as a restored hero, capable of leading the Greek force to victory over the Trojans.

## **Q-THE ILIAD AS AN EPIC**

### **Introduction:**

Homer's life is a shadow in the mists of ancient history. All that we know for certain about him is that he composed two of the greatest epics in world literature, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, as well as several hymns to the gods. The content, ideals, and style of his epics formed the basis of Greek education in the classical age of Socrates, Plato, Sophocles, and Aristotle and influenced the course of western literature for centuries to come.

*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* stand as two of the greatest works ever composed. They have influenced writers throughout the ages for the beauty and power of their imagery, for their character development, for the universality of their themes, and for their extraordinary stories. They take their place alongside the Bible, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as among the most popular and most highly praised literary works in history. Remarkably, Homer had no authors to imitate, no prototypical literature to guide him, for literature--indeed, civilization itself--was still in its infancy when he composed his works. He was the world's first great writer, a model for others to imitate.

### **What is An Epic? :**

The epic is generally defined as a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. The traditional epics were shaped by a literary artist from

historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare (*Beowulf*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Iliad*).

***“An extended narrative poem, usually simple in construction, but grand in scope, exalted in style, and heroic in theme, often giving expression to the ideals of a nation or race.”***

**There are 9 key characteristics of an Epic Poem:**

- 1) It opens in the midst of the story (*medias res*)
- 2) The setting is vast and it covers many nations, the world and the universe.
- 3) It usually begins with an invocation to Muse.
- 4) It starts with a statement of the theme.
- 5) The use of Epithets.
- 6) It includes long lists.
- 7) It features long and formal speeches.
- 8) It shows divine intervention on human affairs.
- 9) The Heroes embody the values of civilization.

**The Iliad as an Epic:**

**In medias res(in the midst of things):** this doesn't mean in the middle arithmetically; its meaning is rather in the midst of a crisis, some problem that is so great, so con-fusing, so painful, no one quite understands how to get out of it: in the midst of things. The fact that the story begins 9 ½ years into the war is not small. Neither side has been able to bring the conflict to a close, suggesting some underlying disorder is in the way. The story is about some change taking place in the interval between Achilles' withdrawal from the war and his return. 9 ½, remember, is almost 10, a number representing completion: as *The Iliad* begins, something is about to happen.

**Time of Action:** About 3,200 years ago in recorded history's infancy, when humankind's imagination peopled the known world with great heroes and villains and nature reflected the mood of the gods inhabiting the mountaintops, the seas, the forests, and the unseen worlds above and below. Homer fashioned *The Iliad*, the story of the Trojan War, about 600 years after the war ended. The story is a mixture of fact, legend, and myth.

**Place of Action:** The walled city of Troy and the surrounding plains in northwestern Anatolia, a region that is part of modern-day Turkey. Anatolia is west of Greece (across the Aegean Sea) and north of Egypt (across the Mediterranean Sea).

**Invocation:** a calling on the gods. When Homer begins by invoking the help of the Muse, Calliope (I, ll.1-7), he is drawing on mythic powers of the cosmos without which he cannot tell his tale. His subject involves something too great for him to tell by himself. What is so great about the war that it is deserving of divine help? Notice the several parts that make up the themes announced in the invocation:

- 1 Achilles' "anger" and its devastation;
- 2 the "will of Zeus" or Zeus's plan to recover Achilles' honor; and
- 3 the anger of Apollo who caused the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles.

**Muse:** Calliope, one of the 9 daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus (memory impregnated with divine power). Homer invokes her as the muse of epic poetry; she contains knowledge of all things past, particularly those associated with battle. The epic world is a world of the past, existing in memory and apparently closed off from the present.

*"Sing, goddess, of Achilles ruinous anger  
Which brought ten thousand pains to the Achaeans,  
And cast the souls of many stalwart heroes  
To Hades, and their bodies to the dogs And birds of prey." Lines 1-5*

**Theme** is the most important part of an epic. Theme should be grand in form. Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

One can make a strong argument that *The Iliad* seems to celebrate war. Characters emerge as worthy or despicable based on their degree of competence and bravery in battle. A theme in *The Iliad* closely related to the glory of war is the predominance of military glory over family. The text clearly admires the reciprocal bonds of deference and obligation that bind Homeric families together, but it respects much more highly the pursuit of *kleos*, the “glory” or “renown” that one wins in the eyes of others by performing great deeds. Major themes of *The Iliad* are as under.

**Theme 1:** The wrath of Achilles. The main focus of the *Iliad* is the anger of the Greek warrior Achilles and the revenge he seeks against those who wrong him, including the general of the Greek armies, Agamemnon, and the Trojan warriors.

**Theme 2:** Glory and honor are everything. The war begins because a Trojan offended Greek honor by absconding with the wife of a Greek king. The war continues—for fully 10 years—in part because the combatants seek glory on the battlefield. In this respect, the combatants are like modern athletes, actors, and politicians who compete for Heisman Trophies, Academy Awards, and votes. Achilles withdraws from battle on a point of honor; King Priam reclaims his son's body for the same reason.

**Theme 3:** Revenge. The Greeks seek revenge against the Trojans because one of the latter has taken the wife of a Greek king. Chryses and Apollo seek revenge because Agamemnon has defied them. Achilles seeks revenge against Agamemnon because the latter has insulted him. Later, after he reenters the battle, Achilles seeks revenge against the Trojans in general—and Hector in particular—for the death of Patroclus.

**Theme 4:** Persistence pays. For 10 years, the Greeks fight a foreign war. Although they long for their families, although they have lost many men, they refuse to abandon the battlefield. Ultimately, their pertinacity enables them to gain the upper hand, setting the stage for ultimate victory.

**Theme 5:** Women play important roles in motivating action and shaping the future. Helen is the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Chryseis is the cause of the rift between Agamemnon and Apollo's priest, Chryseis. Briseis is the cause of the rift between Agamemnon and Achilles. Athena, Aphrodite, Hera, and the sea-nymph mother of Achilles—Thetis—all affect the action of *The Iliad* significantly. Sometimes these goddesses get the better of their male counterparts.

**The Homeric Epithet:** One of the hallmarks of the Homeric style is the epithet, a combination of a descriptive phrase and a noun. An epithet presents a miniature portrait that identifies a person or

thing by highlighting a prominent characteristic of that person or thing. In English, the Homeric epithet usually consists of a noun modified by a compound adjective, such as the following:

- *fleet-footed Achilles*
- *rosy-fingered dawn*
- *wine-dark sea*
- *earth-shaking Poseidon*
- *gray-eyed Athena.*

The Homeric epithet is an ancient relative of such later epithets as *Richard the Lion-Hearted*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and *America the Beautiful*. Homer repeated his epithets often, presumably so the listeners of his recited tales could easily remember and picture the person or thing each time it was mentioned. In this respect, the Homeric epithet resembles the leitmotif of opera composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). The leitmotif was a repeated musical theme associated with a character, a group of characters, an emotion, or an idea.

**Characters:** The epic contains long catalogues of heroes or important characters, focusing on highborn kings and great warriors rather than peasants and commoners.

There are two peoples fighting this war: the people of the West are the Achaians, Danaans, and Argives. The people of the East are the Trojans and the Dardanians. Be aware of the differences between them. Notice, for example, the way they enter the battles in Book III and their respective assemblies, Books I and VII. The gods take sides and participate in the war. Zeus has his own plan and intervenes on both sides as it suits his purposes.

**The Language of Homer:** It is helpful to have some rudimentary knowledge of the structure of the Greek language to understand how Homer's language works. Greek is an inflected language so that the forms of nouns and adjectives change according to the particular case in question, whether nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, or dative. Homer uses a number of adjectives to describe Achilles, the hero of *The Iliad*; although he seems to choose his adjective because of metrical consideration, he also changes the adjective according to case. In the nominative case, when he is the subject of a sentence, Achilles is usually described as swift-footed. In the accusative case, he is usually said to be illustrious. In the genitive case, when he is in possession of something, Achilles is always referred to as the son of Peleus. In the dative case, when someone is giving him something, he is the shepherd of his people or a sacker of cities. For e.g. Achilles' remorse for his hand in Patroclus death:

*"I sat by the ships, a useless burden,  
thought here are better in Assembly-so may  
this strife of men and gods be done with." Lines 104-107*

Homer's language is filled with flowery phrases, such as "*the wine-dark sea*", "*rosy-fingered dawn*," and "*winged words*". He also repeats words and phrases for emphasis, especially when he is describing often-repeated actions, such as arming for battle, preparing a meal, or making a sacrifice. In addition, about one third of the lines in *The Iliad* are repeated wholly or in part in the course of the poem.

**The Impermanence of Human Life:** Although *The Iliad* chronicles a very brief period in a very long war, it remains acutely conscious of the specific ends awaiting each of the people involved.

Troy is destined to fall, as Hector explains to his wife in Book 6. The text announces that Priam and all of his children will die—Hector dies even before the close of the poem. Achilles will meet an early end as well, although not within the pages of *The Iliad*. Homer constantly alludes to this event, especially toward the end of the epic, making clear that even the greatest of men cannot escape death. Indeed, he suggests that the very greatest—the noblest and bravest—may yield to death sooner than others.

Similarly, *The Iliad* recognizes, and repeatedly reminds its readers, that the creations of mortals have a mortality of their own. The glory of men does not live on in their constructions, institutions, or cities. The prophecy of Calchas, as well as Hector's tender words with Andromache and the debates of the gods, constantly remind the reader that Troy's lofty ramparts will fall. But the Greek fortifications will not last much longer. Though the Greeks erect their bulwarks only partway into the epic, Apollo and Poseidon plan their destruction as early as Book 12. The poem thus emphasizes the ephemeral nature of human beings and their world, suggesting that mortals should try to live their lives as honorably as possible, so that they will be remembered well. For if mortals' physical bodies and material creations cannot survive them, perhaps their words and deeds can. Certainly the existence of Homer's poem would attest to this notion.

**Heroes and cultural values:** The narrative focused on the exploits of a hero or demigod who represents the cultural values of a race, nation, or religious group. The epic struggle of a people doesn't take place in a vacuum; it occurs against the backdrop or rather in the midst of a cosmic order. And this cosmic order, the order of the gods, isn't just a setting; there is something going on within this order itself that's a part of the struggle the humans are facing. It brings into focus some aspect of the problem that isn't obvious at first. The importance of this cosmic order and the epic world it unfolds to us isn't small, then; it's enormous because to be aware of a cosmos is to be aware of ancient beginnings. When we enter a cosmos in which the gods play a part, we move into a world that takes us back to beginnings, to "the deeps of time" where boundaries or barriers as we know them fall away. We hear of an Olympos.

Where the gods dwell; an underworld where spirits go or are taken; a place called Tartarus. In book one, Zeus is described as taking a twelve day's journey to the ends of the ocean, that place where Okeanos, one of the fathers of the gods has been banished--it is at the ends of the world as we know it. And after Zeus agrees to Thetis's request to help recover the lost honor of her son, Achilles, Thetis "leapt down...down from shining Olympos into the sea's depth." Over and over again, we are reminded of a mythic world interpenetrating our own and yet fully real to itself just beyond our borders.

### **Summing up:**

An epic in its most specific sense is a genre of classical poetry originating in Greece. The term applies most directly to classical Greek texts like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but it is clear that Roman authors like Virgil intentionally imitate the genre in works like the *Aeneid*. However, some critics have applied the term more loosely. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is called an epic of Christian culture, *El Cid* is an epic of Spanish culture, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* is an epic of American culture, and Shakespeare's various History Plays have been collectively called an epic of Renaissance Britain. Contrast with the mock epics of Alexander Pope and later Enlightenment writers to see its influence in humorous form.

## **Q-Hector As The Epic Hero**

In Homer's The Iliad there appears to be some controversy over who the true epic hero might be. We have heard many arguments supporting Achilles as the Epic Hero, and since The Iliad does indeed say "The Story of Achilles" I believe that Achilles is an easy character for people to associate as the epic hero. Although many people have cited Achilles as having superhuman strength and various other physical attributes, he appears to be lacking the qualities of a real Homeric Epic Hero. A Homeric Epic Hero must demonstrate all of the following three requirements in order for them to truly be considered an Epic Hero. A character must believe that men have to stand together in battle; men had to respect each other; and they had to refrain from excessive cruelty. This last condition was considered to be critically important for the Epic Hero. A true Epic Hero loathed deliberate acts of cruelty, defamation, and injustice. An Epic Hero believed that if they were to kill an opponent it must be done quickly. There was to be no mutilation of any kind because it reflected poorly upon the victor and the victor's community. In the following paragraphs you will see how Achilles breaks all three rules/requirements of an epic hero, and upon doing so relinquishes any right he has to be called an Epic Hero.

The first requirement of an Epic Hero is that he believes that men should stand together in battle. Achilles is a great warrior with superhuman strength, but when Briseis, Achilles' war prize, is stripped from him by Agamemnon he proceeds to throw a temper tantrum. Achilles cares no more about standing alongside his fellow Greek warriors because he has been disrespected by Agamemnon. Homer does an excellent job of making most readers sympathize with Achilles, until around book nine when Patroclus is killed in battle. It is not until nine books of brooding and pouting passed for Achilles to realize how selfish and immature he was behaving. Not until the death of his beloved companion, which he was an indirect cause of, does he decide to return to the battlefield. Even his intentions to return to the battlefield are not philanthropic in their nature. Achilles feels guilty about Patroclus' death and wants to avenge his friend's death more for personal reasons than anything else. Achilles feels that if he kills Hector, Patroclus' death will be justly avenged, and Achilles will not carry such a heavy weight on his chest feeling like he was the cause of his friend's death. for e.g. Achilles' remorse for his hand in Patroclus death, he says,

*"I sat by the ships, a useless burden,  
though there are better in Assembly –  
so may this strife of men and gods be done with."*

Achilles decides not to fight for Agamemnon or the Greeks for nine books. During that same time he breaks the second rule/requirement of an Epic Hero. After Agamemnon disgraces Achilles by taking his war prize, Briseis, from him; Achilles is filled with complete rage. Achilles even draws his sword to take arms against Agamemnon, but is stopped short by a god who makes him change his mind. The antagonistic relationship between Agamemnon and Achilles appears to be on a subconscious level because both men are very proud and on a quest for being immortalized in history. Agamemnon does not appear to take Briseis in spite of Achilles. Agamemnon feels that it is his lawful right to take Briseis, since he is the commanding officer of the Greeks, and his war prize had to be returned. Also, Achilles' anger towards Agamemnon appears to be justifiable because Agamemnon,

whether intentionally or not did indeed disgrace Achilles. Achilles does not break the second rule/requirement of an Epic Hero until he decides to draw his sword, in hopes of regaining some respect by fighting Agamemnon.

**“Achilles: *No argument with you, brothers.  
But if you don't release her,  
you'll never see home again. Decide!***  
**Agamemnon: *Guards!***  
[Achilles draws his sword]”

At this point there is no longer an antagonistic relationship between Agamemnon and Achilles because Achilles consciously chooses to draw his sword against Agamemnon. By drawing his sword against a superior officer Achilles officially breaks the second rule/requirement of an Epic Hero; men had to respect each other. Some might argue that because Agamemnon disrespected Achilles; Achilles had the right to now disrespect Agamemnon. This was not the philosophy of an Epic Hero; eye for an eye. An Epic Hero was supposed to be above pettiness, but as we've seen in books one through nine, we know that Achilles is neither mature nor reasonable. Achilles leaves his men, which breaks rule one, and then he proceeds to draw his sword on Agamemnon, which breaks rule two.

The third, and possibly, the most important rule/requirement of an Epic Hero was that he did not show cruelty or injustice on the battlefield. Before Achilles and Hector begin to fight Hector asks Achilles that if he is killed will Achilles send his body back to Troy for a proper burial. Achilles is in such a fit of rage that he denies Hector of his last wish and begins fighting. The battle between Achilles and Hector ends with Achilles claiming victory. Upon defeating Hector he attaches his body to the back of his chariot and rides around the city of Troy with Hector's body dragging along behind him. Achilles continues to ride around Troy three times a day for nine days. This is blatant act of cruelty and intentional mutilation of Hector's body. There is not a clearer example of how Achilles breaks the third and most important rule of an Epic Hero; an Epic Hero was not to show cruelty or injustice on the battlefield. Achilles, as he kills Hector, says,

***"No more entreating, dog, by knees or parents.  
I only wish my fury would compel me  
To cut away your flesh and eat it raw  
For what you've done. No one can keep the dogs  
Off of your head, not if they brought me ransom  
Of ten or twenty times as much, or more." Lines 345-350***

Achilles is by no means the Epic Hero because he either breaks or completely destroys all three rules/requirements for a character to be an Epic Hero. Some argue that The Iliad shows the development of Achilles into the Epic Hero. By returning Hector's body he was not cleansed of his acts of cruelty. What Achilles did was cruel and inhumane. By returning Hector's body he is just admitting that once again he was impetuous and rash in his behavior. Like his behavior for the first nine books with Agamemnon when he was pouting and brooding because things weren't going his way, the same can be said for the end of the book. Achilles was not satisfied with just avenging Patroclus' death, but he had to add a little sting on top of it all. Achilles might have conceivably had

the most slim chances of possibly being considered as a remote choice as the Homeric Epic Hero if he had given up Hector's body right away. That would have shown growth and maturity.

The Epic Hero in Homer's The Iliad is Hector. Hector stands by his men in battles, thus meeting rule number one. Hector shows respect to men, thus meeting rule number two. And finally, Hector never shows compassion and justice on the battle field. Hector is the embodiment of a true Epic Hero. Hector understands his responsibilities as a great Trojan warrior. Hector knows that even though Troy is destined to fall he will fight until the bitter end. Hector knows that there are women and children behind the walls of Troy, so he fights not only for his own personal glory but for his community. Something Achilles never does because Achilles is only worried about himself. He does not fight for his community, but only in the hope of immortalizing himself. Finally, Hector is the Epic Hero because he has all of Achilles' strengths and none of his weaknesses. Some say that Hector lost his pride and courage when he ran from Achilles. That was a defining moment in the text. It is where you saw Hector solidify himself as the true Epic Code Hero. An impetuous and rash warrior like Achilles would have stood his ground. Hector knew he was outmatched, so he ran trying to lure Achilles into the range of the Trojan Archers. Hector was exhibiting logic and reason. Hector knew that if he were to fall, then Troy would follow suit. Hector chose logic and reason over foolish pride. Hector did not become a coward when he ran away, he became the Epic Hero. if we believe Hector was a coward when he ran away...what is better one million dead heroes who died on the battlefield or one great hero who knows when to fight and when to run that way he can continue to lead his people? Although that is a loaded question, it's also true. No matter how many great warriors or Epic Heroes you might have had, if they are dead, then they are dead and they cannot help defend a city or its people. Hector knew this and that is why he ran, not because he was a coward, but because he cared more about his Troy, his people, and his family. One Great Epic Hero like Hector is worth more than any number of great heroes who are dead, and that's the truth.

## Q-Character of Achilles in Homer's Iliad

*“Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Jove fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another”*

The very **first lines** of the poem sing the raga and importance of one of the greatest warriors. Throughout the course of the poem Achilles goes through many ordeals that change his character immensely. Starting with his quarrel with Agamemnon and withdrawal from battle, to the death of Patroclus, and with the slaying of Hector. Achilles emotions and actions decide the fate of many warriors on both sides. Achilles struggles with anger, honor, pride, loyalty and love make the poem more than just a gruesome war story.

A large source of Achilles' anger started with his fight with Agamemnon. Apollo put a plague on the Achaean soldiers that was killing them off. The only way to stop this from killing them all was to give back a priest's daughter who had been captured. This girl "belonged" to Agamemnon and he didn't want to give her up unless he got Achilles' girl in return. This would disgrace Achilles' honor

but he could not let any more soldiers be killed so, he reluctantly let her go. But in return for giving up his girl he withdrew from the battle. Much of Achilles' anger is a result of this occasion but the death of Patroclus later overrode his previous anger towards Agamemnon.

The death of Patroclus touched Achilles in many ways that changed and shaped his character. Many emotions were a result of his death such as love, loss, anger, and sadness. Patroclus was a dear friend to Achilles and when a mix of divine intervention and Hector cut Patroclus down grief and the desire to avenge his dear friend's death consumed Achilles. This switched his anger from King Agamemnon to Hector, the man who slew his dear friend. This anger drew Achilles to avenge the death of his friend, to kill Hector.

The slaughter of Hector is gruesome and horrid. Not only did Achilles kill Hector but, he hung him by his ankles, attached him to his chariot and dragged Hector around the burial site of Patroclus.

***“Don't be angry, Patroclus, if you learn –  
even though you're in Hades - I gave Hector back  
to his father for a worthy ransom  
But I shall give a proper share to you.”***

-Achilles, Book 24, The Iliad.

This is horrible enough but Achilles for a while refused to give Priam, father of Hector and King of Troy, back the body of Hector for proper burial. He was going to let it be eaten by the dogs, though the gods protected his body from this. This shows Achilles' anger and how brutal he seems. But when Priam comes to retrieve the body of Hector, Achilles welcomes him like a friend and calls for a cease-fire so that Hector can be properly buried. Achilles' drive for blood and vengeance is gone. He mourns with Priam, which illustrates that Achilles may be harsh but he can also be kind and caring. This may also be a sign that Achilles is maturing as a person and growing up. Throughout the poem Achilles seems like a horrible wretched person though in the last book he shows signs of maturity.

Achilles is a man of noble principles all throughout the poem. His argument with Agamemnon is a testament to that. Achilles shows that his principles rank higher than desire for fame on the battlefield. The only point at which he compromises his principles is when he allows Patroclus and his men to go off and fight and refuses to go himself. At that point in the story, he is putting foolish pride before his loyalty and love for his friend. This is the tragedy of human flaws that goes along with anger. He chooses a fate of death over dishonor, truly a hero's decision. Katherine Callan King rightly says that this is:

***“...Achilles' agonizing reassessment of the kind of glory he is willing to die for.”***

Then after he avenges his fallen companion and the blood lust has left his system, he shows his growth and new understanding of loss with Priam. It is not an all-new Achilles, but instead the same Achilles who is perhaps wiser due to the lessons that only death can teach. We can conclude with words of *James M. Redfield*:

***“Achilles' greatness is a greatness of force and of negation.  
He is different from other men by his greater capacity to deny,  
to refuse, to kill, and to face death. He is a heroic rather than  
a demonic figure because his negations are founded not on  
perversity of will but on clarity of intellect.”***

## Q-Women of the Iliad

In the Iliad we saw women as items of exchange and as markers of status for the men who possessed them (Chryseis and Briseis, whom Agamemnon and Achilles argue over in Book I). We saw them in their normal social roles as mothers and wives (Hecuba, Andromache in Book VI). We saw stereotypical characterizations of them as fickle (Helen in Book VI), seductive, and deceitful (Hera in Book XIV). We see them as an obstacle that the male hero has to overcome or resist to fulfill his heroic destiny (Andromache's entreaties to Hector in Book VI). In all, the few times women show up in what is basically a story told in the male sphere, the story is nothing that subverts or calls into question the structure of the society that is being portrayed... or is there? To the extent that the Iliad has a moral lesson to impart to its readers, part of it would have to be that the behavior of Agamemnon and Achilles in the first book (and beyond) is excessive. Both men are as fixated on their own images as heroic warriors that they end up bringing woe upon themselves and the rest of the Greeks. Part of that behavior is the way they treat the women not as human beings but as emblems of their own status and martial prowess. Look carefully at what Agamemnon says to the prophet who declared that he had to give back Chryseis (Page 62):

*“Now once more you make divination to the Dana ans, argue  
forth your reason why he who strikes from afar afflicts them,  
because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take  
the shining ransom; and indeed I wish greatly to have her  
in my own house; since I like her better than Klytimestra  
my own wife, for in truth she is no way inferior “*

To those who already knew the stories of the Trojan War heroes (which all of the original Greek audience of the epic would), these words would be ominous ones. They would know that Agamemnon had angered his wife Klytimestra (Clytemnestra), by sacrificing their daughter to obtain favorable winds for the expedition. They would also know that when Agamemnon arrived home victorious after the war with Troy, concubine (Cassandra, not Chryseis) in tow, Clytemnestra would murder him. Agamemnon is already being characterized here as a person whose arrogant, insensitive and cavalier treatment of the women in his life brings him grief and destruction.

Contrast also Agamemnon's callousness, and what results from it, with the gentler attitude of Hector toward his mother and wife in Book VI and it's easy to see that the poet is capable of imagining a very different sort of attitude toward women. Notice also the care that the poet takes in giving us a sensitive portrayal of Andromache, a portrayal that makes it hard to think of any of the women in the story as mere objects that men can accumulate like gold cups or fat heifers. Here is a part of Andromache's address to Hector that makes us realize how little separates this princess from the girls that Agamemnon and Achilles consider to be their prizes (p. 164)

*“And they who were my seven brothers in the great house all went  
up on a single day down into the house of the death god,  
for swift-footed Achilleus slaughtered all of them  
as they were tending their white sheep and their lumbering oxen;*

*and when he had led my mother, who was queen under wooded Plakos,  
 here, along with all his other possessions, Achilleus  
 released her again, accepting ransom beyond count, but Artemis  
 of the showering arrows struck her down in the halls of her father.  
 Hektor, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother,  
 you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband.  
 Please take pity on me then, stay here on the rampart“*

And here is another passage where the poet brutally drives home the impact of the war on the women, in this case on Briseis herself, who had previously appeared as a mute object handed back and forth between Achilles and Agamemnon. In this passage, Achilles' friend Patroklos has been killed by Hector. This is what makes Achilles put aside his anger at Agamemnon and rejoin the battle. As a reward for rejoining, Agamemnon has given Briseis back to Achilles, and here she mourns Patroklos when his body is being brought back to Achilles' camp. She is in such a helpless and desperate situation that the death of one of her captors -- the kindest one of her captors -- is an occasion for massive grief, and her best hope is that her future life is as the wife of the man who killed her family rather than one of his house slaves or concubines:

*“And now, in the likeness of golden Aphrodite, Briseis  
 when she saw Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, folding  
 him in her arms cried shrilly above him and with her hands tore  
 at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead.  
 The woman like the immortals mourning for him spoke to him:  
 ‘Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows,  
 I left you here alive when I went away from the shelter,  
 but now I come back, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.  
 So evil in my life takes over from evil forever.  
 The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me  
 I saw before my city lying torn with the sharp bronze,  
 and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me  
 and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.  
 And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilles had cut down  
 my husband, and sacked the city of go dlike Mynes, you would not  
 let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilles’  
 wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships  
 to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.  
 Therefore I weep y our death without ceasing. You were kind always.’  
 So she spoke, lamenting, and the women sorrowed around her  
 grieving openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrows each. “*

So, one could make an argument that the poet of the Iliad does portray women as objects which men use to jockey for position with one another. He portrays them in stereotypical roles and with stereotypical characteristics. He portrays them as totally impotent outside the protection of their male guardians. But he does all this in a way that doesn't seek to support or justify that system. Instead, he presents it with such honesty and clarity that it makes the injustices of the society clear. This does not make him a revolutionary, a reformer or a proto-feminist. There is no reason to think that he wanted to, or thought that he could, change society in any way. From his point of view he may have simply been telling it like it is. But it does show a capacity in a Greek male writer to look upon the situation of women with some sensitivity and compassion.

## **Q-The Shield of Achilles in Homer's Iliad**

*“She looked over his shoulder  
For vines and olive trees,  
Marble well-governed cities  
And ships upon untamed seas,  
But there on the shining metal  
His hands had put instead  
An artificial wilderness  
And a sky like lead.”*

- W.H. Auden

Throughout the Iliad the warriors' dream of peace is projected over and over again in elaborate similes developed against a background of violence and death. Homer is able to balance the celebration of war's tragic, heroic values with scenes of battle and those creative values of civilized life that war destroys. The shield of Achilles symbolically represents the two poles of human condition, war and peace, with their corresponding aspects of human nature, the destructive and creative, which are implicit in every situation and statement of the poem and are put before us in something approaching abstract form; its emblem is an image of human life as a whole.

Forged by Hephaestus, this shield includes all manner of imagery to dazzle and overawe Achilles' opponents. Made out of bronze, tin, and priceless gold and silver, this glittering, triple-ply *"world of gorgeous immortal work"* is blazoned with *"well-wrought emblems across its surface."* Starting out describing the earth, the sea, and the sky, Homer goes into detail and uses imagery to talk about such specifics as the *"blazing sun,"* the *"moon rounding full,"* and *"the constellations, all that crown the heavens."*

He then starts going into detail about the two mortal cities. The first city opens with a description of a wedding and a wedding feast. Sharing details such as the glowing torches, the choirs singing, the young men dancing with flutes and harps, and the women who rushed to the doors, were moved with wonder. Then it goes into a mass of people streaming into the marketplace where a quarrel had broken out and two men struggled over the blood-price for a kinsman just murdered. Their

quarreling is settled when they call for a judge, and put before the city elders a prize of two bars of solid gold for the judge who'd speak the straightest verdict.

In this first city, the wedding celebration and merriment that come along with it represent the harmony and happiness of the city and the people's lives. Furthermore, the quarrel between the two men was settled by the process of law, which represents justice and order, and the crowd which decided which elder got the prize, and which judgment would be passed, represents democracy. This equals construction. In this world of ordinary people, they form the backdrop to the grim, implacable rage of Achilles, and suggest optimism for their world; a world removed from that of the hero.

The second city, on the other hand, is full of destruction, with the people at war, being besieged by a hostile army and fighting for its existence. This presents disorder, but struggle for life and glory. However as Homer is describing the city preparing to fight, and the men marching out to war, he uses good imagery, such as

*"Ares and Pallas led them, /both burnished gold,  
gold the attire they donned, and great,/magnificent  
in their armor - gods for all the world,/looming up in their brilliance..."*

Through this heroic imagery, the good part of this city still is able to shine through the darkness, even if it's just a little bit. The description of this city ends with "So they clashed and fought like living, breathing men/grappling each other's corpses, dragging off the dead."

After the description of these cities, Homer goes on to talk about some of the other scenes portrayed on the shield. Some good, some bad, most are good, once again emphasizing the peaceful life. Through the scenes of the farmers plowing, and then reapers harvesting on a king's estate, and then the peaceful and merry vineyard, moving on to the violently murdered bull, which really is the only negative thing. It continues with a nice meadow, and then finishes with describing a dance, which is the archetypal symbol for the joy of life itself.

The more abundant peaceful scenes balance out the evil scenes portrayed on this shield. War has the lesser place on the shield as most of its surface is covered with images of a peaceful life. This imbalance shows the total background of the carnage of war, and it provides a frame that gives the rage of Achilles and death of Hector a true perspective. This also is a representation of the future glories of Rome. This shield also gives off a significant signal to the warriors on both sides, as seen in Book 19. When Achilles re-enters the war fully armed, and his return means all is lost for the Trojans, and all is regained for the Achaeans. In this moment of glory, a light reflects from Achilles' shield. This light is compared in a beautiful simile to the beacon light of salvation that shines from a lonely lighthouse on the Hellespont. The Hellespont is a notoriously dangerous place for Greek sailors, and the Greeks think of themselves as a nation of sailors. Through this simile, then, everything that the shield represents will be, as it were, a focal point for the very concept of Greek civilization.

Although these two cities can be described as the city at war and the city at peace, there are sensitive moments associated with conflict as well as moments of contention associated with marriage scene. Anything else would be oversimplifying life artificially. The depiction is of the entire larger vision of the intricate life of the culture and the world. This shows that there's really something at

stake here to be fighting about. It also shows there's no center to the shield. Although we assume Helen is at the center of the war, the war probably wouldn't end if the Trojans turned her over to Menelaus now. The tapestry is too intricately woven, so as the central blame is Helen, most of the individuals involved are in the war for widely different motives.

This war involves a human side, including the admission of fear and scenes of domestic life, not in a sentimentalized version. This more complete and responsible depiction shows that there's not one single center to the war, just as there's not one single god for the Greeks. Running along the outermost rim of the shield is the Ocean River, the river that is at once the barrier between the quick and the dead, and also the frontier of the known and imagined worlds. One of the last descriptions on the shield, this river could perhaps be a symbol for total inclusiveness and eternity, and for the stability of the larger perspective.

# Dante-The Divine Comedy

## Original Title:

Originally *La commedia di Dante Alighieri* (The Comedy of Dante Alighieri). In 1555, when a special edition of the poem was published in Venice, admirers of the great work added the word "Divina" ("Divine") to call attention to its greatness. Thus, it became known as *La Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy) and the author's name was dropped from the title. In the original title, "di" ("of") appears to have a double meaning. On the one hand, it means Dante wrote the work. On the other, it means Dante experienced what took place in the work.



## Settings:

The action takes place in 1300. It begins in the Forest of Darkness on Good Friday, the day commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, and ends the following Thursday. When Dante starts his journey, he is 35 years old—exactly half the biblical life span of "three score years and ten." From the Forest of Darkness, Dante proceeds through Hell and Purgatory, and then ascends into Heaven.

## Character List:

**Dante** - The author and protagonist of *Inferno*; the focus of all action and interaction with other characters. Because Dante chose to present his fictional poem as a record of events that actually happened to him, a wide gulf between Dante the poet and Dante the character pervades the poem. For instance, Dante the poet often portrays Dante the character as compassionate and sympathetic at the sight of suffering sinners, but Dante the poet chose to place them in Hell and devised their suffering. As a result, if Dante the character is at all representative of Dante the poet, he is a very simplified version: sympathetic, somewhat fearful of danger, and confused both morally and intellectually by his experience in Hell. As the poem progresses, Dante the character gradually learns to abandon his sympathy and adopt a more pitiless attitude towards the punishment of sinners, which he views as merely a reflection of divine justice.

**Virgil** - Dante's guide through the depths of Hell. Historically, Virgil lived in the first century b.c., in what is now northern Italy. Scholars consider him the greatest of the Latin poets. His masterpiece, the *Aeneid*, tells the story of how Aeneas, along with fellow survivors of the defeat of Troy, came to found Rome. The shade (or spirit) of Virgil that appears in *Inferno* has been condemned to an eternity in Hell because he lived prior to Christ's appearance on Earth (and thus prior to the possibility of redemption in Him). Nonetheless, Virgil has now received orders to lead Dante through Hell on his spiritual journey. Virgil proves a wise, resourceful, and commanding presence, but he often seems helpless to

protect Dante from the true dangers of Hell. Critics generally consider Virgil an allegorical representation of human reason—both in its immense power and in its inferiority to faith in God.

**Beatrice** - One of the blessed in Heaven, Beatrice aids Dante's journey by asking an angel to find Virgil and bids him guide Dante through Hell. Like Dante and Virgil, Beatrice corresponds to a historical personage. Although the details of her life remain uncertain, we know that Dante fell passionately in love with her as a young man and never fell out of it. She has a limited role in *Inferno* but becomes more prominent in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. In fact, Dante's entire imaginary journey throughout the afterlife aims, in part, to find Beatrice, whom he has lost on Earth because of her early death. Critics generally view Beatrice as an allegorical representation of spiritual love.

**St. Bernard**: A French Cistercian monk and abbot, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) guides and instructs Dante when the poet reaches the highest region of heaven. Bernard supported the ascendancy of Pope Innocent II against Anacletus II, an antipope. He preached in favor of the Second Crusade, strongly opposed heresy, and wrote many hymns that remain popular today.

**Charon**: A figure that Dante appropriates from Greek mythology, Charon is an old man who ferries souls across the river Acheron to Hell.

**Paolo and Francesca da Rimini**: A pair of lovers condemned to the Second Circle of Hell for an adulterous love affair that they began after reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere.

**Lucifer**: The prince of Hell, also referred to as Dis. Lucifer resides at the bottom of the Ninth (and final) Circle of Hell, beneath the Earth's surface, with his body jutting through the planet's center. An enormous giant, he has three faces but does not speak; his three mouths are busy chewing three of history's greatest traitors: Judas, the betrayer of Christ, and Cassius and Brutus, the betrayers of Julius Caesar.

**Minos**: The king of Crete in Greek mythology, Minos is portrayed by Dante as a giant beast who stands at the Second Circle of Hell, deciding where the souls of sinners shall be sent for torment. Upon hearing a given sinner's confession, Minos curls his tail around himself a specific number of times to represent the circle of Hell to which the soul should be consigned.

**Pope Boniface VIII**: A notoriously corrupt pope who reigned from 1294 to 1303, Boniface made a concerted attempt to increase the political might of the Catholic Church and was thus a political enemy of Dante, who advocated a separation of church and state.

**Farinata**: A Ghibelline political leader from Dante's era who resides among the Heretics in the Sixth Circle of Hell. Farinata is doomed to continue his intense obsession with Florentine politics, which he is now helpless to affect.

**Phlegyas**: The boatman who rows Dante and Virgil across the river Styx.

**Filippo Argenti**: A Black Guelph, a political enemy of Dante who is now in the Fifth Circle of Hell. Argenti resides among the Wrathful in the river Styx.

**Nessus:** The Centaur (half man and half horse) who carries Dante through the First Ring of the Seventh Circle of Hell.

**Pier della Vigna:** A former advisor to Emperor Frederick II, della Vigna committed suicide when he fell into disfavor at the court. He now must spend eternity in the form of a tree.

**Geryon:** The massive serpentine monster that transports Dante and Virgil from the Seventh to the Eighth Circle of Hell.

**Malacoda:** The leader of the Malabranche, the demons who guard the Fifth Pouch of the Eighth Circle of Hell. Malacoda (his name means “evil tail”) intentionally furnishes Virgil and Dante with erroneous directions.

**Vanni Fucci:** A thief punished in the Seventh Pouch of the Eighth Circle of Hell who prophesies the defeat of the White Guelphs. A defiant soul, Fucci curses God and aims an obscene gesture at Him before Dante journeys on.

**Ulysses:** The great hero of the Homeric epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Ulysses was a bold and cunning man who is now imprisoned in the Eighth Pouch of the Eighth Circle of Hell among those guilty of Spiritual Theft.

**Guido da Montefeltro:** An advisor to Pope Boniface VIII, da Montefeltro was promised anticipatory absolution—forgiveness for a sin given prior to the perpetration of the sin itself. Da Montefeltro now suffers in Hell, since absolution cannot be gained without repentance and it is impossible to repent a sin before committing it.

**Antaeus:** The giant who transports Dante and Virgil from the Eighth to the Ninth Circle of Hell.

**Count Ugolino:** A traitor condemned to the Second Ring of the Ninth Circle of Hell. Ugolino gnaws on the head of another damned traitor, Archbishop Ruggieri. When Ruggieri imprisoned Ugolino and his sons, denying them food, Ugolino was driven to eat the corpses of his starved sons.

**Fra Alberigo and Branca d’Oria:** Sinners condemned to the Third Ring of the Ninth Circle of Hell. Fra Alberigo and Branca d’Oria are unlike the other sinners Dante encounters: their crimes were deemed to be so great that devils snatched their souls from their living bodies; thus, their souls reside in Hell while their bodies live on, now guided and possessed by demons.

### **Mythological Personages and Creatures:**

Examples of the mythological figures in *The Divine Comedy* are the following:

- Minos, King of Crete and later judge of the Underworld
- Paris and Helen, lovers who caused the Trojan War
- Achilles, the proud Greek warrior who offended the gods in various ways
- Cerberus, the three-headed dog at the entrance to the Underworld and, in the Inferno, symbol of appetite and gluttony with his three mouths
- Geryon, a monster with a stinger who is a symbol of fraud

- Ulysses, wily Greek who devised the Trojan horse, enabling Greece to defeat Troy in the Trojan War; he is in hell as a deceiver
- Arachne, a maiden turned into a spider after angering Minerva (Athena), goddess of wisdom and war;
- The Furies, avengers of crimes
- The Harpies, hideous monsters
- Chiron, a wise centaur (creature that was part horse and part human)
- Jason, famed retriever of the Golden Fleece who abandoned his wife, Medea, for another woman.

### **Historical Personages:**

Examples of historical personages in *The Divine Comedy* are the following:

- Vergil (see above)
- Homer, the great epic poet of ancient Greece
- Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, poets of ancient Rome
- Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta, illicit lovers killed by Francesca's husband
- Queen Cleopatra of Egypt
- Cato, a righteous government official of ancient Rome
- Venedico Caccianemico, an Italian politician accused of pimping
- Griffolino of Arezzo, who deceived Alberto of Siena by pretending that he could teach him to fly
- Pope Nicholas III, associated with simony, the practice of buying or selling ecclesiastical offices or benefices
- Pierre de la Brosse, chancellor of France who was executed in 1278 but was innocent of the charge against him, treachery
- Brutus and Cassius, ringleaders of the assassination plot against Julius Caesar
- Judas, betrayer of Christ
- St. Thomas Aquinas; St. Benedict; St. Peter; St. John.

### **Plot Summary:**

*The Divine Comedy* has three sections: Inferno (*Hell*), Purgatorio (*Purgatory*) and Paradiso (*Paradise or Heaven*). The first section has 33 cantos (chapters) and an introduction of 1 canto for a total of 34. The second and third sections each have 33 cantos. The characters include mythological and historical personages.

#### **The Forest of Error**

.....On Good Friday in 1300, the 35-year-old Dante enters the Forest of Error, a dark and ominous wood symbolizing his own sinful materialism and the materialism of the world in general. At the top of a hill in the distance, he sees a light representing the hope of the resurrected Christ. When he attempts to climb toward the light, a leopard, lion, and she-wolf—which symbolize human iniquity—block his way. The spirit of the Roman poet Vergil (also spelled *Virgil*), author of the epic *The Aeneid*, comes forth to rescue him. Vergil, the exemplar of human reason, offers to escort him out of the Forest of Error by another route, for there is no way to get by the she-wolf. This alternate route leads first through Hell, where Dante will recognize sin for what it is, then through Purgatory, where Dante will abjure sin and purge himself of it. Finally, it leads to Heaven, where Beatrice—a woman Dante had loved before her death in 1295—will become his guide while Vergil returns from whence he came, for

human reason cannot mount the heights of paradise. Dante happily agrees to make the journey, and they depart.

### **Hell (Inferno)**

.....After passing into hell, Dante and Vergil hear the groans and wails of the damned in the outer reaches of the abyss and see persons who were lukewarm and halfhearted in their moral lives. They then cross the Acheron River and arrive at a cone-shaped cavern with nine circles. In the First Circle at the top, called Limbo, are the least offensive souls, such as unbaptized but well-meaning heathens. They suffer no torment. However, they cannot move on to Purgatory or Heaven because they died before Christ brought redemption. Vergil himself dwells in the First Circle.

.....They then pass down through the other eight circles, seeing terrible sights of suffering experienced by those who died in mortal sin (in Catholicism, the worst kind of sin, such as willful murder and rape). Circles 2 through 6 contain those who could not control their desires for sex, food, money, or wayward religion (heresy). Among the personages they encounter are Queen Cleopatra of Egypt, the Greek warrior Achilles, Helen of Troy, and the man who carried her off, Paris. The Seventh Circle contains those who committed violence against themselves or others, or against God himself. The Eighth Circle contains hypocrites, thieves, forgers, alchemists, swindlers, flatterers and deceivers. The Ninth Circle, reserved for the worst evildoers, are traitors of every kind—those who were false to friends or relatives, or to their country or a noble cause. Dante sees two political leaders frozen together in a lake, head to head. He also encounters the most abominable of all traitors—Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, and Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar. Satan himself, the arch fiend, is here frozen in the lake.

### **Purgatory (Purgatorio)**

.....Dante and Vergil next arrive at the Mount of Purgatory, which is surrounded by an ocean. On ten terraces running up the side of the mountain are souls purging themselves of venial (less serious) sins involving negligence, pride, envy, sloth, political intrigue and other transgressions. Dante exults in the light and hope that greet him after leaving the horrid realm of darkness and death. At the entrance to Purgatory, Dante and Vergil meet Cato, an ancient Roman who, as censor in 184 B.C., attempted to root out immorality and corruption in Roman life. In Dante's poem, Cato symbolizes the four cardinal virtues of Roman Catholicism: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. On Cato's instructions, Vergil cleanses Dante's face of the grime of hell and girdles his waist with a reed, symbolizing humility. An angel writes seven *P*'s across Dante's forehead, each representing one of the seven deadly sins. (The Italian word for sin begins with a *P*.) The angel then tells Dante he must wash away the *P*'s—that is, purge himself of sin—while in Purgatory.

.....Among the terrace dwellers are excommunicants who repented before they died, a lazy Florentine who postponed doing good works most of his life, and monarchs who neglected their duties. As Dante and Vergil continue upward, they also meet the proud, the envious, the avaricious, the wasteful and the lustful. Farther up the mountain, they can gaze across the River Lethe and see the Earthly Paradise, signaling it is time for Vergil to leave and return to his abode, the First Circle of the heathens.

.....Still observing from the opposite bank of the river (and still in Purgatory) Dante sees a pageant in which the participants and sacred objects symbolize books of the Bible, virtues, the human and divine natures of Christ and Saint Peter, and St. Paul and other disciples of the Christian religion. Beatrice is there, too. Out of love for him, she rebukes him for the sins he has committed. After he confesses his guilt, she invites the purified Dante to come across the river and ascend to heaven.

## **Heaven (Paradiso)**

.....Heaven, a place of perfect happiness, is a celestial region with planets, stars and other bodies. It resembles the earth-centered (geocentric) system of Ptolemy rather than the sun-centered (heliocentric) system of Copernicus and Galileo. The placement of an individual depends on the level of goodness he or she achieved in life, although everyone experiences the fullness of God's love. Dante and Beatrice then rise into heaven, where the poet discovers that even some pagans—persons born before the time of Christ—abide in the heavenly realm because they accepted revelations from God. At the lowest level of Heaven is the Moon. Next come Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Stars (where St. Peter condemns corruption under Pope Boniface VIII) and the Primum Mobile (First Mover), the cause of time and of all movement in the universe. The highest level is the Empyrean, the abode of the Triune God, the Virgin Mary, other angels, and saints.

.....When Dante and Beatrice reach the Empyrean, St. Bernard comes forth to prepare Dante to look upon the resplendent beings within. Dante realizes here that knowledge of heaven comes only through the grace of God and deep meditation, not through theology textbooks. After St. Bernard prays to Mary on Dante's behalf, she begs the light of God to welcome the prayer. When Dante glimpses that light, it overpowers him with a love so radiant that he cannot fathom its depth or even remember what he saw.

## **Climax:**

The climax of a literary work can be defined as (1) the turning point at which the conflict begins to resolve itself for better or worse, or as (2) the final and most exciting event in a series of events. According to the first definition, the climax of *The Divine Comedy* occurs in Purgatory when Beatrice causes Dante to admit guilt and repent. According to the second definition, the climax occurs in Paradise when Dante beholds the light of God.

## **Type of Work:**

*The Divine Comedy* is an epic poem on a vast scale, told by Dante himself in first-person point of view. *The Divine Comedy* is also an allegory, a work in which characters, objects, and events have figurative as well as literal meanings. For example, in *The Divine Comedy*, Vergil symbolizes human reason, and Beatrice stands for faith and supernatural truth. The three beasts Dante encounters in Canto 1 represent sin, and various personages in other cantos symbolize specific types of sin, such as envy, sloth, gluttony and lust. Some allegorical characters, objects, or events symbolize several things at the same time.

## **Year Completed:**

*The Divine Comedy* was probably written between 1306 and 1321, although Dante may have begun writing the poem as early as 1300. Most of the poem was written between 1315 and 1321. The poem won a large audience even though copies of it had to be handwritten. (The printing press had not yet been invented.) *The Divine Comedy* ranks as one of the great literary masterpieces of all time alongside the epics of Homer and Vergil and the greatest plays of Shakespeare.

## **How Dante's Epic Differs From Previous Epics:**

Earlier epics, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the anonymous English work *Beowulf*, focus on individual heroes in specific locales. The main stories in these epics generally borrow heavily from myths and legends handed down from generation to generation. *The Divine Comedy*, on the other hand, gets its story mainly from the author's own imagination. In addition, it encompasses heroes and villains from everywhere, including the material and spiritual worlds.

## **Dante's Political, Social, and Religious Views:**

Passages in *The Divine Comedy* reflect Dante's political and social views. Generally, he believed in separation of church and state, with the papacy reigning supreme in spiritual matters and the temporal ruler (an emperor or a king) reigning supreme in material matters. As a Roman Catholic, Dante supported the views of his church and accepted its teachings on life after death. However, he did not blindly support the church's leaders. In fact, he places seven popes in Hell in *The Divine Comedy*.

## **Definition of Comedy:**

A comedy in earlier times was a work with a happy ending. Since *The Divine Comedy* involves redemption, it fits this category. The word *comedy* is derived from the Greek words *komos* (meaning *revel, delight* or *happiness*) and *aidos* (meaning *singer*). Thus, a comedy was a work in which a writer "sang" about a happy event. Comedies of earlier times did not necessarily contain jokes or humorous situations. However, they did have to have a happy ending.

## **Verse Format and Structure of the Poem:**

*The Divine Comedy* contains 100 cantos (major divisions or "chapters" of the epic poem) written in terza rima, an Italian verse form invented by Dante. It consists of three-line stanzas in which Line 2 of one stanza rhymes with Lines 1 and 3 of the next stanza. The rhyme scheme progresses in the following pattern from the beginning of a canto: aba, bcb, cdc, ded, efe, ghg, and so on. The following English translation of the first lines from the *Divine Comedy*—with the original Dante lines on the right—demonstrate the rhyme scheme:

Along the journey of our life half way  
I found myself again in a dark **wood**  
Wherein the straight road no longer lay  
Ah, tongue can never make it **understood**:  
So harsh and dense and savage to **traverse**  
That fear returns in thinking on that **wood**  
It is so bitter death is hardly **worse**  
But, for the good it was my chance to gain,  
The other things I saw there I'll **rehearse**

.Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva **oscura**  
ché la diritta via era smarrita.  
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa **dura**  
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e **forte**  
che nel pensier rinova la **paura!**  
Tant'è amara che poco è più **morte**;  
ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,  
dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v'ho **scorte**

English translation: Dale, Peter. *The Divine Comedy*. London: Anvil Press, 1996.

## **Themes:**

### **Life as a Journey:**

*The Divine Comedy* presents life as a journey in which one man (representing all human beings) must overcome obstacles to achieve the ultimate goal, eternal bliss in the sight of God. Therefore--unlike epics such as *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, and *Beowulf*--*The Divine Comedy* focuses mainly on life as a spiritual journey. The obstacles the traveler must overcome are temptation and sin.

### **Salvation through Repentance:**

Even if a person sins, he is not lost. Sincere contrition and penitence will restore the soul to eligibility for entrance into heaven.

**Rehabilitation:**

Although confession of sins and penance will restore a human being to a state of grace, after he dies he must purge himself of the stains sin leaves on his soul if he has not done so in his lifetime. This purgation in the afterlife takes place in purgatory.

**Love:**

When he was a child of nine, Dante met Beatrice Portinari and loved her from that moment on. Although he married another woman and she married another man, he continued to love her from afar and dedicated many poems to her. She died when she was only 24. In *The Divine Comedy*, she appears to him in Canto XXX of Purgatory, wearing a white veil and crown. Out of love for him, she rebukes him harshly until, in Canto XXXI, he confesses his guilt as a sinner. She then acts as his guide, leading him into Paradise.

**The Perfection of God's Justice:**

Dante creates an imaginative correspondence between a soul's sin on Earth and the punishment he or she receives in Hell. The Sullen choke on mud, the Wrathful attack one another, the Gluttonous are forced to eat excrement, and so on. This simple idea provides many of *Inferno's* moments of spectacular imagery and symbolic power, but also serves to illuminate one of Dante's major themes: the perfection of God's justice. The inscription over the gates of Hell in Canto III explicitly states that God was moved to create Hell by Justice (III.7). Hell exists to punish sin, and the suitability of Hell's specific punishments testifies to the divine perfection that all sin violates.

This notion of the suitability of God's punishments figures significantly in Dante's larger moral messages and structures Dante's Hell. To modern readers, the torments Dante and Virgil behold may seem shockingly harsh: homosexuals must endure an eternity of walking on hot sand; those who charge interest on loans sit beneath a rain of fire. However, when we view the poem as a whole, it becomes clear that the guiding principle of these punishments is one of balance. Sinners suffer punishment to a degree befitting the gravity of their sin, in a manner matching that sin's nature. The design of the poem serves to reinforce this correspondence: in its plot it progresses from minor sins to major ones (a matter of degree); and in the geographical structure it posits, the various regions of Hell correspond to types of sin (a matter of kind). Because this notion of balance informs all of God's chosen punishments, His justice emerges as rigidly objective, mechanical, and impersonal; there are no extenuating circumstances in Hell, and punishment becomes a matter of nearly scientific formula. Early in *Inferno*, Dante builds a great deal of tension between the objective impersonality of God's justice and the character Dante's human sympathy for the souls that he sees around him. As the story progresses, however, the character becomes less and less inclined toward pity, and repeated comments by Virgil encourage this development. Thus, the text asserts the infinite wisdom of divine justice: sinners receive punishment in perfect proportion to their sin; to pity their suffering is to demonstrate a lack of understanding.

**Evil as the Contradiction of God's Will:**

In many ways, Dante's *Inferno* can be seen as a kind of imaginative taxonomy of human evil, the various types of which Dante classifies, isolates, explores, and judges. At times we may question its organizing principle, wondering why, for example, a sin punished in the Eighth Circle of Hell, such as accepting a bribe, should be considered worse than a sin punished in the Sixth Circle of Hell, such as murder. To understand this organization, one must realize that Dante's narration follows strict doctrinal Christian values. His moral system prioritizes not human happiness or harmony on Earth but rather God's will in Heaven. Dante thus considers violence less evil than fraud: of these two sins, fraud constitutes the greater opposition to God's will. God wills that we treat each other with the love

he extends to us as individuals; while violence acts against this love, fraud constitutes a perversion of it. A fraudulent person affects care and love while perpetrating sin against it. Yet, while *Inferno* implies these moral arguments, it generally engages in little discussion of them. In the end, it declares that evil is evil simply because it contradicts God's will, and God's will does not need further justification. Dante's exploration of evil probes neither the causes of evil, nor the psychology of evil, nor the earthly consequences of bad behavior. *Inferno* is not a philosophical text; its intention is not to think critically about evil but rather to teach and reinforce the relevant Christian doctrines.

### **Storytelling as a Way to Achieve Immortality:**

Dante places much emphasis in his poem on the notion of immortality through storytelling, everlasting life through legend and literary legacy. Several shades ask the character Dante to recall their names and stories on Earth upon his return. They hope, perhaps, that the retelling of their stories will allow them to live in people's memories. The character Dante does not always oblige; for example, he ignores the request of the Italian souls in the Ninth Pouch of the Eighth Circle of Hell that he bring word of them back to certain men on Earth as warnings. However, the poet Dante seems to have his own agenda, for his poem takes the recounting of their stories as a central part of its project. Although the poet repeatedly emphasizes the perfection of divine justice and the suitability of the sinners' punishments, by incorporating the sinners' narratives into his text he also allows them to live on in some capacity aboveground.

Yet, in retelling the sinners' stories, the poet Dante may be acting less in consideration of the sinners' immortality than of his own. Indeed, Dante frequently takes opportunities to advance his own glory. Thus, for example, in Canto XXIV, halfway through his description of the Thieves' punishment, Dante declares outright that he has outdone both Ovid and Lucan in his ability to write scenes of metamorphosis and transformation (Ovid's *Metamorphoses* focuses entirely on transformations; Lucan wrote the *Pharsalia*, an account of the Roman political transition and turmoil in the first century b.c.). By claiming to have surpassed two of the classical poets most renowned for their mythological inventions and vivid imagery, Dante seeks to secure his own immortality.

Thus, Dante presents storytelling as a vehicle for multiple legacies: that of the story's subject as well as that of the storyteller. While the plot of a story may preserve the living memory of its protagonist, the story's style and skill may serve the greater glory of its author. Although many of his sinners die a thousand deaths—being burned, torn to bits, or chewed to pieces, only to be reconstituted again and again—Dante emphasizes with almost equal incessancy the power of his narrative to give both its subjects and its author the gift of eternal life.

## **Motifs**

### **Political Arguments:**

An unquestionably significant part of Dante's aim in writing *Inferno* was to offer a large-scale commentary on the political nightmare of fourteenth-century Florence, from which he had recently been exiled. He makes his assertions in various ways. First, he condemns political figures with whom he disagreed by scattering them ruthlessly throughout Hell. Second, because Dante sets the action of *Inferno* several years before the years in which he wrote it, he can predict, as it were, certain events that had already taken place by the time of his writing. He issues these seeming predictions via the voices of the damned, apparently endowed at death with prophetic powers. In these souls' emphasis on the corruption and turmoil of the so-called future Florence, Dante aims pointed criticism at his former home. Third, Dante asserts throughout the poem his personal political belief that church and state should exist as separate but equal powers on Earth, with the former governing man's spirit and the

latter governing his person. Thus, in his many references to Rome, Dante carefully mentions both its spiritual and secular importance.

The poem's arresting final image provides another testament to the equal importance of church and state: Lucifer chews both on Judas (the betrayer of Christ, the ultimate spiritual leader) and on Cassius and Brutus (the betrayers of Caesar, the ultimate political leader). Treachery against religion and against government both warrant placement in Hell's final circle. While Dante emphasizes the equality of these two institutions, he also asserts the necessity of their separation. He assigns particularly harsh punishments to souls guilty of broaching this separation, such as priests or popes who accepted bribes or yearned for political power.

### **Classical Literature and Mythology:**

Although the values that *Inferno* asserts are decidedly Christian, on a thematic and literary level, the poem owes almost as much to Greek and Roman tradition as it does to Christian morality literature. Dante's Christian Hell features a large variety of mythological and ancient literary creatures, ranging from the Centaurs to Minos to Ulysses. He even incorporates mythological places, such as the rivers Acheron and Styx. In addition, Dante often refers to and imitates the styles of great classical writers such as Homer, Ovid, Lucan, and Virgil himself. He therefore attempts to situate himself within the tradition of classical epics while proving that he is a greater writer than any of the classical poets.

Dante incorporates this ancient material for other reasons too, including the simple fact that mythological elements contain much dramatic potential. More important, however, Dante includes mythological and classical literary elements in his poem to indicate that Christianity has subsumed these famous stories; by bringing many religious strands under one umbrella, Dante heightens the urgency and importance of his quest—a quest that he believes necessary for all human beings.

### **Symbols**

It is impossible to reduce the iconic complexity of *Inferno* to a short list of important symbols. Because the poem is an overarching allegory, it explores its themes using dozens, even hundreds, of symbols, ranging from the minutely particular (the blank banner chased by the Uncommitted in Canto III, symbolizing the meaninglessness of their activity in life) to the hugely general (the entire story of *The Divine Comedy* itself, symbolizing the spiritual quest of human life). Many of the symbols in *Inferno* are clear and easily interpretable, such as the beast Geryon—with the head of an innocent man and the body of a foul serpent, he represents dishonesty and fraud. Others are much more nuanced and difficult to pin down, such as the trio of creatures that stops Dante from climbing the sunlit mountain in Canto I. When reading *Inferno*, it is extremely important to consider each element of the poem according to how it fits into Dante's larger system of symbolism—what it says about the scene, story, and themes of the work and about human life.

Perhaps the most important local uses of symbolism in *Inferno* involve the punishments of the sinners, which are always constructed so as to correspond allegorically to the sins that they committed in life. The Lustful, for example, who were blown about by passion in life, are now doomed to be blown about by a ferocious storm for all of time. Other major types of symbols include figures who represent human qualities, such as Virgil, representative of reason, and Beatrice, representative of spiritual love; settings that represent emotional states, such as the dark forest in Canto I, embodying Dante's confusion and fear; and figures among the damned who may represent something more than merely their sins, such as Farinata, who seems to represent qualities of leadership and political commitment that transcend his identity as a Heretic in Hell.

## **Quotes:**

1. ***“Midway on our life’s journey, I found myself  
In dark woods, the right road lost.”***

These famous lines, narrated by Dante, open *Inferno* and immediately establish the allegorical plane on which the story’s meaning unfolds (I.1–2). The use of such potent words as “journey” and “right road” signifies the religious aspect of Dante’s impending adventure and quickly notifies us that we are leaving the realm of the literal. Likewise, the image of being lost in “dark woods” sets up a clear dichotomy between the unenlightened ignorance involved in a lack of faith in God and the clear radiance provided by God’s love. The simple contrast between the “dark woods,” which embody Dante’s fear, and the “right road,” which embodies Dante’s confidence in God, makes his challenge clear—he sets out to look for God in a sinful world. His reference to “our life” contributes to the allegorical level of *Inferno*: the journey upon which Dante is embarking is not solely his but rather that of every human being. He describes his journey in only the vaguest of terms, with no mention of where he is coming from or where he is heading, because he believes that this journey is one that every individual undertakes so as to understand his or her sins and find his or her peace with God.

2. ***“through me you enter into the city of woes  
through me you enter into eternal pain,  
through me you enter the population of loss.  
. . . abandon all hope, you who enter here. “***

Dante reads these lines, which he finds inscribed on the Gate of Hell, as he and Virgil pass into the Ante-Inferno before the river Acheron in Canto III (III.1–7). These lines may be said to represent the voice of Hell, as they declare its nature, origin, and purpose, and thus pave the way for what is to come throughout the poem. First, the inscription portrays Hell as a city, which defines much of the geography of the poem—Hell is a geographically contained area bound by walls and containing a vast population of souls. Hell is thus a grotesque counterpart to Heaven, which Virgil describes as the city of God. Second, the inscription portrays Hell as a place of eternal woes, pain, and loss, situating it as the center of God’s strict punishment of sinners, a place from which there is supposed to be no escape (“abandon all hope”).

3. ***“I did not open them—for to be rude  
To such a one as him was courtesy.”***

Dante speaks these lines in reference to a promise, in Canto XXXIII, to open Fra Alberigo’s eyes for him (XXXIII.146–147). Alberigo, one of the living men who was snatched and brought to Hell before they died because of the magnitude of their sins, is lying supine in Cocytus, the frozen lake; his tears have frozen over his eyes, and he has asked Dante to remove the rings of ice from his eyes so that he might cry freely for a time. Dante initially agrees, but after he realizes the extent of the man’s evil, he changes his mind and recants his promise, taking pleasure in Alberigo’s suffering. This quote is extremely important to Dante’s overall development in the poem, indicating the extent to which he learns not to pity suffering sinners and to despise sin wholeheartedly. At the beginning of *Inferno*, Dante weeps for many of the suffering souls; by the penultimate canto, he doesn’t even help them weep for themselves. This attitude, wholly endorsed by Virgil, may seem harsh to the modern reader, but it is portrayed in *Inferno* as Dante’s necessary first step toward overcoming sin in his own life and finding salvation in God.

4. ***“To get back up to the shining world from there  
My guide and I went into that hidden tunnel;***

...

***Where we came forth, and once more saw the stars. “***

These concluding words of *Inferno* describe Dante and Virgil’s climb out of the underworld and back to the surface of the Earth (XXXIV.134–140). Dante the poet fancies that when Lucifer was flung down from Heaven, he struck the Earth in a place exactly opposite Jerusalem in the Southern Hemisphere and penetrated the center of the planet; the cavity left by his fall is Hell. As Dante and Virgil climb out of Hell on the other side of the world, they climb up through a cavity that was once full of earth; the earth was displaced by Lucifer’s fall and thrust up to the surface, where it formed an island. This island is Purgatory, which Dante tours in the next part of *The Divine Comedy, Purgatorio*, as he continues his trek toward salvation.

These lines are chiefly important because of how they end: Dante, fresh from his nightmarish visit to Hell, gazes up at Heaven’s stars. This image symbolizes the idea that Dante has begun his slow climb out of sin and confusion and has taken a step toward Beatrice and God, ending this very dark poem on a note of brilliant optimism. It is greatly significant that both *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* end with the same word as *Inferno*: *stele*, or the stars. It is clear not only that Dante aspires to Heaven but also that his poem aspires to a place among the epics.

# **Dante's *The Divine Comedy* as an Allegory**

## **Introduction:**

The author of The Divine Comedy was Dante Alighieri, Italy's greatest poet, who was born to a middle-class family in Florence, Italy, in 1265. After his mother died when he was an adolescent, his father remarried and had two more children, a boy and a girl. Dante began writing poetry when he was a teenager; one of his mentors was the poet Vito Cavalcanti, who exerted a strong influence on Dante. Before beginning work on The Divine Comedy, Dante wrote two major works, *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life) and *Il Convivio* (The Banquet), both of which included verse and prose. In the latter work, he urged the use of vernacular Italian instead of classical Latin in the composition of literary works. After becoming involved in rivalries between Florentine politicians and between Vatican and secular authorities vying for power, Dante was banished from Florence. In exile, he wrote The Divine Comedy, incorporating in it commentary on the various factions competing for political control. He wrote it in the Italian Tuscan dialect that favors a familiar, conversational style, thus breaking with the tradition that serious literary works had to be written in Latin and thereby helping to establish Italian as the language of literature. He died in Ravenna, Italy, in 1321.

## **Allegory:**

ALLEGORY, pronounced AL uh gawr ee, is a story with more than one meaning. Most allegories have moral or religious meanings. Famous allegories include the fables attributed to Aesop, an ancient Greek writer. Aesop's fables seem to describe the adventures of animals and human beings.

But the author actually wanted to teach his readers something about human nature.

One of Aesop's best-known fables is "The Fox and the Grapes." On its surface, or its literal level of meaning, the story tells of a fox who wants a bunch of grapes hanging above his head. The fox tries desperately to reach the grapes but cannot. He finally gives up, saying that the grapes are probably sour anyway. The allegorical meaning of this story is that people may pretend the things they cannot have are not worth having.

Allegories had their greatest popularity during medieval and Renaissance times in Europe. *The Divine Comedy*, written by the Italian author Dante Alighieri in the early 1300's, literally tells of a man's journey to heaven through hell and purgatory. Allegorically, the poem describes a Christian soul rising from a state of sin to a state of blessedness. Other allegories include the parables of Jesus, and *The Faerie Queene*, written by the English poet Edmund Spenser in the late 1500's.

Allegories lost popularity in Europe after about 1600, but some, such as *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684) gained recognition in later times. Allegory also exists in other ways. Many novels include allegorical suggestions of an additional level of meaning. Examples include *Moby-Dick* (1851), a whaling adventure that raises issues of human struggle and fate in a mysterious universe, and *Lord of the Flies* (1954), a story about shipwrecked boys that examines the persistence of evil.

## **Allegory in Dante's *Divine Comedy*:**

Dante's portrayal of Hell in the *Inferno* is an undisputed masterpiece of visual and allegorical imagery, enriched not only by extensive use of figurative language, but by concrete physical descriptions as well. Perhaps the most interesting display of Dante's skill in combining these sensory and metaphorical elements occurs in Canto XIV: here, as the two figures cross over a river encased in stone, Virgil recounts to the Pilgrim, in stunning detail, the story of the statue, buried in Mount Ida on the island of Crete, whose falling tears form the waters for the three rivers of the Underworld. In the

course of the guide's narration, the reader, who is first confronted and captivated by powerful geographical images, gradually becomes aware of the underlying allegorical interpretation, and realizes that the scenes portrayed here tell the story of the Fall of Man and his subsequent misery on earth. The speaker, though, is neither Dante nor the Pilgrim, but Virgil, and the effect on the reader of this shift in perspective is indeed the most fascinating aspect of the passage: not only is Dante using Virgil, in Bloomian terms, to authenticate his own creation, but the emotions which Virgil himself conveys to the reader heighten the feeling of suspense, amazement, and appreciation of the work as a whole.

There are two distinct portions of the story Virgil recounts to the Pilgrim in this passage; yet a third image comes from the landscape surrounding the two as they talk. In all three sections, the pictures painted by the poets are geographically and topologically defined, with concrete depictions of the surroundings and a well-focused center. The river, for instance, which the figures use as a pathway through the deserted landscape, is at first seen through its environment, and its origins are specified. Dante then draws a comparison to a similar river in Italy; this concrete image, though not helpful for the modern reader, would have been significant to Dante's contemporaries. Finally, then, Dante describes the river itself, with its encasement of stone, and reveals its function for the travelers as a bridge or a path which they will follow:

*“Without exchanging words we reached a place  
where a narrow stream came gushing from the woods  
(its reddish water still runs fear through me!);  
Like the one that issues from the Bulicame,  
whose waters are shared by prostitutes downstream,  
it wore its way across the desert sand.  
This river's bed and banks were made of stone,  
so were the tops on both its sides; and then  
I understood this was our way across. (ll. 76-84)”*

At first, this picture is much like any other that occurs in Dante's work: a strange and foreign landscape is depicted in words that make it partially comprehensible to the human reader, but the portrayal retains its haunting and disturbing imagery. Upon reading farther, however, the focus of the picture here sharpens, and we see, as Virgil states, how the stream winds its way along, *"extinguishing the flames above its path"* (l. 90). The color of the river, then, corresponds to its effect on the surroundings: in driving away these flames, the river seems to sublimate them and take on their characteristic redness.

A striking remark, though, is revealed at the end of Virgil's narration: this river is composed, in fact, not of water, but of the tears which fall from the statue in Mt. Ida on Crete. With this revelation, Virgil's portrayal of the scene makes an emotional appeal to the reader by allegorical means. The color of these tears is red, recalling an image of blood: possibly this is the very blood that pours out of the statue's heart, either in pity or in pain for the sins that have destroyed the race of man; alternatively, the red river is an allegory for the suffering of Christ for mankind's sins. Also, as Virgil explains, the single stream seen here is destined to separate and become the three famous rivers of Hell -- one of many tripartite appearances, perversions of the Holy Trinity, that are mentioned throughout the *Divine Comedy*. As such, Dante's characterization of the stream as "gushing" out of the forest gains credibility, for the force required to power three distinct rivers must necessarily be tremendous, even to the limits of human comprehension.

The imagery in Dante's scene painting here is unquestionably moving; it dwindles, however, in comparison to the strength of the descriptions laid out by Virgil. In the scenes the guide sets before the Pilgrim, the master poet creates not only a still-life in words, but tells the story that accompanies the image. The first picture Virgil paints, namely of Crete and Mount Ida, is concrete and defined, far beyond the scope of Dante's vision. Names are given, and the island is placed "in the middle of the sea." The scenery Virgil creates there is superlative: what was once a lush paradise of greenery and warmth is now a cold and abandoned desert. In both cases, however, the presentation is methodical, touching, and vivid, complete with personification, allegory, and simile:

***"In the middle of the sea there lies a wasteland,"  
he immediately began, "that is known as Crete,  
under whose king the world knew innocence.  
There is a mountain there that was called Ida;  
then happy in its verdure and its streams,  
now deserted like an old, discarded thing ..." ( ll. 94-99)***

Truly, there was never a more enchanting allegory for the Garden of Eden. Why exactly Dante has chosen Crete as the symbol for paradise lost is unclear, but the focus of the picture here is as sharp as can be. The world of mankind "knew innocence" before the Fall, when Eden was still a fruitful pasture; now, however, the island is a wasteland, deserted by God and man alike: a metaphor here perhaps for Palestine or for other ancient deserts which figure in Christian mythology. Even the name "Ida" could be seen as an allusion to "Eden," though in the original Italian the similarity may not be as great as in the English.

The next section of Virgil's narration presents anew the impressive allegorical imagination of Dante and, by extension, of his guide. The inclusion, however, of the story of Rhea and the young Jupiter seems at first puzzling: why indeed should Dante bring pagan lore into what is obviously a Christian allegory? Upon closer examination, though, the story of Rhea exhibits a remarkable number of similarities to the actions of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: both women try to hide from the father-figure in an attempt to conceal what would surely anger him. In Rhea's case, the object hidden is her son Jupiter, who would otherwise be eaten by the father Saturn; Eve, on the other hand, tries to deny her own sin and carnal knowledge, newly-acquired through the eating of the apple. The difference, however, in this perversion of the 'true' event, is that Rhea succeeds in her seclusion of Jupiter, whereas Eve, as illustrated by the allegory, is destined forever to fall short.

The final, most captivating use of imagery by Virgil occurs in the description of the ancient statue that stands deep within Mount Ida. This scene is certainly one of the most detailed word paintings in the *Inferno*, and its allegorical interpretation, though often obscure and shielded in allusion, is explained in large part in the "Notes" provided in the Musa translation. Once again, the picture which forms in the reader's mind is precise, well-ordered, and moving: this reaction is due primarily to Virgil's exquisite use of concrete physical representation mixed with the emotional imagery of falling tears:

***In the mountain's core an ancient man stands tall;  
he has his shoulder turned towards Damietta  
and faces Rome as though it were his mirror.***

*His head is fashioned of the finest gold;  
pure silver are his arms and hands and chest;  
from there to where his legs spread, he is brass;  
the rest of him is all of chosen iron,  
except his right foot which is terra cotta;  
he puts more weight on this foot than the other.  
Every part of him, except the gold, is broken  
by a fissure dripping tears down to his feet,  
where they collect to erode the cavern's rock ... ( ll. 103-114)*

It seems that Virgil forgets nothing in this passage: the placement of the man in the "core" of the mountain, his stance and demeanor ("his legs spread"), and even his slight leaning to the right form an unforgettable image in the mind of every reader. Significantly, however, this physical representation is not left to rest alone. Instead, Virgil includes the pain and misery of the statue, broken as he is by "a fissure dripping tears down to his feet," which evokes a moving and powerful image of the weeping sinner bemoaning his fate.

In addition to Musa's knowledgeable interpretation of the statue as a symbol for the Fall of Man, in which the progression from gold to silver to brass represents the degeneration of mankind's moral standards, I would suggest that the fissure here, which breaks the man apart and causes him such pain, is a representation of sin itself: indeed, the golden head of the statue (Man before the Fall) remains untouched by this fissure, and it is only the lower parts of his body which succumb to the chasm of sin.

The final imagery that appears in this passage is also the most powerful emotional appeal from Virgil to his companion. Here he tries to communicate to the Pilgrim a scene that is indescribable, almost unimaginable for mortal beings. In so doing he is forced resort to images beyond the range of human sensation: the river of tears that falls from the fissure in the statue continues its descent into hell, dividing into the three celebrated waters; they make their way down, the guide states, **"until they fall to where all falling ends: they form Cocytus."** (ll. 118-119). Portraying as it does an image beyond the capabilities of human imagination -- for Cocytus is the very pit of Hell -- the imagery of Virgil here is understandably no longer as solidly topological or geometric as it was in the more terrestrial scenes. Nonetheless, Virgil's attempted grasp at the intangible succeeds, and the Pilgrim, along with his readers, begins to comprehend the final destiny of the stone-encased river whose path the two poets follow.

Throughout the descriptions presented here, it is vitally important that identity of the speaker be kept in mind. The effect of the shift in perspective from the Pilgrim to Virgil marks not only the entry into a more instructive and symbolic world of meaning, but the creative hand of a master poet as well. Dante's intention in displaying these images through the eyes and mouth of Virgil relates clearly to the Bloomian concept of kenosis -- the renowned poet Virgil takes over part of Dante's task, and in so doing lends his support and authenticity to the claims made by Dante. Whether Dante relies on Virgil for poetical inspiration or for authentication of his own ideas, the effect is the same, and the influence of Virgil leaves an unmistakable imprint on Dante's visual and allegorical imagery.

In addition to the Bloomian distinctions of authentication, however, Virgil's identity as the spirit of a dead poet lends credence to the passage as a whole. As a soul bereft of worldly life, even if

confined to the Underworld, Virgil is capable of understanding the surrounding events and scenes in a way that the Pilgrim, a living being, is not. In addition, Virgil has, as a poet, the capability to express and explain these occurrences through the vehicle of language, and, since he was himself once human, he can communicate his knowledge in a manner that other humans (Dante, the Pilgrim, and the reader as well) will understand. What is described by the Pilgrim, then, is confirmed by the comments of Virgil, and, in the process, the credibility and reliability of Dante's observations is greatly increased.

The narrative perspective of Virgil creates yet another reaction in the reader, however, as well as in the Pilgrim. In the passage just before his account of the island of Crete and the ancient statue there, Virgil points out the river which the Pilgrim has observed, and declares with great solemnity:

*“Among the other marvels I have shown you,  
from the time we made our entrance through the gate  
whose threshold welcomes every evil soul,  
your eyes have not discovered anything  
as remarkable as this stream you see here  
extinguishing the flames above its path. ( ll. 85-90)”*

These words of wonderment and awe come, significantly, from one who has "seen it all," in a certain sense, yet still finds this river one of the most moving sights in Hell -- quite a claim, to be sure. The consequences of Virgil's statement, then, both for the Pilgrim and for the interested reader, are twofold. An appetite awakens, as Dante cleverly states -- an urge to discover the fascinating details that lie behind the scenes. More importantly, though, the emotions that Virgil reveals alter the reader's own perception of events, increasing the awe, amazement, and pity which inevitably follow from such rich imagery and allegory. Virgil's speech whets the Pilgrim's appetite for knowledge and understanding, but his promise is not an empty one: his explanations satisfy the resulting desire for enlightenment, and reflect Dante's success in combining powerful allegorical language with beautifully vibrant visual imagery.

## **The Divine Comedy as an Epic**

### **Introduction:**

*Dante Alighieri - (1265-1321), Italian poet and philosopher*

Dante's central work, the *Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), is considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature.

Born into a Guelph family of decayed nobility, Dante moved in patrician society. He was a member of the Florentine cavalry that routed the Ghibellines at Campaldino in 1289. The next year, after the death (1290) of Beatrice, the woman he loved, he plunged into intense study of classical philosophy and Provençal poetry. This woman, thought to have been Beatrice Portinari, was Dante's acknowledged source of spiritual inspiration.

Dante married Gemma Donati, had three children, and was active (1295-1300) as councilman, elector, and prior of Florence. In the complex politics of Florence, he found himself increasingly

opposed to the temporal power of Pope Boniface VIII, and he eventually allied himself with the White Guelphs. After the victory of the Black Guelphs he was dispossessed and banished (1302). Exile made Dante a citizen of all Italy; he served various princes, but supported Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII as the potential savior of a united Italy. He died at the court of Guido da Polenta in Ravenna, where he is buried.

Dante's reputation as the outstanding figure of Italian letters rests mainly on the *Divine Comedy*, a long vernacular poem in 100 cantos (more than 14,000 lines) composed during his exile. Dante entitled it *Commedia*; the adjective *Divina* was added in the 16th cent. It recounts the tale of the poet's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, and is divided accordingly into three parts. In Hell and Purgatory Dante is guided by Vergil, through Heaven, by Beatrice, for whom the poem is a memorial. The work is written in *terza rima*, a complex verse form in pentameter, with interlocking triads rhyming aba, bcb, cdc, etc.

A magnificent synthesis of the medieval outlook, the *Divine Comedy* pictures a changeless universe ordered by God; its allegorical theme is the gradual revelation of God to the pilgrim. It is also a religious dialogue on the gradations of earthly sin and piety as well as on such topics as predestination and classical philosophy. The symbolism is complex yet highly rational; the verse is musical; and the entire work is one of great imagination. Through his masterpiece Dante established Tuscan as the literary language of Italy, surpassed all previous Italian writers, and gave rise to a vast literature.

Dante's works also include *La vita nuova* [the new life] (written c.1292), a collection of prose and lyrics celebrating Beatrice and illustrating his idealistic concept of love; the *Convivio* (c.1304), an encyclopedic allegory praising both love and science; *De monarchia*, a treatise on the need for kingly dominance in secular affairs; and *De vulgare eloquentia*, on rules for the Italian vernacular. In addition, he wrote numerous lyrics, eclogues, and epistles.

## Short-notes

### Dante: Mastery of Language

In The Inferno - Dante's Immortal Drama of a Journey Through Hell, Dante allows the reader to experience his every move. His mastery of language, his sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature, and his infinite store of knowledge allow him to capture and draw the reader into the realm of the terrestrial hell. In Canto 6, the Gluttons; Canto 13, the Violent Against Themselves; and Canto 23, the Hypocrites; Dante excels in his detailed portrayal of the supernatural world of hell. In each canto, Dante combines his mastery of language with his sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature to set the stage. He then reinforces the image with examples that call upon his infinite store of knowledge, and thus draw a parallel that describes the experience in a further, although more subliminal, detail to the reader.

Through his mastery of language, Dante allows the reader to see what he sees, to hear what he hears, and to feel what he feels, and thus experience his sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature. In Canto 6, Dante introduces the vicious monster, Cerberus and details his grotesque features to the reader. He states,

*“His eyes are red, his beard is greased with phlegm,  
his belly is swollen, and his hands are claws  
to rip the wretches and flay and mangle them” (66).*

This quote vividly depicts the man-beast Cerberus that Dante encountered, and allows the reader to feel present in the scene with Dante. He further emphasizes the sights and sounds to portray the hellish environment when he states

*“Huge hailstones, dirty water, and black snow  
pour from the dismal air to putrefy  
the putrid slush that waits for them below” (66).*

This example is one of many that illustrate Dante's ability to exhibit the sights that he encounters. Dante adds another dimension by providing the ability for the reader to hear the sounds present in Circle III of Hell. An example of this is when he states

*“and they (the victims), too, howl like dogs in the freezing storm” (66).*

Furthermore Dante greatly describes how the victims are feeling about their whole situation with the statement

*“I lie here rotting like a swollen log” (67).*

This quote helps the reader to not only understand how the victims of gluttony are feeling, but also to picture them laying in the sodden mush of garbage. The picture is almost complete.

Dante uses his infinite store of knowledge of Greek mythology, the history of his life, and knowledge of the intricacies of the small town of Florence to complete the picture of the Gluttons. Dante displays his arsenal of knowledge by selecting Cerberus to stand guard over the gluttons. Cerberus is a three-headed man-beast from Greek mythology. His three heads, and obvious yet subliminal ability to indulge, mock the victims. At this point Dante transitions from subliminal messages to overt statements. His knowledge of the history of the society is evident when he asks of Ciaccio:

***“Farinata and Tegghiaio, men of good blood,  
Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo, Mosca,  
and the other who set their hearts on doing good-  
where are they now whose high deeds might be-gem  
the crown of kings?” (68).***

Had Dante not been so well versed he would not have been able to refer to specific names. To further this theme, Dante expresses knowledge of Florence, his hometown. He states through the words of Ciaccio:

***“O you who are led this journey through the shade  
of hell’s abyss, do you recall this face?” (67)***

This quote proves Dante’s knowledge of Florence - Ciaccio would not have questioned if Florence were not such a small town. He is aware that Florence is so small that it would be hard to live there and not know, or at least recognize, the other members of the society. By the conclusion of Canto 6 Dante provided the reader a complete understanding and visualization of his experiences.

The reader enters Canto 13 prepared for a continued visualization provided through Dante’s mastery of language and sensitivity of the sights and sounds of nature. Dante immediately lets the reader understand the new environment that he is now experiencing by describing:

***“Its foliage was not verdant, but nearly black.  
The unhealthy branches, gnarled and warped and tangled,  
bore poison thorns instead of fruit” (119).***

This quote introduces the reader to the woods of suicide and gives them an excellent picture of what he is seeing and how he portrays the sin they committed. Due to these sinners abuse to themselves they are now in the form of trees whereas they can no longer hurt themselves, but are often hurt by others who blatantly disregard their existence, as they once did themselves. Dante then goes on to explain the terror of the harpies who eat away at the branches and leaves of these sinners. He says

***“Their wings are wide, their feet clawed, their huge bellies  
covered with feathers, their necks and faces human” (119).***

This shows the reader the grotesqueries of these violent birds, and like Cerberus in Canto 6, the reader can vividly imagine how these harpies physically appear to Dante. Dante continues to help the reader understand the sounds he hears as he says,

***“They croak eternally in the unnatural trees” (119).***

This quote gives the reader an idea of the incessant sounds that these victims are producing, as a result of the pain they are going through. He then analogizes the broken souls of the victim’s pain simply by breaking the branch of a sinner. The sinner painfully responds

***“ Why do you tear me?  
Is there no pity left in any soul?  
Men we were, and now we are changed to sticks;  
well might your hands have been more merciful  
were we no more the souls of lice and ticks” (120).***

This response encourages the reader into thinking that the soul within the tree is now in great pain and also lets the reader understand the situation that souls are eternally in the form of trees. Dante’s mastery of language and sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature in Canto 13 immensely influence the reader’s interpretation of the woods of suicide.

Similar to Canto 6, Dante expresses in Canto 13 his infinite store of knowledge through Greek mythology and the history of his society. Dante again uses characters from Greek mythology in punishing of the sinners. The harpies’ role in Greek mythology changes from “soul takers” to obsessive eaters. He respectively uses them to feed on the sinners who are in the form of trees. Dante expresses his knowledge of the history of his society by mentioning Frederick II and Pier delle Vigne. Both individuals are well known in history in this time period. At this point, the reader is able to understand the punishment and people present in this layer.

As in the previous Cantos discussed, Dante once again exhibits his mastery of language and sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature. In Canto 23 Dante does not describe in great detail the land that the hypocrites dwell so the reader can assume it to be plain and barren. He does however describe the hypocrites and their punishment in an excess of detail. He states:

***“All wore cloaks cut to as ample a size  
as those worn by the Benedictines of Cluny.  
The enormous hoods were drawn over their eyes.  
The outside is all dazzle, golden and fair;  
the inside, lead, so heavy that Frederick’s capes,  
compared to these, would seem as light as air” (199).***

This quote lets the reader picture the fancy cloaks that the sinners carry and at the same time realize the burden on the shoulders of these poor victims. Dante then goes on to explain the pain of these victims by mentioning the sounds he heard. He stated:

***“We turned to the left again along their course,  
listening to their moans of misery” (200).***

These moans insinuate the everlasting pain that was brought upon these sinners. Dante then gives the reader an idea of the pain that the crucified hypocrite was going through in his quote:

***“A figure crucified upon the ground  
by three great stakes, and I fell in awe” (201).***

This quote allows the reader to know the pain of this man because he is in awe over the punishment and has seen a lot of pain. So falling into awe must mean the punishment is great and the pain to follow is tremendous. Dante also gives the reader a picture perfect description of Virgil and himself sliding down the cliff. He said:

***“Seizing me instantly in his arms, my guide-  
like a mother wakened by a midnight noise  
to find a wall of flame at her bedside  
(who takes her child and runs, and more  
concerned for him than for herself, does not  
pause even to throw a wrap about her) raised me, turned  
and down the rugged bank from the high summit  
flung himself down supine onto the slope  
which walls the upper side of the next pit” (199).***

This quote depicts the extent to which Virgil was concerned by the way in which the two slid down the bank of the cliff. Dante’s picture is almost complete.

Dante uses his extensive knowledge to complete the picture. He discusses the history of his society, tales present in the society, and establishes a punishment that is commensurate to the sins committed by the major hypocrite. By using many specific names in history Dante displays his vast knowledge on the subject. He uses the Benedictine of Cluny, Frederick II, and Gardingo all to help convey a better picture of what he is seeing to the reader. He also uses comparisons to a tale to help the reader better understand the predicament they are in while escaping the fiends in the previous Canto.

***“The incident  
Recalled the fable of the Mouse and Frog  
That Aesop tells” (198).***

This quote not only shows his knowledge of the tales present in his society, but also further illustrates the predicament. Dante lastly shows his infinite store of knowledge in his creativity in the punishment chosen for the Jewish leader who was responsible for nailing Christ to the cross. He explains the punishment:

***“Naked he lies fixed there, as you see,  
in the path of all who pass; there he must feel  
the weight of all through all eternity” (201).***

Not only must this man endure the pain of the stakes as Christ did, but he must also endure the weight of all the other hypocrites as Christ endured the weight of all the sins brought upon him. Dante’s vast knowledge not only proves his education but also helps the reader to better understand what he has seen.

In The Inferno-Dante's Immortal Drama of a Journey Through Hell Dante's mastery of language, sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature, and infinite store of knowledge help the reader to paint a clear picture of what Dante is experiencing. These traits are most evident in Cantos 6,13, and 23. In these Cantos Dante combines his mastery of language with his sensitivity to the sights and sounds of nature to help the reader feel like they are actually present at Dante's side. Dante then reinforces these issues through his infinite knowledge to complete the picture.

## **The Divine Comedy: The Depth of Human Experience**

Although this book is religious through and through, it is also very earthly. You seem to never leave the earth. In fact, there seems to be no difference between earth and the heavenly sphere.

It is a solid world, no distinction between mind and matter, everything is touchable. The physical expresses the spiritual, the spirit of God is physical and pervades the physical universe--it's all one place. There is no heaven and hell, it is just all here. For this reason, this book answers all of those questions you had as a kid in Sunday school and nobody could give you a satisfying answer, for instance, where do people go when they die, what does hell look like, what does heaven look like, what is purgatory, and how does one get from purgatory to heaven. Sunday school teachers should just read Dante to the kids--it is the end-all encyclopedia of heaven, hell, and purgatory.

The symbolism of the beginning is nice, that he is in a forest being chased by various animals. We can imagine that each of the animals represents some kind of vice and that the part in the woods symbolizes the sinful confused life full of temptations. It was interesting that Virgil was his guide. We were expecting a more religious character, for instance, Moses--but it later turned out that he was sitting in hell himself! That was an eye-opener. It makes you realize the difference between the old and the new testaments. Even Noah was in hell. But at least they weren't very deep in hell.

***"All hope abandon ye who enter here."***

I liked how Hell is an interactive place for Dante. He isn't afraid to ***"touch the merchandise."*** Then seizing on his hinder scalp, I cried: ***"Name thee, or not a hair shall tarry here."*** He is human, he takes part and overreacts. And he keeps fainting. It's not a Universal Studios ride through hell, but you can actually grab ahold of the props, talk to old friends and acquaintances, and the guide will patiently wait for you when you faint.

Another aspect of hell that surprised me was that the devil was standing on a frozen lake. This isn't the picture of Larson's Far Side hell scenes, nor is the devil the cool, rebellious bad boy of Milton's Paradise Lost. For Dante, the Devil is an impotent lump of frozen hate. He shows us that evil is not only stupid, but self-destructive as well.

All of the levels are already there, and at each level you have a different kind of enemy, here flying, metamorphosing dragons and on the next level a pool of liquid tar with demons swooping down at the sinners. If you make it through all levels, you and the devil could skate around on a frozen lake throwing fireballs at each other! Each level is interesting because the punishment always matches

the sin of the people there, e.g. the murderers are in a river of blood and the grafters are being fought over by demons just as the grafters fought over positions in their beauracracies. In this sense, each sin is graphically represented in some way so that you can understand the sin better.

We realize in hell that Dante certainly had an axe to grind with the city of Florence in this book! My reference notes identified most of the people in hell as people he had known in Florence.

Purgatory is everything that hell wasn't: light, above ground, things are clean and white and orderly and safe. It is a nice contrast after the bloody jungle ride through levels of hell. Purgatory for Dante is a "school of love designed to correct the erroneaous forms human love has taken." Again you have levels with people there who were guilty of lighter sins. My favorite group was "The Slothful Souls" who as penance were hurrying around uttering quotes about swiftness and speed:

*Soon they o'ertook us; with such swiftness mov'd  
The mighty crowd. Two spirits of their head  
Cried weeping: 'Blessed Mary sought with haste  
The hilly region. Caesar, to subdue  
Ilerda, darted in Marseilles his sting,  
And flew to Spain.'--'Oh tarry not: away;'  
The others shouted; 'let not time be lost  
Through slackness of affection. Hearty zeal  
To serve reanimates celestial grace.'*

Dante's symbolic dreams were nice. My reference notes explained them thoroughly which brought out all their meaning. Dante seemed to have packed this poem with interrelated meanings which could take years to discover. Everything he described seemed to have another meaning. Here he is describing steps in purgatory. By the way he carefully decribes the scene, you know that each step represents something distinct, as well as the colors and textures:

*The lowest stair was marble white, so smooth  
And polish'd, that therein my mirror'd form  
Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark  
Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block,  
Crack'd lengthwise and across. The third, that lay  
Massy above, seem'd porphyry, that flam'd  
Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein.  
On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,  
Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd  
A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps  
My leader cheerly drew me.*

This made the book a series of riddles, more than you could possibly digest in one reading of the poem.

The long anticipation of Beatrice builds suspense until he finally sees her. He of course faints at her beauty. You feel that his love is not really for her but for beauty itself. It was also interesting that Beatrice became his guide in heaven as Virgil, being a more earthly character and representing

reason, could only take him so far. Beatrice, representing faith, would have to take him the rest of the way so that he could understand heaven.

In paradise, I liked the symbolism of light. It is a strength of the poem that even though everything in the story is so literal and touchable, Dante describes Christ and God not as people, but as light and energy and warmth. It retains their mystery and wonder:

*As one,  
Who vers'd in geometric lore, would fain  
Measure the circle; and, though pondering long  
And deeply, that beginning, which he needs,  
Finds not: e'en such was I, intent to scan  
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,  
How to the circle fitted, and therein  
How plac'd: but the flight was not for my wing;  
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,  
And in the spleen unfolded what it sought.  
Here vigour fail'd the tow'ring fantasy:  
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel  
In even motion, by the Love impell'd,  
That moves the sun in heav'n and all the stars.*

This book is for the love of God, of the universe, and personal experience. It is a masterpiece which threads these themes into a tremendous journal through the three known areas of the afterlife. Shakespeare shows us the width of human experience, and Dante the depth. Nor does Dante preach. His religious message is positive. He shows us what a joy it is to live according to the will of God and encourages the reader to embark on the long journey of getting to know the meaning of faith and love. The Divine Comedy gives wonderful meaning to Christian life as it was understood in the Middle Ages. It should be required reading for the study of Christianity. It is the personal and vivid story of a soul's journey through salvation.

## **Dante's Inferno - Autobiographical Journey**

The Inferno is more than just a fictional story about someone traveling through the universe. It is actually more like an autobiographical journey of life through its author, Dante Alighieri's eyes. Written in the early 1300s by a disgruntled Dante living in exile, he literally describes a man who has been trapped, and must find a way to escape. Allegorically, he's telling us about the terrible moment of crisis that occurs in each one of our lives "when evil inside and outside of ourselves seems to block any hope for further constructive development". Written originally as a long poem separated into cantos or songs, he basically wrote with the personal purpose of recording where all of the people he came in contact within his life, will go when they die. This could be one of three places; Hell, Purgatory, or Heaven. He went on to design specific, fitting punishments or rewards based on the life each person led. Dante then tied this all together and made himself a character that walks the entire length of the conceptualized universe. Due to the fact that Dante poured his heart and soul into his writing, there are many representations of his personal life and the time in which he lived, in this piece of literature.

Whether they were someone that betrayed him in his political career or the girl that he fell in love with when he was 9 years old, he found a way to integrate them into the Inferno. As we noticed in this allegory, Dante considers trust and loyalty to be one of the most important human characteristics. He basically felt this way due to the point that he was betrayed and exiled away from his beloved homeland. It is because of this that he places perpetrators of breaking these at the center of hell. Examples of this would be the political grafters who were damned to spend eternity boiling in pitch or Archbishop Ruggieri who betrayed Count Ugolino having his brain being gnawed out. To Dante, these eternal punishments fit the crime that was committed by these sinners. Not all of the references Dante used were negative though. In a later part of the Divine Comedy, he represents his platonic love, Beatrice, as an angel guide to heaven. By using these representations, Dante lets us peer into his mind and understand how he felt.

In a few instances, Dante shows signs of the times in which the Inferno was written. This piece is loaded with numerous allegories that are references to the middle ages. One of these includes Dante's conception of the universe. The way Hell is in the center with nine rings surrounding it, leads us to believe that he was using the then current Ptolemy's belief that the universe was made up of concentric circles, with the Earth at the center. Another common reference we see is the constant use of, then crucial, historical figures. For example, in this passage he refers to the patron saint of the city of Lucca, "I bring you Santa Zita's Elders!". Finally, religious references show that Catholicism was an important influence in life of the middle ages. Dante uses many of the same gods and sacred beings that are contained in the bible.

Overall, it is apparent that the Inferno is an extensive piece of history that describes much of what it was like in the middle Ages. We also get a sense of how Dante was feeling at the time and how terrible humans can be to one another. Combined, these ideas make this a very intriguing piece of writing.

## Imaginary Journey in Dante's Divine Comedy

Dante's Divine Comedy is a moral comedy that is designed to make the readers think about their own morals. The poem could have been used almost as a guide for what and what not to do to get into Heaven for the medieval people. Dante takes the reader on a journey through the "afterlife" to imprint in the readers' minds what could happen to them if they don't follow a Godlike life and to really make the reader think about where they will go when they die and where they would like to go when they die. In the Divine Comedy, Dante uses his imagination and his knowledge of the people's perception of the "afterlife" to create a somewhat realistic yet somewhat imaginary model of the afterlife.

In the first lines of the Divine Comedy, Dante says

*"In the middle of the journey of our life  
I came to my senses in a dark forest,  
for I had lost the straight path."(Dante 1416 lines 1-3)*

This is the typical stereotype of today for when a person becomes "lost" or consumed in sin. The sinful life is a dark life and a sinless life is a bright, white, and pure life. Dante's coming to his senses in a dark forest symbolizes his realizing how "lost" in sin he truly was and realizing that he needed to do something about it, meaning he needed to go through the seven sacraments so that he could become pure enough to see God in Paradise and not have to spend an eternity in Hell. Dante realized that he had strayed from the true faith without realizing it, not knowing exactly how it happened, and is trying to return. Losing the straight path symbolizes losing the holy, pure, or Godlike life. Darkness is more or less a symbol of evil and light or brightness a symbol for good.

Throughout the poem, Dante is advocating that man must consciously aim for righteousness and morality. People can often become so involved with day-to-day living that they will fall into a life consumed with sin. Man must always be aware of his need to perform righteously. The dark forest symbolizes a human life where every waking moment is not consciously devoted to morals and righteousness.

The Inferno is probably the most realistic section of the Divine Comedy because it comes closer to fitting the people's perception of what Hell is really like than Purgatory and Paradise do. People's mental image of Hell is an evil, dark, and scary place that is full of fire and that is exactly the way Dante depicts it. People are eager to see, hear, and read about violence, blood, and gore and the Inferno is full of it which helps the reader to pay closer attention to it. In a sense Dante is trying to scare the righteousness into people. Dante himself became scared when he read the inscription above the gate of Hell that read "**ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER HERE**" (1424) because he did not realize that the inscription was only intended for those who had already died. The inscription implies the horror of total despair. It suggests that anyone that enters Hell at anytime must abandon all hope, so Dante thought he was included in this. Hell is the place for those who deliberately and consciously chose an evil way of life. There is a place in Hell called the Vestibule for people who did not make a conscious choice between Heaven and Hell. Dante emphasizes that Hell is for those who chose it and that choice is irrevocable. If you commit an act of sin you will be automatically condemned to Hell. Hell is filled with people who at the moment of death were either

unrepentant or were saved but were still committing the same sins. In Hell you get exactly what you give forever.

Purgatory is a place that not many Protestants know about or think about so it is not as familiar to people as Heaven and Hell are. All our lives people are taught that if you sin you will go to Hell and if you don't sin you will go to Heaven; there has never been any in between. Purgatory is a place for people who either repented shortly before they died or have not yet completed the process of repentance or all of the seven sacraments. Unlike Hell where it is eternal, people in Purgatory will eventually complete their penance and make it to Paradise the Kingdom of God. If you are in Purgatory you are on your way to Paradise or Heaven but you still need some cleansing but you will eventually make it into Paradise. Purgatory is not eternal. Purgatory is not probation or a punishment; the people there are glad to be there because they know that someday they will be at God's side in Paradise. Purgatory is a place of discipline. This is one of the more imaginary elements of the Divine Comedy because we do not know much about it, although we really do not know much about Heaven or Hell either except for what we read about in the Bible and there really are not many references to Purgatory in the Bible.

Dante depicts Paradise as a very Holy and beautiful place which is how people perceive it, but it is still different in many ways. Paradise is a place of reward for people who consciously chose a righteous way of life. To enter Paradise a person must be washed pure and white as snow. To be saved is not enough to get into Paradise; you must either live a fully righteous and Godlike life, or you must be repentant for all sins. In order to repent you must go through the seven sacraments of baptism, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, Eucharist, ordination, and penance step- by-step. Dante depicted Paradise as a White Rose or Mystic Rose in which God was at the center and saints surrounded Him. This is a good picture in that a white rose symbolizes purity, perfection and divine love which are all characteristics of God, so it is fitting that God place is in the center of a white rose. The white rose is a fitting word picture for God, but is just different from what people would imagine as the home or throne of God.

The Divine Comedy was a somewhat realistic yet somewhat imaginary story that entertained millions and was used as a guide for the medieval people. You could say that Dante has one of the biggest most active imaginations ever to have been able to create a story like the Divine Comedy. The entire story was a figment of his imagination because there has not been any person that has died and traveled to Hell, Purgatory, or Paradise and come back to tell the world about it. Many portions of it would be the same as some people's pictures of it but many portions are different. It would be a great challenge to go back and try to write your own picture of the afterlife.

## St. Augustine in the Inferno

It is hard to place St. Augustine within just one of the levels of Dante's hell for his sins were varied and not great. Today many of his sins are commonplace. For example, most people attempt to better their own lives without regard of others. They attempt to increase their standard of living and gain more worldly possessions. They are neither good nor evil but are just trying to make a living and keep up in today's fend-for-yourself society. Before Augustine's conversion, this was his goal. He was continually searching for **“honors, money, (and) marriage”** (Confessions, 991). This allows Augustine to be placed in the first area of hell, the Vestibule. It is a place for opportunists such as Augustine was before his conversion. It is a place for the

*“nearly soulless. . . who were neither for God nor Satan,  
but only for themselves” (Inferno, 1295).*

Augustine never intentionally hurt anyone, but his actions were led by his instincts to succeed and gain praise. These actions included kissing up to the Emperor, his study of law and the art of persuasion, and the mocking of newcomers to his profession. Since each of these sins also falls within a different realm of Dante's hell, they will be discussed later in this paper.

The second level of Dante's hell, Limbo, does not apply to Augustine because he was baptized and was blessed with the knowledge of Jesus Christ's existence. Therefore, Augustine cannot be placed within this first circle of hell.

The second circle of hell, a realm for those who fell victim of their carnal desires, is another level at which to place Augustine's soul for he was consumed by lust in his pre-conversion days. He was encouraged by his family to learn the art of persuasion and making of fine speech when he was only sixteen. He used these skills, which he developed very well, along with his good looks to seduce as many women as possible. It was

*“in that sixteenth year of my life in this world,  
when the madness of lust. . . took complete control of me,  
and I surrendered to it” (Confessions, 987).*

He was in love with being in love. Yet, he was unable to discern between love and lust. His carnal desires overpowered his soul for the majority of his life. During his lifetime, he had a multitude of mistresses. One of these mistresses he took because he was unable to wait for a little over a year to have sex before being married to his promised wife. She had to reach the legal marrying age of twelve before they could consummate.

*“I was unable to bear the delay of two years  
which must pass before I was to get the girl  
I had asked for in marriage. In fact it was not  
really marriage that I wanted. I was simply  
a slave to lust. So I took another woman” (Confessions, 993).*

Whether or not Augustine's soul can be placed in the fourth circle of hell is a tough decision. Since he was an opportunist, part of his life was spent attempting to gain as many riches as possible in

search of happiness. This would classify him as a hoarder, but seems insignificant among his other sins.

There does not appear to be a place for Augustine's soul in either the third, fifth, sixth, or seventh circles of hell for he did not commit any of the offending sins that would place him within one of these realms.

Circle eight, however, holds several areas in which to put Augustine's soul. In the first bolge, there are the panderers and seducers. Augustine's skill in the use of persuasion earns him a spot here. In the second bolge, there are the flatterers. Again, Augustine's soul reserves a space. One of the sins Augustine speaks of committing is the flattery of the young Valentinian Emperor: "I was preparing an oration in praise of the Emperor in which I was to utter any number of lies to win the applause of people who knew they were lies" (Confessions, 991). This flattery was given in an attempt to gain praise for himself. Once again, he shows him as an opportunist as well. Bolge seven is the realm of the thieves. Augustine can be placed here for the petty crimes committed during his adolescent years. This includes the theft of the pears from the pear tree near the vineyard. This crime was committed merely for the pleasure of doing something that was wrong, not for benefit:

***"I stole things which I already had in plenty and of better quality. Nor had I any desire to enjoy the things I stole, but only the stealing of them and the sin. . . seeking no profit from wickedness but only to be wicked" (Confessions, 987).***

Bolge eight contains those who abuse their God-given gift of genius. Augustine was blessed with the art of persuasion and used it in sin. He used it to get laid and gain praise. Here, Augustine can also reside for all eternity.

Bolge nine houses several different types of sowers of discord. Augustine fits in with the sowers of discord between kinsmen for he is guilty of the mockery and ridicule of newcomers to his profession. He and his company of Overturners enjoyed making fools of the newcomers for no reason what-so-ever causing discord between the two groups:

***"They make a butt of some hapless newcomer, assailing him with really cruel mockery for no reason whatever, save the malicious pleasure they got from it" (Confessions, 989).***

For all his sins, it is very difficult to place Augustine within only one realm of Dante's hell. One could place him in circle eight, bolge nine for his worst sin. However, this sin dominated a very small portion of his life. As Dido was spared being placed in circle seven, round two for the sin of suicide and put in circle two for having given into her lust for Aeneas, I too spare Augustine and place him in a lower level of Dante's hell. Many of his sins were intertwined, and almost all of them lead back to his desire to seize any opportunity to enrich his own life. For this some would place him within the vestibule of hell. However, I believe that his carnal desires filled an equal portion of his life and were the cause of many of his hardships.

## Mythological Beasts in Dante's Inferno

The Inferno is the first part of Dante Alighieri's poem, the Divine Comedy, which chronicles Dante's journey to God, and is made up of the Inferno (Hell), Purgatorio (Purgatory), and Paradiso (Paradise). Dante starts on ground level and works his way downward. He goes all the way through the earth and Hell and ends up at the base of the mountain of Purgatory on the other side. Inferno tells of their journey through the Nine Circles of Hell, where sinners of different types endure varying degrees of punishment.

The Cantos I of The Inferno starts with Dante, The Pilgrim traveling through the dark wood, he wakes to find that he has lost his path and now wanders fearfully through the forest. Terrified at being alone in so dismal a valley, he wanders until he comes to a hill bathed in sunlight, and his fear begins to leave him. But when he starts to climb the hill his path is blocked by three fierce beasts: first a Leopard, then a Lion, and finally a She-Wolf. They fill him with fear and drive him back down to the sunless wood. The Leopard is extremely active with skin, which was mottled. The Lion had a brilliant skin and was so frightening that the air trembled with terror. The She-Wolf was very thin but had nothing but an excessive appetite. At that moment the figure of a man appears before him; it is the shade of Virgil, and the Pilgrim begs for help. Virgil tells him that he cannot overcome the beasts, which obstruct his path, *"for their wilful desires are never satisfied because after a meal, they are hungrier than before"*(97). They must remain until a 'Greyhound' comes who will drive them back to Hell. Virgil advises Dante to take another path where he will reach the sunlight. He also promises to guide him on that path through Hell and Purgatory, after which another spirit, more fit than Virgil, will lead him to Paradise. Dante begs Virgil to lead on, and the Guide starts ahead. The Pilgrim follows.

Metaphors and symbolism are found in every line, and to give a complete description of all the interpretations that have been made would be a huge undertaking. The dark forest is a metaphor for everything that Dante thought was wrong in 1300. This could include inner confusion and sin, the necessary imperfection of the world (as opposed to Paradise and God), political corruption, the absence of true authority, the bad behaviour of the Pope, etc. The uncertain symbolism of the three beasts--a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf contributes to the shadowy atmosphere of the opening scene. The leopard indicates sexual promiscuity or lust. The lion represents pride. The she-wolf portrays avarice, which in modern terms means materialistic and has political ambition. Virgil in his role of Reason or Human Wisdom is of course the means through which man may come to an understanding of the nature of sin. With Virgil-Reason as his guide, Dante the Pilgrim will come to see the penance imposed on the repentant sinners on the Mount of Purgatory. In any case the beasts must represent the three major categories of human sin, and they threaten Dante the Pilgrim, the poet's symbol of mankind.

The journey to the deep ends of the earth then continues though the rest of the cantos are covering the other two parts which Purgatory and Paradise. Inferno is also a landmark in the development of European language and literature, for it stands as the greatest medieval poem written in vernacular language-the common tongue of a people.

# The Cherry Orchard-Chekov

## Key Facts

**full title** · *The Cherry Orchard: A Comedy in Four Acts*

**author** · Anton Chekhov

**type of work** · Play

**genre** · Comedy (satirical, ironic, often concerned with marriage proposals); Tragedy (involving catastrophic loss as a result of the protagonist's weakness)

**language** · Russian

**time and place written** · From 1901 to 1903, in Yalta, an island in the Mediterranean.

**date of first performance** · seventeen January 1904

**date of first publication** · During the last week of June, 1904 (just a few days before Chekhov's death on July one)

**narrator** · There is no narrator in the play

**climax** · The climax comes in Act Three, when Lopakhin reveals he has bought the orchard

**protagonist** · Ranevsky

**setting (time)** · Between May and October of a year around the beginning of the 20th century

**setting (place)** · At the country estate of Lyuba Ranevsky

**falling action** · Everyone leaves the house in October after Lopakhin purchases the estate in August; this departure constitutes the entire fourth Act

**tense** · Not applicable (drama); but the story is told both directly and in flashbacks

**foreshadowing** · Firs walk across the stage in Act One foreshadows his death scene in Act Four; in Act One, Lopakhin foreshadows his own purchase of the orchard by declaring that the orchard cannot be saved except by his plan;

**tone** · Varying between absurd, satirical, ironic and tragic

**themes** · Modernity vs. the old Russia; breaking with the past; nature

**motifs** · The union of naturalism and symbolism; miscommunication; self-consciousness

**symbols** · The cherry orchard; the sound of a breaking string.

## ANTON PAVLOVICH CHEKOV

Anton Pavlovich Chekov was one of the most respected playwrights of the latter nineteenth century. He was born in Taganrog, Russia, in 1860. A bright young man, he attended Moscow University, studying medicine. To help support himself in college, he began to write and contribute to newspapers; after graduating and practicing medicine, he continued to write. His stories were so popular that he decided to devote himself to writing, rather than to medicine. By 1886, he had earned a reputation for himself as a short story writer. Some of his most popular stories include *Kashtanka* (1887), *The Steppe* (1888), *The Party* (1888), *A Dreary Story* (1889), *Ward No. Six* (1892), *the Duel*

(1892), *My Life* (1896), *About Love* (1898), *The Darling* (1898), and *The Lady with the Little Dog* (1899).

Besides writing short stories, Chekov also devoted his efforts to drama. His first successful play was *Ivanov* (1887). He is most well-known, however, for his later plays. They include *The Seagull* (1895), *Uncle Vanya* (1900), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). Both his plays and his short stories are characterized by a subtle blending of naturalism and symbolism. He is also known for his portrayal of the Russian upper class as people stifled by boredom, inactivity, and missed opportunities; many of his characters have great difficulty in understanding the real meaning of life and communicating with others.

Chekov's own life was always filled with conflict. His monstrous father, possessive sister, and delinquent elder brothers made his early family life a living hell. As a married man, he was torn between a duty to his wife, an actress, and his affections for a series of mistresses. In his later life, he was also forced to fight tuberculosis, which killed him in 1904, at the young age of forty-four.

### Character List

**Mrs. Lyuba Ranevsky** - Mrs. Ranevsky is a middle-aged Russian woman, the owner of the estate and the cherry orchard around which the story revolves. She has faced tragedy many times in her life, or rather has tried to escape from it. Her first name, "Lyuba," means "love" in Russian, and she seems to exemplify love with her generosity, kindness and physical beauty, and sexual nature; she is the only character in the play with a lover. But her feelings of love often cloud her judgment, and she is also unable to control her spending, a sign of her disconnection from her present status as an impoverished aristocrat.

**Yermolay Lopakhin** - a businessman and the son of peasants on Ranevsky's estate. He is middle-aged, but somewhat younger than Ranevsky. His grandparents were in fact owned by the Ranevsky family before freedom was granted to the serfs. Lopakhin is extremely self-conscious, especially in the presence of Ranevsky, perpetually complaining about his lack of education and refinement, which he attributes to his upbringing as a peasant on Ranevsky's estate. His memories of the brutality of a peasant child's life on the estate contrast with Ranevsky's idyllic memories as a child of the landowning class.

**Leonid Gayev** - Gayev is Ranevsky's brother. He has several intriguing verbal habits; he frequently describes tricky billiards shots at odd and inappropriate times. He also will launch into overly sentimental and rhetorical speeches before his niece Anya stops him, after which he always mutters "I am silent" at least once. Gayev is a kind and concerned uncle and brother, but he behaves very differently around people not of his own social class. He is fifty-one years old, but as he notes, this is "difficult to believe", because he is in many ways an infant. He constantly pops sweets into his mouth, insults people (such as Lopakhin) with whom he disagrees, and has to be reminded to put on his jacket by Firs.

**Varya** - Varya is Ranevsky's adopted daughter, who is twenty-four years old. She is in love with Lopakhin, but she doubts that he will ever propose to her. Varya is hard-working and responsible and has a similar work ethic to Lopakhin. She is also something of a cry-baby, often in tears; but this may reflect her sense of powerlessness, as she is the one character in the play who may be most affected by

the loss of the estate. She is the estate's manager, so she will lose her job if Ranevsky loses the estate, but, lacking money or a husband, she has no control over its fate or her own.

**Anya** - Ranevsky's biological daughter, Anya is seventeen years old. She seems to have lived a sheltered life. She greatly enjoys the company of Trofimov and his lofty idealism, and is quick to comfort her mother after the loss of her orchard. Anya and Trofimov become so close that Varya fears they may become romantically involved.

**Peter Trofimov** - A student at the local university, he knows Ranevsky from tutoring her son Grisha before he died. Lopakhin refers to Trofimov as the "eternal student," for he has been in university most of his adult life. He serves as a foil for both Lopakhin and Ranevsky; Trofimov's ugliness, belief that he is "above love", and forward-looking nature contrasts with Ranevsky's beauty, her idealistic vision of love, and her obsession with the past, while his utopian idealism contrasts with Lopakhin's practicality and materialism.

**Boris Simeonov-Pischik** - A nobleman, and fellow landowner, who is, like Ranevsky, in financial difficulties. Pischik is characterized mainly by his boundless optimism—he is always certain he will find the money somehow to pay for the mortgages that are due—but also by his continual borrowing money from Ranevsky. Pischik is something of a caricature; his name, in Russian, means "squealer," appropriate for someone who never stops talking.

**Charlotte** - Anya's governess. Charlotte traveled from town-to-town performing tricks such as "the dive of death" when she was very young, before her Father and Mother both died. Charlotte is something of a clown, performing tricks for the amusement of the elite around her, such as Yasha, Ranevsky, and Yopakhin, while, at the same time, subtly mocking their pre-occupations.

**Firs** - Ranevsky's eighty-seven-year-old manservant. Firs is always talking about how things were in the past on the estate, when the estate was prosperous, and the master went to Paris by carriage, instead of by train; most importantly, he frequently talks about how life was before the serfs were freed. He is possibly senile, and is constantly mumbling. He is the only surviving link to the estate's glorious past, and he comes to symbolize that past.

**Simon Yephikodov** - Yephikodov is a clerk at the Ranevsky estate. He is a source of amusement for all the other workers and amusement for all the other workers, who refer to him as "Simple Simon". Yephikodov provides comic relief, with his self-conscious pose as the hopeless lover and romantic, often contemplating suicide. He loves Dunyasha, to whom he has proposed.

**Yasha** - Yasha is the young manservant who has been traveling with Ranevsky ever since she left for France. He is always complaining about how uncivilized Russia is when compared to France, exploits Dunyasha's love for him for physical pleasure, and openly tells Firs that he is so old he should die. Most of the characters besides Ranevsky regard him as repulsive and obnoxious. He has a strong taste for acrid-smelling cigars.

**Dunyasha** - A maid on the Ranevsky estate. She functions mainly as a foil to Yasha, her innocent naïveté and love for him emphasizing and making clear his cynicism and selfishness. She is also the object of Yephikodov's affections, a status about which she is very confused.

## Plot Overview

The play begins in the pre-dawn hours of a May morning in Russia. We learn that the cherry trees are in bloom even though it is frosty outside. Yermolay Lopakhin, a friend of the family, and Dunyasha a maid on the Ranevsky estate, wait for the estate's owner Ranevsky at the estate's main house, in a room called "the nursery". Lopakhin reveals that Ranevsky has been in Paris for the last five years. Lopakhin is a local businessman in his mid- thirties, dressed in a fine white suit (with gaudy yellow shoes), whose feelings towards Ranevsky are mixed between affectionate gratitude for past kindnesses, and resentment at her condescension toward him because of his humble, peasant origins. Also on the estate is Simon Yephikodov, a hapless youth nicknamed "Simple Simon" because of his frequent and ridiculous accidents.

Soon, Ranevsky arrives from Paris, along with her daughter Anya, who has been with her there since Easter of that year; Yasha, a young manservant who has accompanied her on her travels; and Charlotte, Anya's governess, who brings along her dog. Also accompanying her are Firs, her 87-year old manservant; her elder, yet still infantile, brother Leonid Gayev; and her adopted daughter Varya; these last three have stayed in Russia but went to the station to greet Ranevsky on her return.

Ranevsky expresses her joy and amazement to be home again, while Anya reveals to Varya the relative poverty in which she found her mother when she arrived in Paris and the way in which she continues to spend money. Varya reveals that the family's estate is to be sold at auction on the 22nd of August, in order to pay their debts. Anya reveals that Ranevsky's departure for Paris was caused by her grief over two deaths: that of her husband six years before and that of her son, Grisha, who drowned a month thereafter.

Soon, Anya departs for bed, and Lopakhin brings up the issue of the imminent sale. He proposes a solution; Ranevsky should parcel out the land on her estate, build cottages on the parcels, and lease them out to summer cottage-holders, who are becoming increasingly numerous. Gayev and Ranevsky dismiss the idea, because it would necessitate cutting down the family's beloved (and gigantic) cherry orchard. Before he leaves, Lopakhin offers them a loan of 50,000 rubles to buy their property at auction if they change their minds, and predicts there will be no other way of saving the orchard. Ranevsky then lends some money to a fellow impoverished landowner, Boris Simeonov-Pischik. Peter Trofimov arrives; he was Grisha's tutor before the drowning, and thus he brings back painful memories for Ranevsky. Before the end of the act, after complaining about Ranevsky's inability to curb her spending, Gayev outlines three alternatives to Lopakhin's plan: a financing scheme involving some banker friends of his, Ranevsky borrowing some money from Lopakhin (without the condition that they then cut down the orchard), and a wealthy aunt in Yaroslavl who might provide a loan.

In the Second Act, we are introduced more closely to the young servants on the estate, Dunyasha, Yasha, and Yephikodov, who are involved in a love triangle: Yephikodov loves Dunyasha, Dunyasha loves Yasha, and Yasha is very much in love with himself. Soon, Lopakhin, Ranevsky, Gayev, Anya and Varya appear, and they are again debating over Lopakhin's plan to turn the orchard into cottage country. Lopakhin becomes frustrated with Ranevsky's reluctance; she, in turn, thinks his plan is vulgar, and says that if they plan to sell the cherry orchard, she wants to be sold along with it.

Ranevsky reveals that she has a lover in Paris who has been sending her telegrams, asking her to return, and who robbed her, left her, and as a result drove her to a suicide attempt.

Soon, Trofimov appears, and gives several speeches about the importance of work and the laziness and stupidity of Russian intellectuals. In a quiet moment, the sound of a snapping string is heard, and no one can identify its source. A drunkard appears, asking for directions, and then money; Ranevsky ends up giving him several gold pieces. Disturbed, most of the group leave, except for Anya and Trofimov. They discuss Varya's growing suspicion that Anya and Trofimov are having an affair, which they are not; Trofimov declares that they are "above love". The act ends with Yephikodov sadly playing his guitar and Varya calling out, in vain, for Anya.

In the Third Act, Ranevsky throws a party on the day of the auction. The guests consist of several local bureaucratic officials such as the stationmaster and a post-office clerk. Charlotte entertains the guests with a series of magic tricks. Ranevsky worries anxiously about why Gayev and Lopakhin have not yet returned. Ranevsky fears that the orchard has been lost, that the aunt in Yaroslavl has apparently not given them enough money to buy it, and that Gayev's other sources have failed to come through. She and Trofimov get into an argument; Trofimov accuses her of not being able to face the truth, and she accuses him of being unusual for never having fallen in love. Lopakhin and Gayev soon return from the auction. Lopakhin reveals to everyone that he has bought the estate and intends to carry out his plans for the orchard's destruction. Anya tries, in vain, to comfort her mother.

In the last act, it is October, and the trees in the cherry orchard are already being cut down. All the characters are in the process of leaving; Lopakhin will depart to Kharkov for the winter, Varya to the Ragulins', another family that lives fifty miles away. Gayev plans to live in the town, working at a bank, Anya will go off to school, and Ranevsky will leave for Paris with Yasha, to rejoin her lover. Charlotte has no idea what she will do, but Lopakhin assures her he will help her find something. Trofimov and Lopakhin exchange an affectionate if contentious farewell; Yasha leaves Dunyasha, weeping, without a second thought; and Anya tearfully says goodbye to her mother. Anya worries that Firs, who has taken ill, has not been sent to the hospital as he was supposed to be, but Yasha indignantly assures Anya that he has. Ranevsky encourages Lopakhin to propose to Varya; but the proposal is never made—Lopakhin leaves Varya alone, and in tears. Finally, Gayev and Ranevsky bid a tearful farewell to their house. Everyone leaves, locking the doors behind them.

But Firs is, in fact, accidentally left behind, having fallen ill and being forgotten in the rush of the departure. He walks onstage after everyone else has left, quietly muttering about how life has left him by. He lies on the couch, and silently expires as two sounds are heard; again, the sound of a string snapping, and the sound of an axe cutting down a cherry tree in the orchard.

## The Cherry orchard form and structure

The cherry orchard has a four-act structure and time is measured throughout by the seasons, these are told by either the weather or the state the cherry trees in the orchard are in, (if there in blossom or not) it only follows one of the rules of Aristotelian Drama and this is all that takes place at the estate. It is a play in the form of realism with melodramatic moments and is played with the removal of the fourth wall; throughout it has a few moments of Symbolism such as the string snapping which occurs at two key moments in the play, however there is some confusion with many critics in what the string snapping actually symbolizes.

The play in my opinion is a tragicomedy as the main plot essentially is about the loss of the cherry orchard, but throughout it has moments of rather absurd comedy for example when Lopakhin first raises the issue of the cherry orchard being in financial trouble, Charlotta Interrupts saying her dog eats nuts. Gayev also brings a slight amount of comedy to the play with his billiards movements added throughout his speeches. Pishchik is also a comic character. Throughout the play there are also elements of comedy brought in by Yepikhodov's clumsiness and Firs.

The play is in a four-act structure. It is set in a series of montages. A montage is a way of showing the audience that time has passed without the unimportant and irrelevant parts being shown as time goes by. The pace varies throughout the play with some acts flowing rapidly. Most of the action in each act is set in the exact (same) place such as act one which is all set in the nursery and little action takes place anywhere else.

With regard to roles, the minimum number of cast to use is thirteen, However as there is a party in act three a cast of at least seventeen would have to be used to make the dance in act three look visually pleasing

Throughout the play there are many moments of dramatic tension. I believe one of the biggest moments of dramatic tension in the play is when Lopakhin intends on proposing to Yasha in the final scene. This is because audiences of today are used to the denouements being happy and everything working it out in the end, however this by no means occurs in *The Cherry Orchard* as also in the final scene every character goes their separate ways with the exception of one. This character who has remained the most loyal to the family and the estate all through the play and all of their life is Firs. Firs sets a key moment in the play and the Final denouement which comes as a rather big surprise, as all through the scene we (the audience) have been falsely informed by the onstage action that Firs has been taken ill in a hospital. When everyone has left Firs enters the empty stage just as the door has been locked and performs a soliloquy realizing he is going to die in that room and never see the outdoors ever again. As well as being the most emotion-filled scene it is perhaps also the most dramatically ironic as moments before Anya Bids farewell, old life!' and Trofimov hails new life.

The play as a staged performance is rather large (as a production)with regards to cast and technical elements although never in the play are all main twelve characters on stage together, however they do all meet each other at some point and usually exit/enter in groups of three or four and the usual amount for people to be on stage is four or five. The casting would be relatively easy provided people can dance, this is with the exception of Charlotte who would have to be able to

perform various magic tricks and be a ventriloquist or provide equally impressive burlesque in place of these rather important parts of the script.

Another key issue in the form and structure of *The Cherry Orchard* is the setting which would have to change with the seasons with regard to the cherry orchard. But as well as the cherry orchard changing the nursery also has too as it is filled with furniture when they first arrive which is sometimes used as essential props for example Gayev addresses a cabinet of sorts in the first act and Yepikhodov throughout the play knocks over furniture to show his clumsy nature.

The mood and atmosphere (which could easily be emphasized through different lighting effects) are sometimes hard to tell and changes at a very rapid pace. The underlining mood throughout though is undoubtedly sadness as the characters have had some bad times upon their estate. The characters also have had some good times and reminisce about their happy days of childhood.

The pace in the final act is a lot faster than the three before it and everything ties itself up the final act is fast flowing as everyone says fair well. This is until Firs enters unexpectedly and everything slows down reflecting the old fragile state of Firs.

**Q: GIVE A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER OF LYUBOV.**

**Q: DISCUSS THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF MRS. LYUBA RANEUSKY.**

Mrs. Lyuba Raneusky is the protagonist figure of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard". She is quinquagenarian Russian lady, the owner of the estate and the Cherry Orchard around which the story revolves. Lyubov's life as well as her nature has alleviation of multi shades. She has stood in the way of hard realities of life many times and rather endeavored to avert them.

A keen study of "The Cherry Orchard" denudes many facets of her personality. Anton Chekhov presents her before us as a representative of Feudal order. By the last breaths of 19th century, feudalism was dwindling and was replaced by commercialism. So, being a representative of feudalism, she must have to face penury, melancholy and misery. As the descendant of landlords, the current miseries are no less than an ordeal for her.

Her first name "Lyuba" means "Love" in Russian. She seems to personify love with her generosity, magnanimity, corporeal attractiveness and hedonistic nature. She is the only character in the play with suitor. But her amorous feelings waver her judgment frequently. She is sanctimoniously kind hearted and genteel as well as affectionate and sincere to all. She even adores her adopted daughter Varya and courteously behaves even with her servants.

She has to support a large family that proves her a generous lady by nature. Her family includes her brother Leonid Gayev who has several intriguing verbal habits. Varya, her adopted daughter who is at the apex of her youth, her biological daughter who is a teenager, Charlotte, Anya the governess, girls, an old servant, Yasha, a young man servant and Dunyasha, a maid servant. She also splurges money on the beggars munificently. She was thrown from the sky to the earth due to her lavish habits. In Act IV,

Gaye advises her,

***“There was no need to give them your purse Lyuba. You should not have done that you really should not”.***

Lyubov replies,

***“I could not help myself! I could not help it!”***

Improvvidence and carefree nature are major drawbacks in Lyubov’s character as people of the feudal class generally have. Neither she has made any plan for the rainy season nor is she distracted for the present financial exigency. Lyubov persists in spending as bountifully as ever, borrowing the money he needs. Speaking for her in a letter to his wife, Chekhov said,

***“Nothing but death could subdue a woman like that.”***

He described her as,

***“Tastefully, but not gorgeously dressed, intelligent, very good natured, absent-minded, friendly and gracious to everyone.”***

The descriptions declare Lyubov inane and daft as she does not do any valuable or perspicacious works which might be esteemed as brainy. She allows everyone to consummate their desires. Her love affair with a con-man is the nuttiest slip up a lady could ever commit. Yet she is in a frantic haste to elope with her good for nothing love. She is incapable of sedate outlook. We can either call it as callousness for Varya as she was leaving her in the lurch. If anybody deserved her bounty then these two persons who had been in her service in the worst of times deserved the most. Lyubov, time and again seems to eat her heart out and sobbing over her only son’s demise who met his maker by immersing in a river in his childhood. When she comes across Trofimov, teacher of her son, she snivels.

***“My Grisha ..., my boy..., my little boy was drowned why? ..... Why my friend?”***

She has a very soft corner for her son in her heart and still recalls that mishap, Her solicitude for cherry orchard is also conspicuous. She does not want to suffer the loss of it at all. On hearing about its auction, she becomes down in the dumps. She is forced because the sale of cherry orchard has become a necessary evil as there is no way out to release the heavy debt. Her last words for the orchard are unforgettable,

***“Oh my dear..... My gentle, beautiful orchard! ..... my life ..... my you ..... My happiness... goodbye .... Farewell!”***

Her love for aesthetic beauty has been manifested through her love for cherry orchard.

To wind up her character, we can assert that she was a veracious representative figure of feudalism in Russia in the last breaths of 19th century. The most touching figure in a comedy also stimulates the reader’s commiseration. Lyubov’s character is the one and only character that fabricates the play as “A blend of smiles and tears.”

## Q-The Cherry Orchard as Sadly absurd

The deconstruction of the conventions of the theatre in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* predicts the more radical obliteration presented later by Pirandello in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The seed of this attack on convention by Chekhov are the inherent flaws of all the characters in *The Cherry Orchard*. The lack of any character with which to identify or understand creates a portrait much closer to reality than the staged drama of Ibsen or other playwrights who came before. In recognizing the intrinsic flaws of its characters, we can see how Chekhov shows us that reality is subjective, reality is not simple, linear, or clean, and that the real benefit of theater is to show this inane, subjective reality.

There are essentially three flaws that permeate over the characters of *The Cherry Orchard*. The obvious first flaw is nostalgia. Madame Ranevsky is obviously the main character in this group, as she is really in charge of her family, and her inability to move on with the present is so striking in comparison with what the audience so desperately wants her to do. To her, everything is in the past - even the present. She can't get past the days of her childhood or the disasters of the previous six years. Even when she is forced to face reality - that the orchard has been sold - it seems like an event in the past. It has been inevitable from the beginning, and so even as it happens, the events are old news. A wonderful example of Madame Ranevsky's nostalgic focus appears as her last substantive line in the play:

***"One last look... Our dear mother used to walk up and down this room."***

Madame Ranevsky sees the past, present, and future as the past only. Gayef, Simon-Pitschik, and Firs are the other characters that complete this group fixated on the past. Their versions of the past differ slightly, but that is almost all the difference between their individual versions of the flaw. Essentially, Gaye is a benign, ineffectual man, and so his past is consistent with that. Firs and Pitschik both have an aggravated sense of the beauty of the past. Firs sees being a peasant as a wholly beneficial experience - at least in the past. Pitschik seems generally confused about what is happening and what has happened, while still being obsessively nostalgic. The reason why this nostalgia can be compared to a tragic flaw is that it causes the characters it afflicts to ignore the reality of the present. In doing so, it seals their fate to what they call tragedy: the loss of the cherry orchard.

The second group of flawed characters exists mainly for themselves. They are vain, and generally naïve. Danyasha is the best example of this vanity. She dresses outside of the peasant class to heighten her own importance. She also gives herself a highly dramatic quality in everything she does. This is best shown right before Madame Ranevsky returns to the house.

***"I'm going to faint!"***

She says as she playacts for Lopakhin. She stages her actions for attention and lives off that attention. It is unfair to compare Anya to Danyasha completely, but so too is Anya's flaw a form of vanity. She does care about her family, but she only cares to the extent of worry. And yet still she seeks attention and drama in her displays of concern. But the characteristic that overwhelmingly captures Anya is her naïve selfishness. She cares about those who pay her attention and pander to her. Her love for Trophimof comes off as something so horribly artificial, and yet that is exactly what she wants.

Charlotte is the third character in this group of vanity, and she is also a complicated choice. She lives in a shallow world because that is what was created for her. We are not given much by which to examine Charlotte, but what is shown is a girl who occasionally questions life, but mainly lives for the "tricks" of life. Her parents were showmen, and so is she. That is what is expected, and what is real.

The reason why vanity renders Dunyasha, Anya, and Charlotte useless to stop the sale of the orchard is because it makes every issue an issue about "me." Through whatever happens, the pressing issue on their minds is never the overwhelming problem of the orchard; rather, it's about men, or dogs, or being noticed. Vanity leads to superficiality, which cannot solve problems of any great importance.

The two characters obsessed with intellectualism (and not actually doing anything for themselves or others) are Trophimof and Ephikhodof. Ephikhodof truly has nothing too insightful to say. His knowledge is limited, and he confuses everyone, including himself, in his pseudo-intellectual speak.

***"If I labour under a misapprehension,  
how is it that when I woke up this morning,  
behold, so to speak, I perceived sitting  
on my chest a spider of praternatural dimensions, like that?"***

These broad questions of so-called reality pale in comparison with what is actually happening. The play is riddled with such examples.

The character the foreword note refers to as the only giver of "sanity" is Trophimof. This is an inaccurate description of Trophimof, to say the least. Trophimof is also flawed through his intellectualism. Yes, he is unable to do anything to help the situation, as the note points out, but this is entirely his fault. He is unable to do anything because all he wants to do is analyze. The intellectualism of Trophimof and pseudo-intellectualism of Ephikhodof serves only to render their impact on the present completely ineffectual.

Finally, there are three characters that are not easily classified into three groups, but are clearly still flawed themselves. Yasha, although a minor character, is clearly a smart (and devious) man. However, he's criminal. He doesn't use his skills to help the family, and so his flaw is a type of vanity, but it's really that he's an evil person.

The last two characters are clearly the most interesting in terms of flaws. Barbara and Lopakhin are so similarly flawed. Both come from an "inferior" background - Lopakhin, a peasant, and Barbara, adopted. Neither can escape the past fully, but they are not like Ranevsky and Gayef in this respect. Rather, they are anti-nostalgic; they hate their pasts. But still they obsess about it, and that constitutes one part of their flaw. They spend their time caring about other people; Lopakhin spends almost the entire play trying to help Madame Ranevsky hold onto her land. Barbara is constantly looking out for her sister and her mother. Finally, both Barbara and Lopakhin are anti-intellectual. They do not dwell on examining anything for too long, especially not behaviors of others. Lopakhin cannot understand why no one else thinks like he does about things. Barbara doesn't understand how to relate to others to achieve an end. So Barbara and Lopakhin have very similar flaws.

These flaws are essentially the opposite of the flaws of the other characters. So Chekhov is showing us that one can't be too much of anything. Being too fixated on any specific goal without examining the situation and the people in it creates an atmosphere that does not solve problems. The flaws of the characters clash with each other, and nothing is accomplished. The flaws of the characters are inherently important to the plot, and understanding the flaws is essential to understanding how Chekhov alters the conventions of the theatre. By presenting a stage filled with many characters, none of which are "right" or clearly the "main character," *The Cherry Orchard* shows us the importance of true human interaction. Not only is it ridiculous and inane, but it also is the most important part of the theatre.

The first noticeable ramification of having no main or completely reasonable character is that, to the characters, reality is a subjective, personal experience. No one is carrying this plot like Hedda Gabler carries Ibsen's play, or Hamlet carries Shakespeare's. The play is about the conflicting emotions that come into the interactions of humans. Perhaps the best example of this is a conversation between Madame Ranevsky and Lopakhin:

**Lopakhin:** *Excuse me, but in all my life I have never met anybody so frivolous as you two, so crazy and unbusinesslike! I tell you in plain Russian your property is going to be sold, and you don't seem to understand what I say.*

**Madame Ranevsky:** *Well, what are we to do? Tell us what you want us to do.*

**Lopakhin:** *Don't I tell you every day? Every day I say the same thing over and over again... Once you make up your mind about there are to be villas, you can get all the money you want, and you're saved.*

**Madame Ranevsky:** *Villas and villa residents, oh, please... it's so vulgar!*

Madame Ranevsky looks to the past for her reality. We are used to this, it is her flaw. But we can see her viewpoint clearly. It would certainly be nice if things were as pleasant as she sees the past. And this solution that Lopakhin is presenting is clearly uncomfortable. To sell the great emblem of their past, the cherry orchard, would be a travesty. And to live next to people who would live in villas... It's clearly a distressing future that Madame Ranevsky pictures, and the audience knows how she feels and can sympathize.

But on the other hand, she's simply ignoring the reality of the present. It's clear her orchard is going to be destroyed - why not take the pragmatic approach and get money out of it so she can live comfortably? Get the worst over with, and move on. It's so frustrating that Lopakhin clearly presents what will happen to the orchard, and that Madame Ranevsky rejects this out of hand and ignores the inevitable to continue to ask again and again until, maybe, she gets an answer she wants. The audience can sympathize with the frustration in Lopakhin as he tries to convince Madame Ranevsky.

This inherent contradiction with a clear-cut reality is exactly what Chekhov is trying to achieve in *The Cherry Orchard*. It predicts the father's argument in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* as he tries to convince the director that nothing is truly real. Reality is subjective. Chekhov is forcing us to see that reality is not a tidy little package where characters enter and exit at exactly the right time. He wants to show human interaction as it really is. So-called scholars pontificate about nothing, others

obsess superficially about themselves, and those who seem to be living fairly logically are extremely narrow-minded when it comes to understanding others. The final key to understanding how crucially important these inanities of life are to Chekhov's play is the action of the play. Nothing that happens on stage changes the situation of the characters in it one bit. None of the really important events occur on stage. The selling of the orchard, the chopping down of the orchard; all of it happens offstage. This tells the audience that the important part of *The Cherry Orchard* (and by extension, plays in general) is the human interaction. The plot means nothing in comparison with the specific traits and flaws given each character. That is what truly makes the play great. It is reality; everyone talks, no one listens, and no one changes.

**Q: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR THEMES OF “THE CHERRY ORCHARD”?**

**Q: WHAT ARE MAIN CONFLICTS IN DRAMA “THE CHERRY ORCHARD”?**

Change is the law of the cosmos. The clock of time moves on persons, and things come into existence, grow up, mature, decline and go to their resting place. So is the schedule with the socio-political orders and systems. Clash between feudalism and capitalism, tradition and modernity as well as aesthetic beauty and commercialism is central to “The Cherry Orchard.”

“The Cherry Orchard” turned over its new leaf as a debut on the stage in 1904. At that time Russia was ruled over by the Tsar dynasty. Only thirteen years later, the Tsar was overthrown through a putsch.

The process of socio-political U-turns in Russia, as in the rest of the world, had kicked off showing conspicuous indications of great vicissitude in keeping with the times. The old order of feudal supremacy was on its last breath. Agro-based economy amalgamated the Business or Agro-based economy commingled with the industrialism. The balance of power was shifting from feudal sway to industrialism/ commercialism. Huge estates and plazas were selling out and were being put to commercial use. In “The Cherry Orchard”, the change has been symbolized in the sale of Gayev family’s cherished and renowned cherry orchard. With the passage of time, when Chekhov started jotting down this play unlike his contemporaries, he gave this theme a hilarious twist by highlighting the ludicrous facet of the ongoing process of sociopolitical change in Russia.

Speaking of the social custom, Firs, the old servant of Lyubov laments:

*“That’s it! The peasants belonged to the masters  
and masters belonged to the peasants.  
You knew where you were. Now, its all topsy-turvy  
can’t make any sense of it.”*

The revolution and the war metamorphosed everything. The post war Russia was an innovative Russia with a new political and social setup. Symptoms of the imminent revolution make “The Cherry Orchard” a political play.

Lopakhin, who comes of a serf family, represents the whole plebeian who was emerging into an industrialist class. Lyubov and her family represent the feudal class that is, eradicated in Russia and is not struggling for its survival on its own.

Lyubov's ménage and clan is under the obligation of their creditors. They are to pay their debt, which they cannot so their sole asset "The Cherry Orchard" is going to be sold under the law Gayev says that they are expecting some funds from Yeroslavl. On Lopakhin's enquiry, he reveals that the money is in the region of ten or fifteen thousand roubles. The amount is evidently like a drop in the bucket, which has now run into seven digits. This exasperates Lopakhin as he cries out,

*".....With all due respect, you are the most frivolous, unbusiness like people I have ever met in my life."*

In the present case, the renunciation is the penalty, Gayev's clan ought to reimburse for their reckless and lavish spending. It would not unjust to say that in the present case, the loss of tradition and estates came as a blessing, otherwise they would soon be put behind the bars.

Chekhov wants to convey the moral persuasion through his theme that sacrifice of aesthetic value is a necessary evil for the gratification in the recent world. "The Cherry Orchard" is a superb source of aesthetic enjoyment that is going to be put to havoc for purely materialistic interests. It is to be hewed down for building dachas. This gloomy transition reflects the ongoing socio-political transition in Russia that is the striking theme of "The Cherry Orchard."

**Q: WHAT IS IMPORTANCE OF THE TITLE OF THE PLAY "THE CHERRY ORCHARD"?**

**Q: WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LYUBOV AND CHERRY ORCHARD?**

Anton Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard* introduces readers to a pre-Revolution Russian family faced with the impending sale of their estate, the Cherry Orchard. The major character Lyubov Andreyevna in the play is the possessor of the Cherry Orchard. It is in the play that Lyubov must ultimately decide whether to allow her Cherry Orchard to be cut down to make room for villas or to sell the entire estate to pay off her debts. It is her unconditional love for both the Cherry Orchard and what it symbolizes to her that allows her to put the estate up for sale rather than have the Cherry Orchard cut down.

Although she is a constituent of the Russian upper class, Lyubov is hopelessly out of touch with reality and very irresponsible when it comes to finances. She often throws money around as though there are no consequences to her actions. After her husband died and her boy was tragically drowned at the Cherry Orchard, she fled to Paris and bought a villa, which she soon had to sell to pay off her debts. Lyubov dines lavishly and tips handsomely when in all actuality she hasn't a dime to spare. She throws parties and hires orchestras she knows she cannot pay for. It is this type of behaviour that put Lyubov deep enough into debt to where her beloved estate has been put at risk.

To Lyubov the Cherry Orchard means so much more than the acres and acres of beautiful cherry trees and rivers; so much more than the piece of land that was featured in the encyclopaedia. To her it represents her sense of nostalgia, a longing for the past. It is the place where her grandparents lived. Her mother and father lived there as well. It reminds Lyubov of her youth. When she looks at the cherry trees she does not just see branches and blossoms, she sees a time when she walked through the orchard with her mother as a young girl. She says

*"I used to sleep here when I was little...  
and here I am like a child again."*

Lyubov's innocence also remains a part of the Cherry Orchard, for as a child she did not own serfs or squander her family's money. Even though the Cherry Orchard invokes thoughts of her lost husband and son, she still treasures it. *The Cherry Orchard* is a piece of Lyubov's heart.

Because the Cherry Orchard means so much to Lyubov, it is especially hard for her to come to grips with the fact that she has two options neither of which suits her liking. Because of all the debt that she acquired so irresponsibly, it has become inevitable that her relationship with the Cherry Orchard will never be the same. Lyubov will only be able to maintain ownership of the Cherry Orchard if she has the cherry trees cut down and builds summer villas in their place. Her other option would be to sell the Cherry Orchard. Since she has lived on the estate all her life and loves it so dearly, Lyubov never even considers cutting down the Cherry Orchard. In fact she believes that to be a "vulgar" notion. Not only would the land that belonged to her family be trodden on by hundreds of visitors every summer, but also the orchard that held her childhood memories as well as those of the rest of her family would exist no longer. Because Lyubov refuses to insult the integrity of the estate by means of summer villas, the Cherry Orchard ultimately goes up for sale. Lyubov can live with this only because she assures herself that the condition of the estate will be maintained. In essence, Lyubov cares more about the Cherry Orchard than herself and her family. If she were more concerned for herself and her family then she would have built the villas.

Unfortunately for Lyubov, her hopes to keep the Cherry Orchard intact were dashed when she found out that Lopakhin bought it and planned to have the villas built anyway. She was so crushed when she learned of this that she could barely stand up. She wept bitterly, consoled only by the fact that she could return to Paris and that she and her daughter, Anya, would be able to begin a new life together. Had Lyubov not loved the Cherry Orchard so dearly, she would have allowed the cherry trees to be cut down and the villas built, but because she did love it so, she risked her own welfare to keep it intact. Although the Cherry Orchard ultimately came down anyway, were it not for Lyubov's love it would have never even had a chance.

**Q: IS "THE CHERRY ORCHARD" A COMEDY OR TRAGEDY?**

**Q: DECIDE THE GENRE OF THE PLAY "THE CHERRY ORCHARD".**

Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* serves as a glimpse into the lives of upper middle-class Russians at the turn of the century. The play at times seems to be a regretful account of past mistakes, but at other times it seems very comic. The final outcome tends to classify it primarily as a tragedy with no shortage of light hearted moments. It invokes many feelings within the reader: joy, regret, pity, and anger are all expressed among the interactions of several characters with rich and complicated personalities. The reader finds some parts of the characters appealing and some parts disgraceful. This complexity enhances the authenticity of the roles and in turn augments the reader's emotional involvement.

Whether "The Cherry Orchard" is a comedy or tragedy, is a serious and a bit ambiguous question about this play. Notwithstanding, some lavishly humorous situations, characters and dialogues, "The Cherry Orchard" is barely like a comedy in the known sense. And yet Chekhov exhorted that it was a comedy and in places even a farce. In his billet-doux addressed to M.P. Lilina,

wife of Stanislavsky says Chekhov, “Not a drama but a comedy has emerged from me; in places even a farce”, while, Stanislavsky challenged his view in an epistle to Chekhov. “It is not a comedy or a farce as you wrote, it is a tragedy, whatever you way out, you may have found for a better life in the last act.” If it is a tragedy, a comparison with Aristotle’s concept of tragedy will make this ambiguity beyond question. Aristotle defined tragedy in a universal way. According to him,

***“Tragedy is a representation of an action, which is serious, complete in itself and of a certain length, it is expressed in speech, made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play, it is acted not narrated and by exciting pity and fear, it gives a healthy relief to such emotions.”***

During the course of 18th century, the view of tragedy made a u-turn. The realistic vogue gripped the theatres of Europe. The audience did not favor the false exploitation of the princes in tragic plots. In the Elizabethan age, the playwrights had maintained, with a few exceptions, the outlook of social theories prevalent in the society. In the recent times, endeavors are made for composing tragedies. To the Greeks, Fate or Chance was the dominating factor, to the modern world, power of the society is overwhelming. Ergo, a tragedy of today can be wrought out of the conflict between a single human being and his surroundings.

In the light of above mentioned tragedies of different ages, “The Cherry Orchard” is not up to them. The play, in the point of fact, conforms entirely to Aristotle’s definition of comedy;

***“As an imitation of characters of a lower stratum, which are not internally inferior, but whose faults and shortcomings possess something ludicrous.”***

The polemics over the interpretation of “The Cherry Orchard” is certainly one of the most intriguing problems. The comedy, in the play, is more implied than stated. Such specimen of laughter through tars is viewed once in a blue moon. The situation present in the play, is at heart pathetic. A family is going to be deprived of the roof over their heads. Once affluent landlords, the owner of the house are now surviving with borrowed money. And that to pay back their debt they have to auction their estate under the law. Though the waggish elements in the play have to be looked for deeper but some of the situations and remarks are humorous beyond the shadow of doubt. Yepichodov’s melancholies, for instance, do make us roll on the floor with laughter. So do Pishchik’s concern and Gayer’s billiards cues which he employs as conclusion of even some of his most sober speeches, “Pot the yellow in the middle”.

And though, pathetic it appears to be, is not Lyubov’s affair de Coeur ludicrous in essence? So is Yepichodov’s love for Dunyasha, her love for Yasha, Pishchik’s honeyed words to lyubov, his style for begging a loan, Trofimov’s inability to be head over heels, Anya’s eulogy for his high flown outlook, ignoring her need of his heartfelt love, Lopakhin’s inaptitude to propose to Varya and Yasha’s derelict remarks for Russians. Trofimov’s articulate speeches on socio-political theme in response to Anya’s ferrent expression of affection are truly farcical. Yasha, too, behaves in the same softheaded way in response to Dunyasha’s amorous advances Lopokhin’s sole concern remains strictly confined to his ambition of business projects.

For example no character could be more ludicrous than a patrician like Gayev, whose characteristics according to Chekhov is “suavity and elegance”. It is not the fact that Gayev becomes a bank official that is laughable. It is made quite clear that he would not be able to hold a job for even a month. It is also ironic that Gayev would become a bank official considering that it is obvious that he and the rest of his family are all terrible with money. Along with Gayev his sister’s ability to understand business and budget their money is completely ludicrous. Throughout the play Ranyevskaya continuously spends money although the family is broke and losing everything they own. She has Leonid give Pishchik two hundred and forty rubles although she has told Pishchik “I have no money, my sweet.” This is ridiculous and the Reader has to laugh at the ignorance of this family.

Even more ludicrous is Ranyevskaya concern for the loss of her belongings, but makes no attempt to save them. After Lopakhin has spent act one and some of act two explaining how to save the land Ranyevskaya is able to ask, “What can we possibly do? Tell us.” This leaves Lopakhin to make a comical comment about this family “such a strange unbusiness like people.” Although tragic events are taking place throughout the play, the characters actions and dialect are comical.

The symbolism of the sale of the cherry orchard can be seen as comical; it turns out to be a seminal icon for the memories of the family. This play is generated on seminal values of this family. No one in the family wants to see the cherry orchard go but it is ludicrous that the family does not see that the cherry orchard is going either by sale or development. Since this is a fact, it is only appropriate that the family should profit from the loss of the cherry orchard. The importance of seminal values should be overrun by the importance of survival. Ranyevskaya does not seem to be concerned with survival and can only see the cherry orchard as a seminal object. This is completely ridiculous and demonstrates the comical actions of Ranyevskaya. The view of the cherry orchard as a seminal object also effects the true objective of the cherry orchard. Firs says:

***“In the old days, forty, fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries, they used to soak them, they used to pickle them, they used to make jam out of them, and year after year.”***

This caption informs the reader that the original purpose for the land was profit. Ranyevskaya’s memories of the orchard as a fantastic playground disallow her to see the truth that the cherry orchard was just her parents business and it is time to change the business because times have changed. Every one of the many characters was carefully planned out to show some purpose in the message conveyed in *The Cherry Orchard*.

Chekhov is able to illustrate that the core of humanity is full of ludicrous emotions and ideas. The importance of the use of comedy in the play conveys the importance of comedy in our lives. It shows the reader how the most ridiculous moments and decisions are probably the most important ones. The decisions of the characters are full of “faults that possess something ludicrous in them” which allows this to be considered a comedy.

Apart from the elusive humour in “The Cherry Orchard”, Chekhov was a top-Notch humorist in his own right. He came to be known early for his divergent humour. In this play, he puts the sense of humour in on lookers and readers to a trial. As a critic purposes,

*“Throughout, The Cherry Orchard, Chekhov places the action on a knife edge between laughter and tears. But he intends to weigh on the side of the comic, not against it.”*

Another critic writes about Russians,

*“Russians very frequently laugh where one ought to weep.”*

The play, it is true, has plenty of emotional undercurrents but they are all of a hilarious nature. Some of the critics have come up with sound reasons for labeling this play a comedy. To wind up the discussion, it may be concluded that there are arguments on either side. But the writer’s word counts more than what the critics say. Since Chekhov called the play a comedy, the conclusion should certainly weigh that way.

## **Q: DISCUSS ANTON CHEKHOV AS DRAMATIST.**

Anton Chekhov is the superb Russian humorist of the nineteenth century. His short stories, one act plays and comedies place him on high pedestal in the throes of his contemporaries.

Anton Chekhov was born in 1860 in the Crimea region of Southern Russia. His grandfather, a serf, had won his own as well as his family’s freedom with perks of the honest sweat of his brow. Serfdom had been an energetic part of Russian culture. Serfs used to be peasants but a lot were exploited by the deed holders or the seigneurs.

Chekhov proceeded to Moscow in 1879. He put his shoulder to the wheel for the medical profession. At the same time, his literary career got down to business. He began writing for magazines to make the money he had run short of. At the outset of his career, he jotted down jokes, anecdotes and hilarious short stories. His opus made a memorable hit with its ravishing drollness.

When he was at the climax of his pubescence, he got the university degree in medicine and started his practice as a general practitioner. He got ample opportunities to observe the people by this experience. The observations supplied him with raw material for his plays and stories.

He turned his attention in writing more earnest stories anon. At twenty-eight, he was conferred. Pushkin Prize for literature.

Chekhov’s virtuosity has been interpreted as psychological but his psychology turns a blind eye to the individual. Chekhov’s dramatic oeuvre possesses the very element as his narrative work. His opus comprises of multitudinous one act plays, which were awfully admired by the Russians as they were on an elevated artistic level. Chekhov became wondrously prolific. He got plaudits ahead of schedule and eminent demand for his account stimulated him to see it through. In this way, we find a top-notch variety of themes and characters in his stories and plays. Some of his treasured themes are named under the following heads.

- (i) Problems of communication between people.
- (ii) Situation versus desire.
- (iii) Conflict and tensions born of changing social, economic and political ins and outs.
- (iv) Humour arising out of situation or oddity of character.

He put down five plays that are “Ivanov”, “The Seagull”, “Uncle Vanya”, “The three sisters “The Cherry Orchard”.

All these ridiculous plays carry an outlook of the age. Perhaps his plays have somber effects of his life as a doctor as his contacts with people were untrammelled. As he himself says:

***“My studies in medicine have had a serious effect on my literary activities. They considerably broadened the scope of my observations and enriched me with knowledge whose true value for me as a writer only a doctor can appreciate.”***

While discussing Chekhov characters, we can remark that they are not persons rather they are men and women. They have not any leading personality but men of flesh and blood, essential for comedy. Chekhov takes his characters from real life with some degrees of excellence and exploitations. But both the qualities make his audience as well as his readers split their sides. An important character in “The Cherry Orchard” sagaciously but funnily proposes.

***“When you are offered a thousand remedies you can be sure the disease is incurable.”***

Chekhov’s language is vernacular but replete with pedantry, aphorism and witty remarks. In “The Cherry Orchard” Trofimov’s silver-tongued speeches on socio-political themes and Lopakhin’s idiolect on business issues are scintillating proof of Chekhov’s logical prowess. Trofimov says to Lopakhin in “The Cherry Orchard”.

***“You are a wealthy man. Before long you will be millionaire. And just as the predatory beast that devours everything in its path is necessary part of the metabolism of nature.”***

Chekhov was also used to bring the symbolism into effect to convey his message more aptly. He uses symbols for various purposes, by and large, to elucidate a point or to say something which is not admissible in language. “The Cherry Orchard” is judicious for the aesthetic as well as economic utility. This emblem is now going to be wiped out for a building that is entirely the emblem of material interest.

Chekhov is striking for his depiction of character. His knowledge for various types of characters emerges from his practice as a physician. In this capacity, he had to deal with all types of characters ranging from sane, rational, pragmatic type to starkly abnormal people of every stratum.

In “The Cherry Orchard”, none of the characters are thoroughly normal and yet none of them fictitious. The eccentricity of every character belongs to his or her social background to which they are associated with.

Chekhov’s plots seem to move ahead at a snail’s pace. Little development comes on the surface that can be examined. He expands the story in three or four acts that can be abridged in one or two acts. In “The Cherry Orchard”, in a letter to his wife, he wrote.

*“I was chiefly afraid about the lack of movement in the second act, and a certain lack of completeness in the student Trofimov. You see Trofimov is constantly in exile, he is constantly being expelled from university, and how can one depict things like that?”*

Many foreign readers and viewers faulted the play for being culpable and devoid of plot. But no less than a figure like Bernard Shaw said that

*“Hearing Chekhov’s plays makes me want to tear up my own”.*

A keen observation of Chekhov’s work brings us on the point that for the Russia of today, Chekhov is perhaps more alien than any other Russian writer of his own. On the other hand, England has proved particularly sensitive to his charm. He is almost universally regarded as the greatest Russian writer of modern time.

**Q: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR LITERARY TECHNIQUES USED BY ANTON CHEKHOV IN HIS WORKS?**

**Q: GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF CHEKHOV’S UNIQUE ARTISTRY.**

**Q: THE CHERRY ORCHARD IS EPITOME OF MODERN THEATRICAL TECHNICALITIES. DISCLOSE THE VALIDITY OF THE ARTISTIC ARTICULATIONS.**

Chekhov is one of Russia's many important literary figures, and one of the greatest playwrights of modern times. He won the Pushkin Prize and he is known for his short stories and his plays, works that often combine elements of both comedy and tragedy. While works reflect the frequently turbulent developments specific to his homeland, their lasting appeal lies in Chekhov's talent for exploring universally human situations with such grace and dexterity.

Traditionally, humour and tragedy have been kept separate in dramatic works. Although Chekhov is certainly not the first playwright to mix comic and tragic elements onstage, he develops this tendency by creating a play that defies classification as either one of these two dramatic genres. Works such as *The Cherry Orchard*, which cannot be subjected to the traditional standards of classification, have helped build new modern literary traditions through their innovation in genre.

Chekhov changed the theatrical world with his plays. He was often disappointed when his plays were performed as tragedies; although each work has sad elements in it, Chekhov believed that this darker side of the plays should in no way undercut the immensely funny comic elements, which pervade even in the seemingly darkest moments. This confusion of the comic and tragic genres is one of Chekhov's important contributions not only to theatre, but also to literature in general.

Indirect Action is a technique Chekhov was most famous for. It involves action important to the play's plot occurring off-stage, not on. Instead of seeing such action happens, the audience learns about it by watching characters react to it onstage. Lopakhin's speech at the end of Act III, recounting the sale of the cherry orchard, is the most important example of indirect action in the play: although the audience does not see the sale, the entire play revolves around this unseen action.

Anya's criticism of her mother's overspending in France is one of *The Cherry Orchard's* many examples of indirect action. The action described in the speech has not taken place on the stage, and is therefore indirect; the play revolves around the character's on-stage reactions to such off-stage action, for although this sort of action is not seen, it actually drives the plot. Lopakhin's opening speech is another example of indirect action, which both informs the audience of the past and maneuvers the development of the action.

Irony appears in many instances throughout the play, and when it is not used for purely comic effect, it is tightly bound to the theme of blindness. On the one hand, the positions of the character's themselves are ironic. For example, the opposite circumstances of Lopakhin, Firs, and Dunyasha point out the irony in the now supposedly free-moving class system; characters talk about and praise a system of economic mobility. Still, they cannot see the contradiction in the situations of those around them that have no opportunity to improve their standing or are criticized for attempting to do so. In other cases, the play erects ironic moments, where the power in a given scene comes from a combination of two different images. For example, in Act II, Madame Ranevsky complains loudly about how she cannot control her money, while in the same breath she allows Yasha, the most untrustworthy character, to pick up her spilled purse. The fact that she is able to talk about her weakness and neglect the safety of her money in the same breath indicates that, despite her complaints, she is still blind to much of her problem.

Symbolism is also a major tool in the hands of the playwright. In "The Cherry Orchard" many symbols are employed for thematic clarification. The keys at Barbara's waist symbolize her practicality and her power. Gay's imaginary billiards game symbolizes his desire to escape. The cherry orchard symbolizes the old social order, the aristocratic home, and its destruction symbolizes change. Firs himself is a figure of time; Anya is a figure of hope. The symbols in this play are too numerous to count, but many of them hinge on the idea of the changing social order or the specific circumstance of a given character.

Chekhov is also known for the emphasis he places on dialogue and off-stage action, otherwise known as "indirect action." The most important events in Chekhov's plays do not necessarily occur on Chekhov's stage; often, the audience experiences some of the most pivotal and dramatic action not by seeing it, but by hearing about it from the characters. In this concept of indirect action is an innovation on the part of Chekhov, whose impact on theatre and literature continues even today.

## **Q: DISCUSS THE USE OF SYMBOLISM IN THE CHERRY ORCHARD.**

"We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are." This citation by Anais Nin articulates an essential point of view for debate about the symbolic connotation of inanimate bits and pieces, since it is our personality and our memories, which determine our character and meanings. Our feelings towards certain objects are individual, as everyone associates different things in a different manner. Insofar, "we see them as we are", since they can mirror our past, pains, hopes and our ideals. Thus they become more than just an object, but a symbol for a certain part of someone's feelings and life.

This is also the case in "The Cherry Orchard": objects as the 'nursery room', 'the bookcase' and 'the cherry orchard' take on their own symbolic life. They all share one thing in common: each one reveals something of the characters' personalities, feelings and ideals. These inanimate objects are

a reflection of the characters' inner states of being. The meanings of these inanimate objects are changing analogously with the characters' change of mood, perspective and state of mind. Thus one gets the inkling that the objects are more like persons, since it is only the characters' life, which makes and keeps them alive.

‘The nursery room’ may be for a stupendous person without any implicit significance, but for Lopakhin and Liuba it is a symbol for their childhood, background and past. The nursery room reminds Lopakhin of his origins. It makes him aware that he is "just a peasant"; no matter how rich he has become or how elegant he might be dressed, his social background still remains visible for other people. After all, one "can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear", as his origins will be for good a part of his identity. For Liuba the nursery room symbolizes her "innocent childhood". Being in this room, in which "she used to sleep when she was little" seems to bring her back to feel a part of that secure, carefree life and makes her feel "little again".

The bookcase has the same effect on her; all her troubles seem to be far away and she feels pure "happiness". Gayevs' 'relationship' to the bookcase is less personal, as he doesn't associate a particular personal memory with it. He considers it rather as an object, which has its own personality; hence, though it is "an inanimate object, true, but still – a bookcase"! The way he sees it is reminiscent of a hero, as it has for already hundred years "devoted itself to the highest ideals of goodness and justice" and has never deceived anyone. Being constantly and unshakably true to its 'principles', it was a source, from which "several generations of their family" have drawn courage and hope "in a better future". In the course of time a lot of things have changed: some people are dead, Gayev and Liuba got adolescent, and the estate is probably going to be sold. However, the bookcase not being subject to any rules or changes thus becomes for Gayev a symbol of consistency and security.

The central symbol of "The Cherry Orchard", as the title might suggest, is the cherry orchard itself. The cherry orchard does not only represent an inanimate object, but it is the centre of the characters' world. Their lives could be divided into the era "before the cherry orchard was sold" and into the era after it. With this change the symbolic meaning of the cherry orchard before and after the sale also changes. The cherry orchard 'before the sale' plays a part in each of the characters' past; but it seems foremost to be part of Liuba's mind, through which the cherry orchard takes on his own symbolic life, as its symbolic meaning changes with the changes in her mind. She "can't conceive to live without the cherry orchard", as almost her whole past and memories are connected to it. Looking at it seems to revive the memories of her "happy childhood" and makes time stand still, as if "nothing has changed" in her life. In those days her attitude towards life was innocent and "bold", as she wasn't yet "able to foresee or expect anything dreadful". She felt like the cherry orchard, "after the dark, stormy autumn and the cold winter, young and joyous again"; but now, she seems to have lost this "power of vision" and her naive view of life. That might be the reason for her to see the cherry orchard in such an illusory light. It had become a refugee place, where she hides to escape from reality, her "problems" and "sins". The cherry orchard for her embodies a kind of paradise, into which her 'unhappy past' does not enter, but only her 'happy past'. She doesn't want to let go the cherry orchard, because she doesn't want to let go her 'happy past'. As long as the cherry orchard exists, her childhood feelings seem to continue to still exist for real. To sell the cherry orchard would mean to erase that beloved part of her life and thus sell her, too.

However, the irony is that she escapes from her 'unhappy past' to a place just like the cherry orchard, whose magic only lives through the past itself. In as much as the cherry orchard represents a

kind of 'Garden Eden' for her, it at the same time also is a "burden", which rests on her shoulders. As long as she continues to stick to the orchard, she won't "forget her past" and won't thus be able to create a new future.

"To begin to live in the present, one must first atone for his past and be finished with it". Unlike Liuba, her daughter, Ania, already reached that conclusion and is willing to "leave" this burden behind her; her "love" for the cherry orchard has vanished, as it is part of her past life and has therefore nothing to do any longer with her present and future.

'The cherry orchard after the sale' thus becomes a symbol for renewal and a new beginning for the life of each character in the play: Lopakhin purchasing the estate was able to get rid of his origins. "Gay with life and wealth", he has freed himself from being only the grandson and son of serfs, who used to work on this estate. Now he has become the owner of that place and with the cutting down of the cherry orchard, he is going to leave his past and origins behind him, creating a "new living world". Also Liuba's "burden" of the past seems now to have become lighter; "her nerves are better" and she is going to leave for Paris, since she might have recognized that it's finished long ago and that there is no turning back".

Gayev has finally "calmed down", too and is going to be an employee of a bank. Varia is going to leave for a new job, and Ania and Trofimov are gladly stepping towards their "new life". Also the rest of the characters have to start a new life in a new place. When they leave there won't be a soul in this place" anymore. May be not in this place, that's true, but for sure in another place, since there are in the world "many, many wonderful places", on which one can "plant a new orchard".

## **Q: DESCRIBE THE CULTURAL CONFLICT, INDEPENDENCE AND SOCIAL CHANGES AS THE BASIC THEMES OF THE PLAY.**

Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* projects the cultural conflict of the turn of the twentieth century of Russia. With a historical allusion, Chekhov exhibited the changing Russia with "slice of life" in his play. *The Cherry Orchard* is not only a depiction of Russian life but also an understatement of changing traditional value. Cultural conflict itself is an abstraction. To explain it, it is the traditional culture that is unable to resist the invading one.

In the play, each character has his or her own personality, which symbolizes the individual social levels of Russian society. But these characters distinguish themselves into two sides, which are conservators and investors; therefore, they conflict each other in opinion. The following developments will begin with an outlook of *The Cherry Orchard* to acknowledge the basic concept of the play. The second part is culture in change that explains historical background of modern Russia. Third by a contrasting method, the main idea of this part is an illustration of conflict.

The play deals with the theme of independence in many different ways. Fundamentally, it demands that we ask what it is to be free. What with the Liberation, *The Cherry Orchard* deals with independence in a very concrete way: shortly before the beginning of the play, much of Russia's population was not free. The play's characters demonstrate the different degrees of freedom that result from the Liberation. On opposing ends of this question are Lopakhin and Firs. One man has been able to take advantage of his liberation to make himself independent; the other, although he is technically free, has not changed his position at all and is subject to the whims of the family he serves, as he has always been. The difference in their situation demonstrates the observations of many Russians of the time: officially liberating a group of people is not the same as making them free if you do not also equip them with the tools they need to become independent, i.e., resources such as education and land.

Trophimof, the play's idealist, offers one definition of freedom for the audience to consider when he declines Lopakhin's offer of money. According to Trophimof, he is a free man because he is beholden to no one and nothing more than his own concept of morality. His observations seem accurate in light of other forms of non-freedom in the play. Madame Ranevsky, for example, is not free in a very different way from Firs. She has enough assets to be able to control her own destiny, but she is a slave to her passions, spending extravagantly and making poor decisions in romance, and therefore cannot follow a higher moral code as Trophimof does. What with the combination of economic circumstances and the bizarre weaknesses of the characters, the play therefore suggests that there are two sources which control freedom and the lack thereof: economics, which comes from without, and control over oneself, which comes from within.

Several characters address the potential difference between social change and social progress. Firs and Trophimof are two of them. Both question the utility of the Liberation. As Firs notes, it made everyone happy, but they did not know what they were happy for. Firs himself is living proof of this discrepancy: society has changed, but his life, and the lives of countless others, have not progressed. Both characters insinuate that Liberation is not enough to constitute progress; while it was a necessary change; it was not enough to bring mankind to the idealized future Trophimof imagines. The play leaves the impression that while change has come, there is more work to be done.

## Rilke- Duino Elegies

### **Introduction**

An Elegy is a song of lamentation, often written in an elegiac metre, especially a lament for the dead, though the term is often vaguely used of other poetry. Rilke began his Duino Elegies at Schloss Duino near Trieste (on a rocky Adriatic headland, north-west of the city) where he stayed as a guest in the winter of 1911/12, and completed them in early February 1922 at the Chateau de Muzot (*pronounced Muzotte*) near Sierre in Switzerland (south of Berne, and east of Montreux). His Sonnets to Orpheus were completed contemporaneously, as a complementary work, a song of praise, enhancing the song of lament of the Elegies, which nevertheless despite their lamentation represent reconciliation with life, and seek to bear witness to its underlying fountain of joy, the source and spring from which the stream of acceptance and creativity flows that allows us to endure our transient and often painful existence. Lament and joy for Rilke are two sides of the same coin of being, and his main concern is to reveal them in his poetry as aspects of the single whole, the double-realm.

One must be wary of Rilke's own comments (and those of others) about his poetry. His tendency to hyperbole in his letters, and the continuous creation and cultivation of his image as the inspired poet, prove honey-tongued in a seductive, and compelling way. His style is a hypnotic one, and in some respects antipathetic to our own age (it can seem sickly and specious in its claims, those of his commentators sycophantic and excessive), yet the style should not be allowed to obscure the enormous power, and strange beauty of the Elegies. While many of his letters concerning them merely express his great and convoluted relief at having completed them, he also offered a few incisive comments, in particular writing to his Polish translator Witold Hulewicz in November 1925 '*We of the present are never satisfied by the world of time...transience everywhere plunges into the depths of being...it is our task to print this temporal, perishable earth so painfully, passionately and deeply into ourselves, that its essence is resurrected again, invisibly, within us...the Elegies show this, the work of endlessly converting the visible, tangible world we love into the invisible vibrations and tremors of our own nature...*' This is Rilke's concept of the temple within. And it is his adherence to the interior life, and the re-creation and transformation of the exterior world within the mind, that gives his poetry its distinctive other-worldly feel, its sometimes ghostly even deathly countenance, its resonance derived as much from the non-existent and no-longer-living as from the visible and human. That adherence creates a style which runs the risks of affectation, and over-aestheticism at the superficial level, of world-rejection and morbidity at the deepest level. Both are threats to the tightrope-walker that Rilke represents as a poet. Because they are constant threats to all artists working in this age of modernity (there is no such thing yet as post-modernity), Rilke's example is still vital and cogent for us. In many respects it is Rilke who is Baudelaire's heir, though a very different poet. He completes an interior journey that Baudelaire commenced: he is a post-Romantic who is the heir of Romanticism, of the turning inward and away from the social as a means of modern salvation. Religion is subsumed by naked spirituality, and some of the trappings of religion become a means of expression for that spirituality without necessarily indicating conventional beliefs. With Rilke, concept is always more important than external reality, and the idea which generates feeling and disturbs our depths are more important than faith in some outward manifestation of it. Mind is more important for Rilke than the world, symbolic being than actual being, though he would have protested that on the contrary he was a world-lover not a world-rejecter.

His conceptualisation, complicated by poetic personification and empathetic fallacy, is a major risk to his message, since it may undermine the ideas being expressed by confusing the audience. Are Rilke's Angels, for example, real or imaginary? To Rilke, I genuinely believe, it did not matter. What the concept of the Angel represented to him, and its effect on our human condition and aspirations, were and are much more important. Unfortunately, readers may seek an objective correlative for Rilke's angels, and be disappointed or deluded. Religion is not his aim. Spirituality and reconciliation with life are. Because he was so threatened by modernity, by the real and philosophical fragility of our existence, and the nausea and terror which that fragile existence can generate, he sought through mind and poetry a view of life which might offset the pain. The Elegies are that view. While the resolution, in praise, of the Sonnets to Orpheus might not always convince, the Elegies which are the diagnosis of our condition frequently ring true, and in a deep way that can change one's own view of being. It is a

view that he expressed in his beautiful-constructed poem, *The Dove*, and in a letter of 1923: *'Whoever does not sometimes give full consent, and a joyous consent, to the dreadfulness of life, can never possess the unutterable richness and power of existence, can only walk at its edge, and one day, when judgement is given, will have been neither living nor dead. To show this identity of terror and bliss, these two faces of the same immortal head, indeed this single face...this is the true significance and purpose of the Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus.'* Rilke here echoes Dante's positioning of the spiritually neutral at the Gates of Hell, in *Inferno* Canto III, those *'who have lost the good of the intellect'* and: *'lived without praise and without blame'*. He believed the true life to demand more from us than spiritual passivity in the face of the joyful and the terrible.

Rilke often expresses the feeling that his works were given to him and came from outside himself. Clearly, this is a common feeling among creative people that stems from the activities of the sub-conscious or supra-conscious mind, feeding on elements from the world around it. Concepts and symbols, ideas and things carry with them a vast weight of social and personal significance, and that weight is greater than the individual and yet within the individual. So that the mind's being in the world and the world's being in the mind are complementary, indissoluble aspects of thought and feeling. It is just such 'artistic' and seductively spiritual feelings as Rilke's of the works being 'given' that we must be wary of when reading him, lest he be diminished by the aura of some milieu of preciousness. As often with Rilke the feeling is valid and important, but the language may seem to slide away from modernity back into religiosity or a kind of anticipatory new-ageism. Yet the underlying vision in the *Elegies* is hard and penetrating. The words of the letters and some of the poems where his intensity was relaxed somewhat can seem artificial and shallow. He is never slight or uninteresting, but he can be his own worst enemy in stylistic self-indulgence.

Rilke is always self-centred, but always has wider relevance, is always personal but has claims to wider universality. He saw his constant task as transformation, of himself into another, of the world into the mind, of external phenomena into internal, things into thoughts, being into consciousness and becoming. That task can sometimes seem wearying in its lack of spontaneity. That seductive voice can seem the voice of the tempter, proclaiming as fact what is only surmise, and as truth what is only poetry. He specialised in a kind of strangeness, because he required it *'as expressive of something within'*. Poetry is a struggle with language, and the proof or otherwise of Rilke's success in that struggle lies in his works. The critical faculty, the refusal to grant acquiescence without reflection, is an essential quality in reading Rilke and the *Elegies*. The writing is often beautiful, but it is right to ask also, is it true? Sometimes he can seem to have reached the *'deeper dimensions of the inner being'* he tried for. Sometimes he can seem to merely reflect a futility, a sterility of Western civilisation, affected by a world war, and decades of prior over-refinement. An antidote to too much reading, and too much Rilke, is to go out into nature, or talk and laugh with another human being. Nevertheless this hyper-conscious, subtle and semi-solipsistic work can reach out to us, when we are least expecting it, and persuade again, in its hypnotic tones, that the world of Ideas is not a lie, and that Symbols and Language can lead beyond event and temporality to a place from whose perspective all time is eternal, and all space seems internal. He was willing to face up to the immense pain and suffering within life, and to the knowledge of its swift passing, and his art he saw as giving *'now and then, a perhaps clearer meaning to endurance.'*

## **The First Elegy**

**Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic  
Orders? And even if one were to suddenly  
take me to its heart, I would vanish into its  
stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but  
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,  
and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains  
to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.**

Rilke begins with an intense questioning cry. Yet still an ambiguous cry. Who among the Angels would hear so small and insignificant an entity as himself crying out, since the Angels both exist and comprehend all being, encompassing it inwardly? Is that what he means? Or: who or what is there to respond to *him* if *he* cried out, as something seemingly responded to the devout who cried out in previous ages, a Saint Theresa for example? Is the Angel a real existent capable of responding, or a concept indicating ‘*the world no longer from the human point of view, but as it is within the angel*’ (Letter, 1915) a perspective or act of transformation which he saw as his real task. ‘*The Angel of the Elegies has nothing to do with the angel of the Christian heaven, he wrote, ‘...the Angel of the Elegies is that creature in whom the transformation of the visible into the invisible, which we perform, appears already complete.*’ (Letter, 1925) The Angel seems to represent to Rilke an Idea of perfect internality, beyond human contradictions and limitations, ‘*that being who attests to the recognition of a higher level of reality in the invisible – Terrifying, therefore, to us because we, its lovers and transformers, still cling to the visible*’. The external existence of such a consciousness is irrelevant to Rilke, since the idea of it, which is its spiritual existence, is within us as concept. ‘*Here is the angel, who doesn’t exist, and the devil who doesn’t exist, and the human being who does exist stands between them, and (I can’t help saying it) their unreality makes him more real to me.*’ (Letter, 1922) For the Angel, Rilke explained in 1925, all the buildings (for example) consumed by the past exist because they have become invisible, while whatever still stands is already invisible within the angel, that agent of transformation, of complete eternal consciousness. But, lest these angels be confused with the Christian angels, his own spiritual experience was increasingly remote from Christianity, as he says in a letter of 1923 ‘*The Christian experience enters less and less into consideration*’, and in 1925 ‘*not though, in the Christian sense (from which I more and more passionately withdraw)*’

The Angel is a conceit, a symbol of the non-existent superhuman consciousness. Whether Rilke had a belief in the Angel’s external reality is hard to say, but some of the more dubious areas into which he strays are ultimately of less interest than the idea of internalising the universe within consciousness with which he is primarily occupied. He is certainly not utilising the concepts of organised and traditional religion. For example, he said: ‘*By making the mistake of applying Catholic conceptions...to the Elegies or Sonnets, one is withdrawing completely from their point of departure, and preparing for oneself a more and more fundamental misunderstanding*’ (Letter, 1925).

In the first few lines of the opening Elegy, above, Rilke indicates the all-encompassing power of completed transformation, its *stronger existence*, and the terror it represents to us, the terror of eternity for finite beings, of a perspective beyond society for the social animal, and of a view of existence which stands on time rather than being of time. In that terror Rilke finds a strange beauty, and then generalises that beauty itself is full of incipient terror because it draws us, without destroying us, into the orbit of that deeper perception where we see the transience, our limitations, our incapacity for transformation, and a depth and complexity beyond our grasp. His generalisation is only partially valid. Beauty may equally be an indication of form with no designs on us, delight with no authority over us, and relationship without possession. Rilke has set a hidden goal here of movement towards the Angel, a goal perhaps of Western and Middle Eastern Civilisation but not necessarily that of the East. The Taoist way of life for example would suggest that rather than transformation of nature we can seek identification with nature, rather than goals we can seek spontaneity, rather than projecting ourselves onto the world we can accept its flow of energies with humility. Here, in the Elegies, the Idea is also an Ideal, a complete consciousness in which life and death are absorbed, transformed and realised within. Is Rilke also revealing his own failures of relationship, his own desire for an escape from those failures, into a relationship where the Other is simply transformed into the Self, and is therefore a pure narcissism? Yet he at the same time recognises the impossibility (the undesirability?) for a human being, and not an Angel, of such aspirations.

***And so I hold myself back and swallow the cry  
of a darkened sobbing. Ah, who then can  
we make use of? Not Angels: not men,***

He steps back from the attempt, recognising its futility, but lamenting the impossibility of achieving the Angel’s state of consciousness. Who then, he asks, can we make use of in our task of

transformation, who can we turn to in our need for consolation and help? Neither Angels, nor, says Rilke, human beings. *'For when, on my return from a thorough immersion in things and animals,'* after composing his New Poems, *'I was looking forward to a course in humanity, lo and behold, the next realm, that of angels was set before me: thus I have by-passed people and am now looking back cordially at them.'* (Letter, 1913). Rilke seems to evade the human relationship, claiming that human beings cannot assist with the task of transformation. Why: presumably because we are betwixt and between, self-conscious and aware and capable of transformation, but incapable of performing it for another?

***and the resourceful creatures see clearly  
that we are not really at home  
in the interpreted world.***

The resourceful and enduring creatures of the natural world, Rilke suggests, detect our uneasiness with the world of language and thought which we have created internally, our interpreted world. They are a part of nature without complex language-driven thought and therefore transformation, and so unable to console us or help because they lie on the pre-conscious side of reality, with things. The contemporary assertion of a continuum of self-awareness and empathy extending through the animal realm and including the human species is clearly not envisioned or is significantly under-developed here. Rilke nevertheless expressed his own empathy with creatures in the New Poems, even while treating them generally as passive vessels driven by sensation and non-introspective thought and feeling. The eighth Elegy will develop his ideas regarding the creature-world further.

***Perhaps there remains  
some tree on a slope, that we can see  
again each day: there remains to us yesterday's street,  
and the thinned-out loyalty of a habit  
that liked us, and so stayed, and never departed.***

Perhaps consolation remains in things, incapable of transformation and therefore soothing in their neutrality, in familiar places, and in the seeming loyalty of long-lasting habit and routine. Rilke's frequent anthropomorphism is evident here in his personification of 'habit'.

***Oh, and the night, the night, when the wind full of space  
wears out our faces – whom would she not stay for,  
the longed-for, gentle, disappointing one, whom the solitary heart  
with difficulty stands before.***

Night is the vast silent window onto the universe, from which a flow of energy comes that passes over our upturned faces. Here Night is given a female aspect. Intention-less and indifferent to humanity, the darkness remains, accessible to everyone. She is desired as a time and place of solace, gentle in her veiled aspects, disappointing in that she is careless of the individual and neutral in her favours, being ultimately purposeless and unable to satisfy our longings. The solitary heart stands before her with difficulty since to face the universe is to face oneself, the hardest task of all.

***Is she less heavy for lovers?  
Ah, they only hide their fate between themselves.  
Do you not know yet?***

Rilke asks himself (the ambiguous *you* in the Elegies may mean the reader or, rhetorically, the poet himself, frequently both) whether the darkness and indifference of the universe, which makes no response to our cries, is alleviated by love for another human being? His answer is that love conceals

the universe because lovers are turned towards each other hiding the great darkness. The weight of being therefore becomes a temporary lightness, and fate is veiled by human intensity.

***Throw the emptiness out of your arms  
to add to the spaces we breathe; maybe the birds  
will feel the expansion of air, in more intimate flight.***

The poet urges himself to hurl the emptiness that represents the absence of another loved human being into the air, so as to add to the breathable space, and perhaps cause the birds to fly with more fervour and passion.

***Yes, the Spring-times needed you deeply. Many a star  
must have been there for you so you might feel it. A wave  
lifted towards you out of the past, or, as you walked  
past an open window, a violin  
gave of itself. All this was their mission.  
But could you handle it?***

Other aspects of the world also remain and give consolation. Rilke suggests that in a sense they 'need' our presence, in order to become subjects for transformation and be taken into the inner universe of consciousness. Springtime and star in that sense 'wait' for us to recognise them. Similarly a wave lifts towards us in memory, or is itself a wave of memory, prompting our recognition. And the sound of a violin, almost independent of human agency, itself waves of pressure in air, takes on the aspect of a thing. Rilke elsewhere (*Der Nachbar*) identified the sound with the lonely wind-filled night, playing on a hundred instruments the music of consolation. He asks himself, and us, whether we are capable of taking on the task of transformation, whether we are vast enough to take these things inwards and transform them into consciousness, the hidden interior universe, and so fulfil their mission.

Here, the reader must accept both the personification of things, and their being endowed with a kind of intent. It is again an example of his style, a mode of speech, which asserts a position that the poet may not rationally hold. Was he an animist? I doubt it. The poetic expression highlights the passive yet, to the mind, seemingly expectant aspect of the outside world in certain moods. But is that sufficient evidence to conclude that Rilke believed in the neutral universe possessing intention?

***Were you not always,  
still, distracted by expectation, as if all you experienced,  
like a Beloved, came near to you? (Where could you contain her,  
with all the vast strange thoughts in you  
going in and out, and often staying the night.)***

Again addressing himself, the poet identifies his own longing and failed expectation of some deep response from the universe, a response which would be akin to the approach of a beloved person, and also his failed expectation of human love. '*I could be contented with everything, if only it were entirely mine again, and did not keep discharging itself into longing.*' (Letter, 1913)... '*and yet why, since my destiny is, as it were, to pass by the human, to reach the uttermost.*' (Letter, early 1913) He reminds himself here again of his inadequacy for human relationship, given the degree to which he is occupied by vast strange thoughts to the exclusion of other modes of being.

***But if you are yearning, then sing the lovers: for long  
their notorious feelings have not been immortal enough.  
Those, you almost envied them, the forsaken, that you  
found as loving as those who were satisfied.***

If the poet must yearn, then longing might lead him to the celebration of famous lovers, and thereby to carry out an interior transformation, an immortalisation of such feelings. But Rilke turns not to fulfilled relationship for his exemplars, but to unrequited lovers, those whose love was one-sided. Since the universe does not respond to our love for it, such lonely lovers more accurately exemplify our existential longing. Rilke in 1912 said: *'I have no window on human beings, that is certain....they have been communicating with me almost entirely through two examples....those who have died young and, still more unconditionally, purely, inexhaustibly: the woman who loves.'* He then quotes as examples of unrequited love, Gaspara Stampa, Louise Labé, certain Venetian courtesans, and, 'above all', the nun Marianna Alcoforada, and comments how *'on the side of the woman, everything performed, endured and accomplished contrasts with man's absolute insufficiency in love.'* Rilke holds up as example both the extreme self-denial of such love and its one-sided nature, indicating again his own difficulty with reciprocal relationship. He argues that such love is heroic and infinite. (It is equally valid however to consider it extreme, if not perverse, and so our own love for the universe might seem perverse and extreme. Why then does it not, while such unrequited love for an object is capable of responding? Precisely because the universe is not capable of responding, and therefore our love for it is a gift, just as its beauty and complexity seems a gift to us.) His argument is an example of how Rilke seduces, but may also distort. He takes an example from one sphere of our behaviour and feeling and applies it to another. The parallel seems seductive, but the argument may be invalid. Readers must decide for themselves.

Note here also his view of the function of song. Singing is praising, and the theme of praise overt in the Sonnets to Orpheus, here secondary and muted, is vital to the Elegies also. The poet is here to praise, see for example the poem Praise, and Sonnets to Orpheus I:7. Praising is a means of transformation, of taking the world inwards and also expressing it in timeless art.

***Begin,  
always as new, the unattainable praising:  
think: the hero prolongs himself, even his falling  
was only a pretext for being, his latest rebirth.  
But lovers are taken back by exhausted Nature  
into herself, as if there were not the power  
to make them again.***

The Hero is another example of a human role in contact with a wider fate, and a possible exemplar, but the hero is already re-incarnated through time and human memory, and perpetuated in art. His (her?) death itself, is his reason for being, and therefore a perpetual shining symbol or mask (think of Achilles), behind which the human can stand. The lovers however are forgotten, undifferentiated, victims of love. The hero's fate is somehow chosen and intentional, the unrequited lover's an unintended and unfortunate consequence of their love. While the masks of Achilles and Hector identify them, and may be resurrected endlessly, the mask of Love hides an anonymous face, and yet each love is unique. It is easy however to think of counter-examples to this distinction, and it is perhaps rather unconvincing. More significant, however is Rilke's singling out of the unrequited lovers and the hero for further poetic treatment.

***Have you remembered  
[Gastara Stampa](#) sufficiently yet, that any girl,  
whose lover has gone, might feel from that  
intenser example of love: 'Could I only become like her?'  
Should not these ancient sufferings be finally  
fruitful for us? Isn't it time that, loving,  
we freed ourselves from the beloved, and, trembling, endured  
as the arrow endures the bow, so as to be, in its flight,  
something more than itself? For staying is nowhere.***

Gaspara Stampa, the sixteenth-century lover and poetess, is an example. Rilke argues here for a like acceptance of solitude, and one-sided love. He asserts that a more intense, perhaps purer love can exist when that love is not returned, and equally not fulfilled, as it apparently was for say Saint Theresa, in religious devotion. It is human love, within the non-religious realm he is talking about, and in Requiem he preaches even within human love the need to practice letting go, since holding on comes easily. He asserted in a Letter that *'in the end no one in life can help anyone else in life...one is alone. All companionship can comprise only the strengthening of two neighbouring solitudes, whereas all one calls for giving oneself is harmful in nature to companionship.'* There is a significant degree of truth in this, but Rilke's extreme interpretation of relationship and love, perhaps even his incapacity for it, must be borne in mind when reading the Elegies.

***Voices, voices. Hear then, my heart, as only  
saints have heard: so that the mighty call  
raised them from the earth: they, though, knelt on  
impossibly and paid no attention:  
such was their listening. Not that you could withstand  
God's voice: far from it. But listen to the breath,  
the unbroken message that creates itself from the silence.***

Rilke is invoking the voices of his exemplars, those who moved towards infinity and extremity, those who point us towards the edge of life, and he compares the poet's listening with the saints' rapture, though he is quick to downplay the comparison. The poet would be equally incapable of withstanding the clasp of the angel or the voice of the deity. The voice he is listening for is that of the unbroken message from the silent realm of the dead, unbroken because it is repeated in all generations – and regarding that repetition he once wrote of those who, with regard to failed love and sexuality, *'lose it only for themselves, and still hand it on, like a sealed letter, without knowing it'*.

***It rushes towards you now, from those youthfully dead.  
Whenever you entered, didn't their fate speak to you,  
quietly, in churches in Naples or Rome?  
Or else an inscription exaltedly impressed itself on you,  
as lately the tablet in Santa Maria Formosa.  
What do they will of me? That I should gently remove  
the semblance of injustice, that slightly, at times,  
hinders their spirits from a pure moving-on.***

Rilke hears the voices of those who died young, *'In Padua...in Bologna, in Venice, in Rome, everywhere, I stood as a pupil of death: stood before death's boundless knowledge and let myself be educated. You must remember too how in the churches of Genoa and Verona, those youthful forms rest, without envy for our coming and going, fulfilled internally, as if in their death-spasms they had bitten into the fruit of life for the first time, and were now, forever, savouring its unfathomable sweetness'* (Letter, 1914). Whether or not one takes exception to this poetic conceit of the dead still possessing a kind of consciousness, and achieving a fulfilment, which may seem particularly perverse on Rilke's part if one is not religious, the poetic point is to lead Rilke into a passage concerning the realm of death, which he seeks to integrate in all his poetry into the realm of life, seeing both as a whole, a double-realm, within consciousness, where reality is transformed. It is not clear whether Rilke believed in an objective correlative to the realm of death, other than as an echoing absence, but he wishes to make room within the universe of consciousness for death, which otherwise would be untransformed and lie outside consciousness. The reader must decide whether that is impossible for human beings or not and whether consciousness is or is not inevitably bounded by conception and death. Either way it leaves the possibility open for consciousness to work on states of life and death as content for its reflections, and Rilke's primary concern is for wholeness, for praise and lamentation to come together in celebration, in this life. *'Only from the side of death (when death is not accepted as*

*an extinction but imagined as an altogether surpassing intensity), I believe, is it possible to do justice to love'. Note the word imagined. (Letter, 1920) His argument is that 'every one of our deepest raptures makes itself independent of duration and passage; indeed they stand vertically on the courses of life, just as death, too, stands vertically on them; they have more in common with death than with all our vital aims and movements.'* Rilke takes the risk of associating with the deathly, in order to bring it into the whole. And because he believes he sees that whole, he needs to work to remove the sense of injustice we feel when contemplating the early dead. It is helpful to visualise this as a process taking place within the collective human consciousness, a means of releasing us all from the thrall of death and seeing death as a process within the species. Rilke sets himself a daunting but, he believed, essential goal: *'we, in the meaning of the Elegies, are these transformers of the earth, our whole existence, the flights and plunges of our love, all fit us for this task'*. (Letter 1925) And by transformation he means *'the transformation of the visible into the invisible'*, which is *'a higher degree of reality'*. He now goes on to investigate the second realm.

***It is truly strange to no longer inhabit the earth,  
to no longer practice customs barely acquired,  
not to give a meaning of human futurity  
to roses, and other expressly promising things:  
no longer to be what one was in endlessly anxious hands,  
and to set aside even one's own  
proper name like a broken plaything.  
Strange: not to go on wishing one's wishes. Strange  
to see all that was once in place, floating  
so loosely in space. And it's hard being dead,  
and full of retrieval, before one gradually feels  
a little eternity.***

Rilke here tries to characterise and describe the state of being newly dead, as though it were a state of mind, of strangeness. The dead are unable to practise the life of the living, are no longer part of the world's cycle of creation and growth, no longer have identity or purpose or desires. They are in some strange state of consciousness which depends on processing the contents of memory, in order that they might transform themselves into a part of the timeless region.

***Though the living  
all make the error of drawing too sharp a distinction.  
Angels (they say) would often not know whether  
they moved among living or dead. The eternal current  
sweeps all the ages, within it, through both the spheres,  
forever, and resounds above them in both.***

But, Rilke claims, this is a human error of perspective, because to the Angel, that concept of the completed consciousness, in which all has been processed and transformed into the invisible, there is no sharp distinction between life and death. Both are part of the whole, the eternal current or flow, in which everything is now contemporaneous (rather like Dante's afterlife where representatives of all the past ages co-exist), and which comprises both spheres of reality, the living and the dead, and resonates within them.

***Finally they have no more need of us, the early-departed,  
weaned gently from earthly things, as one outgrows  
the mother's mild breast. But we, needing  
such great secrets, for whom sadness is often  
the source of a blessed progress, could we exist without them?***

There is no need therefore to feel sorry for the early dead, they are weaned away from our life, and part of a greater whole. It is rather we who have need of them, as representatives from whom we can learn the double realm, and the wholeness of being, transforming it in consciousness, much as we need and feel contemporaneous with the minds of past ages, in our multi-faceted experience of reality.

*Is it a meaningless story how once, in the grieving for Linos,  
first music ventured to penetrate arid rigidity,  
so that, in startled space, which an almost godlike youth  
suddenly left forever, the emptiness first felt  
the quivering that now enraptures us, and comforts, and helps.*

Rilke finally ends this first Elegy by referring back to the myth of Linos, a youth, the greatest of early musicians, child of one of the Muses, in one variant of the myth a brother of Orpheus, killed by the god of music and the arts, Apollo, in a fit of jealousy. His death was remembered at Delphi with chanted dirges, the *linoi*, and the laments spread throughout Greece and even, according to Pausanias, to Egypt in the form of the dirges to Maneros, the Egyptian spirit of the harvest. The myth suggests an ancient vegetation ritual, with later accretions. Rilke associates the death of Linos, in a further variant, with the invention of music itself, so that the emptiness of death became an empty space now filled with vibration, and death itself a second realm, resonating in harmony with the primary realm of the living. He wrote: 'Death is the side of life turned away from us, un-illuminated by us: we must try to achieve the greatest possible consciousness of our existence, which is at home in both of these unlimited provinces, and inexhaustibly nourished by both...there is neither a here nor a beyond, but only the great unity, in which the Angels (those beings) that surpass us, are at home.' (Letter, 1925)

To summarise, Rilke has introduced us, in the first Elegy, to the Angel, imagined as the perfect transformer of visible existence into the invisible. Human beings are much more limited and incapable of such complete insight and transformation, occupied as we are with our habitual lives, though troubled by longing. But we may find indications of our primary task in the existence and fate of unrequited lovers, heroes, and the early-dead, who point beyond our constrained life of habit towards infinity. It is possible we might free ourselves from our habitual pre-occupations and learn a new way of integrating both life and death, to give a clearer vision of the whole of being, which comprises both realms. Rilke's next step will be to consider visible human life in more detail, as if he were Orpheus descending into the shades.

## **The Second Elegy**

**Every Angel is terror. And yet,  
ah, knowing you, I invoke you, almost deadly  
birds of the soul. Where are the days of Tobias,  
when one of the most radiant of you stood at the simple threshold,  
disguised somewhat for the journey and already no longer awesome  
(Like a youth, to the youth looking out curiously).  
Let the Archangel now, the dangerous one, from behind the stars,  
take a single step down and toward us: our own heart,  
beating on high would beat us down. What are you?**

Rilke again posits the concept of the Angels, the birds of the soul, first invoking the angel Raphael, the healer, who cures blindness, here spiritual blindness, (though Tobit's actual blindness in the Book of Tobit.) And then the dangerous Archangel, from behind the stars, who in Christian mythology would be Michael, the commander of the army of God and therefore dangerous, the only one named as an Archangel in the canonical Biblical texts. Greater than we humans, what are the angels, Rilke asks, and proceeds to answer.

*Early successes, Creation's favourite ones,  
mountain-chains, ridges reddened by dawns  
of all origin – pollen of flowering godhead,  
junctions of light, corridors, stairs, thrones,  
spaces of being, shields of bliss, tempests  
of storm-filled, delighted feeling and, suddenly, solitary  
mirrors: gathering their own out-streamed beauty  
back into their faces again.*

Using natural metaphors that encapsulate 'there-ness', energy-filled presence, and fertility, he tries to describe their favoured status, their completeness, yet creative power. They are *pollen of flowering godhead*, and there is a relevant statement of the open secret of Egyptian sculptures in a Letter of 1914, their enigmatic mysteriousness which is nevertheless perfectly revealed in their solidity and assertive polished surfaces. They are both inscrutable and revealing to the initiate. Rilke writes that he 'cannot recall the smile of the Egyptian gods without thinking of the word *pollen*,' a word which expresses openly Nature's secret of sexuality which is also the hidden phallic secret of clothed human beings. And the angels are *solitary mirrors* that gather their beauty back into their own faces, an image of Rilke's desire for, and love of, solitude, and his self-contained, perhaps self-centred, even narcissistic, nature.

*For we, when we feel, evaporate: oh, we  
breathe ourselves out and away: from ember to ember,  
yielding us fainter fragrance. Then someone may say to us:  
'Yes, you are in my blood, the room, the Spring-time  
is filling with you'.... What use is that: they cannot hold us,  
we vanish inside and around them. And those who are beautiful,  
oh, who holds them back? Appearance, endlessly, stands up,  
in their face, and goes by. Like dew from the morning grass,  
what is ours rises from us, like the heat  
from a dish that is warmed. O smile: where? O upward gaze:  
new, warm, vanishing wave of the heart - :oh, we are that.*

By contrast with the Angel, we human beings are transient and incomplete. We breathe away our existence like incense among embers, and in relationship our identity even if grasped for a moment is unstable and vanishes from the mind of the other. All appearance, even that of beauty, is evanescent and flows by, and our being evaporates like dew from the grass, or rises and dissipates like heat from a dish. The smile and the gaze, those two key attributes of Dante's Beatrice in the Divine Comedy, the means by which we communicate deeply with others, betray us as both fleeting and unstable, both are evidence of process rather than permanence.

*Does the cosmic space,  
we dissolve into, taste of us then? Do the Angels  
really only take back what is theirs, what has streamed out of them,  
or is there sometimes, as if by an oversight, something  
of our being, as well? Are we as mingled with their  
features, as there is vagueness in the faces  
of pregnant women? They do not see it in the swirling  
return to themselves. (How should they see it?)*

In which case, since our being streams away from us, does an element of that being sometimes merge with the Angels' existence, even if they are unconscious of it, as the faces of pregnant women may unconsciously reveal the vague presence of another being, another life, within them?

*Lovers, if they knew how, might utter  
strange things in night air. Since it seems  
everything hides us. Look, trees exist; houses,  
we live in, still stand. Only we  
pass everything by, like an exchange of air.  
And all is at one, in keeping us secret, half out of  
shame perhaps, half out of inexpressible hope.*

Rilke invokes the lovers, who hold an inward, in-turned reality between them. They might present a clue: because everything conceals our inner consciousness, and hides us. We pass through everything, like a spiritual breath of air. Everything conceals us, the creatures mid-way between animal and angel, and therefore are subjects of shame or hope.

*Lovers, each satisfied in the other, I ask  
you about us. You grasp yourselves. Have you a sign?  
Look, it happens to me, that at times my hands  
become aware of each other, or that my worn face  
hides itself in them. That gives me a slight  
sensation. But who would dare to exist only for that?  
You, though, who grow in the other's delight  
until, overwhelmed, they beg:  
'No more' -: you, who under your hands  
grow richer like vintage years of the vine:  
who sometimes vanish, because the other  
has so gained the ascendancy: I ask you of us. I know  
you touch so blissfully because the caress withholds,  
because the place you cover so tenderly  
does not disappear: because beneath it you feel  
pure duration. So that you promise eternity  
almost, from the embrace.*

Lovers represent the extremes of material, sensual delight, the bliss of physical relationship, which in miniature we feel, in stimulation, when we touch our hands together or clasp our face between them, a slight sensation, but insufficient to justify existing. The lovers' embrace gives a timeless, eternal sensation to the physical, so that the place of their touching seems for an instant beyond the ephemeral and evanescent, and is pure existence, the moment, the now, pure being, pure duration.

*And yet, when you've endured  
the first terrible glances, and the yearning at windows,  
and the first walk together, just once, through the garden:  
Lovers, are you the same? When you raise yourselves  
one to another's mouth, and hang there – sip against sip:  
O, how strangely the drinker then escapes from their action.*

Nevertheless, love itself is ritual and becomes a process, and lovers fail to maintain the eternity of the initial relationship beyond the first, glance, desire, walk, kiss, sexual encounter. Physical love too is evanescent. The fleeting intuition of eternity slips away.

*Weren't you amazed by the caution of human gesture  
on Attic steles? Weren't love and departure  
laid so lightly on shoulders, they seemed to be made  
of other matter than ours? Think of the hands  
how they rest without weight, though there is power in the torso.*

***Those self-controlled ones know, through that: so much is ours,  
this is us, to touch our own selves so: the gods  
may bear down more heavily on us. But that is the gods' affair.***

Rilke recalls the restraint of the figures on Attic funeral monuments, the steles, where the gestures are light and constrained, weightless and gentle, and suggests that such restraint is more appropriate to us than sexual ecstasy because it can be sustained by our modest level of strength and power. 'I really believe', he wrote in a letter of 1912, 'I sometimes get as far as to express my whole heart's impulse, without loss or fatality, in laying my hand gently on a shoulder'. Yet we moderns, unlike the Greeks, cannot find adequate symbols outside us to reflect the conscious life within us.

***If only we too could discover a pure, contained  
human place, a strip of fruitful land of our own,  
between river and stone! For our own heart exceeds us,  
even as theirs did. And we can no longer  
gaze after it into images, that soothe it, or into  
godlike bodies, where it restrains itself more completely.***

Rilke echoes Goethe's search for the Classical, in the second part of Faust, in this search for a fruitful land, and also recalls his visits to the Nile in 1911. Our hearts, our longing, our capacity for feeling, memory and expectation, exceed our grasp, our ability to achieve, but we can no longer create Greek forms to soothe us nor believe in the gods as a visible example to us of classical restraint.

The second Elegy has shown us our immediate limitations, our place in the spectrum of consciousness, and the inability of the physical, even in sexual delight, to reach the timeless, while the Classical examples of a more formal and moderate restraint have passed beyond us, and are no longer easily realisable in modernity. The third Elegy sees Rilke delving deeper into the human condition, as he explores the themes of sub-conscious impulse, male sexuality and childhood. He considers what links us to our ancestors, and hints at the inescapable biological and genetic reality of human beings.

### **The Third Elegy**

***To sing the beloved is one thing, another, oh,  
that hidden guilty river-god of the blood.  
What does he know, himself, of that lord of desire, her young lover, whom she knows distantly, who  
often out of his solitariness,  
before the girl soothed him, often, as if she did not exist,  
held up, dripping, from what unknowable depths,  
his godhead, oh, rousing the night to endless uproar?***

Beneath the relationship of love, lies the reality of sexuality, in particular here male sexuality. The conscious mind even of the male lover is ignorant of the sub-conscious power of the instincts.

***O Neptune of the blood, O his trident of terrors.  
O the dark storm-wind from his chest, out of the twisted conch.***

The god within, the genetic basis of our being, is still powerful in our psyches, and capable of usurping reason and abolishing moderation, in favour of an intensity which is in itself terrifying, as it calls into question our habitual and stable selves, our familiar conscious world.

***Hear, how the night becomes thinned-out and hollow. You, stars,  
is it not from you that the lover's joy in the beloved's  
face rises? Does he not gain his innermost insight,  
into her face's purity, from the pure stars?***

The lover's cry of instinct from the twisted conch of his being rises into the night, which grows fluted and hollowed in sympathy. That cry rises to the stars which echo to us the purity and light which shines, for a lover, in the face of the beloved girl. The universe therefore inspires the human, and offsets instinct with permanence, the tempest with night and its feminine soothing calm. Rilke's thought moves backwards to childhood and the mother, who is also the universal mother, Nature.

*It was not you, alas, not his mother  
that bent the arc of his brow into such expectation.  
Not for you, girl, feeling his presence, not for you,  
did his lips curve into a more fruitful expression.  
Do you truly think that your light entrance  
rocked him so, you who wander like winds at dawn?  
You terrified his heart, that's so: but more ancient terrors  
plunged into him with the impetus of touching.*

There are deeper things than visible experience beneath behaviour and being. Touch, sensation, leads us backwards into primeval arenas where the species once existed. They exist behind and beneath, and also above rationality, in the spaces of the universe and of our selves. Sexuality, like birth and death, is one of the primitive experiences that we have sanitised, and even abused and exploited, but which still connects us to the origins of our existence.

*Call him...you can't quite call him away from that dark companion.  
Of course he wants to, and does, escape: relieved, winning  
his way into your secret heart, and takes on, and begins himself.*

The female here calls the male away from the instincts (Note Rilke's view of sexuality, remarkably liberated for his era, as we see in his letters and elsewhere, but still conditioned, as regards woman, by his social context)

*Did he ever begin himself, though?  
Mother you made his littleness: you were the one who began him:  
to you he was new, you hung the friendly world  
over new eyes, and defended him from what was strange.  
Oh where are the years when you simply repelled  
the surging void for him, with your slight form?  
You hid so much from him then: you made the suspect room  
harmless at night, from your heart filled with refuge  
mixed a more human space with his spaces of night.  
Not in the darkness, no, in your nearer being  
you placed the light, and it shone as if out of friendship.  
There wasn't a single creaking you couldn't explain with a smile,  
as if you had long known when the floor would do so....  
And he heard you and was soothed. Your being  
was so tenderly potent: his fate there stepped,  
tall and cloaked, behind the wardrobe, and his restless future,  
so easily delayed, fitted the folds of the curtain.*

This straightforward passage depicts the mother shielding the child from the realities of adult existence. In childhood our fate is concealed, it is potent in that all possibilities are open, and can seem like a hiatus before a second birth into the wider world. There is a rhapsody on this theme of the protecting mother in Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, the mother who 'in the night had the courage to be this silence for the frightened child, dying of fear... and keep the monstrous behind you and are entirely before it, not like a curtain it can raise here and there...as if you had arrived far ahead of anything that might yet happen, and had behind you only your swift arrival, your eternal arc,

*the flight of your love.* The mother causes fate to fade into the background while protective love creates its 'temporary' stillness in eternity.

*And he himself, as he lay there, relieved,  
dissolving a sweetness, of your gentle creation,  
under his sleepy eyelids, into the sleep he had tasted - :  
seemed protected.....But inside: who could hinder,  
prevent, the primal flood inside him?  
Ah, there was little caution in the sleeper: sleeping,  
but dreaming, but fevered: what began there!  
How, new, fearful, he was tangled  
in ever-spreading tendrils of inner event:  
already twisted in patterns, in strangling growths,  
among prowling bestial forms. How he gave himself to it -. Loved.*

The external arc of childhood conceals the complex inner development of emotions and thought. Rilke gives an autobiographical sensation to this description, as if it were contemplating the childhood of this immensely inward and self-centred poet.

*Loved his inward world, his inner wilderness,  
that first world within, on whose mute overthrow  
his heart stood, newly green. Loved. Relinquished it, went on,  
through his own roots, to the vast fountain  
where his little birth was already outlived. Lovingly  
went down into more ancient bloodstreams, into ravines  
where Horror lay, still gorged on his forefathers. And every  
Terror knew him, winked, like an informant.  
Yes, Dread smiled.....*

Development in some sense recapitulates the early history of the species and the child in the inward world descends to the primeval roots of sensation, feeling and awareness, including our deepest fears and loathing. Rilke wrote of the history of the species as: '*a primeval forest whose floor we never reach, because it stands endlessly, layer on layer, on what has been overthrown, an apparition on the back of downfall.*' This idea of recapitulation is further extended.

*Seldom  
have you smiled so tenderly, mothers. How could he  
help loving what smiled at him. Before you  
he loved it, since, while you carried him,  
it was dissolved in the waters, that render the embryo light.*

Rilke gives a touching description of the child bathed in the eternal smile of the maternal, as the embryo was bathed in just such a maternal flow in the womb.

*See, we don't love like flowers, in a  
single year: when we love, an ancient  
sap rises in our arms. O, girls,  
this: that we loved inside us, not one to come, but  
the immeasurable seething: not a single child,  
but the fathers: resting on our depths  
like the rubble of mountains: the dry river-beds  
of those who were mothers - : the whole  
silent landscape under a clouded or  
clear destiny - : girls, this came before you.*

Rilke completes the image of the universal consciousness of the species as an ancient landscape that will re-appear in the tenth and last Elogy. He forges here the connection between the developing child and the generations of the dead, not merely the living and the unborn, but rather that *immeasurable seething* of all the generations past and to come. Note that the metaphor of *dry river-beds* echoes his poem "Tombs of the Courtesans." Thus, the child contains within itself the past and future potential of the species.

***And you yourself, how could you know – that you  
stirred upprimordial time in your lover. What feelings  
welled up from lost lives. What  
women hated you there. What sinister men  
you roused up in his young veins. Dead  
children wanted you.....***

Rilke creates the atmosphere of the double-realm by mingling the dead and the living. The emotions and responses of the dead are also ours. Our perceptions and feelings were, and, in the eternal moment of the whole, are also theirs. Rilke fuses both realms completely in the last phrase...*Dead children wanted you...* where the adjective places the living person addressed into the vanished moment of being children now dead.

***O, gently, gently,  
show him with love a confident daily task - lead him  
near to the Garden, give him what outweighs  
those nights.....  
Be in him.....***

Rilke stresses the need of man for woman, for her espousal of the confident daily task lovingly performed which she can demonstrate to him, or lead him to. This at first sight seems a dated concept of the female role, though clearly such a role remains one dimension of female existence, but note how the last phrase *Be in him*, seeks to fuse male and female, the male absorbing a female element to achieve wholeness. It would certainly be wrong to write Rilke off as merely possessing a male view of life, rather he tries to get beyond the distinction and embrace the continuum of human experience. He wrote in a letter: *'some day there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being.* This humanity of woman *'will come to light when she has stripped off the conventions of mere femininity in the mutations of her outward status, and those men who do not yet feel it approaching today will be surprised and struck by it'*. And finally he stressed that the experience of love would be forced to change also *'from the ground up, reshaped into a relation of one human being to another, no longer of man to woman.'*

The third Elogy has exposed our deeper condition of being, our continuity with the past, and past consciousness, recapitulated in childhood development, and expressed later in sexuality where the feminine and masculine elements need to be fused to create the whole life. The fourth Elogy now returns to a theme touched on in the first Elogy, our innate inner conflicts, the divided nature of mind that feels the pull of irreconcilable goals and prevents us from resting absorbed in that between-world experienced in childhood, where the world and the toy or the world and the game fuse into pure play, and awareness is rapture. We are out of harmony with instinctive life and therefore out of harmony with death also.

## The Fourth Elegy

**O trees of life, O when are you wintering?**

*We are not unified. We have no instincts  
like those of migratory birds. Useless, and late,  
we force ourselves, suddenly, onto the wind,  
and fall down to an indifferent lake.  
We realise flowering and fading together.  
And somewhere lions still roam. Never knowing,  
as long as they have their splendour, of any weakness.*

We are *trees of life*, but we do not contain the reality of the seasons within us, the budding, flowering, leafing, shedding and over-wintering of the deciduous trees in nature. We lack the unity of the cyclical world, the instincts of migratory birds that urge them into congregation and flight. We fail to recognise the signals of change and departure until too late and then throw ourselves into circumstances inappropriate to our inner selves. Our flowering and fading seem virtually simultaneous, both in our mental processes and also in our physical duration. Yet other creatures, lions for example, seem fully integrated into their lives, never foreseeing, in their splendour, their own illness or death, launching themselves into life fully rather than hanging back, in fear of it.

*We, though, while we are intent on one thing, wholly,  
feel the loss of some other. Enmity  
is our neighbour.*

Rilke goes on to diagnose the human condition, and its many limitations, as he sees it. We humans have divided goals, and while trying to complete one task we are already thinking of another, our inability to possess both in the one moment causing a sense of loss and frustration. Conflict and an enmity between goals are always with us, and circumstances may seem hostile simply because of our inability to read life's depths.

*Aren't lovers  
always arriving at boundaries, each of the other,  
who promised distance, hunting, and home?*

Lovers too while promising each other eternity and the boundlessness of a sense of space, pursuit and resolution (physically in the sexual act but mentally in many other ways) that the hunting creatures, like the lions, possess, also meet boundaries in each other formed by non-acceptance, unwillingness, difference and non-comprehension.

*And when, for the sketch of a moment,  
a contrasting background is carefully prepared  
so that we can see it: then this is clear  
to us. We do not know the contours  
of feeling, only what forms it from outside.*

And in fact we understand our feelings only by coming to see them as a result of the external forces which created them, as a contrasting background highlights a foreground contour. In this sense emotions, like language are social rather than innate. We call forth the correct feeling or phrase from the repertoire of feelings and words we know in response to the social context. The background provokes our foreground reaction.

*Who has not sat, scared, before his heart's curtain?  
It drew itself up: the scenery was of Departure.  
Easy to comprehend.*

Possessed by fear of the future, and of death, human beings wait to see the play of their own being acted out on the inner mental stage, Rilke suggests, perhaps betraying the nature of his own specific psyche, that of the observer and voyeur, gripped by a certain passivity in relationship to life and others. And the play such a psyche sees will always be of scenes of departure because the moment is always slipping from our hands, our present is always vanishing beneath our feet into the past, and our future is present before we know it, and past before we can grasp it. Relevant references here are to Baudelaire's poem *The Inquisitive Man's Dream*, where the whole feel of this stage-set in the mind is contained, and also to Heinrich von Kleist's *On the Marionette Theatre* (1810) a work which Rilke admired.

***The familiar garden  
swaying a little: then the dancer appeared.  
Not him. Enough! However lightly he moves  
he is in costume, and turns into a citizen,  
and goes through the kitchen into his house.***

What appears on the stage however is the same habitual and conventional actor, who is our own self, rather than the something essential, fresh and eternal that we long to see as our destiny; our future: a fate both open and infinite. We seem only half-completed to ourselves. We fulfil roles, but badly, being inward and individual as well as outward and social.

***I don't want these half-completed masks,  
rather the Doll. That is complete. I will  
suffer its shell, its wire, its face  
of mere appearance.***

A doll or puppet would be more complete, external. Even though mere shell and appearance it would fulfil the role more absolutely.

***Here. I am waiting.  
Even if the lights go out, even if someone  
says to me: 'No more' - , even if emptiness  
reaches me as a grey draught of air from the stage,  
even if none of my silent forefathers  
sis by me any more, not one woman,  
not even the boy with the brown, squinting, eyes.  
I'll still be here. One can always watch.***

So, frustrated by incompleteness, the poet waits, even if the waiting is a time of emptiness, even if the dead do not return to him within, as modes of his consciousness, not even beloved women, the feminine aspects of life, not even the early-dead, symbols of eternity, in this case Egon von Rilke, his cousin, who died in childhood at the age of seven, of whom Rilke wrote: '*the sadness and helplessness of childhood is embodied for me in his form.*' One can always be a voyeur. One can always watch life, and one's inner self, in hope.

***Am I not right? You, to whom life tasted  
so bitter, father, tasting mine,  
that first clouded infusion of my necessities,  
you kept on tasting, as I grew,  
and preoccupied by the after-taste  
of such a strange future, searched my misted gaze –  
you, my father, who since you were dead, have often  
been anxious within my innermost hopes,***

*and giving up calm, the kingdoms of calm  
the dead own, for my bit of fate,  
am I not right?*

Rilke invokes the shade of his anxious father, an inner spiritual companion, as witness to his vision, and the appropriateness of patience.

*And you women, am I not right,  
who would love me for that small beginning  
of love, for you, that I always turned away from,  
because the space of your faces changed,  
as I loved, into cosmic space,  
where you no longer existed*

And he invokes beloved women, with whom he failed to establish deeper relationships because he saw only the infinite emptiness of cosmic space beyond them and through them until they ceased to exist for him. Here Rilke is confessing to his own self-centredness, his own solipsism as regards the world of other human beings, his own inability to be satisfied by the human:

*.....When I feel  
like waiting in front of the puppet theatre, no,  
rather gazing at it, so intently, that at last,  
to balance my gaze, an Angel must come  
and take part, dragging the puppets on high.  
Angel and Doll: then there's a play at last.*

By waiting he believes the Angel must arrive. (that concept of the transforming powers.) By gazing, through thought and poetry, into the world he anticipates that his thought and art will be transformed to a higher plane, where the human will be mediated between the Angel and the Puppet, the more than human and the less than human, the wholly internal and the wholly external. Then....

*Then what we endlessly separate,  
merely by being, comes together. Then at last  
from our seasons here, the orbit  
of all change emerges. Over and above us,  
then, the Angel plays.*

Then the fragmented might become whole, the complete cycle of our changing life might be visible, and actual. The Angel, (creative transforming consciousness,) would then play with being, with our being also, in the way the dancing god Siva does in the religion of India, creating and destroying worlds, species, individuals, the phases of our life, moments even, in an endless rhythm, for the creative force in us manifests itself as play, on many levels. When it is truly whole the intellect plays with life, beyond fear or hope, in the intensity of our gaze and our games.

*See the dying  
must realise that what we do here  
is nothing, how full of pretext it all is,  
nothing in itself.*

Here, Rilke condemns the seeming pointlessness of human activity, the pretexts that clothe our efforts, and their ultimate impermanence and therefore emptiness. This is close to the Buddhist concept of *maya*, the sea of perceptual illusion. Death, Rilke would maintain, gives life greater significance, because consciousness of it leads to whole vision, and complete transformation.

*O hours of childhood,  
 when, behind the images, there was more  
 than the past, and in front of us was not the future.  
 We were growing, it's true, and sometimes urged that  
 we soon grew up, half for the sake  
 of those others who had nothing but their grown-up-ness.  
 And were, yet, on our own, happy  
 with Timelessness, and stood there,  
 in the space between world and plaything,  
 at a point that from first beginnings  
 had been marked out for pure event.*

The world of the child in contrast to that of adults has moments in eternity where the past and future are absent from consciousness in the intensity of gaze, or play. The child exists in the space between world and plaything. Rilke, in his essay on Dolls (1914) asks us to remember one of those toys, those things of childhood, which first focused attention on the other, even though an inanimate other, some 'forgotten object that was ready to signify everything. He suggests the child experiences 'through its existence, its humdrum appearance, its final breakage, and enigmatic exit, all that is human, right into the depths of death.' What the child experiences, and the adult finds so hard to recover, is unconditional being, in moments of intensity which for the child are casual and everyday, those instances of conscious awareness that Rilke calls *pure event*. In a letter of 1903 he praised the hours of loneliness 'vast inner loneliness' from which the child regards the alien adult world it fails to comprehend, because those hours enshrine a precious and 'wise lack of understanding' that remains connected to pure event. And elsewhere, in a letter of 1924, he describes the intuition 'that at some deeper cross-section of this pyramid of consciousness, mere being could become an event, the inviolable presence and simultaneity of everything that we on the normal higher level of consciousness are permitted to experience only as entropy.' Rilke now questions whether we see or portray childhood that is, portray ourselves, fully if we ignore the facts of our mortal fate, our ultimate death.

*Who shows a child, just as they are? Who sets it  
 in its constellation, and gives the measure  
 of distance into its hand? Who makes a child's death  
 out of grey bread, that hardens, - or leaves it  
 inside its round mouth like the core  
 of a shining apple? Killers are  
 easy to grasp. But this: death,  
 the whole of death, before life,  
 to hold it so softly, and not live in anger,  
 cannot be expressed.*

And who then depicts a child as it really exists, truly places it within the eternity of cosmic space it inhabits for a while, and at the right depth or height relative to our adult world? To do so would require us, like a painter, to show death, which is the child's ultimate fate as child or adult, our own unavoidable destiny, incipient within its childhood being (something we no doubt fear to do because of the ill-luck associated with such a depiction). It would be necessary to portray that death, symbolises it perhaps in the grey uneaten piece of hardened bread on a plate that lurks in the soft freshly-baked loaf, or like the core of an apple hidden within the ripe fruit, left uneaten within the child's mouth. It is easy to grasp the concept of murder, the destruction of a child and the life it represents, much harder to consciously realise that death is there from the start, even before life begins, and then in looking at the child, at its innocence, be able to hold that concept as it were in the cupped hands, softly and gently, without bitterness or anger at the human predicament. In a conceptual sense to rehearse that thought within the mind is to commit a mental murder, to destroy the being the child represents, through the realisation of death, without intending destruction or even wishing harm.

The adult destroys childhood with every breath, unintentionally, and without malice, merely through being what adulthood represents, and merely by the child being what it is, innocence and pure event.

The fourth Elegy then has emphasised the divided nature of the adult consciousness, and contrasted it with childhood. It has suggested the emptiness of the role-playing of adulthood, and the need to summon the Angel of transforming consciousness, which exists at times in the child's games and gaze. And Rilke has suggested that we need to see death within life, and life within death, as the double-realm, in order to understand what we are, and how we might become. The fifth Elegy finds another symbolic stage for human life, in the circus acrobats derived from a Picasso painting and his own life in Paris, and contemplates what it would take to make such activity as ours meaningful, perhaps in the person of lovers.

### **The Fifth Elegy**

*But who are they, tell me, these Travellers, even more  
transient than we are ourselves, urgently, from their earliest days,  
wrung out for whom – to please whom,  
by a never-satisfied will? Yet it wrings them,  
bends them, twists them, and swings them,  
throws them, and catches them again: as if from oiled  
more slippery air, so they land  
on the threadbare carpet, worn by their continual  
leaping, this carpet  
lost in the universe.  
Stuck on like a plaster, as if the suburban  
sky had wounded the earth there.*

The travellers are the acrobats of Picasso's painting *Family of Saltimbanques* (1905), which Rilke was familiar with from his stay in Munich, in the summer and autumn of 1915, living in a house where the painting hung, a painting 'in which there is so much Paris, that, for moments, I forget.' He describes elsewhere a troupe of circus people led by Père Rollin he saw in Paris in 1907, whose aspect also passes into the Elegy. They are versions of ourselves, we human beings, only they are even more transient wanderers, moving their act from square to square of the city, as we are driven on by some unfulfilled external expectation or eternally-disappointed will to perform our actions, on the threadbare carpet of our planet, lost in the universe, stuck-on here to the Earth, like some unfortunate wound rather than intrinsic or natural.

*And scarcely there,  
upright, there and revealed: the great  
capital letter of Being.....and already the ever-returning  
grasp wrings the strongest of men again, in jest,  
as King August the Strong would crush  
a tin plate.*

The grouping on the left of Picasso's painting forms a scarcely delineated D for *Dasein* or Being, while gravity and time make a mockery of the strength of even the strongest man, as King Augustus of Poland could crush a pewter plate in his hand.

*Ah, and around this  
centre, the rose of watching  
flowers and un-flowers. Round this  
stamp, this pistil, caught in the pollen  
of its own flowering, fertilised  
again to a shadow-fruit of disinterest,*

*their never-conscious, seeming-to-smile, disinterest,  
gleaming lightly, on surface thinness.*

The spectators of our actions come and go, flower and un-flower, caught by a passing interest, yet fruiting only into a mild false-smile of polite disinterest.

*There, the withered, wrinkled lifter,  
an old man, only a drummer now,  
shrunk in his massive hide, as though it had once  
contained two men, and one was already  
lying there in the churchyard, and the other had survived him,  
deaf, and sometimes a little  
confused in his widowed skin.*

Our age is represented there, reduced as Père Rollin was to drumming instead of acrobatics.

*And the young one, the man, as if he were son of a neck  
and a nun: taut and erectly filled  
with muscle and simple-mindedness.*

And our youth: physical and naïve.

*O you,  
that a sorrow, that was still small,  
once received as a plaything, in one of its  
long convalescences.....*

And our childhood:

*You, who fall, with the thud  
that only fruit knows, unripe,  
a hundred times a day from the tree of mutually  
built-up movement (that, swifter than water,  
in a few moments, shows spring, summer and autumn),  
fall, and impact on the grave:  
sometimes, in half-pauses, a loving look tries  
to rise from your face towards your seldom  
affectionate mother: but it loses itself in your body,  
whose surface consumes the shy  
scarcely-attempted look.....And again  
the man is clapping his hands for your leap, and before  
a pain can become more distinct, close to your  
constantly racing heart, a burning grows in the soles of your feet,  
its source, before a few quick tears rush bodily into your eyes.*

Our childhood repeats the species in recapitulation, time after time, from birth to the grave, from the leap of the child acrobat to his return to earth. And during our leap of life, (our arc of being) we sometimes look almost lovingly towards the Earth, our mother, as the little boy looks in the painting towards the woman at the right, our mother which is seldom kind to us, which stings our feet with gravity in our return from our efforts to evade it, and yet whose surface we continue to leap from again and again, driven on by the urge of development through adulthood towards old age, swallowing our sadness at our transience and embracing activity which only adds to our pain and sorrow.

*And yet, blindly,  
that smile.....*

Yet that loving look, that sly almost vanishing smile, directed at our mother, the Earth, at our deeper origins, is nevertheless precious:

*Angel! O, gather it, pluck it, that small-flowered healing herb.  
Make a vase, keep it safe! Place it among those joys not yet  
open to us: on a lovely urn,  
praise it, with flowery, swirling, inscription:  
'Subrisio Saltat: the Saltimbanque's smile'*

...worthy enough for the Angel of transformation to pluck it like a healing herb, a balm for the spirit, a future joy resulting from transformation, and preserve it in an urn inscribed, *The Acrobat's Smile*.

*You, then, beloved,  
you, that the loveliest delights  
silently over-leapt. Perhaps  
your frills are happy for you –  
or the green metallic silk,  
over your firm young breasts,  
feels itself endlessly pampered, and needing nothing.  
You, market fruit of serenity  
laid out, endlessly, on all the quivering balance scales,  
publicly, beneath the shoulders.*

And the nubile girl is also exhibited, in this same ritual display of human activity symbolised here by the circus acrobats.

*Where, oh where is the place – I carry it in my heart –  
where they were still far from capable, still fell away  
from each other, like coupling animals, not yet  
ready for pairing: -  
where the weights are still heavy:  
where the plates still topple  
from their vainly twirling  
sticks.....*

Where, Rilke, asks is the reality of our being which this facile, skilled display of habitual, ritual activity masks. Where is the place where the striving (of poetic effort, for example) is still actual and vital and not mere empty performance? We humans need that continual striving, that continual transformation which re-makes the world and makes it real and whole, and perhaps there is a clue in the regions of non-performance, before the work is matured, before our lives are 'finished'.

*And, suddenly, in this troublesome nowhere, suddenly,  
the unsayable point where the pure too-little  
is changed incomprehensibly -, altered  
into that empty too-much.  
Where the many-placed calculation  
is exactly resolved.*

Where is the moment, among difficulties, those agents of reality, where the insufficient suddenly becomes sufficient, and yet before it reduces to stale repetition, hollow excess, dwindles to that place where the complex sum is resolved, and the calculation reduces to a mere zero?

*Squares: O square in Paris, endless show-place,  
where the milliner, Madame Lamort,  
winds and twists the restless trails of the earth,  
endless ribbons, into new  
bows, frills, flowers, rosettes, artificial fruits – all  
falsely coloured, - for winter's  
cheap hats of destiny.*

Reduces to the endless city squares where we, the acrobats, perform, reduces to the indifferent market-place where Madame Death decks us out in the artificial and transient fashions that decorate our trivial and worthless fates.

*Angel: if there were a place we know nothing of, and there,  
on some unsayable carpet, lovers revealed  
what here they could never master, their high daring  
figures of heart's flight,  
their towers of desire, their ladders,  
long since standing where there was no ground, leaning,  
trembling, on each other – and mastered them,  
in front of the circle of watchers, the countless, soundless dead:*

If only there was, somewhere, a place where the lovers who fail to achieve lasting inward transformation in life, who teeter on the ladders and towers of relationship, could master the flights of love, as the acrobats of the everyday, we humans, have mastered our empty performance. And if only that could be done in front of the past generations (and such performance carries erotic, voyeuristic sexual overtones as well as Rilke's other spiritual meanings), the dead who watch in our consciousness, then:

*Would these not fling their last, ever-saved,  
ever-hidden, unknown to us, eternally  
valid coins of happiness in front of the finally  
truly smiling pair on the silent  
carpet?*

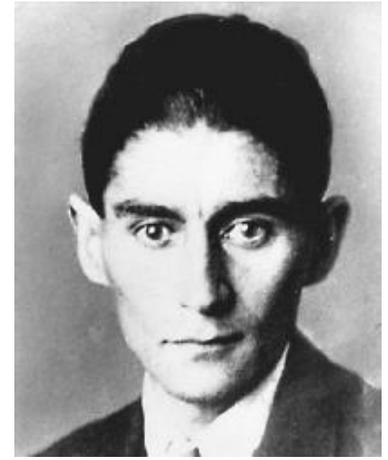
...would not that audience shower coins of happiness (like the coins thrown traditionally at weddings in various countries, and the coins thrown to the acrobats) in front of the fulfilled couple, would we not achieve transformation of our inner reality, and not merely the empty performance of our external one?

The fifth Elegy has expressed Rilke's condemnation of the hollowness of our worldly lives (it is well to bear in mind throughout the Elegies this negative approach to external social reality, and the reader must decide on its validity. Is Rilke's diagnosis true, or is it coloured too much by his own psyche and character?), and utilises the symbolism of the street acrobats to express the ritual, and facile skills of everyday existence. The suggestion, or hope, is that somehow there might be a way of uniting the realms of the dead and the living in a more fruitful, achieved performance than our habitual one, a greater wholeness. The sixth Elegy returns to the Hero, mentioned in the first Elegy, who like the unrequited lovers, and the early-departed might offer a key to our internal transformation, to a greater and fuller life. These three groups, or four if we include the lovers of the previous elegy, stand at the edge of our external life, pointing towards the internal, and as aspects of the transient pointing towards the infinite. (A note to the reader: it may be wise not to assume that the realm of dead has some objective reality, beyond the world of living, in Rilke's scheme. That may have been his view, but he is much more interested in bringing both realms within, in a transformation of consciousness. Is Rilke religious in any conventional sense? Does he believe in an objective after-life? A caution to the reader not to be too sure: equally, to regard the Angels as concept rather than external reality is more helpful in understanding Rilke's direction than not.)

## THE TRIAL - Kafka

### Author Biography

The first of six children Franz Kafka was born in 1883. His father, Hermann Kafka, was an industrious man; he owned a dry-goods store in the Jewish ghetto in the city of Prague. Hermann was ashamed of his Jewish heritage and tried, as much as possible, to appear German. He married into a higher social class when he married Julie Loewy, Franz's mother.



A bright child, Kafka was an excellent student at a prestigious German high school. When he graduated his parents rewarded him with a trip to the North Sea. Afterwards, instead of entering the family business, Kafka decided to go to university. As a student, his rebelliousness led to reckless living and deteriorating health. In 1902 Kafka met the writer Max Brod, and the two men became close friends. Kafka published his first work, *Description of a Struggle*, in 1904. In 1906, Kafka received his doctorate in law from the German university, Karls-Ferdinand, in Prague.

Armed with his law degree, Kafka entered the insurance business. Through a family contact, he began a successful sixteen-year career as one of a handful of Jews working in the semi-public German Workers' Accident Insurance in 1908. There he produced technical writings with a masterful lucid prose. He worked long hours and then managed his brother's factory. Seeing the obvious strain on his friend, Brod begged for help from Kafka's mother. She secretly hired a manager to take her son's place. During this time, Kafka lived at home, in a room between the living room and his parents' noisy bedroom. He gained some recognition as a writer when he was awarded the Theodor Fontane Prize in 1915.

Kafka never married. He had several long-term relationships but companionship troubled him and he wrote in his *Diaries* that he viewed

***“coitus as the punishment for the happiness of being together.”***

Kafka sabotaged his long engagement with Felice Bauer in 1917. Two years later he was engaged to the daughter of a janitor. Kafka's father said that the shame of such a match would be so disastrous that he would have to sell his business and emigrate. In response, Kafka wrote the angry and self-lacerating *Letter to His Father* and gave it to his mother. She decided against giving it to her husband. Kafka broke off the relationship just after they had found an apartment together.

Not surprisingly, work and family strains began to take their toll and Kafka took restorative vacations for his health. Finally, in 1923, he retired from business in order to devote himself to writing. He also moved to Berlin. Missing the activity and tensions of home, he returned. His health problems persisted, however, and he traveled to find a kinder climate for his fragile condition. Kafka died of tuberculosis on June 3, 1924, in Kierling (near Vienna, Austria).

## The Trial

In a letter to his friend Oskar Pollack, Franz Kafka wrote,

*"What we must have are those books that come on us like ill fortune,  
like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide.  
A book must be an ice axe to break the sea frozen inside us".*

Kafka's *Trial* has to be up there as one of the biggest literary ice axes of all time. *The Trial* follows the incredible ill fortune of one Josef K., who wakes up one morning to discover that he's been arrested on unnamed charges. Throughout the novel, K. struggles futilely against a secretive and tyrannical court system, only to be abruptly executed at the end with a knife in the heart.

If *The Trial* lands like an ice axe, it's because K.'s story is so believable and relatable, despite the utter absurdity and sheer terror of his situation. It is our own ill fortune that the decades following the posthumous publication of the novel in 1924 have given us so many historical examples that correlate far too closely with K.'s legal nightmare. For many, *The Trial* is read as a spot-on critique of totalitarian governments such as **Joseph Stalin's** Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, where civil rights were suspended and individuals persecuted on the barest suggestion of civil disobedience. *The Trial* can also be read as a critique of the unwieldy bureaucratic systems that characterize any modern government, both totalitarian and democratic.

For other readers, *The Trial* isn't just a political critique, but a religious allegory about man's relationship to divine will. By leaving character and place names unspecified, many elements of *The Trial* are just general and mysteriously significant enough to have an allegorical quality reminiscent of Biblical parables, including, naturally, the parable of the Law in the penultimate chapter of *The Trial*.

It is perhaps this allegorical quality that also makes *The Trial* resonate with many twentieth century philosophical movements, from Frankfurt School philosophers such as Walter Benjamin to the deconstructionist philosophy of **Jacques Derrida**. *The Trial's* ironic attitude toward traditional systems of value, including religious and moral ones, as well as its display of interpretive fireworks, resonates well with these contemporary philosophies.

Perhaps the final irony is that *The Trial* comes to us via an actual death, the early death of Kafka himself. Kafka had asked his friend Max Brod to destroy all his unpublished novels, including *The Trial*, but Brod just couldn't bring himself to fulfill his friend's last wish. Readers today can be grateful to Brod for having the sense to hold on to Kafka's work, but the fact of the matter is that *The Trial* exists because of a betrayal, an irony that the main character of the novel would surely appreciate.

## **Character List:**

**Protagonist:** Joseph K.

**Antagonist:** The Government and Court System

**Joseph K.:** Thirty-year-old bank officer accused of an undisclosed crime. He lives alone in a boardinghouse.

**Willem and Franz:** Officers who arrest K. one morning but refuse to disclose the crime he is said to have committed. .

**Frau Grubach:** Joseph K.'s landlady.

**Fräulein Bürstner:** Tenant in Joseph K.'s boardinghouse. K. visits her one evening to tell her about his arrest and ends up impulsively kissing her. Thereafter, she refuses to see him

**Fräulein Montag:** German woman who teaches French and lives in the same boardinghouse as Joseph K. She is a friend of Fräulein Bürstner. One Sunday, she moves into Bürstner's apartment and later meets with Joseph K. to tell him that Fräulein Bürstner does not wish to see K. again.

**Uncle Karl:** Joseph K's uncle, who introduces his nephew to a lawyer supposedly skilled in defending clients.

**Erna:** Daughter of Uncle Karl. She is the one who informs him that Joseph K. is to stand trial.

**Dr. Huld:** Joseph K.'s lawyer. He is languishing in bed with an illness.

**Leni:** Dr. Huld's nurse, who is attracted to Joseph K.

**Albert:** Office director at the court and a friend of Huld.

**Manufacturer:** Person who hears about K.'s case and advise him to see a painter who knows how the court system works.

**Titorelli:** Painter who advises Joseph K. on court proceedings.

**Rudi Block:** Client of Dr. Huld. Block is also awaiting trial in a case that is five years old.

**Inspector:** Man who conducts a proceeding at Joseph K.'s boarding house to inform K. officially that he is under arrest.

**Rabinsteiner, Kullich, Kaminer:** Junior bank employees who are attending the proceedings at the boardinghouse.

**Elsa:** Waitress in a wine bar that K. usually visits once a week.

**Captain Lanz:** Nephew of Frau Grubach. He lives in the boardinghouse.

**Bank President:** K.'s employer. He gets along with K.

**Bank Vice President:** Official who covets the bank president's job.

**Priest:** Prison chaplain whom K. encounters in a church. The priest advises K. that his case is going badly and tells him to accept his fate.

**Anna:** Cook in Joseph K.'s boardinghouse. Landlord's Son Court and Police Officials Various citizens

## **The Trial Brief Summary**

The novel opens with Josef K.'s sudden arrest in his room at his lodging house on the morning of his birthday. Two guards inform him that he is under arrest, but they don't tell him on what charges, nor do they know what the charges are. K. is then taken next door to the room of another tenant, Fraülein Bürstner, who happens to be absent at the time. There, he is subjected to an equally puzzling and brief interrogation by the inspector. The inspector informs K. that he is under arrest, but is free to go to work at his bank and otherwise live life as usual.

After work, K. returns back to his lodgings. He apologizes to his landlady for the inconvenience of his arrest that morning, but his landlady doesn't seem to mind. He then waits for Fraülein Bürstner in order to apologize for the disruption to her room that morning. Fraülein Bürstner is at first startled by K.'s explanation, but then permits him to dramatize the morning's events for her in her room. K.'s theatrics awaken the landlady's nephew who is sleeping in the living room. Fraülein Bürstner begs K. to leave, but, before he does, he embraces Fraülein Bürstner.

K. is told that an inquiry into his arrest will be held the following Sunday. When he arrives at the court's address, he is puzzled by the fact that the court seems to be located in an apartment building in an impoverished neighborhood. Since he wasn't given a precise address, K. wanders through the apartment buildings until he comes upon a washerwoman, who lets him into the court, which is convened in a large, cramped hall.

After introducing himself to the examining magistrate, K. protests his treatment at his arrest, and denounces the court and its officials for corruption. But, as he finishes his speech, K. notices that the court is filled with court officials. The examining magistrate tells K. that he has seriously damaged his own case by his behavior, but K. refuses to participate at all in the proceedings and leaves the courtroom.

Despite the lack of summons, K. returns to the court the following week. There, he finds only the washerwoman, who informs him that the court is not in session. The washerwoman, who turns out to be the court usher's wife, promptly seduces K., and lets him explore the courtroom, where he discovers to his dismay that the examining magistrate's notebooks are actually pornographic novels. A law student sweeps in and carries the court usher's wife away, presumably to sleep with a judge. The court usher comes by and offers to take K. on a tour of the court offices. In the dilapidated offices of the court, K. meets other defendants, whose physical condition reveals the wear and tear of undergoing a trial. All of a sudden, K. feels faint in the office's muggy atmosphere, and has to be escorted out of the court offices, where he is instantly revived by the fresh air outside.

Back at work, K. opens the door of a rubbish closet to discover the two guards who arrested him earlier being flogged. Later, K.'s uncle comes by to visit him and berates him for not pursuing his case more rigorously. K.'s uncle takes K. to visit an old friend, a defense lawyer named Huld. When they arrive, Huld happens to be chatting with the Chief Clerk of the court. As the uncle, Huld, and the Chief Clerk discuss K.'s case, K. is distracted by Huld's nurse Leni, who shows him into Huld's office and seduces him. After making love to Leni, K. meets up with his uncle outside Huld's apartment, where the uncle rails against K. again for destroying every chance of success in his case.

As the trial wears on, K. grows increasingly distracted and is unable to focus at work. He is dissatisfied with Huld, who doesn't seem to be making any progress in his case. At the bank, one of his clients, a manufacturer, offers him a letter of introduction to Titorelli, the court painter. K. visits

Titorelli at his studio, where he views Titorelli's portraits of judges. Titorelli explains to K. that acquittal is unheard of, and K.'s only option is to endlessly defer his final judgment. After pushing K. to buy some of his landscape paintings, Titorelli shows K. the exit, which, to K.'s surprise, opens out onto the court offices.

K. finally decides that he must dismiss Huld and take trial matters into his own hands. When he arrives at Huld's, he meets another client, Block the merchant. Block has put everything he's had, including his business, into his defense. K. then barges into Huld's bedroom and informs Huld that he wants to dismiss Huld. Huld asks K. to reconsider, and calls Block into the room. Huld's humiliation of Block fails to impress K., who leaves as Block grovels at Huld's bed.

Sometime later, K. is asked by his bank to take an Italian client on a tour of the local cathedral. When K. arrives at the cathedral, the Italian client fails to show up. After gazing at some of the cathedral's art, K. is about to leave when a priest calls out his name. The priest happens to be the prison chaplain, and chastises K. for his indifference to his case. The chaplain then tells K. a parable about a man from the country who seeks access to the Law, but is prevented from doing so by a gatekeeper. After discussing the numerous possible interpretations of this parable, K. asks the chaplain for help with his case, but the chaplain refuses.

Finally, it is K.'s birthday again. He is dressed to go out that evening, but he is surprised by two formally dressed men. The two men guide him to a quarry outside of town, where one of them holds him at his neck and the other stabs him twice in the heart.

## THEMES

### **Theme of Power:**

Kafka's *The Trial* is often read as a critique of totalitarianism, a form of government power that is characterized by *total* government control of every aspect of daily life (hence *total*-itarianism), as well as a state *authority* that is not accountable to individual citizens and can pretty much do whatever it wants, regardless of what the law says (also known as authoritarianism). Kafka's story about an individual persecuted by the dizzying machinations of an unjust power has been read as an allegory for such modern totalitarian governments as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union. In fact, Kafka's allegory has been so effective that the term "kafkaesque" has entered our general vocabulary as a word that applies to a state controlled by an authority beyond the reach of the law, dominated by an immense and labyrinthine bureaucracy, and saturated by a general state of paranoia where neighbors inform on each other to the government and random acts of violence are perpetrated against ordinary citizens.

*“After all, K. lived in a state governed by law,  
there was universal peace, all statutes were in force;  
who dared assault him in his own lodgings? (1.1)”*

### **Theme of Justice and Judgment:**

Kafka's *Trial* questions the relationship of justice and the law (often capitalized in the novel as "the Law"). The thing about laws is that they're supposed to be just. If there's an unjust or an unfair law, we expect to be able to work to get the law overturned by appealing to higher principles of justice. (Consider, for example, the Civil Rights Movement. Racial segregation and discrimination were unjust; therefore we appealed to a higher principle of justice – racial equality – to eliminate those practices.)

*“You've misunderstood me; you're under arrest, certainly,  
but that's not meant to keep you from carrying on your profession.  
Nor are you to be hindered in the course of your ordinary life.” (1.8)*

But here's the thing about Kafka's vision of the Law: the Law is such an abstract ideal that it can have nothing to do with the ordinary lives of human beings. Put it this way: the idea that all human beings are equal is written into the United States' founding documents, but do we actually have a country where everybody is equal? Would it be fair for the government to come in and mandate certain types of equality? No matter how committed you are to democratic ideals, many of us would hesitate to give up our hard-earned wages – what we consider the individual's equally valid right to his or her own property. While the *ideal* that everybody is equal is just, actually putting it into practice could result in an unjust society where people's property is unfairly taken away from them.

*It's in the nature of this judicial system that one is  
condemned not only in innocence but also in ignorance. (4.1)*

What makes Kafka's novel more of an allegory, however, is that, rather than giving us a concrete political issue (like economic equality), the novel gives us just the bare struggle of one individual against an unspecified Law – not any specific law, just the Law in general. The court is just the human and bureaucratic embodiment of this Law. Just as the Law seems inhuman and unjust *precisely* because it is such an abstract expression of justice, the court is portrayed as equally inhuman and unjust. Thus another paradox of the Law is that it can't just exist in abstraction; it *needs* the court. But the court, as a system run by human beings, inevitably corrupts the law. Kafka's novel nicely indicates the court's corruption through its sordid offices and its lusty judges.

But here we have yet another paradox in the Law. The first paradox is that the Law is supposed to be an expression of justice that transcends all individual human cases, but it is, in fact, unjust *because* it is so abstract, *because* it is oblivious to the individual human case. The second paradox is that the Law is an abstract ideal, but it needs the court, a concrete human system manned by human workers, to exist. The third paradox is that, even though the Law is abstract and above all human affairs, it saturates all human affairs. You just can't escape the Law. No matter how Kafka's hero tries to escape the court, to free himself from the court, he only finds himself dragged deeper into its web. Just like the man from the country in the parable of the Law, Kafka's hero's fate attests to the desolate wisdom that we are always before the Law. If we think we can exist outside or without or beyond the Law, we may be the most deluded people on the planet.

### **Theme of Sex:**

For a novel about a trial, there seems to be an awful lot of hanky-panky going on. No matter how deeply the main character gets mired in his trial, he always seems to have time to flirt and seduce. While we never find out exactly what Josef K. is guilty of in *The Trial*, all of the sex he's having points to one of the main sources of guilt and shame in human society: sex. Both sex and criminality

are aspects of human behavior that are associated with shame. But our shame concerning all matters sexual may be a more fundamental fact of being human than criminality, because sexuality is a quality we all share. If to be human is to be sexual, and to be sexual is to be guilty in the eyes of society, then according to this really depressing social equation, we are all guilty without having done anything wrong. K.'s robust sexuality suggests that his unspecified crime may just be the simple fact of his being human.

*K. ... rushed out, seized her, kissed her on the mouth, then all over her face, like a thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring it had found at last. (2.11)*

#### **Theme of Society and Class:**

*The Trial* is considered by many to be a dystopic, or negative, view of modern society. The novel shows the dysfunctional consequences of the forces of modernization on society. Instead of celebrating the city as a beacon of modern living, we get the city as an impoverished and sordid place, where the poor live in cramped and inhumane conditions. Instead of a society where individuals can pursue their own desires, we get a society that is a force of conformity and ordinariness, all the more effective because of the high concentration of people in cities. In Kafka's modern world, traditional social ties such as interpersonal relationships (such as that between K. and his family) deteriorate, leaving only relations of persecution and exploitation perpetrated by the court. By setting the court in one of the city's poorest districts, the novel emphasizes how the court enforces social conformity by quashing individual free will.

*But Julius strasse, where it was supposedly located, was flanked on ... buildings, tall gray apartment houses inhabited by the poor. (3.4)*

#### **Theme of Isolation:**

Corresponding to Kafka's vision of an all-encompassing but indifferent society in *The Trial* is the individual's intense feelings of isolation, alienation, and anxiety. The court stands in for a society that insists on conformity at all costs, and the individual is guilty simply for being an individual. The whole idea of a defense in this context is paradoxical. The purpose of a defense is to give the individual an opportunity to defend his innocence, but to defend his innocence is to assert himself. And to assert himself, to defend himself and his actions vocally, is by nature criminal in a society that just wants the individual to shut up and blend in. As the novel shows through its depiction of the main character and other defendants, the court infiltrates all aspects of a defendant's life. The experience of a trial leads to an all-pervasive self-consciousness on the part of the defendant accompanied by feelings of inferiority, insecurity, and paranoia.

*Today, K. no longer thought of shame; the petition had to be written. (7.9)*

#### **Theme of Life, Consciousness, and Existence:**

*As he passed by the junk room again on his way home, he opened the door as if by habit. What he saw, in place of the expected darkness, bewildered him completely. (5.3)*

We often use terms such as "existential" and "absurd" to describe works that are both intellectually challenging and depressing, works where nothing seems to happen but something "deep" seems to be going on, even if we can't explain what that is. It's no wonder that Kafka's *The Trial* has often been associated with these terms because the novel's view of life seems to be pretty dismal. There doesn't seem to be any redemptive moment in the novel where we can say, "Ah, here the main character has shown himself to be heroic or inspiring or exceptionally wise," or "Voila, this is the

meaning of life and this is why we should keep on living." Our tried-and-true resources of hard work and common sense don't seem to have any effect in Kafka's world. Instead, in the general spiritual landscape of helplessness, we have characters who confront again and again the hopelessness of their efforts. And corresponding to this general hopelessness is a state of mind that is distracted and exhausted, unable to follow a thought to its reasonable and logical end, unable to formulate a meaningful purpose in life. But this state of mind, at the endpoint of fatigue, is really the heart of Kafka's ironic way of looking at the world, because it is only when the main character grows tired of struggling for his own selfish needs that he gains access to any insight into his life at all.

*But instead of working, he... without being aware of it,  
left his arm outstretched on the desktop and remained  
sitting motionless with bowed head.  
The thought of his trial never left him now. (6.1-2)*

### **Theme of Philosophical Viewpoints:**

We hesitate to lob a big old word like "hermeneutics" in your direction. But hermeneutics is a general term that describes philosophies that attempt to wrestle with such questions of interpretation as: How do we interpret a literary, philosophical, or religious text? What are some of the assumptions and biases we bring to a text when we attempt to understand it? What elements in a text do we look at in order to make sense of it, to get some meaning out of it? What elements of a text remain mysterious and enigmatic, defying our every attempt to understand it? More generally, what is the place of logic and philosophy in a work of fiction? In our everyday lives?

But as these questions hopefully show, hermeneutics, or the question of interpretation, is at the heart of Kafka's *Trial*.

*"The commentators tell us: the correct understanding of  
a matter and misunderstanding the matter are not mutually exclusive." (9.16)*

First of all, there's the obvious question of interpretation involved in the trial itself. How do we *know* what Josef K. did, and what evidence do we have to suggest his guilt? Is there something fundamentally unknowable about Josef K.'s crime, whatever it is? And does it indicate something fundamentally unknowable about all human existence?

Secondly, the novel keeps thrusting parables at us, demanding us to try and interpret these quizzical little stories. Chapter 9 is just a long lesson in how to read a story, as the prison chaplain guides Josef K. through a parable about the Law. The religious context of the story – they're in a cathedral – suggests that the novel is engaging with the Biblical roots of hermeneutics, its foundation in problems of interpreting the many stories that make up the Old and New Testaments. Kafka's parable takes on the Biblical interpretive tradition that relies on the idea that there is some way of correctly interpreting these stories to get at a fundamental "truth" of human existence. For Kafka's novel, there is no "truth" – just endless possibilities for interpretation.

*Logic is no doubt unshakable, but it can't  
withstand a person who wants to live. (10.9)*

### **Theme of Art and Culture:**

Like K.'s sexual shenanigans, art provides one of the seeming digressions in *The Trial* that is actually a critical part of the whole story. In addition to the central discussion of painting in Chapter 8, numerous references to the theater and to literature throughout the text indicate the novel's own

attempt to wrestle with the fact that it is itself a work of fiction, a work of art. In the novel, all of these artistic artifacts fascinate and transfix the characters. They demand the characters' attention, and the characters can't help getting lost in their images. The power of art over the characters' minds and emotions parallels the court's equal power to fascinate and attract, as K.'s inability to resist being absorbed into the court's system attests. But the flip side is that art can also provide a way for characters to gain mastery over their situation, as when K. acts out the drama of his interrogation for another character. Art isn't just a fancy way to dress up a wall in the novel; it's a way of making sense of the world, of arranging your impressions of the world in a way that makes sense to you. Thus art, and by extension Kafka's novel, can provide access to certain truths about life that are otherwise inaccessible.

*"The rules for painting the various levels of officials are so numerous, so varied, and above all so secret, that they simply aren't known beyond certain families... Every judge wants to be painted like the great judges of old, and only I can do that." (8.26)*

## Character

### Josef K.

Outlaws, rebels, anti-heroes, iconoclasts – they're such staples of pop culture and Hollywood blockbusters that you can understand why, as the guard says in Kafka's *The Trial*, the law is attracted to guilt. Of course, few of us would put it exactly in that way, but there's something attractive and, yes, undeniably sexy about outlaws.

Certainly Josef K.'s mini-performance for Fraülein Bürstner seems to come out of his own desire to star in his own biopic, to exploit the seductive allure of the outlaw. The same appeal that makes for memorable heroes in films like *Rebel Without A Cause* also makes for great drama and fascinating fiction, as we find ourselves drawn into K.'s doomed adventures through the court system.

But K. doesn't really look or act like an outlaw. He's the chief financial officer of a bank, a respectable position that most of us are more likely to associate with Monopoly board games than with leather-clad James Dean types. We keep waiting for K. to take some decisive steps in his case and to burst out with some concrete act of defiance. But K.'s actions seem to consist mainly of empty grandstanding and long periods of procrastination. K. himself doesn't seem to be all that confident, as his moods fluctuate between fiery arrogance and paralyzing insecurity.

It doesn't help that the novel doesn't tell us what his crime is or why he's being persecuted. K. is an outlaw because...he's an outlaw. Yet paradoxically, K.'s very vague status as an outlaw in general enables K. to represent *all* outlaws, from actual criminals to people who feel guilty without knowing why, people who don't quite fit in with every single social convention or expectation – which pretty much describes everybody on the planet. We are all in some way outside the law just by virtue of the fact that we are all unique individuals. Just the very fact of our singularity – the details in our biography that differentiates us from other people – makes us stand out as exceptions to the general rule.

Perhaps this is the heart of K.'s struggle in the novel. Try this thought out on for size: the novel takes this basic intuition about the human condition – we are all outlaws – and elevates it into a law.

*The Law*. And if the Law states that we are all outlaws (read: individuals), then there's no way we can ever be innocent because according to the Law, we're all guilty. This is the Law we can't escape even if we tried to break it because, if we broke it, we'd still be following the Law.

If you think that's messed up, imagine living in a society where such a Law was actually enforced and enforced violently, backed up by a huge, impenetrable bureaucracy.

So no wonder K. feels paralyzed and acts out in seemingly unproductive ways. Acquittal before such a law is impossible if you're a human being, because the Law applies to all human beings – it is, in fact, the law of being human. This might explain why K. keeps referring to dogs, because dogs would be innocent before such a law. Logic and common sense, K.'s weapons for much of the novel, are useless against such a paradoxical law. Your only options are, as Titorelli explains, forms of deferral and procrastination. You just have to find a way to endure existence under the Law, which is just another way of enduring your human life.

Now, for many of us, enduring life doesn't sound like a big deal at all. Life is actually pretty good, downright pleasurable, filled with good friends and family, happy memories, and hopes and dreams that make getting up in the morning a lark. But if you've ever questioned the meaning of your life, felt obscurely uncomfortable about the direction your life is taking, sensed a knot or a wrinkle in the fabric of your existence, Josef K.'s story is the parable for you.

## Albert Camus' THE FALL

Author:	Albert Camus
Original title:	'La Chute'
Translator:	Justin O'Brien
Country:	France
Language:	French; English
Genre(s):	Existentialist, Absurdist
Publication date:	1956
Published in English:	1957

### Introduction:

Albert Camus (1913-1960) was born into a humble working-class family in Mondovi, Algiers on the 7th November 1913. His mother was illiterate and his father died just a year later in the Battle of the Marne. His childhood was subsequently poor though not unhappy and he later translated the poverty of his childhood onto focusing his view of existence. He believed that human suffering and happiness stood out more clearly against a stark setting.

In 1923 he went to Algiers to study philosophy where he was influenced by the humanism of **Jean Grenier** and the pessimism of **Nietzsche** and **Schopenhauer**. Having denounced all rational explanations of the world he began a search for salvation in a world that seemed meaningless. A subsequent preoccupation with death and salvation can also be interpreted as Camus' personal experience of the fragility of life.

For at 17, he was viciously attacked by tuberculosis, an illness that was to recur and to lead him to develop a strong sense of the necessity for self-domination and control, and above all over death. A second attack in 1937 meant he was rejected from military service.

Instead he went to Paris where he became a member of the communist party for several years and worked on the newspaper *Paris Soir*. His play *Caligula* appeared in 1939 whilst his first two novels, *The Outsider* and the long essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* were published in 1942 bringing him sudden fame. In 1941, with the German Occupation of France, Camus became one of the intellectual leaders of the French Resistance, editing and contributing to the magazine *Combat* that he had also helped to found. The War Years and those immediately following were Camus' most prolific period. Through his novels, *The Plague* (1947) and *The Fall* (1956), and to a lesser extent in his play *The Just* (1949), he explored his theory of "The Absurd" - the dichotomy between man and the universe, a notion now synonymous with his name. These also established his international reputation and in 1957 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Throughout the 1950s he renewed his interest in the theatre, skillfully adapting and translating works such as Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* and Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. In 1960 he was tragically killed in a road accident leaving the public with the unfinished manuscript of his last novel, *The First Man*, (which appeared in 1994 to widespread critical acclaim.) His famous contemporary Jean-Paul Sartre paid just tribute to him in his obituary notice when he wrote,

*"Camus could never cease to be one of the principal forces in our cultural domain, nor to represent, in his own way, the history of France and of this century".*

## The Fall

*The Fall* is the fictional, first person confession of Jean-Baptiste Clamence, a Parisian expatriate. Jean-Baptiste used to be a hotshot defense lawyer, but suddenly realized his life was hypocritical and now lives out his days in a seedy bar in Amsterdam. The novel puts you in the center of the action (not unlike those "Choose Your Own Adventure" books) because Jean-Baptiste talks to you while you're sitting by him in the said seedy bar.

But *The Fall* is famous for more than its interesting narrative technique. For one, it was written by Albert Camus, a French thinker known for his philosophy of the absurd, a close cousin to existentialism, and his frenemy status with Jean-Paul Sartre, another French philosopher of the mid-1900s. (Note that throughout his life Camus maintained that he was not an existentialist.) Now, Camus is most famous for three big novels. The first is *The Stranger*, published in 1942, which tells the story of a detached, emotionless man convicted of murder, who finds existential freedom while in prison awaiting his death. The second is *The Plague*, in 1947, which revolves around an outbreak of the bubonic plague in an Algerian town, and the struggle of its citizens to deal with human suffering. And of course, the third is *The Fall*, in 1956, published shortly before Camus was awarded the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature. Camus died only three years afterwards, making *The Fall* his final piece of fiction.

Through these three novels, as well as his other works, Camus establishes and explores several ideas of his philosophy. In many ways, *The Fall* can be seen as the high point of Camus's thinking. His ideas increase in complexity over the course of his novels. You'll probably notice that interpreting and analyzing *The Plague* is more difficult than taking on *The Stranger*, and likewise, *The Fall* is more challenging than the works which precede it. But don't take our word for it. Sartre himself said that *The Fall* was the most beautiful of Camus's works, but also the least understood. Scholar David R. Ellison says

*"It seems as if no real progress has been made  
in deciphering the text's central enigmas."*

For you, this is good news and bad. The bad news is no one can tell you with any real authority exactly how to interpret *The Fall*. The good news is you can interpret it however you want. You may find it helpful to read Camus's novels in the order in which they were written. It's fascinating to see the way his ideas grow over time, and it's also useful to gain some experience with Camus before you tackle his final work of fiction. Still, if you haven't read *The Stranger* or *The Plague*, don't worry; we'll get you through *The Fall* unscathed, or at least with only minor injuries.

## The Fall-brief Summary:

You're sitting in a bar in Amsterdam's red-light district some time shortly after WWII, when a man introduces himself to you. His name is Jean-Baptiste Clamence. He used to be a lawyer, and he's now a judge-penitent. You don't know what that is, but he promises he'll explain it to you. He narrates in the first person, explaining that you are both from Paris, you're both in your forties, and you're both men. Through his monologue, Jean-Baptiste spends some time describing Amsterdam, which he believes resembles Dante's depiction of hell. Before you part for the night, you make plans to meet at the same bar – called *Mexico City* – the next night.

Over your next few meetings, Jean-Baptiste fills you in on his personal history. In particular he highlights his glory days back in Paris. He used to be The Man. He was rich, successful, attractive, charming, and had good luck with the ladies. As a lawyer, he would nobly defend widows and orphans, speaking with majesty of "justice" and always believing he was in the right. He used to enjoy helping the blind cross the street, as it made him feel above everyone else. That's just his nature, he says; he likes to physically dwell above other people.

Things continued in this way until one night, while crossing a bridge over the Seine river in Paris, Jean-Baptiste heard the sound of laughter, seemingly coming from the water below, though he could see nothing under the bridge. This spooked him considerably, and drastically changed his life. He started to realize that everything he did was duplicitous, that he was living a lie. If he helped the blind, it was only to make himself feel good. If he pretended to be humble, it was only so that he could stroke his own ego. He suddenly knew that he was a hypocrite in the worst way.

After this, Jean-Baptiste experienced a "period of discovery." Many memories he had previously repressed or forgotten came flooding back to him, all revealing his fundamental hypocrisy. One memory in particular returned, of a night when, crossing a bridge over the Seine River, Jean-Baptiste passed a woman and then heard her fall into the water below. Rather than turn around to save her, Jean-Baptiste did nothing at all. He didn't want to risk his own hide. It soon becomes clear that this one event was the real kicker for Jean-Baptiste. He's never been able to get over the fact that he let this poor woman drown.

Once he realized his own hypocrisy, Jean-Baptiste suddenly feared that everyone else in his life could see the same flaws. He lived in constant fear of being judged by others, and went through a variety of failed solutions in trying to avoid this judgment. Finally, he ended up in Amsterdam, practicing the profession of a judge-penitent.

By this point in the novel, you're meeting with Jean-Baptiste for the final time, in his house in Amsterdam. He tells you his big theory of the judge-penitent. He's been practicing his profession all this time. His job is to confess his own sins so that he has the right to judge you. In fact, his "confession" isn't just his story – it's yours. He's been carefully weaving together details from YOUR life so that the portrait he's made is a mirror he can hold up to you. It is of every man, and of no man in particular. Now, he says, begin your own confession.

## **Themes**

### **Justice and Judgment:**

Much of *The Fall* has to do with the human fear of being judged by others, along with the human tendency to judge everyone, including the self. The narrator of this fictional "confession" claims that it is the very process of judgment that we hate – not the end result of punishment. Meanwhile, our protagonist, Jean-Baptiste, derives power from judging others, which he justifies by simultaneously judging himself. Justice, too, is a main focus of the novel. *The Fall* suggests that true "justice" is elusive, if it even exists at all, in a world where all are guilty and hypocritical.

*“People hasten to judge in order not to be judged themselves.  
What do you expect? The idea that comes most naturally to man,  
as if from his very nature, is the idea of his innocence (4.10).”*

### **Guilt and Blame:**

*The Fall* operates on the premise that all are guilty. This is indeed a classic argument for Camus, but the narrator of this novel goes so far as to suggest that all men are murderers, even if only by accident or through negligence (like not saving others from death). Since the novel was written in the aftermath of WWII, this is a particularly poignant argument. This sort of "universal guilt" makes any attempt at judgment completely hypocritical. A guilty man condemning another man of guilt is absurd by nature.

### **Religion:**

In the world of *The Fall*, God is dead. The narrator argues that, since we no longer have a God to tell us what to do, we need to find another "master" to replace him. Men have basically taken the place of God, because we are perfectly capable of subjugating and judging one another. Who needs God if we can do it all ourselves? The narrator finds religion to be farcical and hypocritical; we misinterpret, manipulate, and bastardize Jesus' true intentions, he argues.

*“Believe me, religions are on the wrong track the moment they  
moralize and fulminate commandments. God is not needed to  
create guilt or to punish. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves (5.14).”*

### **Freedom and Confinement:**

*The Fall* features a man steeped in isolation, in part because he finds all relationships to be confining. The problem is one of responsibility: if you interact with others, you're confined not only by their expectations of you, but by the reputation you publically build. And yet, this very same man preaches a philosophy of slavery. Give up freedom, he says – it is too much of a burden. The burden comes in having to prove over and over your innocence in order to continue to remain free. Having to prove as much means getting judged, which the narrator seeks to avoid at all costs. Admit guilt, give up freedom, and submit to a life of slavery – that's his solution.

*“But on the bridges of Paris I, too, learned that  
I was afraid of freedom.  
So hurray for the master, whoever he may be,  
to take the place of heaven's law (6.16).”*

### **Innocence:**

Innocence doesn't really exist in *The Fall*. In the world of this novel, everyone is guilty – even Jesus Christ. The narrator's philosophy consists of declaring your own guilt (in order to avoid judgment) and condemning yourself to a life of imprisonment. In his viewpoint, being imprisoned means you are guilty, and being free means you are innocent. The classic cause and effect has been reversed; we are not thrown in shackles because we are criminals, rather we are judged as criminals because we find ourselves in shackles.

*“Punishment without judgment is bearable. It has a name,  
besides, that guarantees our innocence: it is called misfortune (4.4).”*

**Power:**

*The Fall* claims that power and subjugation are necessary in the world. Only authority can absolutely determine truth in an uncertain world. In the case of the novel's narrator, power is derived by judging others, and by taking a God-like stance of authority over them. Power is also tied to physical location, and manifests in geographical summits. For example, to live on a mountain is to be above others, and therefore to have power over them. Lastly, just as judging others yields power, so does forgiving them. This is the only way to place yourself above those who appear as authority figures.

*“Of what did it consist? Well, I was something like a group leader or the secretary of a cell. The others, in any case, and even those who lacked faith, got into the habit of obeying me (6.7)”*

**Philosophical Viewpoints: The Absurd**

*The Fall* explores Camus's philosophy of the absurd. Most prominently, we see an illustration of Camus's claim that all men are guilty of something. We are guilty not only by our actions, but by our inactions, or failure to act. Crimes we fail to stop are just as much our fault as those we commit ourselves. The novel explores several existential ideas as well, including Sartre's "bad faith" and Kierkegaard's "dread." The idea of doubt and universal uncertainty features not only in the novel's themes, but in its technique and narration as well.

*“I loved them, according to the hallowed expression, which amounts to saying that I never loved any of them (3.20).”*

**Transformation:**

*The Fall* explores one's man transformation from the blissful ignorance of self-serving hypocrisy to the internal angst of self-judgment and awareness. This transformation has less to do with discovering new information than with being willing or able to face what is already known. Truth, innocence, and freedom are reconsidered in the new light of self-examination. Interestingly, what this transformation provokes is a change in mindset, not a change in action – leading us to wonder how legitimate a shift it is.

**Truth:**

*The Fall* reflects the existentialist claim that there is no objective truth. What we think of as fact is a set of beliefs. In fact, that novel's main conflict arises from those beliefs being shaken by the narrator. This narrator then concludes, almost jovially, that truth is overrated. For one, it's boring. It's also not that useful. According to the narrator, "truth," as we think of it, isn't always as illuminating as lies.

*“Don't smile; that truth is not so basic as it seems. What we call basic truths are simply the ones we discover after all the others (4.14).”*

**Mortality:**

The pursuit of immortality drives much of the conflict in *The Fall*. The narrator is admittedly in love with himself, and the thought of his own death torments him. He finds himself struggling to deal with a set of paradoxical facts, including: men will never take you seriously until you're dead, but

once you're dead, you can't stick around to enjoy it. According to the narrator, death is a great way to make your point, but it's likely that men will misinterpret the reasons of your martyrdom, meaning you have died in vain. The narrator seeks moments of immortality in a variety of ways (i.e., sex and alcohol). Moments of debauchery, he claims, are the moments when you are most freed from your own mortality.

## **Character**

### **Jean-Baptiste Clamence:**

Jean-Baptiste is the main character and narrator of *The Fall*. He tells you the story of how he went from being a super-successful lawyer to the sketchy guy helping you order gin in a seedy bar in Amsterdam's red-light district.

But who *is* Jean-Baptiste Clamence? Well, depending on which scholar you ask, Jean-Baptiste is any one of a number of things. To start with, he's your guide. He's teaching you, but he's also deceiving you. He is admittedly a play-actor, and man oh man does he play a lot of roles. Among others, Jean-Baptiste is God, a prophet, a demon, the devil, the Pope, Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Adam, Dante, and Virgil. He's a lawyer. He's a judge. He's a penitent. He's a philosopher, an arguer, and an egotist. And he may or may not be insane. Lucky for you, we'll talk about all of these. But before we dissect the man, let's look at what the man has to say.

### ***Jean-Baptiste's Basic Argument and Solution***

Jean-Baptiste's "confession" to you outlines 1) a basic problem, 2) a set of attempted and failed solutions, 3) a grand cure-all solution that isn't yet possible, and 4) a solution that, for the time being, he thinks is working just fine. We're going to take you through his argument in a basic summary of the major ideas in *The Fall*.

So we'll start with number one: the problem. Think back to the scene where Jean-Baptiste hears the laughter coming from the water. While congratulating himself on being virtuous and wonderful, he is suddenly reminded of the fact that he let a woman drown years ago without lifting a finger to help.

Once Jean-Baptiste recognizes that he's a hypocrite, he's pretty sure that the rest of the world can tell he's duplicitous as well. So now, all of a sudden, he gets paranoid and thinks that everyone is judging him. Now that he thinks about it, everyone is judging everyone else. And, now that he thinks about it some more, everyone is guilty of something, so we're always going to be judged and we're always going to be condemned. Jean-Baptiste doesn't want to be judged – he doesn't want to be *laughed at*.

And now for number two, the failed solutions. Jean-Baptiste first tries love. He tries to escape from judgmental men by retreating into the world of women. Unfortunately, he treats women badly and he knows it. All that he's doing is adding to his list of crimes, and feeling increasingly guilty. So he gives up on love and relationships and tries meaningless sex instead. "Debauchery," as he calls it, only works for him as a momentary distraction, which is why it's not such a great solution. Next he

tries alcohol: same deal. It's a *momentary distraction*, not a *permanent solution*. Suicide, he thinks, might work – except, he won't be able to enjoy it. So scratch that off the list. Four ideas, four failures.

Then Jean-Baptiste comes up with his grand idea, the one cure-all solution: slavery. Jean-Baptiste's solution ties together all the big concepts he discussed in *The Fall*: innocence, freedom, and judgment. It works like this: with freedom comes a big burden, namely, having to stay free. If you're free, it must mean that you're innocent. (Because if you were guilty, you would be in prison.) So, if you want to stay free, you have to prove over and over that you're still innocent. And how do you prove your innocence? By standing up in court and having someone judge you. This is problematic because being judged is the problem we're trying to solve. If you give yourself up to slavery, you don't have to be judged. You're basically skipping the court process and going straight to jail. Remember, for Jean-Baptiste, punishment isn't the problem. According to him, we can all deal with getting punished. It's getting *judged* that's the real problem. So slavery is the answer.

But Jean-Baptiste recognizes that this sort of universal slavery isn't possible. So instead, he needs a temporary solution. To arrive at this conclusion, he has to "reverse [his] reasoning." Now, before we talk about his solution, we have to understand what "reverse the reasoning" means. Jean-Baptiste basically sees it as 'pulling a Copernicus.' Copernicus was the guy who came along and told the world that the earth rotates around the sun, and not the other way around (as people had previously thought for generations before Copernicus came around). So to "reverse the reasoning" is to pull a switcheroo, and go in the other direction.

We've already seen Jean-Baptiste 'pull a Copernicus'; in fact, it's become a sort of hallmark of his absurd and unique brand of logic. Remember when he talks about Luke and his gospel, which by omitting Jesus' "Why hast thou forsaken me?" actually drew more attention to it? And how Jean-Baptiste himself omits information so that you will notice it all the more? These are great examples of 'pulling a Copernicus.' The reversal logic comes with the Jean-Baptiste territory.

And now for his solution. Remember, the problem is that he doesn't want to be judged. He told us in the beginning of *The Fall* that all men judge one another, and that they do so to avoid being judged themselves. Now he 'pulls a Copernicus': he judges himself in order to judge you. That's his solution – and that's why he's bothering to go through this "confession" at all. (As you'll see later on, judging *himself* and judging *you* are actually the same thing.) That's what it means to be a judge-penitent: he confesses his own sins (he is penitent), while condemning you for yours (he is the judge).

Now Jean-Baptiste is no longer a hypocrite. He's still duplicitous, it's just that now he *admits* to it. He acts exactly the same way as he did before, but now he's honest about it. So now he doesn't have to avoid judgment, because he's stripped judgment of its meaning. If you say to the judge, "Yep, I'm guilty," then getting judged as "guilty" doesn't really matter any more. He's solved the problem.

That's the simple version. The "solution" is actually a *little bit* more complicated than that. In confessing his sins, Jean-Baptiste has not only avoided judgment; he's also proven himself innocent. We know, we just said he was admitting his guilt in order to avoid judgment. This is true if his confession is genuine. But his "confession" is just as much an accusation of YOU as it is about his own sins.

Go back to Chapter Four and look at the passage where Jean-Baptiste tells his law students that, if they want to defend a murderer, they should talk about their own sins. The idea is that, if we are all guilty, we can't really condemn the murderer for being guilty. Jean-Baptiste has made "guilty"

and "innocent" into relative terms. He says to you that, to prove your innocence, "it is not enough to accuse yourself. [...] One must accuse oneself *in a certain way*" (our italics) (4.27). What is this certain way? You're looking at it. *Accuse yourself by simultaneously accusing others*. Be a judge-penitent. Jean-Baptiste becomes innocent because he has made you guilty. This seems absurd because it is.

### ***Jean-Baptiste's Various Roles***

Now that we've nailed down Jean-Baptiste's basic argument, let's look at the roles Jean-Baptiste's character takes on from Biblical, mythological, and literary history. Jean-Baptiste fills some pretty big shoes, God's among them. The fact that he plays so many roles is significant in and of itself; check out "Symbols, Imagery, Allegory" for more on this. But for now, we're going to take a closer look at some of the more significant parts our narrator plays.

### ***Jean-Baptiste as God***

Think of it this way: in the world of *The Fall*, Jean-Baptiste is an omnipotent God. He creates the world around you by describing it. He even creates *you*, by telling you how old you are, what you look like, and what you do for a living. Because his entire confession is a judgment, he's judging you as though he's God. In fact, that's one of the reasons he does it. He finds it

***"intoxicating to feel like God the Father and ...  
sit enthroned among [the] bad angels at the  
summit of the Dutch heaven" (6.24).***

Yes, that's right – it's all about power. Remember, Jean-Baptiste has established that we no longer need a real God. The only point to such a figure would be to guarantee innocence, and there is no more innocence in his world (because, remember, everyone is guilty of something, even Jesus Christ). Since we don't have a God to tell us what to do, we need someone else to take his spot. And Jean-Baptiste has "arrived," as he says, in order to "announce the law."

Part of the reason Jean-Baptiste wants to be God is that it means he can live forever. "Yes, I was bursting with a longing to be immortal," he says.

***"I was too much in love with myself not to want the  
precious object of my love never to disappear" (5.7).***

Which brings us to Jean-Baptiste's interesting weird death wish – interesting because the man wants to be immortal. He tells you at the end of his narrative that he hopes you are a policeman, so that he will be executed for harboring the stolen van Eyck painting. How is it possible that a man who wants to be immortal also wants to die? Let's check it out:

***"I would be decapitated ... and I'd have no more fear of death.  
... You would hold up my still warm head...  
and again I could dominate – an exemplar" (6.28).***

However, as Jean-Baptiste argued earlier, martyrdom is always fruitless, since no one ever understands why you gave yourself over to death. This might have something to do with his desperate plea:

***"Drink up with me, I need your understanding" (2.15).***

## ***Jean-Baptiste as John the Baptist***

As his name suggests, Jean-Baptiste could be a twist on John the Baptist, the Biblical figure who recognized that Jesus was the Messiah and baptized him in the River Jordan. There are many John-the-Baptist-related implications for *The Fall*, and several have to do with the stolen van Eyck painting, which you can read all about in "Symbols, Imagery, Allegory."

If he is John the Baptist, this is bad news. First of all, the man is haunted by water. He can't even cross a bridge at night. As you know, baptism has to do with water. He's a John the Baptist that can't baptize anyone. This raises an interesting question: how is he supposed to cleanse others of sin when he can't get past his own transgressions? Look at his description of his role as a judge-penitent:

***"With me there is no giving of absolution or blessing.  
... I am for any theory that refuses to grant man innocence  
and for any practice that treats him as guilty" (6.12).***

## ***Jean-Baptiste as Virgil, or maybe Lucifer***

Jean-Baptiste compares Amsterdam to Dante's vision of hell portrayed in his epic poem *Inferno*. In *Inferno*, Dante travels through hell guided by Virgil, the Roman poet. If Amsterdam is your hell, then Jean-Baptiste is your Virgil. The man even says of Amsterdam,

***"I didn't bring you to this island for quaintness.  
... I am one of the few people ... who can show  
you what really matters here" (4.1).***

If Jean-Baptiste is your Virgil, then that makes you Dante, and you are getting an intricately guided tour through hell. So what does Jean-Baptiste have to say about hell?

***"Hell must ... streets filled with shop signs  
and no way of explaining oneself.  
One is classified once and for all" (3.8).***

This isn't a far-cry from Dante's depiction of the underworld, where every man is labeled by his sins and punished accordingly. (If you had committed adultery, for example, then you were an adulterer, that was your label, and you were stuck with the other adulterers.) It's interesting that Jean-Baptiste is so against labeling. That's what he does, after all. That's his role as judge-penitent, to "tot up" everyone's sins and say to them,

***"It comes to so much. You are an evildoer, a satyr  
, a congenital liar, a homosexual, an artist, etc." (6.12).***

If a land peopled with trade-signs is hell, then Jean-Baptiste indeed lives in hell – but it is a hell of his own making. While Jean-Baptiste guides you through his hell, he also resides over it as master and commander. This, of course, makes him a stand-in for Lucifer.

## ***Jean-Baptiste as a Madman***

By the end of the novel, we have to wonder if this Jean-Baptiste is clinically insane. In the last chapter of *The Fall* he's in and out of bed, he's ranting to you about God and on tangents about doves

that fill the sky. Speaking of these doves, we definitely get some earlier hints that Jean-Baptiste is less than lucid, you know, like that line where he says

*he's "lost [his] lucidity" (4.3).*

But it's also possible that his madness is all part of the plan – that he's faking it just to mess with you, his audience. We get the notion from Jean-Baptiste's statement that we shouldn't *"take [his] emotional outbursts or [his] ravings too seriously, because "they are controlled" (6.28).*

### ***Jean-Baptiste's Confession. Oh, and That Whole Judge-Penitent Thing.***

Enough about roles. Let's talk about the structure of *The Fall*: Jean-Baptiste's confession and profession as a judge-penitent. First of all, why does Jean-Baptiste delay so long in explaining what a judge-penitent is? Well, because his entire confession *is* his explanation. It seems as though he's been putting the answer off. In fact, he's telling you everything you need to know throughout the course of the novel. The surprise ending – where you find out that you are his client (and are being judged) – puts a whole new spin on *The Fall*, as does his claim that his crimes are really yours.

What is going on here? One possibility is that Jean-Baptiste is manipulating you, as he claims. He could tell you were a lawyer, so he chose "lawyer" as his former profession. He could tell you were from Paris, so he pretended he was from Paris.

If this is true, though, we have to ask ourselves: who is Jean-Baptiste? Then remember that that's not even his real name, so you have to ask, who is this random guy buying you gin? He may be no one at all. Remember when he said that

*"when one has no character one has to apply a method" (1.10)?*

Maybe that's what he's doing here. He has no character and no substance, which is why he is defined only by his method, that of the confession. The profession of the judge-penitent.

Let's look at another possibility, and one that gives this mystery man far less credit: he's full of it. He's the lawyer in question, he's from Paris, he let a woman drown, but he's so ashamed of himself that the only way he can confess is by pretending his sins belong to someone else. Sort of like the "I have a friend with a problem..." approach, except that the "friend" is you. Here's another radical theory for you: Jean-Baptiste is just talking to himself. That certainly explains why the fictional "you" character has *everything in common* with him. And it raises some seriously interesting implications about the nature of his confession, which is designed to gain power over the listener. (How do you subjugate yourself? How do you hand your personal freedom over to...yourself? How do you judge and condemn yourself?)

Before you go, look at what Jean-Baptiste has to say on the nature of confessing:

*"I have ceased to like anything but confessions, and authors of confessions write especially to avoid confessing, to tell nothing of what they know. When they claim to get to the painful admissions, you have to watch out, for they are about to dress the corpse. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about" (6.2).*

## The Tree of Man

### **“The Tree of Man” as a book of Genesis. Or “Man is Puppet in the Hands of Nature”**

Critics who have asserted Patrick Victor Martindale White’s (1912-1990) greatness  
*“An unmistakably major writer”*

*“Towers over most other living novelists”*

*“The hardly of Australia”*

*“Potentiality greater than any other living novelist”*

was born on 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1912 in London to Australian parents. He is an Australian writer and one of the greatest novelists concerned with the exploration of the civilization of the country. He took to writing about noticeably adult themes at his early age. He was also rewarded with his Nobel prize for literature in 1973,

*“For an epic and psychological narrative art,  
which has introduced a new continent into literature.”*

White is considered as a great post modernist writer who has written 10 novels, 6 plays, 2 collections of short stories and one collection of poems. His contribution to literature is....,

**“Happy valley”**

**“The Lining and the Dead”**

**“Riders in the chariot”**

**“The Aunt’s story”** and many more

The fourth novel of white, “The Tree of Man” which is the most moving novel of his major phase, was first published in 1955. It is a novel about,

*“Every possible aspect  
of life through an  
ordinary man and woman”*

#### **Genesis:-**

Critics both here and abroad seem to agree that white was the greatest living Australian Novelist and his strength lies in the imaginative exploration of Australian experience. He is a perceptive observer of Australian ways. The English poet, Ted Hughes sees White as an interpreter of Australian civilization. For him, “The Tree of Man” is.....,

*“A true epic-the life story of  
the Australian anonymous hero.”*

“The Tree of Man” can be taken as interpretations of the national themes and event. It has the shape familiar to reader of Australian fiction of a family pioneering saga. It is considered as the author’s attempt to infuse the idiosyncratic way of life in the remote Australian bush. It is full of cultural tradition and ideologies.

“The Tree of Man” is stepped in Australian folklore and cultural myth. White works the myth of pioneer to focus not on outward achievements or landscape but on the progress of his two main characters- Stan Parker and Amy Parker.

“The Tree of Man” is a book of Genesis because it deals with Australian aborigines. It is a domestic drama dealing with the lives of the Parker family and their changing fortune over many decades. Stan and Amy are a simple farming couple stationed at Durilgai. The physical world in which Stan and Amy live is less strongly imagined than their inner experience and that experience, which is White’s central concern, is almost unrelated to their Australian identity.

Pioneer epics dote on heroes who can tap the land but not themselves. In “The Tree of Man”, the primitive Australian back country tamps tempers and even tries a job. Stan is the simple unarticulate man groping his way towards the meaning of life. However, fate trips him up with distressing regularity.

Stan is a handsome young man and Amy is a skinny teenager, when they get married at the turn of the century in the Ricketty Church at Yuruga, a town where.....

***“A person could be dead and  
only the flies would cotton on.”***

Stan takes his bride to wilderness where the peace has not been violated. Stan builds up a small house and possesses his cart. After the day’s routine work are done, neither Amy nor Stan have much time for romantic frills. However, they love each other with an honest animal urgency. Neighbors come and stay in the good earth with vices.

But the nature shows her dangerous face – draughts, fires, floods across the land. Stan wanders at times what he is struggling for and if there is god he then hopes to find the answers from him and that Stan’s wife gives him.

Stan’s Ray proves to be a mean person who kills puppy dogs. He grown up to be a ruffian and lives with a prostitute. Stan’s daughter – Thelma is ashamed of her parents and their back country’s ways. Stan’s bitter cup is not full until Amy commits adultery with a red haired traveling salesman. Like a tongue-tied liar, Stan buries his sorrow in the mind and spites at the,

***“paper’s sky, quite flat  
and White and Godless”***

With marked carts, Stan goes back to Amy and they measure out their old age in rocking chairs. Stan’s mute wisdom is in knowing that endurance is all.

***“we look before and after,  
And pine for what is not,  
the sweetness songs are those,  
that tell us of saddest thought”***

The lines of Shelley in “The sky lark” are very applicable to the character of Stan.

At the end of the novel Patrick White has depicted so many trees as a sign of over-powering nature Stan’s mental disturbance is inherited by his grandson. He is involved in some creative activity. He goes through trees and the search for truth starts again. The following lines express the central thematic concerns of the novel...

***“So he would write a poem of all life of  
what he didn’t know but he knows.”***

Stan dies with a hope that his grandson would write a poem of life.

***“Putting out shoots of green thought.  
So in the end, there was no end.”***

Patrick White’s novels express no specific orthodox convictions about existential or mystical matters. However, he has been inspired by Christian mysticism and the psychology of Jung.

The typical aspect of White’s literary technique is that he fused the traditional Christian aspects with the mythological beliefs of the Australian aborigines (a member of one of the native peoples of Australia, existing in a land from its earliest times). In most of his novels, White employs Australian associations combined with archetypal or literary European ones. His attitude is pessimistic in the sense that his successful questers are described as innocent simpletons isolated and alienated, physically or mentally handicapped. The final insight is achieved only through ordeals and humiliation. Here, in “The Tree of Man” also, the explorer is a sufferer who in his search of truth causes others to suffer too White asks himself,

***“Am I a destroyer,  
this face in the glass,  
which has spent a  
lifetime searching for....  
Truth can be the worst  
destroyer of ALL”***

White is more interested in the great Australian emptiness. All his novels demonstrate how will, permanence, possession and safety must be sacrificed. A journey of exploration is always painful.

The desert in the centre of the Australian continent conveniently shaped like a human heart becomes the interior with all its interpretative possibilities. The nation of mental exploration is linked with geographical imagery, particularly of the Desert. Stan also goes through the desert like exploration.

The major theme of the novel is the identity issue of Australia. White has written the history of the Australian aborigines through the saga of Stan Parker. This history is artistic and metaphorical. Hence, we should agree with the view.....

***“The Tree of Man is a book  
of Australian Genesis.”***

In attempt to explain the novel, Patrick White observes.....

*When all come to live  
I felt the life was on  
the surface, so dreary,  
ugly, momentous, there  
must be a poetry hidden  
in it to give it a purpose  
and so to set out to  
discover that secret lose  
and the tree of man imaret.”*

**Existential dilemma in the character of Stan.  
Or  
Spiritual growth in Stan Parker.**

The novel “The Tree of Man” is about the lives of simple man and women Ruches one can find anywhere in the world.

*“Every possible aspects of like  
through an ordinary man and woman.”*

The novel is stepped in Australian folk here and cultural myth. White works the myth of pioneer to focus not an outward achievements or landscape but on the progress of 2 main characters – Stan and Amy towards what Blake call it a state of,

*“Four fold vision”*

In which Stan is finally able to see in a job of spittle. Stan is the simple unarticulated man groping his way towards the meaning of life. However, fate trips him up with distressing regularity.

Man is a spiritual seeker. He transcends laws and commandments of religion. Spirituality relates him to the eternal and the infinite. This shows that man has a higher dimension which transcends his physical and social personality. He is essentially spiritual. Religion leads to realization of divinity within.

In this novel, white portrays the married life of Stan, a farmer of Durilgai. He is a handsome Youngman and Amy is a skinny teenager. They get married at the turn of the country in the Rickety Church at Yuruga, a town where.....,

*“A person could be dead and  
only the flies would cotton on.”*

He takes his bride to wilderness. They take up the land in the bush, not many miles from Sydney. He builds up a small house and established a prosperous dairy farm. Stan possesses his own cart of cattle. After the day’s routine work is done, neither Amy nor Stan have much time for romantic frills. They love each other with an honest animal urgency. A little settlement grows up around them.

Stan removes all the bushes from his farm and wishes that his wife should live peacefully in his “honest house”. The lose bush which she plants in the first days of her marriage serves as an outward sign of her emotions. Amy’s rose bush is juxtaposed to Stan’s trees. The giant size of the trees overshadows the rose bush.

During this time, the nature shows her dangerous face – draughts, fires, floods across the land. Stan wonders at times what he is struggling for and if there is God and if he cares then he hopes to find the answers from him.

When the bushfire reaches to Glamstonbury and Madelaine is caught in the fire, Stan rescues her, while bringing her out of house Stan is momentarily in love with madelaine.

Afterwards, Stan joins the army during the war, and keeps himself away for four years from his family. Amy betrays and falls in love with businessman in his absence. Having return from war service, Stan finds himself a stranger to his wife and grown up children. He shares their satisfaction and fails that some greater fulfillment lies beyond his present reach.

Stan is very well aware of her affair with Leo. His discovery of Amy’s infidelity leads him to his loss of faith in God as well as in man. So his wife continues enduring tension and a feeling that only the present is real.

***“Why should life  
all labour be,  
if death is the  
only end of life.”***

Stan has some existential problem. He feels himself alienated from his family.

***“In the seas of Life,  
we mortal millions live alone.”***

The whole work is inevitable isolation of the individual. A human relation fails the man and the wife grows apart from each other and from their children. Stan’s children Ray and Thelma are also a disappointment to them. They show the same inability to love deeply, to express strong emotion, even to form friendships because they live in their own world of thoughts. Ray turns to be a rebellious type. Thelma moves to the city and marries to a solicitor.

Like a tongue tied Lear, Stan buries his sorrow in the mind and spites at the ...,

***“Paper’s sky, quite flat  
and white and Godless.”***

With marked carts, Stan goes back to Amy. He feels that endurance is all...,

***“We look before and after,  
and pine for what is not,  
our sweetest songs are there,  
that tell us of saddest thoughts.”***

Both Amy and Stan accept each other's mystery. After a temporary psychic death, there is a gradual evolution of Stan's spiritual rebirth. At the end, Stan becomes one with God whereas Amy still clings to her world of possessions.

The word "tree" in the title of this novel stands for Stan's quest for growth, for inexhaustible life. In Stan, we find the melancholic longing for permanence. While Amy stands for motion in life. At the end, white has depicted so many trees as a sign of over-powering nature. Stan's mental disturbance is inherited by his grandson. He is involved in some creative activity. He goes through trees and the new search for truth starts again. The following lines express the central thematic concerns of the novel.

***"So he would write a poem of all life  
of what he didn't know but he knows."***

He dies with a hope that his grandson would write a poem of life. It is not however, the promise of the pattern of generations that white sees but the promise of permanence of art that the boy is dreaming of the poem that he will write about all life.

Stan is always in search of something beyond the immediate experience. Amy is partly unaware of Stan's moment of illumination which comes to him at the time of his death....,

***"Putting out shoots of green  
thought so the end, there was no end."***

The normal man with his limited sight is observed satirically in relation to the visionary, whose insights are accepted as revealed truth. He is an ordinary human; he has the gift of sight. He sees into the mystery. Here is almost an act of faith in Stan's grasp of the essential reality. It is a story of a Layman's journey from ignorance to spiritual awareness.

## Chinua Achebe- A Man of the People

Achebe has been active in Nigerian politics since the 1960s. Many of his novels deal with the social and political problems facing his country, including the difficulty of the post-colonial legacy.

He is married and has four children. He currently lives in the United States, where he holds a teaching position at Bard College.

Albert Chinualumgu Achebe best known as Chinua Achebe is a renowned *critic, poet* and *novelist* of Nigeria. Chinua Achebe is famous for his exceptional *novel Things Fall Apart* published in 1958. This book is a staple *book* in the schools throughout Africa and is studied in almost all English speaking countries round the globe.

Chinua Achebe was born on 16th November, 1930 in Igbo, village of Ogidi in southeastern Nigeria. Achebe was raised by his Protestant parents. Achebe was academically very sound and won many scholarships during his undergraduate years. In 1936 Chinua Achebe was enrolled to St Philips Central School where he soon impressed his teachers by virtue of academic excellence. In 1948 Achebe joined first Nigerian University College that was affiliated to the college of London in order to pursue higher studies. Achebe scored high marks in the entrance examination of the university and was consequently offered admission directly as a Major Scholar.

Chinua Achebe was fascinated by the traditions of African culture and world religion. Achebe started *story writing* when he was studying at the university. Achebe in 1953 taught English in a school for a very brief tenure. Later on in 1954 he moved to Lagos after completing his graduation to work in Nigerian Broadcasting Service. Achebe while working in NBS met Christie Okoli who was also working with NBS. Their relationship developed and they married in 1953. They had three children, a daughter *Chinelo* born in 1962, elder son *Ikechukwu* born in 1964, and *Chidi* the youngest, born in 1967.

Achebe's first short story was *In a Village Church* in which he narrated the rural life and Christian institutions of Nigeria. Other popular short stories like "*The Old Order in Conflict with the New*" and "*Dead Men's Path*" were written by Achebe while he was studying at the university. *Things Fall Apart* was Achebe's first published novel that readers witnessed in 1958, the book received accolades from all corners of the world. In subsequent years Chinua Achebe wrote novels including *No Longer at Ease* in 1960, *Arrow of God* in 1964, ***A Man of the People*** in 1966, and *Anthills of the Savannah* in 1987 and many other books which became equally popular. Chinua Achebe is also called "the father of modern African writing".

**An Image of Africa:** Racism in Conrad's "*Heart of Darkness*" is a lecture given by Chinua Achebe at the University of Massachusetts, in 1975. The lecture was published and became controversial for its criticism of *Joseph Conrad* as racist. Later on Achebe decided to join in the politics of Nigeria. In 1967 when Biafra became an independent state Achebe served as the ambassador and was supporting for the independence of the new nation. Achebe requested for aid from America and Europe for this state. But in 1970 Nigerian government again took the region and Achebe got involved with prevailing political parties. Soon Achebe was frustrated by elitism and corruption and resigned from politics. Achebe lived for several years in United States during the decade of 70,s. In 1990 Chinua Achebe again came to live in U.S after a major car accident which made him partially disabled.

Chinua Achebe's novels mainly focused on tradition of the Igbo society, the Christian influence and its effect. Achebe's style depends on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines narration with

representations of proverbs and folk *stories*. Achebe had written a number of *children's books*, *short stories*, and *essay collections*. Chinua Achebe is currently the Professor of Languages and Literature at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

### **Christianity in *A Man of the People*:**

In each of Chinua Achebe's novels, he utilizes intertextuality, a type of criticism that engages multiple texts within a text. In *A Man of the People*, Achebe relies on the Bible as a text within his work to enhance his stories and communicate with his reader. His uses of biblical allusions are as fluent as his use of oral traditions and proverbs. This intertextuality "***demonstrates the kind of dialogical imagination that... characterizes the most artistically and morally profound works of fiction***" (Gallagher 137). Specifically, Achebe uses names and character comparisons to refer to other texts and to explain and enhance his own text.

*A Man of the People* is a satire of the Nigerian government in the 1960's. Achebe, in naming his own characters after those in the Bible, draws parallels to their situations, and in some cases, uses irony to further develop his own characters' personalities and stones. According to writer Kalu Ogbaa, the name Achebe uses "***have a basic function - they identify and describe the characters who bear them***" (63). It is therefore essential to examine the names of the characters in context and in comparison to the text they reflect in order to better understand the meaning of Achebe's work.

As one examines more carefully his biblical allusions and references, a pattern develops concerning Achebe's use of Old and New Testament. He appears to be drawing parallels between Israel's experience in exile and the intellectuals' experiences in Nigeria. In addition, Achebe makes conceptions between the modern movements in African society toward individual morality by relying upon the New Testament scriptures. Thus the elite appear to be experiencing their own exile while trying to reestablish the moral life of their culture.

One of Achebe's first uses of intertextuality occurs when Max, the leader of the Common People's Convention, or CPC, asks the story's protagonist, Odili, if he remembered to bring his Bible to his house. Odili says no, so Max quotes from memory a passage from Jeremiah in the Old Testament:

***"A voice was heard in Ramah.  
weeping and great lamentation.  
Rachel weeping for her children  
And she would not be comforted.  
because they are not (82)."***

This passage is most often interpreted to be a prophecy of the massive killing of all male children under two years of age that occurred during the reign of King Herod. Herod attempted to dispose of the baby Jesus so there would be no threat of another king overtaking his throne. By quoting this, Max appears to explain the state in which Nigeria finds itself. The rulers are destroying the nation to achieve the success and security they desire. The fact that he quotes this is perhaps, in itself, a prophecy of the attempts to kill all threats to the position Chief Nanga, the Minister of Culture, holds -- threats like Max and Odili. It is interesting that preceding this recitation, Max reads one of his own poems:

***"I will return home to her-- many centuries have I wandered-  
And I will make my offering at the feet of my lovely Mother:  
I will rebuild her house, the holy places they raped and plundered,  
And I will make it fine with black wood, bronzes and terra-cotta (82)."***

This stanza is familiar to the biblical reader, as it resounds with similarities to the prophecies of the Old Testament writers in their visions of returning to Jerusalem from exile to rebuild the Temple and live at peace with God. The poem Max wrote is reflective of the ideals of Africa and the attempts to the CPC to restore Africa to its former ideals.

Yet even in his present position, advocating a change in the politics and a moral adjustment for the nation, Max, with all his ideals to restore morality to the government, fails to promote the individual morality required to restore the nation. He concedes to the ways of the world in accepting bribery money from Nanga. ***"The paper I signed had no legal force,"*** Max says to justify his actions. But ***"it had moral force,"*** responds Odili sadly (127). Max thus conveys the image of an Old Testament man, for one cannot restore morality if one is in exile. And that is precisely where the elite, like Max, find themselves to be: wandering in the wilderness of unethical behavior, searching for the Promised Land, the ideal Nigeria restored.

Soon after his encounter with Max, Odili returns to Anata, and finds the people angry with Josiah, a shopkeeper, who stole his blind customer's walking stick. This story relies upon the Old and New Testament to convey its significance and enhance its meaning. The ***"most ominous thing [Odili] heard"*** concerning the incident came from a ***"kind of Christian"*** who also happened to be a ***"carpenter"*** (87). Achebe has released a red alert with this description. Jesus, the foundation of the Christian movement, raised to be a carpenter. appeals to the reader's sensitivity to intertextuality. Achebe soon reveals that his name is Timothy, clearly a biblical name thanks to Achebe's allusions to a Christian carpenter.

First Timothy, found in the New Testament, was originally a letter the apostle Paul wrote to the young Timothy encouraging him ***"to refute false teachings"*** (Barker 1833). This refutation could easily parallel the reprimands of the crowd concerning Josiah's evil work. As Timothy comments, ***"Josiah has taken away enough for the owner to notice"*** (Achebe 87). Even more interesting, though, is the comment Timothy makes next: ***"If anyone ever sees my feet in this shop again, let him cut them off"*** (87). Again, intertextuality comes into play. This statement appears to be a reflection of Jesus's words in Mark 9:45:

***"If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.  
It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to  
have two feet and be thrown into hell."***

In most interpretations of this verse, it is read not as a literal response to sin, but is rather an emphatic way of conveying the consequences of sin to remind the audience to avoid sinning. In referring to this, Achebe enunciates the seriousness of Josiah's sin, which proves so severe that for another to support Josiah would be a terrible crime in itself. This is the carpenter Timothy's individual, moral response to the sin. He communicates that separation from the sinner is essential to the preservation of society and morality. Here, the reader sees an illustration of the individual morality the village people adopt in response to the world in which they live. They have accepted a New Testament solution to the immorality of the world around them.

Josiah however, sacrifices individual morality and thus the morality of the nation for his own benefits. Although Josiah commits a crime by stealing the blind man's stick, earlier in the book, he is described as contributing a "discordant," yet "jovial" joke to a discussion about wealth and ministers (15) And after his misdealing with the beggar, Josiah disappears but returns again to offer his services to the progress of the C. P.C.'s campaign to elect Odili. When Odili refuses his offer, Josiah appears again, only to expose Odili at Chief Nanga's inaugural campaign meeting (139). Again, Achebe utilizes intertextuality to communicate a message.

Biblically, the character Josiah appears in 2 Kings 21-23, 2 Chronicles 34~35 and Isaiah 57:1. He was King of Judah, but, unlike his predecessors, believed in serving God. So when the book of Law was found in the Temple, Josiah destroyed all idols and priests devoted to any other god than Yahweh.

There is quite a difference between these two Josiah's. One, God-fearing and righteous; the other deceitful and corrupt. The trader Josiah proves to paradoxically be created to counteract the biblical Josiah in several ways.

First, Josiah stole the blind man's stick to burn it for medicine. It is interesting that he would do this, for this act proves similar to the priests' burning of incense at the altars of false gods. Furthermore, both are found offensive in the eyes of justice (2 Chronicles 34:4). Josiah appears to be assuming, not the role of King Josiah, but that of his adversaries, the priests who fell away from God's righteousness.

But, from the beggar incident, Odili learns that Josiah was stealing from "*the will of the people*" (87). And so, perhaps the correlation between trader and king is that King Josiah was stealing from the will of the people as well. Israel wanted to continue in their ways, sacrificing to false gods, doing what they thought was right, but King Josiah stole that right from them as he brought the law back into their lives. In this context, Josiah the trader becomes a counterpart to King Josiah, and the biblical parallel turns to irony.

The irony of Josiah's story continues, though, when Odili compares Nanga's inaugural campaign meeting to a sort of priestly system. He looks at the elite of the elite lined in a row up on the platform. Odili sees Edna sitting on the platform "*like a convent girl*" (138). Nanga wears white robes as he waits on the high platform to begin the ceremony. The convent girl and the robed leader all cast a priestly light on the ceremony. These allusions remind us of the priests in the Old Testament who ruled over Israel and the Temple, often in corrupt ways. It was King Josiah who rid Israel of them, and it is the trader Josiah who rids Nigeria of the government. It is interesting that though he exposed Odili at the meeting, it was because of that meeting. Because Odili was injured, and because the thugs and rioters got out of control, that the government lost its ground. And so, it is a sort of paradox that again creates Josiah's character and makes his actions so intriguing.

Another biblical name Achebe uses is Hezekiah, Odili's father. Upon examining the text in 2 Chronicles 29-32, the reader discovers that Hezekiah was King of Judah and reestablished service of the Temple. Later, when the king of Assyria came to invade Judah, Hezekiah blocked off all water from the springs outside the city (2 Chronicles 32:3) and channeled it to the west side of Jerusalem to prevent the Assyrians from having water. He also built walls and professed his faith in God to save his people. In response, God sent an angel and destroyed the Assyrians.

As the reader is beginning to suspect, Achebe's choice of the name Hezekiah is not without relevance. After Odili's rally to get his people behind him, the reader discovers that in Urua, the people have running water, but when Nanga hears of their speculations to cast their vote for Odili, he strips them of their pipes. Some of the pipes are returned later once the vote again favors Nanga (Achebe 136). The reader now realizes why Achebe chooses Hezekiah to be the name of Odili's father. After all, it was he who allowed his house to be used for the campaign rally, and likewise his village that suffered from the water loss.

However, there are more implications from giving Odili's father the name Hezekiah other than out of mere cleverness with the water parallel. What makes Hezekiah an Old Testament man is the Old Testament ethic he follows. As local chairman of the P.O.P., Hezekiah's loyalty seems to be with his corrupt party. Later, though, he refuses to respond with a lie to the accusation that he held a C.P.C rally at his house. However, this is not his individual morality shining through, but his ethic. Hezekiah continues to live by a law of the land: tolerance, let every man have his say. He maintains the warrior ethic of honor and valor. It is this side of him that makes Hezekiah an Old Testament man.

Fully aware that something must be done about the corrupt government, Eunice, yet another biblically named character, fights to secure a moral minister in office. She proves to be faithful to the cause of the C.P.C., even to the point of killing the corrupt chief of police. Once again "only the individual can act against those who are beyond the control of the community.

Eunice can avenge the death of Max Kulamo, when the people would not" (Colmer 92). Eunice stuck by her party and kept faith concerning what it would take to secure morality in the government. Likewise, the biblical Eunice was a Jewish Christian described as having "sincere faith" (2 Timothy 1:5). Interestingly enough, she is the mother of Timothy. It is easy to see the parallel between the two Eunices in their sincere, individual devotions to their causes.

Another biblical name is given to the "*man of the Old Testament*" (Achebe 119), Chief Nanga. The satiric qualities of his name are set up by his title: Chief the Honorable M.A. Nanga M.P. in that his abbreviations, though meaning one thing, allude to separate meanings denoting high achievements academically and politically, despite the real absence of any such achievements. Micah A. Nanga abbreviated implies a Master's degree. M.P., standing for Member of Parliament, implies Master of Politics. "*The name is loaded with Achebe's oblique puns and subtle comments on the phony patriotism, pseudo-intellectualism, arrant philistinism and political bravado which characterized the activities of the Nigerian intelligentsia and politicians of the early sixties,*" as Ogbaa points out (71). His Christian name, Micah (Achebe 440 continues the satire.

The biblical prophet Micah had a "*deep sensitivity to the social ills of his day, especially as they affected the small towns and villages of his homeland.*" His message "*reflects social conditions prior to the religious reforms under Hezekiah*" (Barker 1370). As with Timothy and Eunice, the reader encounters more intertextuality within Achebe's use of outside texts: Micah and Hezekiah. Nanga's life also reflects the social conditions prior to the leadership of Hezekiah, or rather. Of Hezekiah's offspring, Odili. He lived in corruption and greed. In this way, Nanga is similar to Micah in that both lives reflect the culture they lived in. However, the message both men give is quite different. Nanga communicates verbally to Hezekiah and his village that the social condition they were once under, one with no water could easily return to them should they abandon his leadership. Nanga's message, although a warning, like Micah's, is based on greed and power, in an effort to maintain the corrupt system of government. The prophet's message, on the other hand, was issued to reform the

nation of Israel to a better state. It is therefore, ironic, and paradoxical, that Achebe would name a man so blind to his own corrupt nature after a man who spoke so much against that same corruption. Perhaps this emphasizes the reality of the two-faced political system present in Nigeria that Ogbaa referred to in his evaluation of Nanga's name.

An additional biblical name referred to in the novel is Odili's servant, ironically named Peter. For it was Peter, Jesus's disciple, who, when Jesus was washing his feet., asked him to wash his *"hands and head as well"* (John 13:6-11). It is also ironic that Peter, whose name meant, *"the rock"* (Matthew 16:18) was reduced to servanthood, for it was upon him which the church would be built. And yet servanthood is what Jesus advocated the most. It is this subtle servanthood, the personal sacrifice of a man with enough education to free him from the bonds of servanthood, that makes Peter a New Testament character. It is this common man who exemplifies the morality Christ advocates in the New Testament.

Another connection between the Peter the disciple and Peter the servant is found in Mark 10:28-31. In response to the story of the rich man who could not enter the kingdom of heaven, Peter says to Jesus, *"We [the disciples] have left everything to follow you"* (Mark 10:28). Jesus replies by affirming that anyone who leaves his family will be rewarded on earth and in heaven. It is interesting, then, that Odili's servant required a return home to his family every holiday season (Achebe 27). But, he leaves his family for eleven months of the year, thus showing his personal devotion to his work.

And so, it is amongst the moral struggles that Odili finds himself. He is caught between the crossroads of the men and women of the Old and New Testament. There are those associated with the Old Testament: Nanga (Micah). Hezekiah, Max and Josiah, and those associated with the New: Timothy Eunice and Peter. And then there is Max and Odili. Max leans toward the Old Testament lifestyle because of his inability to abstain from moral corruption. Odili, leaning toward the New Testament, comes to realize that it is individual morality that will restore the nation, not a reliance on the community in their corruption and fear.

### **Summing Up:**

It is clear, therefore, that Achebe involves the Old and New Testament themes to be paradoxical and to parallel his story and message in *A Man of the People*. His allusions to both the Old and New Testament through character names and language explains the state of Nigeria. Achebe tells the reader that the solutions to Nigeria's problems lie in the individual morality displayed in several common people. It is the self-seeking immorality displayed by other characters that leads to the corrupt government. Yet, despite its mass corruption and unethical behavior, Nigeria appears to be on the road to restoration. Like the wandering Jews in exile entering into the Promised Land, ready to restore the Temple, are Nigeria's intellectual elite finally allowed to establish a better government. Nigeria, like the Jewish temple, will be restored, but only with the intercession of morality. Christ's New Testament morality, an individual morality established in the lives of the people, will be the salvation of Nigeria. It is this truth that Achebe establishes through his use of biblical texts to enhance the symbolism in his own text.

# **Achebe - as a novelist with special reference to: *A Man of the People***

## **Introduction**

Albert Chinua Lumogu Achebe was born in a Christian family on November 16, 1930 in Ogidi eastern Nigeria. He was fifth in a family of six children. This village was the centre of missionary campaign. His father, Isaiah Okato was the first man of the village to adopt Christianity.

At University College Ibadan Achebe was introduced to famous European writers who have set their novels in Africa, such as Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, and Graham Greene but by how, instead of identifying with the European adventures against their African counter parts. Achebe help impelled to represent the historical encounter.

All the novels depict ancient culture of Nigeria and its opposition to missionary campaigns of attracting the people to Christianity.

## **As a novelist**

Although Achebe has also written poetry, short stories and essays both literary and political, he is best known for his novels. He was able to show in the structure and language of his first novel, that the future of African writing did not lie in simple imitation of the European forms but in the fusion of such forms with oral traditions. Achebe is the conscience of African literature because he has consistently insisted on the power of story-teller.

Achebe, hence, is considered not only to be the inventor of African literature but also the conscience there of it has always been his purpose. He's a story-teller to appeal to the morality and humanity of his reader and to give their life a fuller meaning. He states his mission in his essay *The Novelist as Teacher*,

*“Here is an adequate revolution for me to accept to help my society religion behalf in itself and to put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement.”*

Thus, Achebe believes that any good story - novel should have a message, should have a purpose.

## **Proverbs and folklore**

Proverbs and folklore are salient features of Achebe's novels. Achebe, who believes that culture's folklore, passes on a great cultural richness. He thinks that such folklore can provide solutions to a people's question and problems. Folklore, which is an important feature of the Indo culture, finds appropriate place in the novels of Achebe.

By the time we come to Indo society in Nigeria in “no longer at ease”, most traditional values disappeared but some of the proverbs that explicit moral and spiritual wisdom remain with the people. Here are the two examples,

- 1) "Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it."
- 2) "He who has people is richer than he who has money."

*A Man of the People*, Achebe's fourth novel, has a number of proverbs that clearly trace the decay of cultural values in Nigerian society. Selfishness, greed and desire for power characterize political leaders. Like chief Nanga the general motto of the people leader is,

***"Ours is ours but mine is mine."***

Achebe's characters make use of folklore to make their arguments forceful and effectively illustrate moral values.

### **Achebe's Language**

Achebe uses language which he sees as a writer's best resource to expose and compactly propose generated by African politicians to manipulating their own people faced with his people growing inferiority complex and his leader's desire for the truth, the African writer content turn his back on his culture. Achebe believes,

***"A writer has a responsibility to try and stop (these imaging threads) because unless our culture begins to take itself seriously it will never.....get off the ground."***

The ways in which Achebe means force language to achieve particular ends distinguishes his writing. Thus, the writing of other English language novels to convey the flavor of traditional Nigeria, Achebe translates Indo proverbs into English and weaves them into his stories.

To encounter an appreciation for African culture in this unfamiliar with it. Achebe alters English to reflect negative Nigeria languages in use.

***"Without seriously distorting the nature of the English."***

Observes Outstare Palmer in *The Growth of the African Novel*, Achebe deliberately...

***"introduces the rhythms, speech patterns, idioms and other verbal nuances of Indo."***

Palmer further observes that the effect of this is that while everyone who knows English will be able to understand the words and find few signs of awkwardness, the leader also has a sense, note just of black men using English but of black African speaking and living in a genuinely black African living situation.

### **Achebe's Style**

Since the 1950's Nigeria has witnessed,

***"the flourish of a new literature which has drawn sustenance from both traditional oral literature and from the present and rapidly changing society."***

M. Laurence writes in her book *Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerians Dramatists and Novelist*. Thirty years ago Chinua Achebe was one of the founders of this literature, and over the years many

critics have come to consider him the finest of the Nigeria novelists. His achievement, however, has not been limited to his continent. He is considered by many to be one of the best novelists, now writing in English language.

Unlike some African writers, struggling for acceptance among contemporary English language novelists, Achebe has been able to avoid imitating the trends in English literature. Rejecting the European notion that,

***“art should be accountable to no one and [needs] to justify itself to nobody.”***

As he puts it in his book of essay *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Achebe has embraced instead the idea at the heart of the African oral tradition that:

***“art is, and always was the service of man, our ancestors created their myths and told their story for a human purpose. “***

For this reason, Achebe believes that,

***“any good novel should have a message, should have a purpose. “***

### **Summing up**

Achebe’s feel for the African context has influenced his aesthetic of the novel as well as the technical aspects of his work. As Bruce King comments in introduction to Nigerian literature. Achebe was the first Nigerian writer to successfully transmute the conventions of the novel, a European art form, into African literature.

It would be appropriate to quote, King’s notes on Achebe’s novels, to sum up our discussion:

***“European character study is subordinated to the portrayal of communal life. European economy of form is replaced by an anesthetic approach to the rhythms of traditional tribal life.”***

# Theme of Political Satire in Chinua Achebe's *A man of the People*

## Introduction

Chinua Achebe is well known modern African novelist writing in English. His novels are refreshing, entertaining, didactic and informative. He exposes the unique potentialities of man of Africa in his major novels *Things Fall A Part*, *No Longer At Ease*, *Arrow of God*, and *A Man of the People*. No socially conscious writer writes in a vacuum. He has his own vision of order design and pattern. Every novelist has a reason for writing novels: Richardson to inculcate result, Fielding to reform, Dickens to expose social evils and Trollope to earn money by entertaining readers. Fielding Thackeray and Meredith speak in their own person interpreting character and action of their novels. The same way, Achebe is also an interpreter of man, society, politics and literature like Wordsworth and Arnold. He plays the role of a teacher to re-educate and regenerate his society to restore Africa's former pride, dignity and confidence lost during the colonial period. He reaches that his society should regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of defamation and self-defamation.

Achebe is a dedicated artist he says,

***“The writer’s duty is not to beat this mornings headlines it is to explore the depth of the human condition.”***

His novels help the rehabilitation of the damaged African psyche. They are a legacy of the colonial rule where the heroes are involved in a world of violence, violation and uncertainty. As a moralist Achebe indulges his heroes on the basis of their moral response to the basic cultural crisis of a society exposed the west. As an objective observer Achebe describes the setbacks of traditional culture responsible for the social and modern Nigerian society with a touch of money and satire he focuses his attention on the hero and others at a moment of Crisis

There is a kind of dualism between character and society, between the individual growth of the hero and the established in additional life in his novels from the heights of glory to the depths of degradation. For example, Konkevo, one of the greatest men of Emuofia is buried like a dog. The tradition head of Umuaro Ezeulu becomes a laughing stock in his own village. Obi, secretary to the scholarship board is charged with corruption, convicted and sentenced to prison. Odili who is lacking in conviction and ideals suffers in the whirl of political turmoil. But there is moral dignity in the suicide of Okonkwo and the suffering of Ezeulu.

*A Man of the People* depicts the uneasy relationship and personal rivalry between the corrupt politicians, chief Nanga and the intellectual turned politician Odili Samaly. In 1964, there were three main political parties in Nigeria: People's Organization Party, Progressive Alliance Party and a new party of Max Alias. Novel falls into two parts. The first part exposes the dirty political behavior of Nanga to remain in power by corrupting his electorate and Odili's contempt for Nanga's stealing his girlfriend, else from him Odili is encouraged by his political idealism to join a new rival party founded by max when a barrister friend and his political mentor. This is the beginning of the second part of the novel. Odili vainly contests the seat held by Nanga and he is beaten by Nanga's hence man Odili fails to enforce his ideals in the society which is riddled by dishonesty and corrupt at every level. In the end the military coup provides no political redemption. The people simply change their loyalties overnight from the old to the new military rule.

The novel does not directly concern itself with colonialism but, with the Whiteman's legacy. Here Achebe exposes Nigeria's prevalent political corruption. Both Odili who represents the young educated Nigerians, and the chief Nanga who represents a type in Nigerian politics, are drawn to alien culture and are corrupted by the new forces power and wealth there Achebe focuses his attention on the evils inflicted on the African societies, not by an alien race but the Africans themselves.

In the afro-Anglican fiction in the sixties political satire became very popular. The satire was not against imperialists but against African themselves. Politicians were treated as villains of society rather than idealistic national leaders. For example, Nigeria become a cesspool of satirizes a world in which dignity is a same symbolized by the times of chief the honourable M.A. Nanga M.P., the minister of culture. Moreover, self-respect and principles do not exist in the society. Even Max an ambitious politician radical fields to corruption and dishonesty. A minor character, who is a simple 'Sush' woman, dismisses both Odili and Nanga in the following words:

***“They are both white man's people.”***

Mrs. Nanga sends her children to her village regularly she says,

***“Don't you see they hardly speak our language.”***

Here, Achebe satirizes the attitude of the villages also. They have punished Josiah, counter part of Nanga for a similar crime. Nanga has stolen traditional ethic and turned it into the ethic of the national men with it. They said about their corrupt and dishonest political leaders.

***“Let them eat, after all when white men used  
to do all the eating, did we commit suicide?  
Of course not.”***

Further, the novel is about triggers bribery, self seeking politicians and earnest educated young men anxiously awaiting their slice of the national cake. Even then the novelist does not lose hope of a happy state through the deaths of Ikem and Chris and relief from Nangas dictatorship Achebe suggests that real salvation cannot be from harm and death but can be from corrupt on social evil and loss of humanity possible through some 'clean souls' that lead the people towards perfection.

Thus, *A Man of the People* is a brilliant satirical force which exposes follies of the Nigerian society and the cynical attitude of political opportunist to exploit the people for personal ends. This is not a contemplative novel and an instant outburst against the result both in anger and despair. It is a serious attack on bribery and dishonesty among the political leader of the post independence African.

## Character of Nanga

In his novels Achebe describes the after effects of the colonial rule on Nigeria particularly on Igbo society. His heroes are involved in a world of violence and uncertainty and their characters are put on test in the moment of crisis.

*A Man of the People* shows the foul means adopted by the corrupt politicians to remain in power. It shows how the democratic procedures are corrupted at various levels by the dealings of political parties and wasted interests of individuals. This novel depicts the uneasy Odili Samely. It does not directly concern legacy chief Nanga is a corrupt politician who provides the novel its ironic title. He is an embodiment of the ambitions and failings of the people. He is a shrewd, opportunistic Machiavellian politician. He represents extreme individualism damaging the African character both Odili who themselves.

Here Achebe describes the time of the electoral campaign of October December 1964 and its immediate bitter effects Nanga is ironically portaged as a corrupt politician. He is interested in the greater share of the national cake. Further he steals else Odili's girlfriend and offers six girls the same evening to Odili and yet he calls himself ironically minister of culture Achebe remarks.

***“Just think of such a man going abroad and calling himself minister of culture ridiculous! This is why the outside would laugh at us...”***

Nanga is a fraud not only in political and commercial terms but also culturally the attacks those Africans who have received western education he starts a campaign of an authentic African culture, but he himself hankers after the western things and fills his house with them he prefers to speak English and his children are also about to forget their mother tongue it mirror character our language?

Some critics opine that Achebe balances the evil aspects of nangas character by introducing in him certain positive elements such as his charming personality his urge so share the national cake with Odili but this is a conventional critical approach where we find a combination of good and bedevil in an individual. In fact Achebe does not portray Nanga as a character at all but purely as a signifier of the finest rogues in Nigerian literature Achebe passes very bitter remarks against Nanga by fivius his crude jokes his permission to white men to address him by his first name and his hatred for higher education.

In this novel Achebe shows that different varieties of the English language become an effective political device there chief Nanga the man of the people, finds that speaking to different people with popularity with the Americans, he speaks American English with odili and his gang a type of familiar 'pidgin' and with the villages he uses a proverbial style. Thus he appears to be a great rhetorician in order to argue and persuade the people.

In a discussion with an interviewer Achebe pointed out,

***“Nanga is very important he is the only character who has the title of the book. He is very clever and cunning. He knows what he wants to do in a way. It is the tragedy of our situation. Nanga uses such devices to destroy the Society”***

Like Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, he does not use them to save the system. He applies them in a very narrow, selfish way those may be the worst consequence of colonization that one is utterly alienated from his community. The leader is not a leader if his people. He is totally an alien the matters of interests concerns and comforts of his people that way Achebe point out.

***“The separation of the leader from those he leads is perhaps the greatest evil”***

Thus, though the character culture the novelist stresses on an individual’s materialism which has knight corruption strife and cynicism.

### **The title *A Man of the People***

The title of a work of art is like a sign-board of a shop a signboard indicates the nature and contents of a business. In the same way the title of a literary work indicates its theme the titles of Achebe’s novels are highly suggestive and meaningful. The title of his four major novels *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People* reveal the themes of the novels. For example, in *Arrow of God* Ezeulu is an obstinate old priest. The people oppose him because he tries to wound their feelings by meddling with the natural rhythm of season. Here the title suggests that there is gods role in the action of the novel. Ezeulu is punished in the end by his own deity. Who is loyal to the mass, not to an individual because no individual is greater than his people.

In *A Man of the People*, Nanga assumes the title Achebe ironically portrays him as a corrupt politician who is interested in the greater share of the national cake. Further he steals else Odili’s girl friend offers six girls at the same evening to Odili and yet he calls himself ironically minister a culture which is quite ridiculous here Achebe remarks.

***“Just think of such a man going abroad and calling himself minister of culture. This is why the outside would laugh at us”***

The same iron is against the high minded Odili who is a petty opportunist. He enters into politics only to take revenge on Nanga and for personal gain.

In this novel Nanga represents one of the political spectrums. Aim of his role is to retain his power. Though he makes a show of genuine sympathy and close relationship with the people but he is ironically called so. There is an ironic half truth in it because Nanga is sensitive to the demands of his people and he asserts that he represents government of the people by the people and for the people. This suggests leadership but actually it is not so. He is not what he appears to be. This dual personality deceives the common ignorant mass. Thus, neither Nanga nor Odili is the man of the people. Achebe is the man of the people in reality. He represents the voice the suppressed and oppressed Nigerians who suffer at the hands of such selfish and cunning politicians.

Thus, the title *A Man of the People* is quit meaningful and suggestive.

## Character of Odili Samalu

*A Man of the People* is a satirical farce about corrupt politicians cynically exploiting a political system, a legacy of colonial rule. Achebe is cynical about his modern Nigerians society and does not favor any of the central figures in the novel. Odili Samalu is an intellectual turned politician. He is full of vigor and youthful vibrations and idealism. He has a double role in this novel as a narrator and anti-hero. He has challenged Nanga at the polls, but he is defeated because his real motive has been personal revenge against the chief honorable M.A. Nanga M.P.

The satire in this novel is gentle and subtle. Achebe merely exposes the follies of his society and offers no practical solution to the political malady. He does not make elaborate comments on the maladies but he makes the leader look at things through the eyes of a weak idealist who happens to be the narrator and a character in the novel without strong conviction and political ideology.

The narrator acts in limited areas outside his personal life. The unsophisticated villagers see things more clearly than he does. A mirror character who is a simple 'bush' woman dismisses both Odili and chief Nanga in the words.

***“They are both white man’s people.”***

In the beginning of this novel Odili’s admiration is mixed up with envy when he meets chief M.A. Nanga, M.P. at the Ananta grammar school. But his opinion is changed when he visits the residence at Nagain bori. The captive being a weak idealist, Odili comes under the influence of Nanga and develops a sympathetic attitude to the temptations of power. He says,

***“All I can say is that on that first night there was no room in my mind for criticism and maybe I should have thanked god that I was not a man who has just come in from the rain and dried his body and put in dry clothes is more reluctant to go out.”***

Thus, he shifts his loyalty from the first to the third person pronoun now it is quite clear that the narrator’s hatred for politician is tempered by his close observation of the problems of power-politics when he first met Nanga at the grammar school he ironically remarked.

***“The minister stepped out wearing damask and gold chains and acknowledging cheers with his ever present fan of animal skin which they said fanned away all evil design of the wicked.”***

Here the world they stand for the superstitious villagers.

Thus the first person narrator Odili Samalu fails to respond to the needs of the 'poor contemptible people' and 'silly ignorant villagers' from whom he separates himself both Odili and Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) belong to the 'hybrid class' of intellectuals who work as intermediaries between the politicians and the people. Odili belongs to that group of intellectuals who had aligned themselves with the group in power, neglecting the largely illiterate masses who expected more from these leaders of the future.

## J. M. Coetzee

J. M. Coetzee, born in 1940, South African novelist and scholar, winner of the 2003 Nobel Prize in literature. Coetzee's novels often use allegory to examine the apartheid regime—and post-apartheid transition—of South Africa, and to explore the resulting effects of these policies on individuals and society.

Coetzee was born in Cape Town, South Africa. His father was a lawyer and his mother a schoolteacher. Although Coetzee spoke Afrikaans (the language of a majority of the white population in South Africa) with relatives, he grew up in an English-speaking household and attended English-language schools. He graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1961 with degrees in literature and mathematics, and in 1962 he left South Africa for England, where he worked as a computer programmer. In 1965 Coetzee went to the United States, and four years later he received a Ph.D. degree in linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin. While he was completing his dissertation in 1968 and 1969, Coetzee began working as an assistant professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He returned to South Africa in 1971. Coetzee became a lecturer at the University of Cape Town in 1972, an assistant professor in 1980, and a professor of general literature in 1984. In 1986 and again in 1989 he taught at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

When Coetzee returned to South Africa he completed work on two novellas he had already begun, which were published in one volume as *Dusklands* in 1974. Both novellas, *The Vietnam Project* and *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee*, deal with the dilemmas faced by individuals who are in conflict with society. *Dusklands* was followed by *In the Heart of the Country* (1977; published the same year in the United States as *From the Heart of the Country*), which is structured as the diary of a woman declining into insanity. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the story of a government magistrate's personal evolution into questioning the government for which he works, won South Africa's highest literary honor, the Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award.

Coetzee's next book, *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), was the story of a man's physical and psychological journey through a country at war. The novel won the Booker Prize, Britain's highest literary award. Sixteen years later Coetzee became the first writer to win the honor twice with *Disgrace* (1999), which tells the story of a man coping with dismissal from his college teaching job and the brutal gang rape of his adult daughter. The book aroused controversy in South Africa, with some critics denouncing it as racist.

In 2002 Coetzee moved to Australia. The following year he published *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons*, a novel about the life of an Australian writer. That year he became the fourth African writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature, following Nigeria's Wole Soyinka, Egypt's Naguib Mahfouz, and South Africa's Nadine Gordimer. The award announcement called Coetzee a "scrupulous doubter" with a "capacity for empathy that has enabled Coetzee time and again to creep beneath the skin of the alien and the abhorrent."

Coetzee's other works include the novels *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), and *The Master of Saint Petersburg* (1994), as well as a number of books of essays, among them *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (1994), *Giving Offense* (1996), and *Stranger Shores* (2001). He has published two volumes of memoirs, *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002). Coetzee has also translated the works of other authors into Dutch, German, French, and Afrikaans.

## **John Maxwell Coetzee (1940) *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)**

### **Introduction:**

J. M. Coetzee was born in Cape Town in South Africa in 1940. He was educated in South Africa and the United State as a computer scientist and linguist. His first work of fiction was *Dusklands* (1974), which was followed by *Waiting for the Barbarian* (1980). It was awarded the CNA prize, his masterpiece *Life and Times of Michael K* was published in 1983 which won the Booker prize. *Disgrace* (1999) is another famous novel which proved to be the best seller. The hero, David is a romantic professor. He seduces his girl student who is younger than his daughter. This is the beginning of his disgrace. He confessed his guilt and wants to be punished, but the jury wants to give him a chance to improve himself. Then he goes to his daughter, Lucy's farm. Here, he enjoys peace of mind.

### **Theme / Moral:**

Coetzee's fictional works are fairly representative of African reality and sensibility. He gives a social – psychological study of his protagonists who are caught in the web of conflict between will and tradition. The problems which he discusses in his novels have a universal appeal. They are not limited up to Africa but are present in all societies, religious and races all over the world.

### **African Colonial / Postcolonial Writers:**

Africa had to suffer under the colonial rule for decades and it has not become fully free from the influences of colonialism as yet. African nationalism has overtaken the colonial powers, but it has yet to give itself a new direction and order to remove the complications of the colonial legacy. The colonialists imposed their will and norms on the African society. Africa was heavily exploited by the colonial powers. African people had to live under the laws imposed by them. They had to face the crisis of values generated by the colonial politics. They shook the very foundation of the traditional African values with the entry of the colonial powers into Africa. The relation between the individual society and the government under want a radical transformation as a result, many mal-adjustments appeared between the individuals and the groups in the African society.

In such present post – colonial conditions, the African writers such as Wole Sobinka, Chinua Achebe and Coetzee function as the guardians of the African conscience. They depict the crisis and contradictions faced by the African people.

### **Waiting for the Barbarians:**

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* Coetzee depicts the same such conditions through the characters of the magistrate, colonel Jell and the slave girl the star. The African people have become free from the slavery of the colonial rule, but still they are afraid of their own people. They are afraid of the attacks of the barbarians who are the tribal people. They steal away certain household commodities and a few sheep. It has become a way of their life. The old man says,

*“They (barbarians) were coming to see the doctor”*

Perhaps that is the truth. No one would bring an old man and a sick boy along on a raiding party.

### **Hysteria about the Barbarians:**

Here the magistrate, the hero narrator of this novel, says that the Africans have hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamt of dark barbarians hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians breaking his house, setting fire to the curtains and raping his daughters. At this time, the magistrate observes that this is all hollow and baseless. He says,

***“Show me a barbarian army and I will believe”***

He further remarks that even the prisoners of the empire believed in.

***“Fresh stars, new chapters, clean pages.”***

Being in charge of law and order in the empire, the magistrate wishes that the prisoners be fed, that the doctor be called to treat them and that the arrangements be made to restore the prisoners to their former lives as seen as possible, as far as possible.

### **The magistrates Episode:**

Then the magistrate comes into contact with the slave girl star. She is blind. She is one of the barbarians colonial Joll brought her here. The magistrate likes her very much. He has deep sympathy for her. He asks her about her living which she replaces ‘by washing’. He again asks her,

***“Where do you live?”***

Her answer is very significant, ‘I live.’ Then his sympathy goes deeper and deeper and one day he offered her to come at his place to work. He doesn’t want her to be in the streets and affirms that she must have a place of abode. He suggests her to share the cook’s room. Then she stays with him and has sensual relations with him. At last, he returns her to the barbarians.

### **Coetzee’s View:**

Here Coetzee asks,

***“What are there barbarians dissatisfied about? Why do they want from us?”***

He himself answers that they want to resettle themselves. They want their land back. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to. Even the meanest Ostler of Peasant has contempt for the barbarians for the last twenty years.

He wishes that these barbarians would rise up and teach us a lesson, so that we would learn to respect them. They will outlast us. We have grabbed their land even the old magistrate, defender of law and order, has assaulted and imprisoned many innocent and helpless barbarians.

### **Conclusion:**

At last, Coetzee, through the magistrate says,

***“I want to say that no one deserves to die. I want to live as everyone wants to live, to live and live & live, no matter what!”***

In a dream the magistrate feels as if he is calling his barbarians friends someone tells him, that is barbarians language he hear, ‘There is laughter’. Such is the world the writer lives and he does not want to leave it.

Coetzee concludes with the hope that a day will come when the soldiers will grow tired and go away. When that will happen the barbarians will come out again. They will graze their sheep and leave us alone. We will plant out fields and leave alone and in a few years the frontier will be restored to peace.

## **Character of the Magistrate**

Coetzee's fictional, dramatic and political works are truly representative of African reality and sensibility. He gives a social – psychological study of his protagonists who are caught in the web of conflict between will and tradition. The issues that he discusses in his famous novels such as *Dusklands* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* have a universal appeal.

Coetzee's novels fascinate every one with their rich wisdom and practical knowledge. Human psychology and human behavior have been his interesting topics of study. He is a good analyst of character. He believes that there is a cosmological dualism, world and soul. Intellect grasps reality and our mind reflects on it. An individual reacts to the changing social scenario.

Man is not isolated individual in a merely physical environment. He reacts to social pattern of ideas and concepts. Life for a man is a series of him forces him to do something different from others. The pride of a man's life is his will, his ability to do something constructive. This is done in the interest of the society to revitalize it.

In Coetzee's heroes we find that they are true to themselves and to the society. The individuality is subordinated to the society. His hero is a rebel a reformer. His psyche is wounded. He suffers mental strain. He holds that individual effort can bring about changes. He says,

***“It is the individual working as a part of social ‘milieu’, who raises the consciousness of the community of which he is a part.”***

The unnamed old magistrate is the hero of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. He is the synthesizer the symbol of great re – union. The characters in this novel consider themselves as alien, lonely. They are constantly in the state of fear, uncertainty and insecurity. The old retired magistrate serves as a beacon light to them and shows them the right path of peace and prosperity.

Even after the end of the colonial power in Africa, the people have not become fully free from its influence. It shook the very foundation of the traditional African values. Many cases of maladministration appear between the individuals and the African society.

Here the old retired magistrate represents Coetzee's views on the post-colonial African social break-up. Even after the end of the colonial rule in Africa, colonel Joll arrests and tortures many innocent Africans and the magistrate has to imprison them. He feels deeply grieved at such injustice done to them. He himself falls in love with a helpless slave barbarian's girl and establishes sensual relation with her. He repents a lot and returned her to her family. Now his alliance with the Empire is over. He sets himself in opposition. The bond is broken. He is a free man. No one greets him.

The common people are still afraid of attacks from the barbarians. The word runs like fire from neighbour to neighbour 'Barbarians!' The elderly people show their children the twelvie miserable captives to prove that the barbarians are real. The soldiers beat them slap them and shout loudly, 'Enemy, enemy, enemy'. The magistrate feels himself ashamed of this gross injustice given to these

innocent people. The magistrate firmly believes that the Empire is solely responsible for all this. He says:

*“The children never doubt that the great old trees in whose shade they play will stand for ever, that one day they will grow to be strong like their fathers, fertile like their mother, that they will live and prosper and raise their own children and grow old in the place where they were born what has made it impossible for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children? It is the fault of Empire. Empire has created the time of rise and fall of beginning and end of catastrophe.”*

The magistrate has deep sympathy for the barbarians. He asks, ‘what are these barbarians dissatisfied about? What do they want from us?’ He himself answers that they wish to reestablish themselves on their own land. They want their land back. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to. He says, “It is easier to utter the word ‘justice’, easier to shout ‘no!’ easier to be beaten and made a martyr than to defend the cause of justice for the barbarians.” He wants a life of simple satisfactions. He cherishes the dreams of such a life and does not want to leave it. The barbarians will return. They will graze their sheep and leave us alone. We will plant out fields and leave them alone and in a few years the frontier will be restored to peace.

Thus through the character of the magistrate, Coetzee conveys his humanitarian message that ‘every man wants to live. To live and live and live. No matter what!’ We will be happy when this journey is over. We are tired of each other’s company. The magistrate says,

*“All I want hold is to live out my life in ease in a familiar world, to die my own bed and be followed to the grave by old friends.”*

## **The Title *Waiting for the Barbarians*. [Short – Notes]**

Someone has said, ‘Well began is half done.’ The title of most of Coetzee’s novels justifies these words. The title of his famous novels such as, *In the Heart of Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life and Times of Michael K.*, *Foe*, *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* are highly significant and meaningful.

Africa had to suffer under the colonial rule for a long time and it has not become fully free from the influences of colonialism as yet. The colonialists shook the very foundation of the traditional African values. The relation between individual society and government under went a radical transformation. As a result, many mal-adjustments appeared between the individuals and the groups in the African society. The famous post – colonial novelists like Soyinka, Achebe and Coetzee favour the cohesion between the individual and the society.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* through the character of the old magistrate, Coetzee points out that the plight of the common Africans remains the same in the past as well in the present still their hearts are not free from the known as well as unknown fears. They are in need of proper guidance and

direction. The novelist presents possible challenges to them, the danger zones and the ways open to them to improve themselves. Here he describes the post – colonial social break-up. Even after the end of the colonial rule the end of the colonial rule. The Africans are constantly in the state of fear, uncertainly and insecurity.

The common people are still afraid of attacks from the Barbarians. They are always *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The barbarians come out at night. Before nightfall the people bring in their goats and other households commodities children scream in their dreams. ‘The Barbarians are here!’ The people say, ‘The barbarians have dug a tunnel under the walls and they can come and go as they please, take away what they like. No one is safe any longer.’ The farmers fill their fields, but they go in groups, never singly. They work without heart. They are pigeon – chested people. Their women seem always to be pregnant. Their children are stunted. The young girls have fragile beauty. There are signs of ignorance and slovenliness on their faces.

Here the magistrate points out that the barbarians are not actually waiting to attack their fellowmen, but they are waiting for the soldiers to grow tired and go away. When that will happen the barbarians will come out again. They simply want their land back. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to. They want nothing but justice, so there is no need to be afraid of their attacks on the contrary. It is barbarity on our part to mistake them as our enemies. Here, the magistrate servers as a beacon light to such ignorant Africans. He is the synthesizer, the symbol of great re-union.

Thus the title, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is quite meaningful and suggestive, the humanitarian message of the novel is:

***“Every man wants to live. To live and live and live.  
No matter what!”***

## DEREK WALCOTT

**Q- Evaluate Derek Walcott as a poet with English tongue and Caribbean soul with special reference to his poetry studied by you.**

Derek Walcott is an outstanding lyric poet of the West Indies writing in English. He is one of the three greatest poets writing in the English language in the world today, the other two being Seamus Heaney and Jorie Graham. His father was a Bohemian; that is a person, who lives and behaves in an informal way that is considered typical of artists and writers. His mother was a teacher, who had been a real inspiration to Derek to compose poetry, not only that but she really encouraged him to read poetry of good poets of the world and he did it just like a prayer. He had great regards for his parents. His mother really inspired him to write poetry as she knew that her son had the potential to write lyrical poetry. He was a brilliant student and got scholarship for university education in Jamaica, the West Indies.

Derek has been a real patriot and loves his country more than anything else. Unlike his fellow writer, V.S. Naipaul, who turned his back on the West Indies, Derek still takes an active interest in the cultural life of the West Indies. He devotes a lot of time in writing poetry along with his profession of a professor in Boston.

His lyrical poetry is at once extremely lush and lyrical. He has a sort of propulsion that is the force that pushes something forward and he continues to get inspiration to write poetry. The main characteristics of his poetry are his love for his native land which is generally green and pleasant. In fact he has taken the coloniser's language and made it fresh and lucid.

In his poetry, Walcott studies the conflict between the heritage of European and West Indian culture, from slavery to independence of the West Indians during his youth. His collection of poems entitled 'The Bounty' is significant and can be interpreted in so many ways. Its literal meanings are:

- (1) The good things that something provides,
- (2) Generous behaviour,

In West Indies it is pronounced as "bungti" which means liberality in giving, something that is given liberally, a reward, and an inducement. His poems in this collection are full of allusions to the English poetic tradition and symbolic imagination that is at once personal and Caribbean. He is an extremely prolific poet who made his debut at the age of 18 with 25 poems. Widespread recognition as a poet came with the publication of "In A Green Night" in 1964. His poems are full of The West Indian way of life.

Walcott has expressed his rage against the racism and the rejection of colonial culture very powerfully. For his contribution to world literature, Derek Walcott was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992. "The Bounty" has many kinds of poems and some of them are very complex also.

He has used a lot of metaphors in most of his poems. He writes about the Caribbean and the African lands in his “The Bounty” poems. He writes about nature and natural surroundings of his native land. Derek Walcott, the most representative poet of the West Indies, developed himself from the scratch, and by his own will-power, self-discipline, and the desire to be a poet, made him self heard and respected by those who came in his contact and they acknowledged him as a great poet. He is proud to belong to the West Indies, and he visualized a great future for his country not in the conventional manner, in refinement and culture confined to the upper few, but in a vast, comprehensive progress shared by the mass of the common people with their ordinary aims, objects and occupations.

He felt that the West Indies was a different nation from all other nations, because she was made up of strong, self-reliant and independent elements drawn from various nations, who by the sheer power of determination and an iron will were destined to weld themselves into the greatest and most powerful nation of the world. He takes an active interest in the cultural life of the West Indies. He has worked as a professor of poetry at the University of Boston and divides his time between Trinidad and the U.S.A.

‘The Bounty’ is his collection of lush and lyrical poetry on various complex subjects. Most of the poems in this collection contain complex ideas. He is the most representative poet of the West Indies. In fact he is rightly called the Caribbean poet. Most of his poems in ‘The Bounty’ give voice to the Caribbean personality. He believed that the Caribbean poets so far had not made any honest attempt to represent the West Indies in their poems. He wanted the West Indies to have a poet of her own, and when he found that there was none, he took up that task himself. While writing poems for his various collections of poems like ‘In a Green Night’ (1964) which manifested his primary requirement to create a literature truthful to the West Indian life. In ‘The Fortunate Traveler’ (1981) and ‘Midsummer’ (1984) Walcott explored his known situation as a black writer in America who has become estranged (to break up relations) from Caribbean homeland. The very title of such books as ‘Castaways’ (1965) and ‘The Gulf’ (1969) referred to his feeling of artistic isolation.

Most of the poems in his ‘The Bounty’ are great works of art. In most of the poems in this collection, he has expressed his rage against the racism and the rejection of colonial culture powerfully and for his contribution to world literature, Derek Walcott was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992. There is nostalgic element in his poetry as he writes:

***“ So, for my, my own epitaph, “Here lies  
D.W. This place is good to die in. It was really.”***

He also expresses natural surroundings in his poems like ‘For Adam Zagajewski,’ ‘Christmas Eve’ and other poems untitled poems. He has his own peculiar style and individual language of his own country. He writes about his experiences of Caribbean land and the African land. One of his poems is a tribute to his late friend Joseph Brodsky who was a fellow Nobel Prize winner and Russian poet. Most of his poems in ‘The Bounty’ are outstanding and significant.

## Salman Rushdie-SHAME

Salman Rushdie, born in 1947, British novelist of Indian descent, whose book *The Satanic Verses* (1988) was banned in several Islamic countries. The book was so controversial that Rushdie had to go into hiding for several years. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), Rushdie's first novel set largely in the United States, tackled popular culture and the absence of firm ground.

Born in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, Rushdie was educated at the University of Cambridge. His early publications include the novels *Grimus* (1974), *Midnight's Children* (1981), and *Shame* (1983), in which he employed fantasy and dreams in a surrealist style. *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981 and was an unexpected critical and popular success. Rushdie also wrote a report on his travels in Nicaragua, *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), and in 1990 his children's book *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was published.

*The Satanic Verses*, a novel combining fantasy, philosophical ruminations, and comic aspects, was well received, but it also aroused the ire of many Muslims, who considered it an attack on the Qur'an (Koran), Muhammad, and the Islamic faith. As a result of demonstrations, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia banned the work. In 1989 Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* (edict) declaring that Rushdie be put to death.

Although Rushdie offered an apology and a formal statement of his adherence to Islam, the fatwa was not lifted, and he remained in hiding until late 1991, when he began to make isolated and unscheduled appearances and to allow a few interviews. In 1995, despite the continuance of the death threat, Rushdie began making television appearances, granting more frequent interviews, and giving public readings of his works. The Iranian government eventually backed away from the fatwa, but some religious groups still consider it active.

In 1995 Rushdie's collection of short stories *East, West* appeared. *The Moor's Last Sigh*, also published in 1995, is a novel about the last surviving member of a brilliant multiethnic Indian family that traces its lineage to the last Moorish sultan of Granada, Spain. He followed it with two novels largely set in the United States, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001). *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* draws on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in a story about the love affair between two musicians in the mid- and late 20th century. In *Fury*, a doll maker, fearing that the fury within him might lead him to harm his wife and child, deserts his family to seek a new life in New York City.

### A Point of view on *Shame*:

Rushdie's third novel *Shame*, in a way, is a companion piece to *Midnight's Children*. Comparing both the novels Rushdie remarks,

***“It seems to me that everything in both books has had to do with politics and the relationship of the individuals and history”.***

Rushdie, who has dazzled the world with his extraordinary vision in *Midnight's Children*, now surpasses even that triumph in shame. While his *Midnight Children* is a stupendous evocation of the evolution of India since independence, *Shame* is about what happened to the other half of the subcontinent after 1947.

The novelist, as Sushila Singh aptly remarks,

***“Expatriates upon the sins of Pakistan on the basis of his spiritual bond with that country”.***

The novel rests on the two poles of shame and shamelessness.

### **Theme of Shame - Its various nuances:**

Shame expatiates extensively on the theme of shame and also encompasses various nuances that are associated with it. It runs on three levels - the Political, the Cultural and the Social.

- **The Political Level**

On the Political level, the novel runs like a document on the contemporary political situation in Pakistan. It may appear that the novelist concerns himself with the story of Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa, the two powerful political leaders of the country. One may be tempted to draw parallels in the story of General Zia and Zulfikar Bhutto. The novelist explores in the depth of the Iskander Raza plot:

***“a very macho book all about careerism, cops, politics, revenge, assassination, excursions, blood and guts”.***

*He even presents various strategies employed by these two families – Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa. He comes out overtly how shame is the result of excessive humiliation and that it certainly leads to violence. Naturally politicians who take recourse to the methods of repression are bound to tell one day or the other.*

- **The Cultural Level**

On the cultural level, the novelist draws our attention to poets and artists who are punished in Pakistan. A reputed poet in Karachi is put in jail for his patriotic compositions. Besides being tortured in an inhuman fashion, he,

***“had been hung upside –down by the angler and beaten, as if he were a new born baby whose lungs had to be coerced into action so that he could squeal”.***

The plight of the poet reflects ostensibly the state of affairs prevailing in Pakistan.

- **The Social Level (Mores of the Islamic Society)**

This is the theme of the social mores of the backwards and superstitious Islamic society that multiplies on shame through limitless repression breeding violence. In fact, this leads to psychological horrors in the society. In the words of the narrator:

***“Repression is a seamless garment, a society which is authorization in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honors and properties, breeds repressions of other kinds”.***

*as well. Contrariwise: dictators are always or at least in public, on other people's behalf - puritanical".*

Thus the theme of shame, as depicted through the book takes on a zigzag trajectory, with interesting results.

### **Rushdie's Art of characterization:**

Rushdie's art of characterization of this novel has drawn considerable critical attention. Omar Khayyam represents the comic vituperation of the murky political history of Pakistan. He is born of three recluse spinsters who keep secret which of their wombs bore him on his grandfather deathbed.

Omar often wants an escape from the oppressive protection of his three virgin mothers in Nishapur. He discovers that the personal shame is only a microcosmic form of the national shame he sees abroad this rumination at the end of the novel throw light on his desperate situation.

***"I can confess to many things feelings from roots, obesity, drunkenness, hypnosis, getting girls in the family way, not sleeping with my wife, too many pine kernels, peeping tommery as a boy...I confess to social climbing, to only doing my job to being corner man in other peoples wrestling matches. I confess to fearing sleep".***

### **Sufiya Zinobia:**

Sufiya Zinobia seems to have grown out of the corpse of the murdered girl in England. Caught between two cultures, she becomes a sacrificial scapegoat in expiation of the guilt her parents feel for having transplanted themselves in an alien land. Through the disfigurement of Sufiya, Rushdie creates an impressive world that becomes longer recognizes her as a character, as,

***"She evolves into a myth and a legend, a beast, lusty for kill stalking the country, naked, matted with grime and blood".***

Rushdie dwells upon the triggers of violence within Sufiya. The first outburst is a demoniac writing of necks of Pinkie Aurangzeb's two handed and eighteen turkeys. The second outburst is an attempted writing of the neck of Naveed's husband, Talvar. There are subsequent instances of violence. The novelist seems to think that if Sufiya, who is Shame, is alienated in Pakistan, what remarks then is un-alienated shamelessness:

***"What the opposite of shame, what's left when shame is subtracted? That's obvious shamelessness."***

Through the story of Omar Khayyam and Sufiya Zinobia, the novelist has presented an axis which lies between Shame and Shamelessness.

### **Recreation of Contemporary Indian History:**

The greatness of the novel lies in the recreation of contemporary Indian history. The novel contains vivid representation of history in the plot involving the important architects of Pakistan's history in Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa. In the words of R. S. Pathak:

***“The novel tries to highlight complex networks of trans-cultural relationships between the individual and historical forces”.***

The treatment of the events as well as character is artistic in terms of history. For example, the novelist talks about various historical situations that obtains in Pakistan:

***“History was old and rusted it was a machine nobody plugged in for thousands of years and here all of a sudden it was being asked for maximum output. Nobody was surprised that there was accident... No it’s more than that; there are things that cannot be permitted to be true”***

Rushdie runs wildly about alike a time traveler who has lost his magic capsule and fears he will never comes from the disintegrating history of his race.

Some of the characters in the novel seem to negate history. Omar Khayyam descended upon the cowards of history like a wolf on the fold to Raza Hyder, the recalling of history is merely a ‘rite of blood’. Bilquis is suspicious of history and pushes the past away like a poor relation.

#### **His illusionary fictional reality:**

The uniqueness about Rushdie’s treatment of history also lies in his ideas of illusionary fictional Reality. For example, the locale of *Shame* is,

***“Not Pakistan, or not quite there are two countries real are fictional....my story, my fictional country exists like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centering to be necessary; but its value is of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan”***

We know that on the surface level the country is Pakistan, but on the deeper level, it may be any country when forces of repression operate. It is there that the level transcends the confines of the particular. As the novelist says:

***“I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I too, face the problem of history what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change, and to come back to the ‘roots’ idea. I should say that I haven’t managed to shake myself free of it completely.”***

This shows how the novelist sorts out events judiciously and gives imaginative colorings to his plot. As Timothy Brennan rightly observes:

***“As though fearing reprisals shame hides history in allusive references to the past which are buried in casual place names and family titles and ironic reincarnation of figures from legend”.***

### **Use of Irony in the Novel:**

There are layers of irony in the novel. There is the use of the situational and verbal irony here. The description of the 40<sup>th</sup> day celebration of the death of the old Shakil, father of the three sisters, is ironically done. The dumb waiter ironically is not a man but an instrument of communication of the three scandalized sisters to communicate with the outside world at the time of their confinement. Another instance of irony is that Moulana Dawood is decorated in his own town with the regard to Raza Hyder's family.

Ironically, god does not find a place for himself in Pakistan which is thought to be a holy country of god. To give a few instances of verbal irony, Omar Khayyam is named after a poet with an expectation of courting the muse but ironically no quatrains issue forth from his pen. Pakistan indicates a holy place but in the novel it turns out to be a center of brutality and grotesqueness. Sufiya Zinobia is a beauty as well as a beast. As the novelist rightly explains, to comprehend her is to acknowledge in national makeup recognition of which shatters a nation's concept of itself.

### **Technique of Parallel & Contrasts:**

Rushdie also employs the technique of parallels and contrasts. We may include in the list of parallels the following:

- Just as evil days have fallen on Pakistan, the families of the main characters in the novel are doomed to unforeseen circumstances.
- Just as one notices the confrontation between the two families Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa one observes similar confrontation between the forces of shame and shamelessness.
- The dexterity of Sufiya Zinobia is contrasted with the charming nature of good news. There is also a contrast in temperaments between Omar Khayyam and Babar.
- Just as *Midnight's Children* concerns itself with political scene that obtained in India shame delineates the events that have happened since independence in Pakistan while recording the events, the novelist likes to underline his message also. He aims at showing how shame is a part of the architecture of the society in a country like Pakistan where,

*“Shameful things are done; lies, loose living, disrespect for one's elders, failure to love ones national flag, incorrect voting at elections over eating, extramarital sex... smuggling, throwing one's wicket away of a test match and they are done shamelessly”.*

### **Language for nasty and rude expression of cynical frankness:**

It is perhaps for the use of languages that Rushdie's 'shame' has earned itself a place in the literary halls of fame, one finds in the novel nasty and rude expression of cynical frankness for example, old Shakil calls his three daughters. "Whores" and condemns his city as "a bell hole". Hasmat bidi causes the order of a mule thus: "may your grand sons urinate upon your pauper's grave". Isky Harappa abuses Raza Hyder by calling him "a seducer of his grandmother's pet mongrel bitch." The employment of scandalous and foul language has both structural and thematic significance.

### **Felicitous Phrases:**

The novel bustles with felicities of expressions. For example, Bisques has an unforgettably powerful nickname of Khansi ki rani or queen of coughs. The place where the three sisters look forward to transact their amorous affairs is called the ‘dumb waiter’. The description of the doctor and instruments of medical students is fraught with felicitous expression.

*“What’s a doctor, after all? A legitimized voyeur, a stranger whom we permit to put fingers and even hands permit most people to insert so much as a finger tip, who gazes on what we take more trouble to hide: a part at besides, an outsider permitted to our most intimate fragments, birth , death etc.. Anonymous, a minor character also paradoxically, central, especially at the crisis”.*

This passage shows that Rushdie has succeeded eminently in the use of felicitous expression in his languages.

### **Urdu Expression:**

Rushdie does not hesitate to use a few Urdu expressions with a view to adding Indian sensibility to his novel for example the pawn broken is called “a wide eyed chalacksahib”. Naveed Hyder comments on marriage thus, “...marriage is freedom you stop being some ones daughter and become some ones mother instead *ek dum, futu-fut* pronto”. Raza Hyder and his people wept with pride. He has taken the ‘*aansu ki wedi*’. These expressions add the Indian flavour to the language and intensity the meaning of the novel.

### **Quotation and Reference from Literature:**

The novel abounds in quotation and reference to a variety of literary sources. Rushdie’s aim is not to collect quotation and make reference but to raise echoes. What interests him is the penumbral of universal sentiment around the particular expression used by these famous authors. He almost weaves these into the central motive that echoes the absurdity of a three sisters. The reference to ‘hanged a man’ reminds us a Grazer’s ‘the golden bough’ which offers a comparative study of the belief and institution of mankind ‘affairs of honors’ suggests medieval knight errantry. The women in the Vail alludes both to the bible and to the Hawthorne story about the veiled minister ‘judgment day’ is an allusion to the doomsday a concept common to all religions. The title of the novel with its connotation of the existential angst called shame is reminiscent of Kafka’s *The Trial*, a work cited within the text.

These reference to various literary sources are intertwined into the central ideas of shame, the emotion that begins in a sense of guilt and leads to violation of other people, violence to neighbors’ and eventually to self destruction and to more shame.

### **Summing up:**

To sum up, one may say that Rushdie’s *Shame* deals with the central motif of shame that runs through the psyche of several characters as a subterranean force and finally acts as a shuttle that pulls into shape several stands of the shameful story of *Shame*.



# **Dr. V. R. Godhaniya College**

POST-GRADUATE CENTRE OF ENGLISH

M.A. - PART - II



“Night’s darkness is a bag that bursts with the gold of the dawn.”