

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

MA (ENGLISH)

4th Semester

COURSE : ENG - 401

FICTION : MODERN

Block : III, IV & V

**Directorate of Open and Distance Learning
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ENGLISH

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BLOCK - III
UNIT - I : LIFE AND AGE OF
D. H. LAWRENCE
D. H. LAWRENCE: *SONS AND LOVERS*

Unit Structure

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1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the life and works of D. H. Lawrence
- understand the age in which Lawrence was producing his literary works
- comprehend the philosophy of Lawrence

1.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the novel *Sons and Lovers* written by David Herbert Lawrence, popularly known as D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) – a successful novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist and playwright in English literature. He is basically known as a novelist for his works like *The White Peacock* (1911), *The Trespasser* (1912), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Aaron's Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923), *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (1930). He also wrote a number of poems, short stories, essays, plays, travel sketches and letters.

In this unit, you will get an overview of the life and works of D. H. Lawrence, literary trends of his age and his philosophy of mysticism. You will also be given an idea about the background of the novel.

1.2 D.H. Lawrence – The Novelist

You have already been stated that D. H. Lawrence was a successful novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist and playwright in English literature. Let us now discuss Lawrence's life, his works, his philosophy and the genesis of the novel under discussion. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* is so much autobiographical that the study of his life would be of immense help in understanding and appreciating the work.

1.2.1 His Life

D. H. Lawrence was born in the mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, England on 11 September 1885 to John Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall. His father was an uneducated coal miner, who liked his work but could not make professional advancement because he was continuously involved in wrangling with his immediate superiors. But he was quite popular among his fellow miners. He had a good voice and he used to sing in the choir at Brinsley church for some years. At night he enjoyed drinking in the local pub. On the other hand, his mother Lydia belonged to a middle class family. Her father George Beardsall was an engineer. In her youth she was attracted to a refined young man, but their relation came to an end. She met Arthur Lawrence at a party and married him in 1875, knowing in the least what it was to be an uneducated coal miner's wife. Soon the charm of marriage was over and she was disillusioned only to find her dreams shattered. The intensely physical John Arthur Lawrence and his wife shared the same house but they lived in two different worlds. Occasionally, they quarreled violently causing terrible fright to the children. Their life became an endless battle between culture and clumsiness. Lydia could not even bear the dialect used by her husband and did not let her children speak the same. She considered herself intellectually superior to the womenfolk of miners' colony and did not like to mix with them. She wanted her daughters to marry above the working class and her sons to stay out of the pits. But her husband did not have any desire for social or economic upliftment.

He was their fourth child and was physically delicate and sensitive. His mother was his constant source of inspiration and with her encouragement he excelled at school. He won a scholarship at Nottingham High School. He worked briefly as a manufacturer's clerk in 1899 after his graduation. But he was not happy with his work and he left his job after a serious attack of pneumonia. He taught as a pupil teacher in Eastwood British School since

1902. Then he taught at Ilkeston, Derbyshire until 1906 when he went to Nottingham University for a two years academic programme leading to an Arts degree. After acquiring the qualification of a teacher he joined Davidson Road School in Croydon, a suburb of London, as a junior assistant master. He worked there till he had another severe attack of pneumonia in 1911.

His literary interests developed early in his life. Jessie Chambers, the daughter of a family at whose home he lived part of his convalescence five years ago, played a vital role in his experimentation in verse and fiction. The emotional conflict that he underwent due to Jessie and his mother has been represented in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. His mother died in January 1911 and it was a major event in his life as he emotionally was so much attached with her. A few weeks later he published his novel *The White Peacock*, in the writing of which Jessie Chambers was a source of encouragement. The narrator in this novel, describing the story of a girl and two suitors, shares much with the writer himself. *The Trespasser* was a novel of frustrated love and was based on the work of a London friend – Helen Corke. By 1913 Lawrence also published a book of poems and his powerful novel *Sons and Lovers* and he was by then becoming a reputed writer. This novel of Lawrence is highly autobiographical and it describes the growth of a sensitive young man in a coal miner's family. It also represents the emotional turmoil in the protagonist's relations between his spiritual sweetheart and his possessive mother. He could liberate himself from her influence only after her death.

Lawrence's personal life took an abrupt turn when he eloped with Frieda von Richthofen Weekley one month after they had met in April 1912. She was the wife of a professor of Philosophy in Nottingham University and was the mother of three small children. This event took him in a journey around the world and the couple had to live in poverty. In spite of that he continued to write poems, short stories, novels and plays. They returned to England in 1914 but they received hostilities and were charged of pro-German sympathies. He published *The Rainbow* in 1915, but it was denounced by many reviewers

as obscene and the entire edition was destroyed by court order. He lived briefly in borrowed apartments in London and cottages in Berkshire and then left for Italy to live there for the next three years. After publishing three books of poems, he published another novel – *Women in Love*, in which he continued some characters, including Frieda herself, from the earlier novel. The novel shows the influence of Freudian psychology and a rejection of European culture and a plea for a more vital primitive one that would reinforce life. His preoccupation with healthy and spiritual sexuality, a vivid intuition about people and his preternatural sensitivity to nature mark the novel. He preferred blood consciousness rather than a sterile cerebral consciousness. In 1920 he published another novel, *The Lost Girl* following Arnold Bennett's naturalism. Probably it was an attempt to write a novel that would sell, but it was far weaker than the earlier one.

He was invited to live in Taos, New Mexico in 1921 by Mabel Dodge Luhan, who was establishing an artists' colony there. They reached there in September 1922 via Ceylon, New Zealand and Australia. He published *Aaron's Rod* in the same year, which describes the attempt of an established man in a mining environment to start all over in middle life. *Kangaroo* was published in 1923. *The Boy in the Bush* (1924) is a rewriting of a novel by Martin Skinner. It is an adventure story in West Australia. In New Mexico Lawrence became full life again busying himself in writing, building, gardening, riding, baking and painting etc. In 1926 he published a violent novel – *The Plumed Serpent* – where both Christianity and sophisticated Europeans bowed before the vigour of the blood consciousness of the Indian primitivism and the primal instinctive behaviour of its representatives. At this time Lawrence had a severe tuberculous hemorrhage and malaria. He returned to England and then to Italy. Here he published his *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928. Its publication raised the charges of obscenity again and he was threatened of prosecution. His health worsened and he was taken to a villa at Vence, above Cannes, at his insistence. He died there on 2nd March 1930 with Frieda at

his side. His body was reinterred at Taos later. Compared to the short career he had, he left behind him an extraordinary and large body of literary creations.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What type of a child was Lawrence? Where did he grow up?
2. Who was Jessie Chambers?

1.2.2 His Works

D. H. Lawrence's writings cover a wide range of literary genres, viz., novels, short stories, essays, poetry and plays. He also created some paintings. But here we shall concentrate on his major novels:

The White Peacock:

The White Peacock, published in 1911 is the first novel of D. H. Lawrence. It is an autobiographical novel; its narrator is a sensitive young man Cyril Beardsall. This is no coincidence that Lawrence's mother was also a Beardsall before marriage; he intentionally gave the title to the young man in order to recreate his own self in the novel. In other words Cyril is a pen-portrait of Lawrence. George Saxton, one of Cyril's friends falls in love with Cyril's sister Lettie. After continuing this relationship for years, Lettie ultimately marries a wealthy young man Leslie Tempest. This disturbs everyone concerned. George becomes a drunkard and personally disintegrates. Lettie also does not get happiness in her married life. The novel thus deals with unhappy relationships between the two sexes. The setting of the novel is also Eastwood – Lawrence's own country.

The Trespasser

The Trespasser, Lawrence's second novel, published in 1912, is an adaptation of a novel by Helen Corkeone of his friends from his school teaching days in London. It is about the frustrated love affair between Siegmund, a violinist and Helena, a school teacher. He has taught her violin for some time.

He is married; but his marriage is an unsuccessful one. He leaves his wife and children and goes on a holiday with Helena. The novel depicts the life of these two persons in the Isle of Wight for five days. This relation also fails because of Helena's sexual coldness and the fact that she needs him only as a dream not as a real person. Leaving her, Siegmund comes back home and commits suicide. The novel is extremely good in certain parts, but in some others it is badly written.

Sons and Lovers

This novel was published in 1913 and was originally titled as *Paul Morel*. This novel is autobiographical and it describes the life of the Morel family. Mrs. Gertrude Morel, a refined woman from a middle class family has been married to an uneducated coal miner Mr. Walter Morel and is utterly unhappy with her marriage. Her entire attention is given to her sons. After the death of her eldest son William, she becomes strongly attached to Paul. Due to this disastrous attachment he cannot establish any satisfactory relationship with any woman. Miriam comes to his life, she awakens the artist in him; but the two fail to achieve harmony in their relationship, partly due to mother-pull in Paul and partly due to sexual inhibition in Miriam. Paul is passionately in love for some time with Clara Dawes, a married but separated woman, who earns her own living. But the consummation of their relationship brings dissatisfaction only. Their relationship breaks down soon. With the death of his mother Paul is left despaired; but at the end of the novel he is determined to face the unknown future. The plot of the novel is well knit and it presents a faithful description of the life of people in the mining town of Bestwood.

The Rainbow

The Rainbow published in 1915 is the least autobiographical of Lawrence's novels. It represents marital fulfillment. The novel describes to story of three generations of the Brangwens living on the Marsh farm. While other members of the family move to the city, Tom Brangwen continues to stay at the farm. He meets, falls in love and marries Lydia Lensky, the widow

of a Polish revolutionary, who comes to stay at the village with her little girl Anna. In spite of having differences they seem to have found marital fulfillment. Anna grows up and falls in love with Will, the son of one of Tom's brothers who moved to the city. After her marriage with Will, Anna finds complete fulfillment in child rearing. They have a daughter named Ursula, who, after growing up refuses to accept her mother's confined existence in child bearing and looking after the family. She falls in love with Anton Skrebensky, a Polish young man, who goes abroad to fight against the Boers. He returns after six years and tries to reinvigorate their relationship, but Ursula does seem satisfied and leaves him. Anton also leaves for India and eventually marries his colonel's daughter. Ursula later on tries to reunite with Anton, but she comes to know that he has already married. However, she is hopeful of a bright future.

Women in Love

This novel was published in 1920 and it is a sequel to the novel *The Rainbow*. It tells us the lives of Ursula Brangwen and her sister Gudrun in terms of their relationship with the two men Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich, who are paying attention to them. Birkin is the eternal man Ursula seems to have waited for, and he represents Lawrence himself. She finds complete happiness with him. But Gudrun and Crich fail to achieve marital happiness; in her attempt to dominate Crich, Gudrun destroys him. In this novel we see Lawrence's philosophy of life represented. It rejects Christianity for its dualism and perpetuation of the conflict between mind and spirit. The institution of marriage and the process of industrialisation have been questioned in the novel.

Aaron's Rod

Aaron's Rod was published in 1922. The novel describes the search for satisfaction in relationships by Aaron and his disappointment in his attempts. Aaron is dissatisfied with his marriage life and leaves his wife and two children and goes to London. There he meets Lily, a married school teacher and the

two have a kind of homosexual relationship. Lily goes to Italy and Aaron follows him. In Italy, Aaron has a brief and dissatisfying relationship with the wife of the Italian Marchese del Torre. He returns to Lily again only to get disappointed. He meets his wife again, but resents of being dominated by her. Ultimately he goes away in order to live a single life. Compared to the earlier works, *Aarons Rod* is artistically incoherent.

Kangaroo

Published in 1923, Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* deals with the theme of marriage and relationship between man and man in an Australian setting. Somers, a writer and his wife Harriet visit Australia. They represent Lawrence and his wife Frieda respectively. Somers, being unhappy with his writing, wants to do something with real people. They befriend an Australian couple Jack and Victoria Calcott. Jack wants to be in an intimate friendship with Somers, but he does not respond warmly. Kangaroo is a Jewish lawyer in Sidney, who heads a political movement in which Jack is an activist. Somers is impressed by Kangaroo, but he does not respond to his movement. Being threatened by Kangaroo, Somers feels terrified. Kangaroo is shot in a clash and Somers visits him in his death-bed. At the end Somers and Harriet leave Australia. As represented in the novel marital relationships fail if the woman dominates over the man, similarly man to man relationships also fail because of lack of emotional responses.

The Plumed Serpent

Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*, published in 1926, is an attempt to understand the nature of religion more fully. At the beginning of the novel we see Kate Leslie, an Irish widow of forty, going to watch bull fight with two of her American male friends. She is disgusted by the game and leaves it. She meets two men of Spanish origin, Ramon and Cipriano. She goes to the lake of Sayula with them. There an attempt has been made to receive the pagan

gods of Mexico. The chief god in their pantheon is Quetzalcoatl, which is the 'Plumed Serpent' of the title. The death of Jesus and coming of Quetzalcoatl has been enacted in a scene in the plaza. Kate marries Cipriano in an ancient ceremony and finds complete physical happiness with him, but she still craves for the old liberty to move freely. The novel expresses Lawrence's dissatisfaction with Christianity and his glorification of the primitive religion of Mexico.

Lady Chatterley's Lover

Lady Chatterley's Lover, published in 1929, is Lawrence's best known and most criticized novel. Lawrence describes it as a phallic novel. Sir Clifford Chatterley is now crippled and impotent because of a wound he suffered in war. In an attempt to give new meaning to his life he becomes a writer. His wife Constance looks after him for some time, but gradually becomes disinterested in him. She is attracted by Mellors, the game keeper of her husband. They passionately fall in love with each other. They decide to marry and live on a farm in England. They overcome the hostility of society and when the novel comes to an end they are expecting a baby. It has some frank descriptions of sexual experience and attracted much criticism immediately after its publication.

Check Your Progress 2

1. What type of a novel is *Sons and Lovers*?
2. Why is *The Plumed Serpent* an important novel?

1.3 D. H. Lawrence and His Age

Every writer is somehow affected by the social, cultural, political and intellectual environment of his age. Literary trends of the age also affect one's writings. In order to appreciate a writer's works, we need to have a fair idea about the age in which these works of literature were produced, because a

writer represents in his writings what he generally derives from life. D. H. Lawrence is not an exception; hence we shall discuss the socio-cultural and literary backgrounds which affected the writings of Lawrence.

1.3.1 Socio-economic Changes

By the end of the 19th century, agrarian life broke down in England due to rapid industrialization. Industrialization and urbanization went hand in hand. During this period we see the growth of industrial complexes. Industrialization and urbanization had good impact on English society and economy, but they had their own problems. The industrial towns grew quickly and chaotically making the standard of living deplorable for the inhabitants. Children were left uncared for. Danger of fatal epidemics loomed large at these places. Spiritual and ethical values degraded rapidly and crime began to take place at a faster rate. Acquisition of wealth became the motto of life for many. Value of people came to be judged in terms of money. Money formed the basis of human relations. Humanists such as Ruskin and Carlyle condemned the commercialization of the age. The vanishing rural way of life came to be represented in literature as cherished nostalgia.

1.3.2 Emancipation of Women

English society in the twentieth century is remarkably different from the English society of the Victorian Age. Among the different radical changes one important aspect was the emancipation of women. The position of women upgraded considerably in society. Women were no longer confined to the chores of the home; they now had important roles to play in society. Earlier the 'angel in the house' was praised even by poets like Tennyson. In the twentieth century spread of education and movement towards democratization prepared the way for liberation of women. They were now encouraged to pursue higher education and their right to vote was strongly supported.

1.3.3 The Spirit of Questioning Established Social Norms

The shift to the twentieth century was a movement towards rationalism; but it also brought about an atmosphere of uncertainty and moral perplexity. In the Victorian period, even though writers had the questioning spirit, they were not critical about the fundamental social or moral norms. But the twentieth century saw a number of writers who could really question the established social and moral order for reformation and reconstruction of the same. These writers include Shaw, Wells Galsworthy etc. The authority of the older over the young has also decreased in this period.

1.3.4 Questioning of the Supremacy of Conventional Authority

Simultaneously with the liberation of women there was a tendency to question the male authority. With the end of the World War I, supremacy of the male authority declined very fast. Incompetency of those in authority was no longer accepted silently; people now do not hesitate to protest. Even the doctrines of Christianity came to be questioned. The theory of evolution forwarded by Charles Darwin shattered the very basis of Christianity. Philosophers like Max Muller also rejected the supremacy of Christianity. There was a general loss of faith in God and religion.

1.3.5 Impact of Freudian Psychology

Theories regarding human psychology put forward by Sigmund Freud and later by Jung and Bergson changed the entire understanding of human behaviour. The findings of Freud were rooted in the theory of biological instincts. According to him, the unconscious plays a very important role in shaping human behaviour. Man's behaviour is not as much rational as it was thought earlier. One's actions might be motivated by forces which one might be totally unaware. The firm line between the normal and abnormal drawn during the nineteenth century gradually disappeared after the new discoveries of Freud. He and his followers established that neurosis and other forms of abnormality occur due to repressed sex instincts.

1.3.6 Changes in Interpersonal Relationships

Psychological theories put forward by Freud and his followers had its impact on the explanation of private and family relationships. The Oedipus Complex brought about such explanations of relationships which were erstwhile unthinkable. Abnormalities of human behaviour interested authors of novels. Infantile sexuality has also been the themes in literature. D. H. Lawrence also made use of the theme of human sexuality in his fiction.

1.3.7 Anxiety

During and after the World War I, there was an increase in anxiety in families and societies across the globe, particularly in England. Tension and frustration increased at personal and societal level. Unemployment, economic depressions and rapid growth of population on the one hand, and revolt against authority on the other made life as a whole insecure and hard. Political instability is a marked characteristic of the age. Rapid spread of education and scientific ideas also led to the disillusionment of people. Due to development in transport and communication people could move and communicate faster; ideas spread more rapidly at this age than earlier. God and religion could no longer give mankind the solace it used to give earlier.

1.3.8 The Changing Status of Man

Earlier, man was the bread winner of the family and he was the supreme authority at home and at society. But the twentieth century offered woman many a ways to prove her and the result was a drastic change in the position of man in family and at society. Freud described man as a biological phenomenon, who is a prey to instinctual desires. Marxists believed that man is the outcome of economic and social forces and is a product of socio-economic evolution. As a result of these economic factors and philosophical ideas man began to have a confused idea of themselves, which to a great extent continues till today.

1.3.9 British Imperialism

The Victorian age celebrated the growth of imperialism. By the beginning of the twentieth century it covered a huge landmass over the globe having more than three hundred and seventy million people. However, cracks in the British Empire were visible from the beginning of the twentieth century. The Boer war is one of the earliest events which showed that the imperialistic aggression of the British can be challenged. By mid-twentieth century disintegration of British imperialism took place fast.

1.3.10 Popular Culture and its Problems

With the spread of education and the arrival of the printing press, books, magazines, papers etc. multiplied and became cheaper. Commercialization negatively affected the quality of art and literature; and Industrialization destroyed the folk culture. The cheap literatures produced to cater to the needs of the general public were abundant in vulgarity and brutality. A day-dreaming was instilled in man by the television, cinema and cheap novels and he lost the sense of reality.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Did Lawrence question established norms of society in his novels?
2. What are the factors that contributed to the increasing anxiety in the

modern period?

1.4 Introduction to Lawrence's Philosophy

D. H. Lawrence had a prophetic vision and he took his novels as a means to communicate his philosophy of life to people. So, we find Lawrence the philosopher side by side with Lawrence the novelist in his novels. Critics, including David Daiches, did not appreciate his over emphasis on his doctrinal beliefs. Lawrence was a mystic and mysticism can hardly be called a philosophy; it is a mood or a way of looking at things. Mysticism is irrational; it is related to

faith, intuition and experience. So, what Lawrence gives us may not be considered as consistent philosophy. His mysticism can be read under the following categories:

1.4.1 Concept of a Religion of Blood

Lawrence believed that human beings are more and more intellectualized day by day. Reason is gaining an upper hand in every sphere of life. So, impulse has been neglected and man's instinctive and spontaneous responses to life have been pushed aside. He felt that because of this life loses its vitality. He felt that reason should not overwhelm spontaneous reaction to life. He attached sanctity to the natural impulses of a person.

1.4.2 Anti-Materialism

Materialism was an indispensable consequence of the rapid industrialization. Lawrence was anxious about the increasing materialism, selfishness and meanness in society. He was nostalgic about the romantic life destroyed by newly established towns. He felt that separation of work and emotion leads to this sordidness and ugliness of modern life. He tried to escape this dead life by moving to Mexico, Australia and Italy.

1.4.3 Anti-intellectualism

Lawrence believed that there is a dark mystery in life; and he believed that it cannot be understood by any intellect. This dark mystery can be understood by instincts and intuitions only. Intellect cannot explain it. It would simply destroy the mystery in the process of defining it.

1.4.4 Exalted Conception of Sex

For Lawrence a marital relation should not seek fulfillment in reproducing only. It should be productive in other ways. His works are modern in the very sense of his frank treatment of sex. He did not inherit the conservatism of the Victorians; sexual mysticism formed the basis of his attitude

to life. He believed that sexual harmony could bring about attainment of happiness in life. In consideration of the mysticism involved, sex experiences could be compared to the divine experiences.

1.4.5 Polarization of the Sexes

Lawrence believed that the two sexes must identify and recognize the differences as well as the uniqueness of the other. Polarization of two characters who come in contact with each other brings harmony between them. Domination or possessiveness should not come in the way of formation of a harmonious relationship between the individuals concerned. Intellect and instinct, male and female, consciousness and feelings, mind and senses are always in a state of opposition. They must be in a never-ending opposition, but none of them should be exalted at the cost of the other.

1.4.6 Rejection of Christianity

D. H. Lawrence could not accept the glorification of ascetic life by Christianity. The conflict between mind and matter, spirit and flesh has been perpetuated by this religion. He did not accept the division between spirit and flesh. In his novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) he expresses his rejection of Christianity and his preference for the primitive religion of Mexico.

Check Your Progress

1. Did Lawrence preach some kind of philosophy in his novels?
2. What was Lawrence's view on materialism?

1.5 Let us Sum Up

- D. H. Lawrence was born in the mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, England on 11 September 1885 to John Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall. His father was an uneducated coal miner, but his mother Lydia belonged to a middle class family. She

was educated and her father George Beardsall was an engineer. Soon after their marriage, they felt unhappy with each other and the marriage proved to be a failure.

- Lawrence's literary interests developed early in his life. Jessie Chambers, the daughter of a family at whose home he lived part of his convalescence played an important role in his experimentation in verse and fiction. The emotional conflict that he underwent due to Jessie's love and his mother fixation has been represented in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.
- He died there on 2nd March 1930 with Frieda at his side. His body was reinterred at Taos later. Compared to the short career he had, he left behind him an extraordinary and large body of literary creations.
- D. H. Lawrence's writings cover a wide range of literary genres, viz., novels, short stories, essays, poetry and plays. He also created some paintings.
- Like every writer, D. H. Lawrence was also affected by the social, cultural, political and intellectual environment of his age.
- D. H. Lawrence had a prophetic vision and he took his novels as a means to communicate his philosophy of life to people. So, we find Lawrence the philosopher side by side with Lawrence the novelist in his novels. He was a mystic and mysticism can hardly be called a philosophy; it is a mood or a way of looking at things. Mysticism is irrational; it is related to faith, intuition and experience. So, what Lawrence gives us in his novels may not be considered as consistent philosophy.

1.6 Key Words

Freudian Psychology – Freudian Psychology consists of a set of theories and therapeutic techniques forwarded by Sigmund Freud, which are related to

the study of the unconscious mind.

Imperialism – Imperialism is an action (including colonialism) in which a country extends its power by acquisition of territories.

Industrialization – It is the period of social and economic change that transformed an agrarian society into an industrial one.

Materialism – Materialism is a philosophical concept which holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature.

Mysticism – Mysticism refers to the attainment of insight in ultimate or hidden truths.

Novel – A novel is any relatively long, written work of narrative fiction, normally in prose, and usually published as a book.

Oedipus Complex – It is concept of psychoanalytic theory coined by Sigmund Freud in 1910, which refers to a child's unconscious desire for the parent of the opposite sex.

Rationalism – Rationalism is the view that regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge.

1.7 Terminal Questions

1. Assess the contribution of D. H. Lawrence to the English novel.
2. Write a critical note on Lawrence as a novelist.
3. Illustrate the features of Lawrence's philosophical beliefs.
4. What are the features of the Age of Lawrence? Explain.
5. Make an assessment of Lawrence as a novelist keeping in view the typical features of his age.

1.8 Suggested Readings

Allen, Walter. *The English Novel* (1954).

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1.9 Model Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’

Check Your Progress 1

1. Lawrence was a physically delicate and sensitive child. His mother was his constant source of inspiration and with her encouragement he excelled at school. He had a liking for art. He was born and brought up in the mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, England.
2. Jessie Chambers was the daughter of a family at whose home he lived part of his convalescence. She was his girlfriend in his youth and she played a vital role in his experimentation in verse and fiction. The emotional conflict that he underwent due to Jessie and his mother has been represented in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Check Your Progress 2

1. *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical novel and it describes the life of the Morel family. The characters and the settings of the novel are based on real life people and places which had an impact on Lawrence’s growth as a person and as a novelist.
2. Lawrence’s *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), is an attempt to understand the nature of religion more fully. It expresses Lawrence’s dissatisfaction with Christianity and his glorification of the primitive religion of Mexico.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Lawrence did not directly question established social norms, but he represented some of them (such as religion and the institution of

marriage etc.) in such a way in his novels that his disbelief in them is clearly perceived. However, he did not want to impose them on others.

2. Unemployment, economic depressions, political instability, rapid growth of population, revolt against authority made life as a whole insecure and hard in the modern period. God and religion could no longer give mankind the solace it used to give earlier.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Lawrence was a mystic and mysticism can hardly be called a philosophy; it is a mood or a way of looking at things. Mysticism is irrational; it is related to faith, intuition and experience. So, what Lawrence gives us in his novels may not be considered as consistent philosophy.
2. Lawrence was anxious about the increasing materialism, selfishness and meanness in society. He was nostalgic about the romantic life destroyed by newly established towns and felt that separation of work and emotion leads to this sordidness and ugliness of modern life.

UNIT - II : INTRODUCTION TO *SONS AND LOVERS* – ITS MAJOR THEMES AND CHARACTERS

Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 An Introduction to the Novel
 - 2.2.1 An Autobiographical Novel
 - 2.2.2 A Cathartic Work
 - 2.2.3 The Oedipus Complex
 - 2.2.4 Jessie Chambers' Comments
 - 2.2.5 Exaltation of Sex
 - 2.2.6 Principle of Polarity
 - 2.2.7 Exploration of Human Relationships in terms of Economic Aspects
 - 2.2.8 A Social Novel
 - 2.2.9 Representation of Class Differences
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- 2.3 The Theme of Oedipus Complex in *Sons and Lovers*
 - 2.3.1 Oedipus Complex and D. H. Lawrence
 - 2.3.2 Oedipus Complex and William Morel
 - 2.3.3 Oedipus Complex and Paul Morel
 - 2.3.4 Paul's Relationship with Miriam and Clara
 - 2.3.5 Paul is Never Released from his Mother-fixation
- 2.4 Characterisation in *Sons and Lovers*
 - 2.4.1 Walter Morel
 - 2.4.2 Gertrude Morel
 - 2.4.3 Paul Morel

- 2.4.4 William Morel
- 2.4.5 Miriam
- 2.4.6 Clara Dawes
- 2.4.7 Baxter Dawes
- 2.5 Let us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Terminal Questions
- 2.8 Suggested Readings
- 2.9 Model Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to critically appreciate:

- the genesis and background of the novel
- the theme of Oedipus Complex as represented in the novel
- the major characters in the novel

2.1 Introduction

This unit will give you a general introduction to the novel *Sons and Lovers*. The novel is based on real life events and experience of D. H. Lawrence. It can be read as a cathartic work, a social novel or as a novel of transition. In this unit, these aspects of the novel, along with some other issues, such as the view of Jessie Chambers – Lawrence’s girlfriend, the principle of polarity, exaltation of sex in the novel, representation of human relations, depiction of class differences and drawbacks of the novel, will be discussed. The third section will introduce you to the theme of Oedipus Complex. There are only seven important characters in the novel. Brief sketches of these characters are given in the next section which will help you have a better understanding of this work of fiction.

2.2 An Introduction to the Novel

D. H. Lawrence started writing the novel *Sons and Lovers* sometime in 1910 and at first it was titled *Paul Morel*. This was published in 1913; till then it was the most important work by Lawrence. It still has its importance among the readers and critics of Lawrence. Here we see more mature qualities of Lawrence as a novelist than in his earlier novels such as – a firm grasp of his subject matter and a awareness of the living quality of nature. It received a wide attention from readers and critics. It is an important work not only of Lawrence, but of the entire body of English literature.

2.2.1 An Autobiographical Novel

Sons and Lovers is so much autobiographical that almost all characters have remarkable resemblances to the real life characters Lawrence came across. He was the fourth child of an unhappy couple living in the mining town of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England. Being a sensitive child he suffered deeply during his childhood due to the unhappy conjugal life of his parents – Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall represented as Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel. The character of Paul Morel has been created after D. H. Lawrence, while Miriam represents Jessie Chambers. The bitterness he had in childhood is vividly expressed in this novel.

Paul's relation with his mother and Miriam has strong resemblances to the author's relationships with his mother and Jessie Chambers respectively. The setting of the novel – a mining town named Bestwood also bear remarkable likeness to Eastwood, the mining town where Lawrence grew up.

2.2.2 A Cathartic Work

Lawrence wrote this novel as an effort to understand his early life experiences and in writing the same he re-lived the experiences again and again. In the process he could see the past more clearly and more objectively. So, his interpretation of it changed. It seems he could resolve his childhood problems in this novel. This is a cathartic work in this sense.

2.2.3 The Oedipus Complex

Oedipus Complex, to explain simply, is a condition in which a child shows excessive affection for the parent of the opposite sex and simultaneously distances from the other parent. Gertrude Morel, disillusioned with her husband, gradually casts him aside and pays her complete attention to her two sons William and Paul; they are almost treated as substitutes for her husband one after the other for emotional support. The attachment to the mother affects the sons so much that they cannot develop a normal and healthy relationship with any other women. Lawrence himself was a victim of similar experiences due to his emotional attachment with his mother Lydia Beardsall.

2.2.4 Jessie Chambers' Comments

The character of Miriam in the novel has its origin in Jessie Chambers whom Lawrence met early in his life. Lawrence loved her but could not continue the relationship due to his excessive attachment with his mother. Similarly, Paul also cannot carry on the relationship with Miriam for his mother-fixation. Jessie helped Lawrence to write the episodes involving their relationships; but, she was not happy with the final publication of the novel in 1913. She felt that Mrs. Morel was unduly glorified at the cost of Miriam. She wanted a truthful representation of their relationship in the novel; but Lawrence was writing a novel and not an autobiography. He took the liberation of an author to create a work of art.

2.2.5 Exaltation of Sex

You have already been told that Lawrence believed in sexual mysticism; his attitude to life was deeply influenced by his idea. It had more meaning to him than simply producing children. He believed that deepest mysteries can be unraveled by sexual experiences. It is not gross animalism; but a creative faculty. It is a way into the divine mysteries of the world which cannot otherwise be explained. The exaltation of sex is to be perceived in this novel also.

2.2.6 Principle of Polarity

Lawrence believed that there exists in the world a range of oppositions, such as mind and spirit, light and darkness, male and female; and these oppositions are in a constant conflict to annihilate one another. The relationship between a man and a woman can be fruitful only when it is based on the law of polarity. Men and women in his novel are in an everlasting strife to possess, dominate and over-power the counterpart of their opposite sex. This is because of the lack of a balance between them, where maleness of man co-exist with femaleness of women and vice-versa, and not at the cost the other.

2.2.7 Exploration of Human Relationships in terms of Economic Aspects

Money has its importance as a means of economic transaction and has the ability to contribute to human welfare and happiness. Lawrence, in this novel, successfully explores the intricacies of human relationships in terms of money. The Morel family is a miner's family and it has experienced extreme poverty. But, Mr. Morel has a spendthrift nature and this worsens the relationship between the husband and wife. Mrs. Morel ultimately casts him off and his place is taken by William as the bread winner of the family. Lawrence carefully describes even the smallest financial details of the family. In spite of being in extreme poverty, Mrs. Morel wanted socio-economic up gradation for her sons and daughters.

2.2.8 A Social Novel

The setting of the novel is the small imaginary mining town of Bestwood. Here, Lawrence has been able to give a life-like picture of the society in a coal mining town inhabited mostly by uneducated people from the lower economic stratum. The novelist's insight into the society and its representation in his work can easily be seen in the episodes dealing with the excitement caused by the fair in the small town, scenes of love and quarrel between the Morels, children's games, Mr. Morel working or washing himself in the scullery etc. We also observe the exploitation of the women in the novel. Participation of women like Clara in the new women's movement is questioned in the novel by exposing the exploitation of female labourers in the lace-making at her home.

2.2.9 Representation of Class Differences

The novel is about the poor, but in certain episodes it describes the differences between middle and poor classes vividly, Gertrude Morel representing the educated middle class and Walter Morel and his family representing the uneducated poor class people. Sympathy and understanding among characters who belong to the same class are stronger than among those belonging to different classes. When the Morel family expects a baby or when their first child dies the entire neighbourhood comes together to help and console them.

2.2.10 A Novel of Transition

The novel begins as a traditional nineteenth century novel, but ends as a modern one. The early part of the novel contains more conventional elements like the family life of the Morels, people in mining society etc. The omniscient narrator is another traditional feature of the novel. But unlike the Victorian novels, we do not see the author being didactic in tone; he never wants to impose his ideas and philosophy on the reader. Like a modern novel it rejects surface reality. It tries to peep into the inner problems of the characters and is not contented with their outward representation. Another modern quality of the novel is the absence of the traditional hero. Paul is an emotionally weak figure, who is a victim rather than an agent. The ending of the novel is also left open unlike a traditional novel.

2.2.11 Impressionism in Character Delineation

Impressionistic techniques have been utilized in character delineation. The external features and behaviours of characters are described in detail but the main thrust is to unravel the internal commotion and sensations of the characters. There is no intrigue or other complicity of plot in the novel. The narration moves backward and forward in time to reveal the psyche of the characters. Lawrence uses a number of symbols in the novel. A better understanding of these helps us to appreciate the novel better.

2.2.12 A Great Novel in spite of having Some Drawbacks

The novel has certain drawbacks. For instance, the character of Baxter Dawes brought into the second part of the novel plays no significant role in the novel. And the novel itself fails to continue the grasp of the readers' attention till the end at the same intensity. The fate of the hero (or anti-hero?) – Paul Morel – is not clear at the end. Despite having some flaws, the novel, no doubt, is one of the greatest works of English fiction and it provides a satisfying experience to the reader.

Check Your Progress 1

1. Why is *Sons and Lovers* a cathartic work?
2. Can we call *Sons and Lovers* a social novel?

2.3 The Theme of Oedipus Complex in *Sons and Lovers*

The concept of Oedipus Complex was forwarded by Sigmund Freud. He showed it as a universal phenomenon. It signifies the manifestation of infantile sexuality in children for the parent of the opposite sex and a corresponding distaste for the other parent. The term 'Oedipus Complex' has been derived from the name of Oedipus – the king of Thebes. According to Greek mythology, he was the son of King Laius of Thebes. Who was prophesied to kill his own father and marry his own mother and have children by her. Oedipus unknowingly did all these; and when he came to know the truth, he blinded himself.

2.3.1 Oedipus Complex and D. H. Lawrence

It is well known today that Lawrence was a victim of the Oedipus Complex and he made a self-portrayal in the character of Paul Morel in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. He had a firm emotional attachment with his mother Lydia Beardsall. He treated her almost as a lover. His poems like 'Monologue of Mother' and 'The Virgin Mother' also bear witness to this fact. It has also been recorded that Lawrence once told Jessie Chambers that he could never love her because he had loved his mother like a lover.

2.3.2 Oedipus Complex and William Morel

Gertrude Morel, an educated and religious middleclass woman of twenty one marries a sensuous and healthy miner Walter Morel. They are very happy for a few months, but gradually the bubble of Mrs. Morel's illusion bursts and she becomes extremely unhappy at her condition – her economic poverty and her husband's carefree and irresponsible ways of life. William is their eldest son. As he grows up Mrs. Morel casts her husband away and seeks emotional fulfillment through William, who responds to her instinctively. In the early part of the novel there is an episode where he brings two egg cups with moss roses on them from a fair and gives them to his mother almost as a lover. He also gives her the first prize that he has won at school. But the mother has an excessive possessiveness because of which she cannot bear when William forms a relationship with any girl. When he falls in love with a passionate girl named Gyp, his mother is very critical about her. William cannot find equilibrium in this tug of war; he is torn between his love for his mother and passion for Gyp. He suffers a deep agony inside and ultimately dies.

2.3.3 Oedipus Complex and Paul Morel

The problem of mother-fixation is more extensive and deeper in case of Paul. Mrs. Morel has been so much frustrated with her husband that she is anxious about the baby in her womb. But at the birth of Paul, she makes a resolution to compensate for bringing him into the world unloved and undesired. Paul's physical weakness necessitates special attention to him on the part of his mother. He is dependent on her physically and psychologically; this psychological dependence continues till her death and beyond. Simultaneously with the growing love for his mother, Paul developed a strong dislike for his father. He begins to look at his father as an opponent. Once Paul becomes ill; his mother sleeps with him and he recovers; while his mother, who is a bad sleeper, also has a deep sleep. Paul's world seems to revolve around his mother. When Walter Morel is in the hospital following an accident, Paul plays joyfully the man in the house.

There is an episode in chapter VIII of the novel where Mrs. Morel, being jealous of Miriam, says to Paul very emotionally that she never had a husband. Paul, laying his mouth at his mother's throat, strokes her hair. She gives him a long fervent kiss and at that time Mr. Morel arrives, who bitterly reacts to them and Mrs. Morel faints. Interestingly enough, Paul forces his mother to sleep with Annie and not with his father. Paul plays the role of husband substitute in the novel. He instinctively sticks to her like a husband; for instance, in the visit to Nottingham they chatted like lovers. Again, during a visit to Mrs. Leiver's farm, they went to a wood full of bluebell flowers. Paul sticks flowers in her coat and it offers another evidence of their emotional attachment. He once complains to his mother for not making him the eldest son, because he would then have a younger mother.

2.3.4 Paul's Relationship with Miriam and Clara

The Paul-Miriam relationship fails despite their mutual affection. Miriam's approach to love, he feels, is nun-like – spiritual and religious. But it is not only Miriam who is responsible for the failure of their relationship. Because of his excessive attachment with his mother he seeks to find his mother like qualities in every woman, and when he fails to find the same he feels incapable of loving them. There is only one woman whom he can love – his mother. He cannot develop a healthy physical or psychological relation with any other woman. Miriam's conflict with his mother for his love and possession of his soul made him ultimately reject her.

Clara, on the other hand, tries to possess the physicality of Paul and leaves the rest for his mother. But still their relationship comes to an unhappy end. This is again due to Paul's intimate relationship with his mother. He finds Clara's physical appeal too superficial to continue. His mother understands that and hence she is not so much opposed to Clara as she is to Miriam.

2.3.5 Paul is Never Released from his Mother-fixation

The penultimate chapter is entitled “The Release.” But the chapter confirms Paul’s allegiance to his mother instead of presenting the promised release. He puts an end to his relationships with Miriam and Clara; he is now free to be in an ideal love relationship with his mother as death has ended the physical barrier between them. The title of the last chapter is “Derelict.” Paul, being deserted by his mother, has become indifferent to both life and death. He has only one meaning and passion in life – his mother, but she is now dead. At the end he moves towards the city, but it is not sure whether he goes there to live or to die.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Why does Paul’s relationship with Miriam fail?
2. Why does Paul’s relationship with Clara fail?

2.4 Characterisation in *Sons and Lovers*

Novels of D. H. Lawrence are fascinating and unconventional; he takes us to a strange, unexplored but mysteriously appealing domain through his novels. The novel under discussion is no exception. This is so because of his art of characterization among other factors. His art is different from the characterization of conventional novel in many aspects. His novels do not contain a large number of characters; *Sons and Lovers* has only seven major characters. Again, his novels do not contain any conventional hero. In this novel, Paul is not a hero in the conventional sense. Thirdly, Lawrence tries to study the psychological conditions of his characters rather than making an effort to establish their relationship with society. In this novel he tries to reveal the mental condition of the characters by exploring their mutual relationships.

Lawrence does not explore all aspects of life through his characters; he has definite points of view to offer including his idea of sexual mysticism and he does so without being didactic. In this novel, which is largely autobiographical, he makes his characters advocate particular points of view with immediacy. His characters are three

dimensional characters; they are drawn as common people with goodness and flaws of human beings. They are not 'round' characters because they show little psychological development in the course of the novel. Lawrence deals with the psyche of the characters and in order to delineate the same, instead of using dramatic technique, he uses impressionistic technique. It is also noteworthy that Lawrence's characters are in harmony with their environs. The non-human is animated in his novel to bring to the foreground some aspect of the human relationship the author wants to vivify. His characters in this novel are delineated with less external details, because his emphasis lies in the exploration of the psyche of these characters.

The major characters in the novel are discussed below:

2.4.1 Walter Morel

The character of Walter Morel had its origin in Lawrence's father Arthur Lawrence. His father had unpolished manners and a violent temper which Lawrence utterly disliked as a sensitive child. He disliked his father also because he made his mother suffer. Therefore, he was harsh and unsympathetic in his delineation of the character of Walter Morel. But in expressing his grudge through the portrayal of his father in the novel he has created a remarkably alive, coherent and convincing character.

Walter Morel and Gertrude meet for the first time at a Christmas party when he was twenty seven. He is a miner and belongs to socially and economically lower class, but Gertrude is fascinated by his pleasant personality – his liveliness and vigour. There is a peculiar grace in his dance steps which adds to his fascination. Gertrude is attracted by his humility. By the next Christmas they are married; they are married at the heat of their love relationship, but they are unable to achieve marital bliss. Walter lacks the intellectual subtleties which Gertrude as an educated individual is capable of. There is an intellectual inequality between the husband and the wife, which results in a vacuum in their efforts at a deeper intimacy. Their marital happiness ends after a few months.

Their conflict starts about Walter's concealing of some facts regarding the ownership of the house and some unpaid furniture bills.

This hiding of his poverty was not a very serious matter for Walter; but Gertrude, with her sense of superiority, refinement and sophistication as an educated middle-class lady, regarded it as a shocking catastrophe. She gradually becomes indifferent to his and he undergoes a pathetic deterioration. The narrator says in the first chapter itself that in seeking to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed him. After William, their eldest son, is born she gives little importance to her husband. This undermines his pride in his manhood and resumes his drinking habit and becomes irritable making their relationship worse. On one occasion he even drives her out of the house at night when she is carrying; he later on feels remorse at what he has done and tries to patch up the breach in their relationship by doing little things for her. There are many incidents which prove that Walter is ill mannered, but which also prove at the same time that Gertrude fails to understand her husband and looks down upon him; what is more unexpected in a marital relationship is that she even transfers her hatred for the man to her children.

Walter Morel is crude in his approach and quarrelsome; this inhibits his rapport in family life and obstructs his progress in professional life. But he is not a bad person at heart. His love for his family members and friends, and his repentance for his wrong doing is quite genuine. However, he ends up committing the same mistakes again. Doing so repeatedly perhaps deteriorates his morals and at Gertrude's death he sentimentalizes over death before her relatives which involves pretence.

He is a good workman who is the happiest when he is engaged in some sort of work. His children love to watch him work and would gather around him to watch it. He also uses to tell stories to the children in some occasions and they listened to him with love and adoration. The dialect that he uses also adds to his charm; Gertrude was impressed with him for his dialect to a large extent. She never used it or allowed her children to use it; but Paul uses this dialect when he makes love to Clara and Arthur, the only son who did not suffer from his mother's corrupting influence, also uses it in his love making.

Walter's manners are rough for a sophisticated woman like Gertrude, because his conducts are controlled by instinct; and for this very reason they are natural. The sophisticated people's responses are conditioned. Walter, with his daily descent and ascent in the mining pit, represents natural rhythm of life and virility.

2.4.2 Gertrude Morel

There is no conventional hero in the novel *Sons and Lovers* and Gertrude Morel is the central figure in it. The story of the novel is focused on her. It describes first her fascination with Walter Morel, their marriage and subsequent discontentedness in conjugal life. Casting off her husband she first takes on her eldest son William and then Paul as her emotional partners. This act of hers has a tremendously catastrophic effect on her sons. The character is based on Lawrence's own mother Lydia Beardsall. Gertrude belongs to the middle-class family from her parents – the Coppards. She is short in stature and had a delicate build up; but she has defiant blue eyes, bright golden hair, and an unmistakably proud unyielding temper. She is not free from the typical middleclass values and snobbishness. She now belongs to the mining community by marriage; but she does not identify herself as one of them. She pays a little higher rent than the Bottoms women; but on account of it she feels that she is socio-economically higher than these women. She never realizes the hollowness of her middle-class values.

Gertrude, in her teenage, loved a polished young man named John Field, whose gift – a bible – she keeps carefully till much later in the story, but she was deserted by her lover in favour of his land lady, a widow of forty. This was a humiliation for her and partly because of this and partly because of her fascination for the young and hearty miner she marries Walter Morel within a year she meets him. When we see her in the novel, Gertrude is thirty one, married for eight years and she is utterly unhappy with her married life.

Her marital bliss is shattered gradually by her disillusionment beginning with the discovery of some hidden facts regarding the house-ownership and some unpaid furniture bills. Her husband used to drink

heavily to her utter dissatisfaction. Moreover, their temperament differed largely. Gertrude thinks herself as an intellectual who likes to discuss religion, philosophy or politics with some educated man; but her husband is incapable of these mental exercises. This destroys her attempts at finer intimacy and the two are gradually alienated.

Gertrude has her share of responsibility in destroying her marital relationship. She was attracted to Walter Morel because he was unlike her; but she gradually develops a hatred for him because he is unlike her. The novelist describes the situation in these words: “The pity was, she was too much his opposite. She could not be content with the little he might be; she would have him the much that he ought to be. So, in seeking to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed him.”

Walter often comes home drunk and violent quarrels take place between them; he bullies and even beats Gertrude. But the bad temper is roused by the instigating and nagging behaviour of his wife. Jerry Purdy is his friend with whom he enjoyed a ten miles walk; Gertrude does not approve of Jerry and she resents the trip. This made Walter furious and drives her out of the house at night when she is pregnant. He feels remorse at this act and tries to patch up by doing petty things for his wife. On one occasion, he comes home hungry and asks Gertrude to attend on him; she says, “Never, milord, I’d wait on a dog at the door first.” He feels very angry and throws a drawer at her, which hurts her on the forehead. He becomes tender and tries to tend the wound but Gertrude rebuffs him badly. These scenes, among others make one sympathise with her; however, one unmistakably observes the flaws in Gertrude also which aggravates their conflict.

Another incident that changed Gertrude’s attitude to her husband altogether is his clipping off of William’s golden curls of hair without her knowledge. She was almost stunned by the act; she said “I could kill you, I could”. She later on said that anyway his hair had to be cut someday. But this act changed something in her forever; it acted as a spear at the soft corner she had for her husband till then.

Since she did not find marital happiness and mental fulfillment in her husband, she diverted her attention to her sons. As William, her eldest child, grows up, she depends upon him for emotional support. He brings her gifts and prizes from school and she receives these like a queen. He looks at her and is fascinated by her; he could never free himself from this mother-attachment and as a result could not continue his relationship with the girl he loves. Inflicted and torn between his mother and his beloved he ultimately dies.

Gertrude then turns to Paul for emotional support. Paul, like William, being engulfed in the unhealthy relationship with their mother, having sexual overtones, fails to have a rapport with girlfriend Miriam. She once says to Paul, “You know, Paul – I’ve never had a husband – not really.” She takes him as a husband-substitute. Gertrude does not approve of Miriam because she feels that Miriam would take her son away. She thinks:

“She (Miriam) exults – she exults as she carries him off from me. She’s not like an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to absorb him till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet – she will suck him up.”

But ironically this is truer of her than of Miriam. She has a stronger and more devastating influence on Paul than any other woman in his life. He fails to continue his relationship with Clara also because he seeks his mother in every woman, and he feels dejected when he does not find. She is so over-possessive that she does not recognize the individual existence of her sons. Inability to understand the principle of polarity on the part of Gertrude, which the novelist believed so earnestly, leads her and her family to tragic circumstances.

However much faults Gertrude has, her tragic end draws sympathy towards her. She worked hard as mother to bring up the children in poverty; she kept them out of the mining industry; she educated them, tried to establish them and was pretty successful in doing so. She suffers from cancer and undergoes acute pain; Paul, being unable to bear the sight gives her an overdose of morphia to make her die soon.

2.4.3 Paul Morel

Paul Morel is an autobiographical sketch of Lawrence. Through this character the author re-lived his childhood and adolescence and got an opportunity to analyse his relationship with his mother, his father and Jessie Chambers. It is said that this character helped Lawrence to undergo catharsis. Lawrence has drawn the character with all sensitivity that he had during his childhood. Paul is the third child of Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel. His parents' marriage has degenerated into a series of quarrels before his birth; and hence the thought of having another child made his mother feel wretched. When he is born, his mother resolved that "with all her force, with all her soul, she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved."

Paul, being a sickly child, needs special attention from his mother. He sticks to his mother like a shadow and this helps in the formation of a strong bond between the mother and the child. When he watches his parents' quarrels, he always sides with his mother. He prays to God to make his father give up drinking. Seeing his mother beaten up by his father he develops a hatred for him. He feels terribly frightened when his parents quarrel; he is even more frightened by the sudden silence after the quarrels. He thinks, "What was it? What was the silence of blood? What had he (Mr. Morel) done?" The brutal atmosphere of the house engendered in him a neurotic personality. He often suffers from fits of depression. Gradually, the strong attachment with his mother changed into an unhealthy inter-dependence between them.

Paul's neurotic hypersensitiveness makes him suffer in his first contact with anything. He suffers when he first goes to school; he also suffers when he goes to receive his father's salary. He expects everyone to be as kind to him as his mother. He is an accomplished artist with a rare insight and his paintings are manifestations of inner reality. He is very happy when he is engaged in some painting. He also loves books and reads some in the company of Miriam. This love for books is an expression of his desire to do something at the higher planes of intellectualism, which he inherits from his mother.

The relationship between Paul and his mother appears to be a very heart touching affair till he is in his childhood. He is eager to do something for her to make her happy. He collects blackberries for her by walking miles, he paints to please her etc. but certain things in their relationship are disturbing from the very beginning. For instance, his mother feels that the naval string that connected him with her has not been torn. As he moves into adulthood, he becomes the husband-substitute. Certain passages in the novel which describe their intimate scenes are filled with sexual implications. This Oedipal relationship incapacitates him to love other women and keep a balanced relationship with them.

Paul and Miriam meet when they were very young. They frequently spend time together and develop a liking for each other. In her company he gains insight and she is a very good critic of his paintings. But their relationship grows at a very abstract plane; Miriam is spiritual and inhibited while Paul, unable to come out of his mother-fixation, is unable to arouse in her any sexual passion. In the second phase of their relationship, he tries to enter into a physical relationship with her; but Miriam lies before him like a creature awaiting immolation and he feels as if her were dead or sexless. With his mother in the subconscious all the time he does not feel happy in her company and their relationship comes to an unhappy end.

After his break up with Miriam, Paul becomes close with Clara – a lady of extreme passion – an opposite of Miriam. He is just swept off by her sexual attraction; but he cannot continue a relationship based on gross animality. His intellectual demands assert, and he feels dissatisfied when Clara cannot fulfill them. Clara also gets better fulfillment of her passion from her husband than from Paul and she returns to him. Ultimately their relationship also fails. At the concluding part of the novel Paul is a broken and disintegrated man. His mother is dead and he does not have anyone to stabilize him. He cannot paint or read to pacify himself. He is just loitering; but in false show of courage he turns toward the glowing city whereas we know that he cannot face the realities of life alone there.

2.4.4 William Morel

William is the eldest son of the Morels. He is the early version of Paul in the sense that what Paul undergoes is the repetition of what William faced earlier. He is successful as a student and at his profession. He is the promising boy who could have fulfilled his mother's urge for socio-economic upliftment. He had a deep attachment with his mother from his childhood. She appeared to him so lady-like, tender and fascinating. The novelist describes us in the early part of the novel how his interest wanes in the fair after his mother leaves. In chapter 6 of the novel we are told that he "... was accustomed to having all his thoughts sifted through his mother's mind." So, he does not seem to be a man having an independence of thought.

The Oedipus Complex has a damaging influence on William; he fails to break off the chains of affection with his mother and establish warm relationships with other people. His mother involved him so much as an emotional partner that he cannot give himself freely to anyone else. He falls in love with a girl named Gyp and wants to marry her. But his mother comes between them because she thinks that she would take her son away from her. He is torn between the desire to have a sexual relationship with Gyp like an adult man and his wish to be with her mother. He painfully realizes that he cannot leave his mother and is weakened by this; ultimately he dies pathetically.

2.4.5 Miriam

Miriam, modeled after Lawrence's real life girlfriend Jessie Chambers, represents the spiritual aspect of love that he wanted to explore. Many of the incidents involving Paul and Miriam are said to have written by Jessie herself. But later on she was not happy with the final product because Lawrence edited her writings and she felt that she was wronged for glorifying his mother. This is because Lawrence was writing a novel and not an autobiography, but Jessie missed this point.

Miriam is a sensitive girl and due to the grossness of the male members of her family, she becomes biased against all men. Because of the same reason she becomes an introvert; and Paul accuses, “She took all and gave nothing.” She is a “romantic in her soul” and she likes to be isolated from others. She thinks that she is a distinctive one who likes to live in a way so that her personality rises above others. She is an ambitious girl; but Paul observes that the kind of intellectual companionship provided by Miriam is rare.

At the same time Miriam is a possessive girl. But her possessiveness springs from a sense of insecurity that she has from her childhood. Paul says to her, “You aren’t positive, you’re negative. You absorb, absorb as if you must fill yourself up with love, because you’ve got a shortage somewhere,” As observed by Paul and Mrs. Morel whatever thing she loves – be it her younger brother, a daffodil or Paul himself, she takes the soul out of it. She is a deeply religious girl because of her upbringing. She observes everything from the spiritual point of view; she is one who treasures “religion inside” her and “breathe it” in her nostrils. She even looks at her love for Paul as a spiritual sin or as a spiritual obligation as God pleases. There is nothing sensual about her love for Paul; it is the chaste love of a nun for a priest.

Miriam’s spiritual fervour impedes her natural flow of emotion and consequently destroys her relationship with others. In chapter 7 we find that she even hesitates to laugh. This type of inhibition in physical expression and living on a completely spiritual plane endangers her normal human relationship with others. She cannot be a companion of flesh and blood; she is incapable of bringing peace to her companion. Her possessiveness, together with the Oedipal love of Paul ultimately broke her relationship with him.

2.4.6 Clara Dawes

Lawrence in this novel aims to explore the male-female relationships. Unlike Miriam and Mrs. Morel, Clara is not based on real-life person. She represents the life-force in the novel. She is the opposite of Miriam – if Miriam is the soul, she is the flesh. She has all

characteristics of a bewitching female. Paul is easily swept off by her white, honey-like skin, full mouth, firmness and softness of her voluptuous body. She attracted him so much that “her beauty was a torture to him.”

Clara also represents the modern emancipated woman. She has the courage to step out of an unhappy marriage. She can support herself by working. She is associated with the Suffragette movement and thinks that it is women’s way out from male domination. She bears a scornful attitude to men. But she can maintain a relationship with them without being bitter. She has a proud bearing and the girls of Jordan’s factory call her as “The Queen of Sheba.”

Clara is the complete opposite of what Miriam represents and that is why Paul finds her provocative. She does not have any inhibition; and hence can offer Paul what Miriam cannot. But Paul is an intellectual; he is a refined artist. He needs mental compatibility in his companion. Clara is that physical person who cannot hold him for long. Although she can satisfy the craving of the flesh; she cannot satisfy his soul. Clara understands that and very sensibly goes back to her husband.

2.4.7 Baxter Dawes

Baxter is Clara’s husband; he is physically quite good, but his behaviour is repulsively coarse. He uses the same dialect as Walter Morel. He uses swearing words profusely; he calls Paul a “swine” and “devil.” He is quarrelsome and tough – the perfect antithesis of Paul.

Clara confesses that he in a way degraded her. He hates Paul because he is jealous and because he knows that he is intellectually inferior to Paul. He bullies Clara and thrashes Paul. He must bring down everybody to his level.

Baxter’s character develops during the course of the novel; he is not an unmitigated villain. He has a human heart beneath his brutish temperament. He is capable of understanding and forgiving. At the end, it is clear to Clara that she prefers Baxter to Paul as a lover; this is so not simply because of physicality, but because of Paul’s inability to give himself generously to others. He displays rare generosity in accepting Clara back. He asks her if she wants him again and in his attitude he changed from a brute to a loyal husband.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Mention one feature of Lawrence's characterisation in the novel.
2. What is the dominant trait of Miriam's personality?

2.5 Let us Sum Up

- D. H. Lawrence started writing the novel *Sons and Lovers* sometime in 1910 and at first it was titled *Paul Morel*. This was published in 1913; till then it was the most important work by Lawrence.
- *Sons and Lovers* is so much autobiographical that almost all characters have remarkable resemblances to the real life characters Lawrence came across.
- It seems he could re-live and resolve his childhood problems in this novel. This is a cathartic work in this sense.
- In the novel the attachment of William and Paul to their mother affects them so much that they cannot develop a normal and healthy relationship with any other women. Lawrence himself was a victim of similar experiences due to his emotional attachment with his mother Lydia Beardsall.
- The character of Miriam in the novel has its origin in Jessie Chambers whom Lawrence met early in his life. Lawrence loved her but could not continue the relationship due to his excessive attachment with his mother. Similarly, Paul also cannot carry on the relationship with Miriam for his mother-fixation.
- Lawrence believed in sexual mysticism; his attitude to life was deeply influenced by his idea.
- Lawrence believed that there exists an opposition between male and female; and the opposition is in a constant conflict to annihilate one another because of the lack of a balance between them, where maleness of man co-exist with femaleness of women and vice-versa, and not at the cost the other.

- Lawrence, in this novel, successfully explores the intricacies of human relationships in terms of money.
- The novelist's insight into the society and its representation in his work can easily be seen in the episodes dealing with the excitement caused by the fair in the small town, scenes of love and quarrel between the morels, children's games, Mr. Morel working or washing himself in the scullery etc.
- The novel is about the poor, but in certain episodes it describes the differences between middle and poor classes vividly.
- The novel begins as a traditional nineteenth century novel, but ends as a modern one.
- Impressionistic techniques have been utilized in character delineation.
- The concept of Oedipus Complex was forwarded by Sigmund Freud. It signifies the manifestation of infantile sexuality in children for the parent of the opposite sex and a corresponding distaste for the other parent.
- Lawrence was a victim of the Oedipus Complex and he made a self-portrayal in the character of Paul Morel in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.
- D. H. Lawrence's novels are fascinating and unconventional; he takes us to a strange, unexplored but mysteriously appealing domain through his novels including *Sons and Lovers*. His art of characterization among other factors helps in doing so. His art is different from the characterization of conventional novel in many aspects. His novels do not contain a large number of characters; *Sons and Lovers* has only seven major characters. Moreover, his novels do not contain any conventional hero.

2.6 Key Words

Cathartic – Having the power for purification or purgation of emotions.

Mother-fixation – An arrest in psychosexual development characterized by an abnormally persistent, close and often, paralyzing emotional attachment to one’s mother.

Round character – Those characters in a work of literature who are developed and show Complex traits, like real people.

Social novel – It is a type of novel dealing with a prevailing social problem.

2.7 Terminal Questions

1. Write a critical appreciation of the novel *Sons and Lovers*.
2. “*Sons and Lovers* abounds in autobiographical elements from Lawrence’s personal experiences.” Elucidate.
3. “*Sons and Lovers* is a catharsis of Lawrence’s own emotional experiences during his lifetime.” Illustrate.
4. “The Oedipus Complex is the excessive affection of a child for the parent of the opposite sex to him or herself.” How does it affect Paul’s relation with his mother?
5. “Paul loves his mother almost as a lover, this incapacitates him to have normal relations with other women.” Comment.
6. Critically examine Lawrence’s art of characterization with special reference to *Sons and Lovers*.

2.8 Suggested Readings

Coombs, H. (ed.) *D.H. Lawrence: A Critical Anthology* (1973)

Draper, R. P. (ed.) *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage*

Freeman, Marry. *D. H. Lawrence: A Basic Study of His Ideas* (1955)

Hough, Graham. *The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (1956)

Kazin, Alfred. *Introduction to Sons and Lovers* (1962)

2.9 Model Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’

Check Your Progress 1

1. Lawrence wrote this novel as an effort to understand his early life experiences and in writing the same he re-lived the experiences again and again. In the process he could see the past more clearly and more objectively. In this sense it is a cathartic work.

2. Yes. We can call *Sons and Lovers* a social novel because in it Lawrence has been able to give a life-like picture of the society in a coal mining town inhabited mostly by uneducated people from the lower economic stratum. The novelist's insight into the society and its representation in his work can easily be seen in the episodes dealing with the excitement caused by the fair in the small town, scenes of love and quarrel between the Morels, children's games, Mr. Morel working or washing himself in the scullery etc.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Miriam's approach to love, he feels, is nun-like – spiritual and religious. But it is not only Miriam who is responsible for the failure of their relationship. Paul's excessive attachment with his mother he seeks to find his mother like qualities in every woman, and when he fails to find the same he feels incapable of loving them.
2. Clara tries to possess the physicality of Paul and leaves the spirit for his mother. But still their relationship comes to an unhappy end, because of Paul's intimate relationship with his mother. He finds Clara's physical appeal too superficial to continue.

Check Your Progress 3

1. His characters in the novel are three dimensional characters; they are drawn as common people with goodness and flaws of human beings. They are not 'round' characters because they show little psychological development in the course of the novel.
2. Miriam is a possessive girl, but her possessiveness springs from a sense of insecurity that she has from her childhood. Paul says to her, "You aren't positive, you're negative." She takes the soul out of whatever thing she loves. She is a deeply religious girl because of her upbringing. She observes everything from the spiritual point of view; she is one who treasures "religion inside" her and "breathe it" in her nostrils.

UNIT - III : CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE NOVEL

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Structure of the Novel
- 3.3 The Use of Symbols in the Novel
- 3.4 Relationship between Paul and Miriam
- 3.5 Relationship between Paul and Clara
- 3.6 Feminist Readings of *Sons and Lovers*
 - 3.6.1 Feminist Criticism – An Introduction
 - 3.6.2 Kate Millett’s views on *Sons and Lovers*
 - 3.6.3 Faith Pullin’s views on *Sons and Lovers*
 - 3.6.4 Hillary Simpson’s views on *Sons and Lovers*
 - 3.6.5 General Estimate of *Sons and Lovers* by Feminist Critics
- 3.7 Let us Sum Up
- 3.8 Key Words
- 3.9 Terminal Questions
- 3.10 Suggested Readings
- 3.11 Model Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- understand the structure of the novel
- appreciate the uses of symbols in the novel
- explain the complications of human relationships in the novel
- read the novel from the perspective of feminist literary criticism

3.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the structure of *Sons and Lovers*. The novel is often charged of having a weak structure or of formlessness. We would here analyse if it has a weak form or an unconventional form. The unit will also deal with the use of symbols in the novel. A reading of the novel would be incomplete if we do not study the subtle use of symbols by the novelist, because symbols are integral to the narrative in this work. The novel explores human relationship in its various manifestations. You would find in this unit an analysis of the relationships of Paul, the autobiographical character of Lawrence, with Miriam and Clara – two different types of women. A reading of the feminist views of the novel is also included here, as this novel, like other novels authored by Lawrence, presents an intuitive understanding and sensible portrayal of women characters and thereby easily attracts feminist criticism.

3.2 The Structure of the Novel

D. H. Lawrence's novels are accused of being formless time and again. His inner urge to express himself was much stronger than his concern about the form in which it would be expressed. 'What' would be represented in his novels was more important for him than 'how' it would be expressed. V. S. Pritchett criticises Lawrence for being "a muddling narrator totally unskilled in construction." In the essay "Technique as Discovery," Mark Schorer condemns him for his failure "to allow technique to fathom meaning" in this novel. He further says that Lawrence used it rather "in confused and contradictory ways in his private attempts to master sickness." On the other hand, Middleton Murry is of the opinion that "to charge him with a lack of form ... is to be guilty of irrelevance. Art was not his aim." So, from criticisms like these it seems that Lawrence broke all aesthetic principles governing works of art. But, the author, in a very confident tone, writes about *Sons and Lovers* in a letter to Garnett, "I tell you it has got a form ... haven't I made it patiently, out of sweat as well as blood?"

It has been said that the novel explores certain experiences of Lawrence's life which gives him another chance to re-live these experiences and undergo some type of catharsis to emancipate the artist in him. But, at the same time the novelist has a definite notion to express which forms the inner logic in the novel. This also describes the structural design of the novel. The idea of the disturbance in sexual polarities powerfully controls the structure of the novel.

The novel begins like a conventional one. The courtship and subsequent marriage of Walter and Gertrude, the disillusionment of Gertrude Morel, the disintegration of their married life, gradual alienation of the two and the final casting off of the husband by the wife have been described in the conventional way. However, after that Lawrence avoids using the conventional narrative with its climactic culminations and uses a particular natural mode of narrative which, in spite of appearing incoherent, is more akin to life-beats. The structure of the novel is woven with the human relations and events in the novel. Betsky in his essay "Rhythm and Theme: D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*" says, "Each event is a successive wave and the movement of the relationship is the full tide which is its consummation. After that consummation, there are wave-like returns to the achieved tension in that relationship but now each wave shows a diminishing strength and intensity."

The description of the married life of the Morels forms the first wave-rhythm. Courtship and marriage of the couple have been described very succinctly by the novelist. He then selects particular incidents in their life to show the gradual disharmony and consequent failure of their marriage. Mrs. Morel, a refined, sophisticated and well-educated intellectual lady of middle class finds it intolerable to live with a rough uneducated miner, who in spite of his efforts does not understand her. All efforts of finer intimacy and intellectual rapport fail; Mrs. Morel turns to her children – particularly William and then Paul – for the desired emotional support. She gradually casts her husband aside and there ends the first wave –rhythm.

William, the first son of the Morels, goes to London for taking up a job. Being unable to bear the split between his intense mother-pull and his strong love for Gyp – his beloved – he dies. His early departure to London and his death make Paul and his mother's Oedipal relation more intimate. Paul's sickness makes Mrs. Morel realize that she ought to look after the living son rather than to cling to the dead one. Paul enters at this wave into a new love and realization of his mother. This wave is a strong one and it leaves Paul weak.

The third wave-rhythm goes on simultaneously with the second wave-rhythm. It deals with the Paul-Miriam relationship. But it does not have the vigour of the second wave-rhythm. Miriam inspires Paul – the artist; but she has a Puritanical sensibility, grounded firmly in inhibitions and taboos. She is passionate to take out the soul of things, but she recoils at the slightest physical intimacy. This helps in the death of Paul's manliness; he is unable to keep a balance in his relationships with his mother and Miriam, both of whom fight for his soul. It is then that he is attracted to the physical relationship with Clara; his break up with Miriam and his involvement in a relationship with Clara take place at the same time and we move on to the fourth wave-rhythm.

Clara is the representation of passion and sensuousness in the novel. There are incidents where it appears that she and Paul are in complete harmony with each other. For example, when they make love on the bank of Trenton river scarlet carnations splash down Clara's bosom like some divine benediction upon them. But their relationship also fails. Clara is too small to hold Paul for long; her physicality without intellectual intimacy stifles Paul and he goes back to his mother's protective love, but this too ends with her illness and death. There are wave-like returns to relationships, particularly by Paul, but each wave shows diminishing strength.

Use of symbolism forms the inner texture of the novel. Symbols from nature are used copiously and effectively in the novel. Use of symbols also renders the novel its compactness. Another important aspect

of the novel's structure is its movement between panoramic views and close ups. In dealing with this the novelist shows great resourcefulness of language and structural balance. Therefore, the novel may be said to have an unconventional structure, but we cannot say that it is formless.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What is the usual charge against Lawrence's narrative structure?
2. What does Clara represent in the novel?

3.3 The Use of Symbols in the Novel

Lawrence's use of symbols is very subtle in *Sons and Lovers*. There are a large number of symbols in the novel. Yet they do not appear blatant, because they are very well-integrated to the entire texture of the narrative. If we remove the symbols much of the novelist's message in the novel will be lost. Prof. William Tindall says that Lawrence was a symbolist and keeps him in the same category of French symbolists like Baudelaire who use symbols as a means to establish their affinity with the infinite. However, Lawrence only uses symbols as materials to express powerful forces of nature and emotional attitudes of his characters.

The novel is set in the mining town of Bestwood – having close resemblances with Eastwood where Lawrence spent his childhood; and the coal pits are a concrete reality there. It may appear that the coal pits do not necessarily have a symbolic meaning. Yet they carry meanings larger than themselves. They symbolize virility and the rhythm of a sexual act. The descent and ascent in the pits are symbols of death and life itself. As opposed to the principles followed by the sophisticated people, they represent a crude natural principle close to Walter Morel.

In the first chapter itself, during a quarrel Walter throws a drawer at Gertrude and hurts her on the forehead; it bleeds profusely and two drops fall into the hair of Paul, who is in his mother's arms. The drops of blood seem to be soaked into his scalp. This symbol means on the one

hand a disintegration of the conjugal relation and sealing of a blood-tie between Gertrude and Paul on the other, which is very crucial in the novel.

Again, in chapter VII titled "Lad-and-Girl Love," Paul and Edgar let a hen pick grains from their palms. But Miriam is frightened to let the hen nip at her palm. In another incident Paul and Miriam are seen at the swing. Paul swings feely and enjoys the act. Miriam, however, is reluctant to go high. These incidents show a girl's natural fear for bold activities. But at the symbolic level they signify her reluctance and inhibition for sexual acts. She feels awkward at the slightest physical touch, which mortifies Paul's desire for her.

Lawrence uses natural symbols in the novel and his natural symbols are organically related to man. In an incident when Paul and Miriam are together, Paul is moved and aroused by looking at the orange moon over them; but he is unable to make love to Miriam. On another occasion however, he is with Clara; and this time his passions are aroused by looking at the turbulent and impetuous flow of the Trenton river and he immediately makes love to her. In both cases natural symbols are in close affinity with the man, but the river is more accessible to him. In the first chapter also the author describes an incident where Walter shuts Gertrude out of the house at night; she walks in the garden among flowers and later, when Walter lets her in, she faintly smiles to see her face all smeared up by the yellow dust of lilies. It is like the benediction from nature to the mother and the unborn child.

In an episode when Miriam, Paul and Clara are seen together, they pick flowers. Miriam picks them with reverence and there is no elegance in her bunch. Paul picks them with a scientific precision and love and his bunch has a natural beauty. But Clara does not pick flowers at all; she defiantly says that it would kill the flowers. This is because she symbolizes life-force in the novel. The attitudes of the characters towards flowers symbolize their attitude towards life itself. Walter Morel symbolizes nature whereas Gertrude Morel symbolizes culture; and the

novel can be read as a conflict between nature and culture. Commenting on the use of symbols Francis Fergusson says that Lawrence seems not “to distinguish between the reality or metaphor or symbol which makes it plain to us.”

Check Your Progress 2

1. How does Lawrence use symbols in *Sons and Lovers*?
2. Comment briefly on Lawrence’s use of natural symbols in the novel.

3.4 Relationship between Paul and Miriam

Lawrence wanted to represent human relationship in the novel *Sons and Lovers* and the relationship between Paul and Miriam is one of the most intensely written parts of the novel. It, in fact, forms the core of the novel. Paul meets Miriam for the first time at the Willey farm, when he accompanies his mother in a visit to the Leivers family. Paul feels an urge to visit the place again and again; at first he is more intimate with the boys, but he develops an increasing affection towards Miriam.

Miriam is sensitive and over-refined; she loathes the vulgarity of her father and brothers and is drawn towards Paul. She is biased against all men, but she finds something different in Paul. He is a man who can paint, is interested in poetry and algebra, can be sad and one who has “death in his family.” She treasures religion inside her and is extremely devotional, which impedes the natural flow of her emotions. She does not think love and physical relation as natural. She would love Paul only if God considers it right; similarly nothing would refrain her from loving him if it is the will of God. At the end of the first phase of their relationship, Paul says to her rightly, “See, you are a nun. I have given you what I would give a holy nun, as a mystic monk to a mystic nun.”

Miriam is not satisfied with a passion of ordinary level. Her possessiveness for things often takes a frenzied level. She fondles and sways her five year old younger brother with her face half lifted, her

eyes half closed. Paul says bitterly, “Why do you make such a fuss for? Why can’t you be ordinary with him?” She also absorbs everything as if she has a shortage somewhere. Her inhibition for sexual act and her future problem of having a wholesome sexual relationship is indicated symbolically by the scene where Paul lets a hen peck at his palm, but Miriam feels afraid to do so. Once she says openly that there is a dreadful thing about marriage, but one has to bear it. The symbol of the swing confirms that. Her fear to get high on the swing, when Paul assists her in it, has been described by the novelist in the following words, “She felt the accuracy with which he caught her, exactly at the right moment and the exactly proportionate strength of his thrust, and she was afraid.”

The Paul-Miriam relationship has two phases. In the first Paul gains insight in her company. Immediately after a sketch is finished he takes it to her. But due to a strong puritanical attitude of Miriam towards physical love, their relationship is confined only to the vague and abstract plane. The purity of their relationship makes Paul’s blood falls back. In the second phase, Paul returns to Miriam to initiate her into sexual life. For a week they get enough time to spend together in isolation at her grandmother’s home, but every time Paul approaches her, she lies before him like a creature awaiting immolation. In a desperate condition Paul decides to break off.

The ultimate rejection of Miriam comes when she, after the death of Mrs. Morel, makes a proposal of marriage to Paul. He says that she loves him so much that she would keep him in her pocket and she can only sacrifice herself for him. So, he rejects her. His mother-pull was also too strong to respond to Miriam’s love in a healthy and more sensible way. Miriam is not alone responsible for the unhappy end of their relationship; Paul and his mother’s unhealthy influence are also equally to be blamed for the same.

Check Your Progress 3

1. How does Paul react to the over-possessiveness of Miriam?
2. What are the two phases of Paul-Miriam relationship?

3.5 Relationship between Paul and Clara

After the break up with Miriam, Paul goes straight to Clara, who is the complete opposite of Miriam. Miriam represents the soul, while Clara the flesh; Miriam is sexually inhibited, while Clara is sexually aggressive. The essence of the relationship between Paul and Clara is extreme passion. But the two as persons are otherwise incompatible.

Interestingly, it is Miriam who introduces Paul to Clara; when they meet for the first time Paul is twenty three and Clara thirty. Clara is married, but she lives with her mother because of the bullying nature of her husband. Paul is infatuated by her bewitching look – her white honey-like skin, her full mouth, bare shoulder and arms and her curvaceous body. He is also fascinated by her slightly raised upper lip – which may be raised because of her contempt of all men or maybe out of her eagerness to be kissed. He finds her physical appeal irresistible. The firmness and softness of her body and its consciousness is a torture for him.

After the weary struggle at some physical intimacy with Miriam, Paul is in need of an outlet to his unfulfilled desires. He finds Clara the best receptacle of his passion. He and Clara get more intimate after she joins the Jordan's factory. For some time they bring real fulfillment to each other. There are a number of beautiful love scenes between the two. In one such scene they make love by sitting on the banks of the Trinton river. When she rises, bright coloured flowers fall from her bosom down to her feet as if it is a benediction from heaven for their happiness.

But the intensity of passion in their relationship does not last long. Their relationship becomes full of anxiety and uncertainty and declines. Their happiness is unique and complete in nature, but is fleeting. Clara feels that there is a detached criticism of her in the eyes of Paul. This coldness made her heart harden for him. There is a quick deterioration in their relationship at the end Clara returns to her husband Baxter Dawes, preferring him to the psychologically weak man in Paul.

Paul's mother-fixation hampers his efforts to establish natural relationship with any other women. But, in case of Clara, his mother is not as opposed as she is to Miriam. She does not want to suck out his soul and she takes care of his physical needs. Still their relationship fails and there are several reasons for that. Paul realizes that Clara is too physical to hold his soul in peace for long. Besides, Paul's love for Clara is of an impersonal kind; he is unable to love her for the person she really is. He is simply fascinated by her physical beauty and he needs someone to love him and he finds Clara the most suitable woman. She ultimately realizes that Baxter's love was much stronger for her than Paul's. With this realization Paul appears inadequate and paltry to her; Paul too does not need her anymore and helps in her reunion with her husband. Thus their relationship ends in a fiasco.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Why does Paul become intimate with Clara immediately after they meet?
2. What happens to Clara and Paul relationship at the end?

3.6 Feminist Readings of *Sons and Lovers*

3.6.1 Feminist Criticism – An Introduction

Feminist literary criticism is that type of literary criticism which is informed by feminist theory. It offers critiques of literary works by applying feminist principles and ideology. This school of literary criticism explores the forces of male domination in literature. It changed the way works of literature are viewed and studied. It covers a broad category of works from George Eliot and Margaret Fuller to the recent theoretical works in women's studies and gender studies. The first and second wave feminist critics were concerned with authorship of women and representation of women in literature. But the third wave feminist literary criticism has taken new and varied approaches to literature. It has been applying Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical theories and theories of queer studies to interpret literary texts.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1928) is one of the formative texts of feminist criticism, where she made a plea for social justice for women. Modern feminist criticism began with the second wave feminist critics like Marry Ellman and Kate Millet questioned the male-centric literature that portrayed women in a demeaning way. Three phases can be observed within the second wave feminism – the feminine phase, the feminist phase and the female phase. Female writers adhered to male values in the feminine phase. In the feminist phase there was a theme of criticism of the role of women in society. During the female phase, it is assumed that women's works are valid and the texts are less argumentative and aggressive than in the feminist phase.

Elaine Showalter became a leading gynocritic with her work *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Feminist critics during her time were not satisfied by simply demarcating the narratives of oppression. They wanted to create a literary space for the female writers of past, present and future. French critics such as Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray introduced psychoanalytic criticism into their works. Most recent feminist literary criticism involves critics like Susan Gubar, Nancy Armstrong, Hortense Spillers etc. who use their nuanced and subjective experiences in the understanding of feminist literature. Black feminist criticism emerged particularly in the post-civil war period in the USA. Politics of lesbianism has also found a way into feminist literary criticism.

3.6.2 Kate Millett's views on *Sons and Lovers*

Kate Millett regards *Sons and Lovers* as a great novel for its embodiment of profoundly felt experience and for its representation of the proletarian English life. But she points out that Paul is upheld by a "faith in male supremacy which he has imbibed from his father and enlarged upon himself." She is of the opinion that his passion for his mother due to Oedipal feelings is lesser than his passion for attainment of the power to which his male status entitles him. All of the major women in the novel – Mrs. Morel, Miriam and Clara – exist only to serve him by playing different roles. She finds an element of sadism in

his treatment of Miriam and Clara, who are finally rejected by him to move on to his male dominated world. She also regards the novel as structurally weak.

3.6.3 Faith Pullin's views on *Sons and Lovers*

Faith Pullin does not distinguish the novel from an autobiography of Lawrence and she condemns the ruthless use of women by Paul. He uses almost every woman who comes to his life of his self-identification. Like Jessie Chambers, she thinks that Miriam has been unjustly portrayed. She criticises Paul's gratification in using Clara as her boss and her lover. Going a step further than Millett, she says that the true love in the novel is to be found only between Paul and his father. He wants to celebrate life like his father; his desire to be an artist is only a manifestation of it. She regards the women characters in the novel as stereotypes.

3.6.4 Hillary Simpson's views on *Sons and Lovers*

Hillary Simpson regards Clara as a feminist; she is particularly interested in the women's suffrage movement as represented in the novel. Lawrence's feminism in the novel is found in the sympathetic treatment of Mrs. Morel's guild activities and in Clara's involvement in the women's suffrage movement. But she also points out that Clara's involvement in the movement has no real function to be seen in the novel. This makes Clara's character incoherent. But, she observes that it is actually Paul who overwhelmed her feminist feelings by making her believe that what she needs is a gratification of physical desires.

3.6.5 General Estimate of *Sons and Lovers* by Feminist Critics

Lawrence is known for his sensitive portrayal of women characters; and hence his novels attract feminist readings. *Sons and Lovers* is not an exception. Lydia Blanchard praised him for showing sympathy with intelligent women trapped in a male-dominated society. On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir is of the opinion that Miriam and Clara sacrifice their femininity and love to the dominating male character. Thus,

Lawrence's sensitive delineation of woman characters has been appreciated and his 'male chauvinism' has been criticized by feminist critics. Gender and sexuality have been important issues in the novel and feminist criticism of the novel has opened up many important aspects of the novel.

Check Your Progress 5

1. What is feminist literary criticism?
2. What is the general estimate of *Sons and Lovers* offered by feminist critics?

3.7 Let us Sum Up

- D. H. Lawrence's novels are accused of being formless time and again. His inner urge to express himself was much stronger than his concern about the form in which it would be expressed.
- The novel begins like a conventional one. However, after the early portion of the novel, Lawrence avoids using the conventional narrative with its climactic culminations and uses a particular natural mode of narrative which, in spite of appearing incoherent, is more akin to life-beats. The structure of the novel is woven with the human relations and events in the novel.
- Lawrence's makes a very subtle use of symbols in *Sons and Lovers*. There are a large number of symbols in the novel. Yet they do not appear blatant, because they are very well-integrated to the entire texture of the narrative.
- Lawrence wanted to represent human relationship in the novel *Sons and Lovers* and the relationship between Paul and Miriam is one of the most intensely written parts of the novel. It, in fact, forms the core of the novel.
- Miriam is not alone responsible for the unhappy end of their relationship; Paul and his mother's unhealthy influence are also equally to be blamed for the same.

- The essence of the relationship between Paul and Clara is extreme passion. But the two as persons are otherwise incompatible. Paul's love for Clara is of an impersonal kind; he is unable to love her for the person she really is. He is simply fascinated by her physical beauty. She too ultimately realizes that Baxter's love was much stronger for her than Paul's. With this realization Paul appears inadequate and paltry to her; Paul too does not need her anymore and helps in her reunion with her husband. Thus their relationship ends in a fiasco.

3.8 Key Words

Aesthetic – Connected with beauty or the appreciation of beauty

Black feminist criticism – It is that trend of literary criticism where sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are intrinsically involved together

Criticism – Criticism is the practice of judging the merits and demerits of something

Critique – Critique is a method of systematic and disciplined study of a written or oral discourse

Culture – Culture is the sum total of social behaviour found in human societies

Feminist theory – Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional or philosophical discourse

Gynocritics – Gynocritics or gynocriticism is a term coined by Elaine Showalter in the 1970s to describe a new literary project intended to construct “a female framework for the analysis of women's literature.”

Narrative – A narrative is a presentation of real or imaginary story in oral or written form

Puritanical – Of or related to the Puritans; Precise in observance of legal or religious requirements; strict or rigid – often used by way of reproach or contempt

Women's suffrage – Women's suffrage is the right of women to vote in elections

3.9 Terminal Questions

1. Has *Sons and Lovers* any structural unity as a novel? Discuss.
2. Illustrate the tangle of personal relationships in the novel.
3. Miriam's failure to recognize the demands of the flesh is the major reason of the failure of Paul-Miriam relationship. Elucidate with examples.
4. In spite of intensity Paul- Miriam relationship fails due to Miriam's extreme religiosity and sexual inhibition. Examine with examples.
5. Critically examine the relationship between Paul and Clara.
6. What is feminist literary criticism? Give a general estimate of the novel *Sons and Lovers* by the Feminist critics.
7. Why do you think Paul-Miriam Relationship as the essential core of the novel?

3.10 Suggested Readings

Menninger, Karl. *Lover Against Hate* (1942)

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics* (1970)

Sagar, Keith. *The Art of D. H. Lawrence* (1966)

Simpson, Hillary. *D. H. Lawrence and Feminism* (1982)

Vivas, Eliseo. *D. H. Lawrence: The Failure and the Triumph of Art* (1960)

3.11 Model Answers to 'Check Your Progress'

Check Your Progress 1

1. D. H. Lawrence's novels are accused of being formless. They are said to have a weak structure. His inner urge to express himself was much stronger than his concern about the form in which it would be expressed.
2. Clara is the representation of passion and sensuousness in the novel.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Lawrence's use of symbols is very subtle in *Sons and Lovers*. There are a large number of symbols in the novel. Yet they do not appear blatant, because they are very well-integrated to the entire texture of the narrative. If we remove the symbols much of the novelist's message in the novel will be lost.
2. Lawrence uses natural symbols in *Sons and Lovers* and his natural symbols are organically related to man. In an incident when Paul and Miriam are together, Paul is moved and aroused by looking at the orange moon over them; but he is unable to make love to Miriam. On another occasion however, he is with Clara; and this time his passions are aroused by looking at the turbulent and impetuous flow of the Trenton river and he immediately makes love to her. In both cases natural symbols are in close affinity with the man.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Miriam's possessiveness for things often takes a frenzied level. She is not satisfied with a passion of ordinary level. For instance, when she fondles and sways her five year old younger brother, she does so with her face half lifted, her eyes half closed. Paul says bitterly, "Why do you make such a fuss for? Why can't you be ordinary with him?" Paul says that she is negative and she absorbs everything as if she has a shortage somewhere.
2. The Paul-Miriam relationship has two phases. In the first Paul gains insight in her company. Immediately after a sketch is finished he takes it to her. But due to a strong puritanical attitude of Miriam towards physical love, their relationship is confined only to the vague and abstract plane. In the second phase, Paul returns to Miriam to initiate her into sexual life. But every time Paul approaches her, she lies before him like a creature awaiting immolation. In a desperate condition Paul decides to break off.

Check Your Progress 4

1. After the weary struggle at some physical intimacy with Miriam, Paul is in need of an outlet to his unfulfilled desires. He finds Clara the best receptacle of his passion. He and Clara get more intimate after she joins the Jordan's factory.
2. Clara and Paul's happiness is unique and complete in nature, but is fleeting. Paul at the end feels that Clara's animal passion cannot hold him any longer. She also feels that there is a detached criticism of her in the eyes of Paul. This coldness made her heart harden for him. There is a quick deterioration in their relationship at the end Clara returns to her husband Baxter Dawes, preferring him to the psychologically weak man in Paul.

Check Your Progress 5

1. Feminist literary criticism is that type of literary criticism which is informed by feminist theory. It offers critiques of literary works by applying feminist principles and ideology. This school of literary criticism explores the forces of male domination in literature. It covers a broad category of works from George Eliot and Margaret Fuller to the recent theoretical works in women's studies and gender studies.
2. Lawrence is known for his sensitive portrayal of women characters; and hence his novels attract feminist readings. *Sons and Lovers* is not an exception. He has been praised for showing sympathy with intelligent women trapped in a male-dominated society. On the other hand, his 'male chauvinism' has been criticized by feminist critics.

BLOCK - IV

FICTION : MODERN E.M. FORSTER: A *PASSAGE TO INDIA*

CONTENTS

- UNIT 1 : BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL
- UNIT 2 : THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL
- UNIT 3 : THE THEMES OF THE NOVEL
- UNIT 4 : USE OF SYMBOLISM
- UNIT 5 : CHARACTERISATION

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this Block, you shall read about E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. This block has been divided into five units. The first unit deals with the background to the novel including a detailed account of the trends of twentieth century literature to which Forster's work belongs, the life and works of E.M. Forster, the socio-historical context and the critical reception of the novel. The second unit includes a discussion on the basic structure of the novel, incorporating the three sections of the novel along with a brief discussion on the traditional versus modernist features in the narrative. Moving on, you shall get to explore the various themes of the novel in the third unit and the symbolism in the fourth unit of this block. The fifth and the final unit shall make an examination of the characterisation as employed by the novelist.

E.M. Forster had not brought out a fictional work for fourteen years when, in 1924, he produced his fifth and most celebrated novel *A Passage to India*. When the novel appeared in 1924, it was praised by reviewers in a number of important British and American literary journals. The novel was chosen as one of the 100 great works ever written in English literature by the Modern Library. Despite some criticism that Forster had depicted, the book was popular among readers in both Britain and the United States. The novel

received two prestigious literary awards the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1924 and the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse Prize in 1925. More than seventy years later, it remains highly regarded and many schools of art, critics and other writers consider it a classic of early twentieth-century fiction. Subtle and rich in symbolism, the novel works on several levels. On the surface, it is about India and the relations between British and Indian people in that country. It is also about the necessity of friendship, and about the difficulty of establishing friendship across cultural boundaries. Forster's narrative centers on Dr. Aziz, a young Indian physician whose attempt to establish friendships with several British characters has disastrous consequences. Throughout the novel, Dr. Aziz is accused of attempting to rape a young Englishwoman . It is an attempt at understanding the country India and the Indians from a more personal, positive and meaningful perspective.

Considering the wide review, varieties of reading and multiplicity of interpretation of *A Passage to India*, it is difficult to sum up the work in just one block. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to touch upon every possible aspect of the novel. The study of this block would help you interpret and evaluate the novel in terms of its narrative structure, theme, symbolism and characterisation. There are certain sections titled 'Stop to Consider' wherein very brief explanations and discussions on topics or terms related to the text have been provided. You can try answering the questions provided in each unit to check your progress.

UNIT - I :

BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL

Contents:

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Twentieth Century Literature
 - 1.2.1 The Edwardian Period
 - 1.2.2 The Modernist Revolution
- 1.3 E.M. Forster: Life and Important Works
- 1.4 The Socio-Historical Context
- 1.5 Critical Reception of the Novel
- 1.6 Summing up
- 1.7 References
- 1.8 Further Readings

1.0 Objectives

The objectives of this unit are to understand, analyse and discuss in detail various aspects of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. After going through this unit you will be able to

- a) acquaint yourself with the twentieth century literature
- b) acquire a background of his life and major works;
- c) relate the novel to the specific socio-historical context
- d) familiarize yourself with the critical reviews of the novel

1.1 Introduction

The literary career of E.M. Forster covers the first quarter of the twentieth century. The twentieth century was an age of complexities witnessing not only major social, economic and political changes but also radical experiments in the field of literature and arts.

1.2 Twentieth Century Literature

It was with great hope but also with some anxiety that the 20th century commenced because the new century marked the final approach to a new millennium and entry into a unique era. H.G. Wells's utopian studies, suitably titled *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), both captured and fitted this optimistic mood and expressed a common belief that science and technology would transform the world in the century ahead. Achieving such transformation, required that outdated institutions and ideals had to be substituted by ones more suited to the growth and liberation of the human spirit.

1.2.1 THE EDWARDIAN PERIOD (1901-1910)

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the accession of Edward VII seemed to indicate that a freer, less prohibited era had begun. In the Edwardian period, many writers, influenced by the realistic and naturalistic practices of the 19th century (upon Ibsen in drama and Balzac, Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Eliot, and Dickens in fiction) and in sync with the anti-Aestheticism set by the trial of Oscar Wilde, assumed their task in the new century to be an openly moralising one. George Bernard Shaw, in a series of amusingly iconoclastic plays, such as *Man and Superman* (performed 1905, published 1903) and *Major Barbara* (performed 1905, published 1907), transformed the Edwardian theatre by debating upon the principal issues of the day: the question of political organization, the morality of weaponries and war, the function of class and of the professions, the legitimacy of the family and of marriage, and the topic of female emancipation. There was also John Galsworthy who made use of the theatre in *Strife* (1909) to explore the conflict between capital and labour, and in *Justice* (1910) he endorsed reform of the penal system. Harley Granville-Barker, in *The Voysey Inheritance* (performed 1905, published 1909) and *Waste* (performed 1907, published 1909) analysed the hypocrisies and dishonesty of upper-class and professional life.

Likewise, many Edwardian novelists were eager to investigate the failings of English social life. H.G. Wells—in *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900); *Kipps* (1905); *Ann Veronica* (1909), his pro-suffragist novel and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910)—delineated the frustrations of lower- and middle-class existence. In *Tono-Bungay* (1909), Wells portrayed the threatening consequences of the uncontrolled developments taking place within a British society still dependent upon the institutions of a long-defunct landed aristocracy. Arnold Bennett in his *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) described the limitations of provincial life among the self-made business classes in the area of England known as the Potteries. In *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), Bennett showed, with unmatched pathos, the destructive effects of time on the lives of individuals and communities. Galsworthy, in *The Man of Property* (1906), the first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*, described the disparaging possessiveness of the professional bourgeoisie; and, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *The Longest Journey* (1907), E.M. Forster portrayed with irony the insensitivity, self-repression, and boorishness of the English middle classes and in *Howards End* (1910), Forster showed how little the rootless and smug world of contemporary commerce cared for the more rooted world of culture, although he acknowledged that commerce was a necessary evil. Despite perceiving the difficulties of the present, most Edwardian novelists, like their counterparts in the theatre, firmly believed not only that constructive change was possible but also that this change could in some measure be brought about by their writing.

Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling, who had established their names during the previous century, and Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and Edward Thomas, who established their reputations in the first decade of the new century, were less confident about the future. They tried to restore the traditional forms such as the ballad, the narrative poem, the satire, the fantasy, the topographical poem, and the essay, which they believed preserved traditional sentiments and perceptions.

What characterised the most significant writing of the period, traditionalist or modern, was neither hope nor apprehension but the influence of bleaker feelings that the new century would witness the collapse of an entire civilization. Great Britain got involved in the South African War (the Boer War; 1899–1902) at the beginning of the new century and many assumed that the British Empire was as doomed to destruction, both from within and from without, as had been the Roman Empire. Hardy, in his poems on the South African War, questioned simply and scathingly the human cost of empire building and established a tone and style that inspired many British poets in the course of the century. Kipling, who had done much to generate pride in empire, began to speak in his verse and short stories of the burden of empire and the problems it would cause.

It was the expatriate American novelist Henry James who captured the sense of an imperial civilization in decline most fully or subtly. In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), he had briefly analysed the fatal loss of energy of the English ruling class and, in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), had described more directly the various uncertainties that threatened its authoritarian rule. By the turn of the century, however, he had noted a disturbing change. In *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897), members of the upper class no longer seem bothered by the means adopted to achieve their dishonest aims. Great Britain had become indistinguishable from the other nations of the “Old World”, in which an ugly greed had never been far from the surface. James’s conveyed his dismay at this condition in his late fiction, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904).

Joseph Conrad was another expatriate novelist who shared James’s sense of crisis but attributed it to human failings rather than the fall of a certain civilization. Man was a solitary, romantic creature of will who at any cost imposed his meaning upon the world being unable to think of a world that did not reflect his central place within it. In *Almayer’s Folly* (1895) and *Lord Jim* (1900), he had seemed to sympathize with this predicament

but in “*Heart of Darkness*” (1902), *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), and *Under Western Eyes* (1911), he detailed such imposition without sympathy. He did so as a philosophical novelist whose concern with the mocking limits of human knowledge affected not only the content of his fiction but also its very structure. His writing itself is marked by gaps in the narrative, by narrators who do not fully grasp the significance of the events they are retelling, and by characters who are unable to make themselves understood. James and Conrad used many of the conventions of 19th-century realism but transformed them to express what are considered to be peculiarly 20th-century preoccupations and anxieties.

1.2.2 THE MODERNIST REVOLUTION

There was an unusually creative period of novelty and experiment, from 1908 to 1914, as novelists and poets undertook, in anthologies and magazines, to challenge the literary principles not just of the recent past but of the entire post-Romantic era.

The essence of Modernism was a radical and idealistic spirit stimulated by new ideas in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political theory, and psychoanalysis. It was expressed rather subtly by the pastoral and often anti-Modern poets of the Georgian movement (1912–22) and more accurately by the English and American poets of the Imagist movement, to which Pound first drew attention in *Ripostes* (1912), a volume of his own poetry, and in *Des Imagistes* (1914), an anthology. Prominent among the Imagists were the English poets T.E. Hulme, F.S. Flint, and Richard Aldington and the Americans Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Amy Lowell. The Imagists reacted against what they considered to be a worn out poetic tradition and wanted to refine the language of poetry in order to make it a medium not for pastoral sentiment or imperialistic rhetoric but for the exact description and evocation of mood. To achieve this purpose, they experimented with free or irregular verse and made the image their principal instrument. Unlike the leisurely Georgians, they worked with brief and economical forms.

D.H. Lawrence, in his two most imaginative novels, *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920), attributed the malady of modern civilization—a civilization in his view only too eager to participate in the mass slaughter of the war—to the effects of industrialization upon the human psyche. Yet as he rejected the practices of the fictional tradition, which he had used brilliantly in his deeply felt autobiographical novel of working-class family life, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), he drew upon myth and symbol to hold out the hope that individual and collective rebirth could come through human intensity and passion.

On the other hand, the poet and playwright T.S. Eliot, in his most innovative poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1922), attributed the sickness of modern civilization—a civilization that, on the evidence of the war, preferred death or death-in-life to life—to the spiritual emptiness and rootlessness of modern existence. As he rejected the conventions of the poetic tradition, Eliot, like Lawrence, relied on myth and symbol to hold out the hope of individual and collective rebirth, but he differed sharply from Lawrence by believing that rebirth could come through self-denial and self-renunciation.

The Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats and the Irish novelist James Joyce also made significant literary contributions so that their works are considered to be the most important Modernist achievements of the period. In his early verse and drama, Yeats, who had been influenced as a young man by the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite movements, evoked a legendary and supernatural Ireland in language that was often vague and exalted. Being a supporter of the cause of Irish nationalism, he wanted to instil pride in the Irish past. The poetry of *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914), however, was marked not only by a more concrete and colloquial style but also by a growing isolation from the nationalist movement, for Yeats celebrated an aristocratic Ireland symbolized for him by the family and country house of his friend and patron, Lady Gregory. The splendour of his mature reflective

poetry in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stair* (1929) resulted in large measure from the way in which he accepted the fact that his idealized Ireland was illusory.

Joyce, in his collection of short stories, *Dubliners* (1914), and his chiefly autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), described in fiction at once realist and symbolist the individual cost of the sexual and imaginative harshness of life in Ireland. His panoramic novel of urban life, *Ulysses* (1922), was sexually frank and imaginatively rich. Using unusual formal and linguistic inventiveness, including the stream-of-consciousness method, Joyce depicted the experiences and the fantasies of various men and women in Dublin on a summer's day in June 1904. His purpose was not simply to document for he drew upon an encyclopaedic range of European literature to stress the rich universality of life buried beneath the provincialism of pre-independence Dublin, in 1904 a city still within the British Empire. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is much more experimental. Here, by means of a strange, multilingual idiom of puns and portmanteau words, Joyce has not only delved into the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious but also suggested that the languages and myths of Ireland were linked with the languages and myths of many other cultures.

Aldous Huxley's satirical novel *Crome Yellow* (1921) sets the dominant tone of cynicism and bewilderment, in the wake of the war. Drawing upon Lawrence and Eliot, he dealt with the fate of the individual in rootless modernity in his novels of ideas—*Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), and *Point Counter Point* (1928). His pessimistic vision found its most complete expression in his most famous and inventive novel, the anti-utopian fantasy *Brave New World* (1932), and his account of the anxieties of middle-class intellectuals of the period, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936).

Huxley's candid and disenchanting manner was followed by the dramatist Noël Coward in *The Vortex* (1924), by the poet Robert Graves in

his autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That* (1929) and by the poet Richard Aldington in his *Death of a Hero* (1929), a semiautobiographical novel of prewar bohemian London and the trenches. There were exceptions to this dominant mood which were found among writers too old to consider themselves members of a betrayed generation. In *A Passage to India* (1924), E.M. Forster examined the quest for and failure of human understanding among various ethnic and social groups in India under British rule.

These were, however, writers of an earlier, more confident era. A younger and more contemporary voice belonging to members of the Bloomsbury group was seen to be emerging. In opposition to the gibberish and hypocrisy that, they believed, had marked their parents' generation in upper-class England, they aimed to be resolutely honest in personal and artistic life. In Lytton Strachey's radical biographical study *Eminent Victorians* (1918), this amounted to little more than amusing impudence, even though Strachey had a profound effect upon the writing of biography. But in the fiction of Virginia Woolf, this outlook led to profound and moving results. In short stories and novels of great elegance and lyrical power, she set out to portray the constraints of the self, caught as it is in time, and suggested that these could be overcome, if only momentarily, by engagement with another self, a place, or a work of art. This interest not only gave the act of reading and writing an unusual significance but also produced her most innovative, daring and intricate novels such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931) and her most sober and touching work *Between the Acts* (1941). Woolf owed a great deal to the example of *Ulysses* but she was without Joyce's amplitude and creative vitality. In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the limit of time to a single city is suggestive of *Ulysses*. The stream of consciousness technique is used, with this difference that we pass from mind to mind through transitional impressions of environment. When within a personality, the movement is back and forth through time, and during the accurately indicated pauses in time, the movement is from

one personality to another. The purpose is to create a sense of immediacy, but the effect upon some readers is of a refined detachment from reality. Thus, Woolf transformed the treatment of subjectivity, time, and history in fiction and helped create a view among her contemporaries that traditional forms of fiction were no longer adequate.

1.3 E.M. Forster: Life and Important Works

Edward Morgan Forster was born in London on 1 January 1870. He was educated at private schools in Eastbourne and Tonbridge and from 1897, he attended King's College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he read classics and history, partly under the supervision of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, of whom he also wrote a biography. During this time, he acquired many important ideas and influences. He was especially influenced by the philosopher G.E. Moore and the aesthetic belief that the purpose of life is to contemplate beauty in art and to cultivate good personal relations. Forster was elected to the 'Apostles' circle of Cambridge intellectuals, through whom he met members of the Bloomsbury Group. Following Cambridge, in 1901 he went on a one year's tour of Italy and Austria with his mother and meanwhile he also began writing. In 1902, he taught at the Working Men's College and thereafter at the extra-mural department of the Cambridge Local Lectures Board, lecturing on Italian art and history. His first story was 'Albergo Empedocle' which appeared in *Temple Bar* in December 1903. In the following year, he started contributing stories to the Cambridge-based journal *Independent Review*.

STOP TO CONSIDER

BLOOMSBURY GROUP

The Bloomsbury Group was a highly cosmopolitan, urbane, witty and ferociously clever group which was loosely constituted as an inner circle of friends and a less well-defined, wider circle of intimates and acquaintances. The Group proper counted Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Desmond McCarthy, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Roger Fry in the immediate circle. Others, like E. M. Forster and T. S. Eliot, were closely associated

with the Group but not part of the inner circle. The Group was named after the quarter of central London that surrounds the British Museum, with busy streets punctuated by a series of leafy residential squares, in which many of the Group had their London residences. Unlike the more disreputably bohemian Soho and the area known later as Fitzrovia on the west side of Tottenham Court Road, Bloomsbury is solidly residential and respectably bourgeois. The presence of the Museum, several University of London colleges and institutes, important publishing enterprises, and other cultural institutions have for many years now made it the intellectual centre of London. For the Group, the Bloomsbury area, academic but not stuffy and provincial, was perfectly suited to their styles of life and to their position in British society. It provided a very convenient and very safe social setting for the expression of carefully calculated degrees of non-conformity, but it was not the place from which a defiant, rebellious, campaign would arise.

A social-moral comedy, Forster's first published novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), is a story about Anglo-Italian contrasts that sets the passionate world of Italy he had seen on his travels against the English person's fear of feeling. He worked as a private tutor for an Indian Muslim, Syed Ross Masood in 1907. Forster developed a close friendship and love with the Indian to whom he dedicated *A Passage to India*. In the same year, Forster's novel *The Longest Journey* was also published. It is the story of an orphaned undergraduate and then struggling writer, Rickie, who abandons his close friend Ansell for a loveless marriage but is partially enlightened by the free spirit of his wilful, pagan, Wiltshire half-brother Stephen. *A Room with a View*, Forster's second Anglo-Italian novel published the following year, is a story of misunderstandings and English snobbery which ends happily as the heroine, Lucy Honeychurch, realises in time her love for the impulsive George Emerson over the effete intellectual Cecil Vyse. A book that brought considerable success and secured Forster's reputation is *Howards End* (1910) which is a condition-of-England novel about sections of the middle

classes. It focuses on the question of who will inherit Howards End, Forster's metonym for England based on his childhood home of Rook's Nest.

The year 1911 saw the release of a collection of short stories by E.M. Forster entitled *The Celestial Omnibus*. Forster made his first visit to India, with R.C. Trevelyan, Dickinson and G.H. Luce in 1912-13 and soon after he began writing an early draft of *A Passage to India*. He also worked on the homosexual novel *Maurice: A Romance* (1971) that was not published until after his death. In 1915, after the war began, Forster began working for the International Red Cross in Alexandria and became a strong supporter of the poet C.P. Cavafy. After the war, he returned to England in 1919, but began travelling again in 1921. On this trip to India he worked as the private secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas Senior. His letters home from the two Indian trips were later published as *The Hill of Devi* (1953). In 1922 he published *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, but copies were set on fire before distribution and the book was not republished until 1938. *Pharos and Pharillon*, Forster's essays on Alexandria along with some translations of Cavafy's poems, was published in 1923.

Forster's novel *A Passage to India* was conceived in his mind over a period, between his first visit to India in 1912 and his second in 1921, which covered the First World War, the continuation of wartime suppressive measures in the Rowlatt Acts, Gandhi's return to India from South Africa and the beginning of his civil disobedience campaign, the First Government of India Act, a rise in Indian Nationalist feeling, British promises of Independence, and the massacre at Amritsar. Published fourteen years after his previous novel, *A Passage to India* (1924) was the last full-length fictional work E. M. Forster felt he could write. This novel is about the journey of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore to India to visit Adela's fiancé and Mrs Moore's son, Ronny Heaslop. In India, they meet a college teacher Cyril Fielding, the Brahman Hindu Dr Godbole and the Muslim Dr Aziz. The alleged assault on Adela by Dr Aziz during a visit to the Marabar Caves constitutes the pivot of the novel.

The Clark lectures delivered by Forster at Cambridge University in 1927 were published as *Aspects of the Novel* the same year. He was also offered a fellowship at King's College, Cambridge, on the strength of them. The year 1928 saw the publication of his second collection of short stories *The Eternal Moment*. Forster published his first biography, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* in 1934. The same year he became the first president of the National Council for Civil Liberties. In 1936, Forster published his first assembly of essays and occasional pieces, *Abinger Harvest*. His mother died in 1945 and in the same year he was elected Honorary Fellow of King's, which entitled him to live at the college, as he did for the rest of his life. In 1947 he set out on lecture tours in the United States and two years later he refused a knighthood from the King. He also wrote the libretto for Benjamin Britten's opera, *Billy Budd* in the same year.

In 1951, Forster published his second collection of essays and articles, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, in 1953 *the Hill of Devi* and in 1954 the two story volumes *Collected Short Stories*. The final book he wrote was *Marianne Thornton* (1956), a biography of the great-aunt whose gift in 1887 had enabled him to go to Cambridge and subsequently to become a writer. Forster was awarded the Order of Merit in 1969 and he died the following year on 7 June. In 1971 Forster's *Maurice* was published and in 1972 his remaining largely unpublished short stories *The Life to Come* was released (Childs 5-8).

1.4 The Socio-historical Context

In *A Passage to India*, Forster uses India to represent a set of significantly different values and conventions from those of England. But India crucially differed from Italy and Greece, on which his early novels were based, in that it was a part of the British Empire and its relationship to England and the English was in many ways more complex. Here the English were rulers as well as foreigners, and their behaviour was always meant to represent something more important than themselves.

It was on 31 December 1600 that Queen Elizabeth granted the year-old East India Company its first royal charter to trade – a monopoly that was not broken until 1813. The East India Company had been founded in 1599 to exploit the spice trade, which had formerly been controlled by the Dutch and the Portuguese. However, the first Englishman known definitely to have visited India in 1579 was a Jesuit called Thomas Stevens, who served as a missionary in India for forty years. Knowledge of India in England during this time was all second hand and entirely unofficial such as merchants' and travellers' tales. This continued to be so until after 1615, when James I sent out Sir Thomas Roe, funded by the East India Company, to begin official Anglo-Indian diplomatic relations.

England, from the year 1640, began to acquire land in India from trade, annexation and inheritance. After 1757, when Robert Clive famously fought to recapture Calcutta, which had been seized by the Nawab of Bengal the previous year, there was considerable exploitation and plunder by the British, along with an explosion of trade between the two countries. In 1773, the British government interfered to manage the East India Company's affairs and British land control increased, with permanent settlements in Bengal and in the south around Madras. English language and culture were promoted in the 1830s, particularly in consequence of Thomas Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education.'

In 1857, sepoys in the Indian army turned against their officers leading to the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857 or the Indian Uprising or War of Independence. This uprising which centred on Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur, incorporated soldiers and civilians and grew into twelve months of violence and counter-violence. In 1858, Lord Canning suppressed all opposition and became the first Viceroy of India as the British government took over rule of India. Eventually, tension between Anglo-Indian and Indian society began to grow and the pretence of a benevolent rule was impossible to maintain as the British became increasingly and intentionally detached.

In 1876, Queen Victoria was declared Empress of India. Indian opposition to British rule grew over the next few decades, to be led by Gandhi in 1915 when he returned to India after training to be a lawyer in England and practising in South Africa. Gandhi initiated a campaign of passive resistance and at the end of the war he organised fasts and mass meetings in protest against the Rowlatt proposals, which recommended continuing wartime measures such as curfews into peacetime and in March 1919 became law. The terrible outcome of this battle of wills was the Amritsar massacre of April 1919, when hundreds of Indian civilians were fired upon by troops under the command of General Reginald Dyer at Jallianwallah Bagh.

Although Gandhi pleaded for non-violence and passive opposition, there were riots in the Punjab in 1919 and in Bombay in 1921. In 1922, Gandhi was imprisoned by the British but soon released. His ability to expose British rule as both unjust and unwanted made the raj's position increasingly defenceless. This is the context for the "battlelines drawn" by the Anglo-Indians at the Club in *A Passage to India* and also for the unlikelihood of a friendship between Aziz and Fielding at the novel's ending. Over twenty years later, in 1947, following the war and the election of a Labour government in Britain, India finally achieved independence (Childs 8-9).

Check your Progress

1. Make an assessment of the life and works of E.M. Forster.
2. Trace the socio-historical background in which E.M. Forster wrote *A Passage To India*.

1.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE NOVEL

Forster's *A Passage to India* was both "a critical and a commercial success". Reviewers in Britain, America, and India praised Forster's book highly. But reviewers in the British-Indian press were deeply critical, finding their reflection in the book both disagreeable and incorrect. Such resentment, over metropolitan novels about India, was growing for some time, and it was

not mere outrage at the portrayal of the British in India but at the mistakes over practices and history. Forster acknowledged criticisms that his depiction of Aziz's arrest and trial were inaccurate, in that they contained technical errors, but expressed his feeling that portrayal of English psychology was true. In fact, his representation was based on the reactions of the British-Indians to the bombing of the vice-regal procession before Christmas in Delhi in 1912. Indian commentators appreciated the novel in 1924 as one of the just and unbiased British interpretations of the country to date. However, thirty years later, in his 1954 article 'Passage to and from India', Nirad Chaudhuri censured the book for its "apolitical liberalism" and for having a Muslim protagonist who certainly did not represent a predominantly Hindu country or of the question of India the novel supposedly tried to deal with. After Chaudhuri's interference, debate arose over the novel's representation of Indo-British relationships. Edward Said's 1978 survey *Orientalism* played a seminal role in this discussion, whose perspective was first applied at length to *A Passage to India* by Benita Parry. Parry's reading of the novel declares "the context of the colonial 'historical situation' as important to both the study of Forster's story and to the meaning of literary texts: European fiction inherits and informs the Empire's practices of domination over the colonies, through force and representation."

From the 1980s onwards, a variety of feminist and postcolonial approaches have given different stresses on the ways in which the novel mirrors or interprets "colonial discursive practices" and ways of representation. Sara Suleri, for instance, argues that, "in the use of metaphoric geography, the West's Others most often appear as (dark) holes beyond civilisation, divinity or morality, such that European narrative's most compelling and durable image of the East is a hollow or indeed a cave." This possibly relates with other faults, such as "muddle and contradiction", which Forster seems to attach to India whether in the space of Cave, Temple, or Mosque. Whereas Suleri argues that the focus of the novel is the void of the Marabar Caves, Brenda Silver believes that "at its heart is the 'unspeakable' colonial trope of rape."

Taking the perspective of Frantz Fanon as well as Said, Silver analyses questions of control and resistance throughout the novel in terms of gender, 'race', and sex, such that, while Suleri says that India can only be represented to British-India as a sign of possible rape, Silver finds substantial obscurity in the novel, for example arguing that Aziz 'reduced to his sexuality, becomes simultaneously rapist and object of rape' (as cited in Childs, 191). Another interpretation has used Said's *Orientalism* to read *A Passage to India* in relation to a collection of Indian criticism, offering not only a reading of Forster's novel as one in which colonialism overpowers liberalism for Adela, Aziz, and Fielding, but also a critique of the inadequacies of Said's approach and of *Orientalism* itself as a text whose assumptions are Eurocentric.

Homi Bhabha, the principal theorist of colonial ambiguity has analysed Forster's novel, and others such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, as texts which exhibit their lack of understanding of other cultures through their (non-)representations of language and their descent into confusion and unintelligibility. Bhabha's reading is thus related to the text's radical indeterminacy which, for most critics, is illustrated by and contained in Forster's use of the Marabar Caves, and Adela's experience within one of them. The latter has attracted the attention of the critics because it remains a gap or aporia that the novel, with an omniscient narrator, refuses to explain. Therefore, the reader is left with the possibilities put forward by Fielding, that either an individual such as Aziz, the guide, or someone else is physically responsible or it relates to a perception such as hallucination.

Bhabha's approach is one of the most recent to suggest that Forster's spiritual concerns in the novel correspond to his experience of cultural difference. Forster himself argued that his book was about the human race's attempt to find a "more-lasting home", that its central concern is metaphysics (as cited in Childs, 192). The first and third sections of the novel focus on religion in their titles, while the second, 'Caves', is a reference to the Jain religion founded in the sixth century bc by the reformer Mahavira. The third

section records Forster's experience of the Hindu Gokul Ashtami festival, as described in *The Hill of Devi*, while repeatedly teasing the reader with Forster's understanding of India as a spiritual but muddled country, in notions such as telepathy, transcendence, and the transposed 'God si love'.

1.6 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we undertook to examine some of the key events and circumstances of the life of E.M. Forster, beginning with his education, early influences etc. We then moved on to explore his career, his travels, especially to India. We then had an overview of this vocation, examining his chief achievements and contributions as a novelist. In this unit, we have also examined the socio-historical context in which the novel was written and had a glimpse of the India, as part of the British empire, which Forster uses as a backdrop in his novel. We also read some of the common critical approaches that might be applied to the novel.

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UNIT - II : THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

Contents:

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The First Section-Mosque
- 2.3 The Second Section-Caves
- 2.4 The Third Section-Temple
- 2.5 Point of View
- 2.6 Summing Up
- 2.7 References

2.0 Objectives

The objective of this unit is to analyse the structure of the novel *A Passage to India*. This unit shall examine the three parts or sections of the novel and the particular symbols, correspondences and associations of each part. It shall also deal with the point of view of the novel.

2.1 Introduction

In his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Foster talks about the plot, which is the heart of the novel. In a plot, he says, the emphasis falls on causality. He believes that the time-sequence is preserved but the sense of causality overshadows it. He says that plot requires intelligence and memory which are closely connected to each other and essential for the novel. Further, he describes the plot as one where “Every word or action in a plot ought to count: it ought to be economical and spare... organic and free from dead matter...and the final sense will be ...of something aesthetically compact, something which might have been shown by the novelist straight away it would

never have become beautiful” (88). Plot is an unfurling mystery that requires a suspension of the time sequence to appreciate it. It indicates the capacity to appreciate something shapely and unique. Plot is a fixed form into which people and events are fitted and interrelated. Events are not merely supposed as a sequence, but in their totality as an interconnected system.

Forster's *A Passage to India* has got a tripartite structure which has given rise to various interpretative explanations from different critics and the reader can make his own choice regarding the one to agree with. The novel's three sections represent, according to Forster in his notes to the Everyman edition, the 'three seasons of the Cold weather, the Hot weather, and the Rains, which divide the Indian year'. This seasonal backdrop of the three sections suggest the frame of mind of the various characters as also the general feeling of the situations in the novel.

2.2 First Section-Mosque

The opening section of the novel, 'Mosque,' begins with a tourist-book overview of the ordinary small Indian city i.e. Chandrapore, twenty miles from which are the extraordinary Marabar Caves. This section concerns itself with journeys, meetings and friendships, the first journey being that of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore to visit Ronny Heaslop, who is the Chandrapore city magistrate, Mrs Moore's son and Adela's fiancé. Mrs Moore is a spiritual figure with a significance similar to Mrs Wilcox in Forster's previous novel, *Howards End*, and Adela is an earnest, immature young woman eager to see the 'real India' (Forster 21). The first significant meeting of the novel is that of Mrs Moore's with the Muslim Dr Aziz, the book's Indian protagonist, at a mosque by the Ganges. The next attempt at building Indo-British friendship, is the failed 'Bridge Party', which the city's snobbish officials organise so that the two women can meet the local Indian community. The third meeting of the novel's opening section is an unofficial get-together organised at his home by Cyril Fielding, a liberal college principal, at which Adela, Mrs Moore, Aziz

and the Hindu Brahman Professor Godbole meet. In the next section of the novel, Aziz invites the group to be his guests on a trip to the Marabar Caves. However, this party at Fielding's house is spoilt when Ronny arrives and ruins the atmosphere with his bossy sahib attitude. His unfeelingness and snobbery makes Adela decide not to marry him but a mysterious car accident changes her mind. Towards the final pages of 'Mosque', Aziz and Fielding are seen to come closer and this section ends in Aziz showing a photograph of his dead wife to the Englishman as a token of their friendship. Part I, set during India's cold season, taken as a whole, is mostly characterised by good-natured hospitality and invitation impaired by Anglo-Indian prejudice as well as cultural difference and misunderstanding, which Forster depicts as 'muddle'.

The Bridge Party

Before coming, both Mrs. Moore and Adela are eager to know the real India. In order to realize their desire, Mr. Turton, the highest ranking British official in Chandrapore, organizes a "Bridge Party" to provide a chance for Mrs. Moore and Adela to know India. This "Bridge Party", however, is definitely not a success for the social and racial gulfs between the English and the Indians who are given their "objective corrective": on one side of lawn stand the English ladies and their menfolk, querulous, distressed at the presence of so many Indians; on one other side of the lawn stand the Indians, embarrassed, some servile, some faintly contemptuous, regarding the disgruntled English with a kind of nervous curiosity. The enmity and lack of communication between the two parties make the "Bridge Party" fail. Even Mrs. Moore and Adela, with all the good will in the world, cannot get much response from the Indians after this pattern of British frigidity has been established. They ask to call on one of the Indian ladies- Mrs. Bhattacharya and are met with a bewildering combination of friendliness and ignorance. The gulfs between the two parties are widened, not narrowed. Though the "Bridge Party" is held in the club and attended by both parties, the English stands rather apart from the Indians. The British, for the most part disapproving of the Indians, and a little nervous with them too, remain aloof, while the Indians, though coming early, stand grouped at the extreme side of the tennis lawn, doing nothing. Thus, the gulf between the two groups is physical as well as social.

2.3 Second Section- The Caves

The second section of the novel 'Caves', is set in the hot weather. Its main focus is the journey to the caves, which Aziz is compelled to undertake despite everyone's weariness over the prospect. The trip is made unpleasant as Fielding misses the train and Mrs Moore feels physically and spiritually unwell in the first cave they visit. Adela and Aziz continue alone with only a guide to the second group of caves and become separated after a moment of embarrassment caused by Adela asking Aziz if he has more than one wife. They enter separate caves but shortly afterwards Adela rushes down the hills to stop a car and return to Chandrapore. Though the reader does not get to know what actually happened, Adela believes she has been assaulted in the caves by Dr. Aziz. The car in which she travels back to the city is the one that brings Fielding to the expedition. Perplexed by the situation at the caves, Fielding returns with Aziz to find his friend is arrested at Chandrapore station. Fielding and Mrs Moore believe Aziz to be innocent for their views are based on knowledge of his character rather than on prejudiced assumptions about 'Orientals'. The rest of the Anglo-Indians come together behind Adela and Ronny, convinced that an Indian must be obviously guilty of the crime if he has been accused by one of their own people. Fielding is shunned by the other members of the Anglo-Indian community and resigns from the English club. Mrs Moore decides to sail home but she dies aboard ship, news of the event reaching the others shortly after Aziz's trial. In the courtroom, Adela says that she has made a mistake and Aziz is therefore acquitted. She is avoided by the English but Fielding decides to support her. Consequently, Fielding's friendship with Aziz is damaged. Aziz thinks that a romance is developing between Adela and Fielding but the two sail home to England separately.

2.4 The Third Section- The Temple

The final section 'Temple' takes place in the rainy season, two years later and the narrative shifts to Mau, where Godbole is Minister of Education

and Aziz is doctor to the Rajah. This section begins with a description of the Gokul Ashtami festival, celebrating the birth of Krishna, at which Godbole presides. Fielding returns to India on a tour with his wife and her brother. He has come to Mau to inspect the local school. Aziz has no desire to meet him as he believes Fielding to have married Adela and is unaware that he has actually wedded Mrs Moore's daughter from her second marriage, Stella. Aziz however is only calmed when he meets Stella's reticent brother Ralph, who has the same spiritual qualities, as well as honesty and goodwill, that Aziz had found in Mrs Moore. Aziz's reunites with Fielding when their boats collide on the Mau Tank at the height of the festival and each falls into the water. In the famous ending of the novel, the reader sees them riding together in the jungle, still wishing to be friends but aware that the political situation makes it impossible to be so (Childs 113-114).

Check your Progress

1. Write a critical note on the plot construction of Forster's *A Passage to India*.
2. Is the section entitled 'Temple' in *A Passage to India* necessary? Analyse.

2.6 Traditional versus modernist traits in the narrative of *A Passage to India*

By the time, Forster completed his novel *A Passage to India* i.e. after his second visit to India in 1921, modernist experiments with the form of novels had made Forster's Edwardian works appear old-fashioned. *A Passage To India* is written in the third person, with an impersonal narrative voice. This technique makes the narrative seem traditional and straightforward, especially, when compared to the more obviously experimental narrative techniques that were being used at the time by such novelists as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. The narrator here is apparently omniscient, telling the

reader much about India at the same time as describing the situations in which the various characters find themselves.

A Passage to India, though in many respects a traditional English novel, contains one central plot device that links it to the sort of “modern fiction” that Virginia Woolf championed. The narrative withholds a full explanation of certain events, most notably the misadventures that befall Mrs Moore and Adela Quested at the Marabar Caves. On a trip to visit the Marabar caves, Miss Adela Quested hears a loud echo, which causes her such confusion that the innocent Dr. Aziz winds up being arrested for assaulting her. Forster leaves the source of the echo unexplained, thus breaking with the realist conventions which would have accounted for its origins and embracing the ambiguity typical of modernist narrative. Forster wrote of the echo: “In the cave it is either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book. And even if I know!” Forster’s rejection of narratorial and even authorial omniscience indicated the transition from the Edwardian to the modernist age (Pericles, par 2). Indeed, in recounting these details, the narrator is ambiguous rather than omniscient. A degree of ambiguity also surrounds the depiction of certain characters. Often, relatively minor characters (such as Mr Turton, Mrs Cledar, Mahmoud Ali and the Nawab Bahadur) will appear in a scene without much introduction. Forster seems to take their presence for granted. This technique mimics the way that people might come and go in real life. Forster also assumes that the reader will have some knowledge of the social nuances of British India.

However, Sarker opines that barring Forster’s novel *Maurice* published posthumously in 1924, all the other four novels of the writer were written and published during the Edwardian period and not in the modern period. Forster, he says, was not a modernist novelist either as regards themes or as regards style. In fact, Forster, a liberal humanist,

was, in his life as well as in his novels, primarily interested in human relationship and the cultural mesh that prevents the growth of it and also in the problem of under-developed heart. He was not interested like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, in the inner workings of the minds of his characters and in experimentations in the style of novel writing which failed him to be recognised as a modern novelist. He was a follower of Jane Austen (1775-1817) and George Meredith (1825-1909). He absorbed Austen's ability of drawing fine characters in simple everyday language and Meredith's ability of telling entertaining stories. He was also influenced by Proust's "technique of elaborating or leading forth the story"(165). But he never adopted the stream- of-consciousness method, nor was he engaged in portraying the intentions of his characters. Although he had been a harsh critic of the Victorian middle-class hypocritical outlook, yet as a novelist he was certainly a Victorian. Mulk Raj Anand opined Forster that he was mainly "an English novelist of the Edwardian and Georgian era, firmly rooted in the tradition of Jane Austen and George Meredith" (Quoted in Sarker, 165).

2.6 Summing Up

In this unit, we saw how Forster excels in technique while dealing with the structure of his novel. The structure of the novel is not just an arrangement of events but beneath the structure, one can find another arrangement which is that of meanings. We have seen how the novel despite being a traditional one, is at the same time, characterised by features that mark it as a modern fictional work.

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UNIT - III :

THE THEMES OF THE NOVEL

Contents:

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The theme of cultural misunderstanding, of separateness and of barrier
- 3.3 Failure of the ruler and the ruled to connect.
- 3.4 Hinduism
- 3.5 The Theme of Personal Relationships
- 3.6 The Significance of the Title: *A Passage To India*
- 3.7 Summing Up
- 3.8 References

3.0 Objectives

The objective of this unit is to analyse the novel in terms of its various themes. It shall also deal with the significance of the title of the novel.

3.1 Introduction

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is one of the most inclusive and wide-ranging novels ever written, rich in matter and theme as well as in technique. The novel is characterised by a blending of several themes such as the theme of cultural misunderstanding, of separateness and of barrier, failure of the ruler and the ruled to connect, the theme of personal friendships etc.

3.2 The theme of cultural misunderstanding, of separateness and of barrier

One of the major themes of E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* is cultural misunderstanding. Differing cultural ideas and expectations regarding hospitality, social proprieties, and the role of religion in daily life are

responsible for misunderstandings between the English and the Muslim Indians, the English and the Hindu Indians, and between the Muslims and Hindus. Aziz tells Fielding at the end of the novel, "It is useless discussing Hindus with me. Living with them teaches me no more. When I think I annoy them, I do not. When I think I don't annoy them, I do" (304). Forster demonstrates how these repeated misunderstandings become hardened into cultural stereotypes and are often used to justify the uselessness of attempts to bridge cultural gulfs. When Aziz offers his collar stud to Fielding in an 'effusive' act of friendship, Heaslop later misinterprets Aziz's missing stud as an oversight and extends it as a general example: "...there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (75). At the very outset, that is, at the beginning of the second chapter, the brief opening chapter merely setting the scene and providing the background to the action which ensues. The two Moslems with whom Aziz is dining, we are told "were discussing as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (8). The one hope for unity, then, according to Forster, is a trust in the power of friendly personal relations among individuals; but even this proves inadequate as we see in this relationship between Aziz and Fielding. The more sincere the advances of personal goodwill, the more they are misinterpreted on either side. The responsibility for the failure of communication rests not on the individuals but upon human nature in general and upon "the whole conflict of civilizations" as Crew observes (quoted in Mitra 5-6). And Forster in *A Passage to India*, instead of recommending a way of behaviour, simply tries to show us an image of our miserable plight as human beings, engaged in a losing battle against the meaninglessness of life.

Cultural misunderstanding culminates in the experience at the Marabar Caves and one thing this episode seems to reveal is how much cultural misunderstanding, especially of the Indian by the British, is deliberate, even necessary. If the British were to really try to understand the Indian, the cultural

barriers might weaken and the British might begin to see their equal humanity and this of course would make the British role as conquering ruler more difficult. This is why Mrs. Moore is so revered by Aziz and the other Indians. She is too new a visitor to have become hardened, not having been there the six months Aziz and his friends agree are required for English ladies, and she still treats the Indians as people. She never advocates British withdrawal but she doesn't understand why they can't be more 'pleasant' to the natives. Perhaps there is a clue to answering this question in the experience Mrs. Moore has at the Caves.

The Marabar Caves and their 'echo' are complex symbols that seem to work on a number of levels and some of these levels are revealed in the way they affect Mrs. Moore. The echo of the Caves essentially stays with her "and began...to undermine her hold on life" (139) and she eventually loses her idealism and her faith because the echo reveals their limitations. In representing the British colonialist at her best, even Mrs. Moore is dwarfed by the essential indifference of India, an indifference born of a history stretching back to antiquity. In the end, with all their best sentiments and illusions of superiority, India will remember the British as just another short-lived conqueror. The Caves are dark and empty, signifying nothing in themselves but impersonal eternity, yet the polished walls reflect the visitor's image and the echo becomes the echo of one's limitations. Perhaps this is why those British who have been in India for years cannot be pleasant, must keep the Indian at a distance, must stay clumped together like a "herd," why intimacy with the Indians always brings problems. Not only would it make the job of ruling more difficult, cultural and social intercourse might reveal the limitations of the British colonizers and thus the Empire. The British rule of India might ultimately be futile and simply echo back to Britain her illusions, her fears, and her smallness and leave India untouched (Galloway, pars.4-5).

According to Lionel Trilling, the theme of separateness, of fences, and of barriers is in *A Passage to India* expanded and everywhere dominant. The separation of race from race, sex from sex, culture from culture, even of man from himself, is what underlies every relationship. The separation of the English from the Indians is merely the most dramatic of the chasms in the novel. Hindu and Moslem cannot really approach each other. Adela and Ronny cannot meet in sexuality, and when after the trial, Adela and Fielding meet in an idea, a 'friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air,' (249). Fielding when he marries Mrs. Moore's daughter Stella, will soon find himself apart from his young wife. And Mrs. Moore is separated from her son, from all people, from God, from the universe. This sense of separateness broods over the book, pervasive, symbolic- at the end the very earth requires, and the sky approves, the parting of Aziz and Fielding- and perhaps accounts for the remoteness of the characters: they are so far from each other that they cannot reach us (Bradbury 84).

3.3 Failure of the ruler and the ruled to connect

An anti-imperialist, Forster effectively brings out the relations between the colonizer and the colonized and his criticism of imperialism is liberal. He approaches the Anglo-Indian imperialism in terms of public school attitude: the prejudice, snobbery, priggishness, complacency, censoriousness and narrow-mindedness. His works abound with highly satirical portraits of the English middle-class culture and point towards something deficient within the English character. As Forster remarks- " For it is not that the Englishmen can't feel—it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow, or even to open his mouth too wide when he talks—his pipe might fall out if he did. He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasion". Forster's portrait of the Raj is very convincing, as he was thoroughly familiar with the realities of the Raj. Having spent two years in India, in 1912 and again in 1921-22, he was closely involved in Indian affairs, supported Gandhi's Non Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s and remained a commentator in the inter-war period, hence his account of India is culturally and historically specific (Sinha 29).

Stop to Consider

Orientalism

Orientalism, a significant work by Edward Said in 1978, brought the concept of the 'other' into focus and analysed how the Orient were habitually dominated by the West and reduced to being 'the other' in the sense of alien, inferior and non-Western. Said's basic charge put forward in his work is that the Orient as conceived by the Orientalists is a fiction of their own imagining bearing no resemblance to the actual Orient, which as he points out is a vastly complicated region. Forster too, in his adulthood was inspired by Orientalism as the Italian Renaissance and Greek paganism had inspired him in his youth. Forster's novel portrays the imperialist agenda of the West to rule the 'barbaric Orient'; the 'other', the mysterious, the exotic, the erotic, the superstitious and the irrational.

Forster's satire is not directed only against the British. The British may act badly in Forster's India, but so do the Indians. There is never any doubt that they need the justice and fair administration that the British give them. It is the hostility and lack of communication between the two sides that marks the failure- the old failure to 'connect'. The gap between the two sides is, roughly speaking, the gap between head and heart. Forster says that it is the 'undeveloped heart that is largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad.' Forster's Indians, on the other hand, make up for any failure in cold judicial reasoning by their highly developed hearts. Between the two groups there is a failure. But if the British are to be blamed for the failure, that is only because they were the groups from which any initiative must necessarily have come. As viewed by John Beer, throughout the novel, Forster tries to stress the quality of achievement of the British and in particular their desire that justice be done. His central points both for and against the regime are made in his account of the work of Ronny as City Magistrate at Chandrapore:

Everyday he worked hard in the court trying to decide which of two

untrue accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly, to protect the weak against the less weak, the incoherent against the plausible, surrounded by lies and flattery. (45-46)

Throughout the novel, this failure of connection between British and Indians is a running theme. The separation is strongly emphasized in the last chapter, when the two characters who have tried hardest to come together, Fielding and Aziz are out riding. The final passage, in which the whole landscape confirms Aziz's words about the impossibility of friendship between British and Indians, finely epitomizes this element in the novel:

But the horses didn't want it... 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there'. (306)

3.4 Role of Hinduism

As compared to Islam and Christianity, Hinduism comes closest to resolving the confusions and problems of life in India. The temple-scene with all its chaos of music, revelry, noise and piety is representative of the muddle and mystery of India. This mystery which is associated with India, is embodied in Godbole. He is partly a comic figure, but a kind of wise fool who represents the harmonious contradictions allowed for in Hinduism. Hinduism is at the core of the novel. Like India which has accommodated a variety of cultures, creeds and races, Hinduism, too, has grown by assimilating the customs and beliefs of the native people as well as those of the invaders. Forster has tried to project this very trait of unification of the religion. In Mau, Aziz finds that a Moslem saint is worshipped by the Hindus and that the Moslems of the place had grown idolatrous under the influence of the Hindus. Mrs. Moore, the English lady, is transformed into "Esmis Esmoor", a Hindu goddess.

Hinduism's all-inclusiveness envisages a world in which the good and the evil, the absurd and the lofty, the cruel and the kind co-exist. Hinduism also contains within itself the recognition of divisions among men and encourages men to remove all differences and embrace all. Forster's opinion

of Hinduism as seen in the novel and as pointed out by Frederick C Crews is that although Hinduism offers the most fascinating fable for the muddle and futility in the world, and our isolation from meaning, it is as powerless as Islam or Christianity when confronted with the nihilistic message of the Marabar Caves. The indecisiveness and ambiguity of Forster's total vision is clear and his attitude to all religions remains one of agnosticism and sceptical detachment.

3.5 The Theme of Personal Relationships

Forster handles the theme of friendship very effectively in the novel, which is also considered as the theme of personal relations or the motto of Forster's "only connect". Every character, in the novel tries to connect with the others or establish friendship. The relationship between Aziz, a young Muslim doctor and Fielding, a matured Englishman, a school teacher is the most significant friendship in the novel. In spite of the many barriers of race and character, these two men succeed in creating a unique rapport that stands out as evidence of power of goodwill and kindness.

Stop to Consider

Liberal Humanist Tradition

Forster's views as a humanist may be aptly summed up in the epigraph to his other masterpiece —*Howards End*—"Only connect". It epitomizes his ideal of achieving a harmony between the discordant elements within man himself and between man and the universe. It is about the need for the two parts of society—the intellectual and cultural and the commercial—to meet and understand each other. Forster writes not only about the need for society to be interlinked as a whole, but of the need of individuals to "to connect the prose and passion", to link their rational and emotional sides. His open-mindedness and humanist view of life is seen in his novels in their focus on human relationships and the need for tolerance, sympathy and love between individual human beings from different parts of society and different cultures. He spoke in favour of tolerance in many areas of life, and he vigorously opposed censorship. The urge of

bridging the difference between the East and the West and exploring the barriers of race, of class, of age and gender seems to be Forster's prime concern in *A Passage to India*. The humanist in Forster makes him insist on the need to connect and debate about how Anglo-Indian rule could be liberalized through the new attitude of courtesy and decency. Forster's famous essay *Two Cheers for Democracy*, which was originally printed in 1938, reflected his concern for individual liberty. He assumed liberal humanism not dogmatically but ironically, writing in unceremonious sentences and making gentle stabs at pomposity and hypocrisy—"if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country".

In their very first meeting, when they are still strangers, their desire for true friendship brings them together. The differences between two men are great. Fielding is a member of the ruling race of Englishmen whom, Aziz has found it difficult to make friends with. Again, there is the difficulty of communication due to Aziz's lack of knowledge of English language. It prevents Aziz from establishing perfect understanding with Fielding. Fielding's casual remark, "Please make yourself at home"(58), is misunderstood by Aziz as a signal for unconventional behaviour. Aziz also misunderstood the introduction of Fielding's funny dismissal of his topic of Post-Impressionism and interprets it as snub. Such difficulties of language are bound to produce misunderstanding, suspicion and distrust. However, there are more fundamental differences dividing the two men, who present a perfect study in contrast. Fielding appears in the novel as genuine but reserved man who, full of goodwill and consideration for other people, still refrains from a too intimate involvement with them. He insists, "travelling light" (111) even at the cost of more enduring relationships. Aziz presents a clear picture of contrast. He is impulsive, unreserved, given to extremes of love and jealousy, affection and bitterness. In an atmosphere of goodwill and kindness, Aziz throws shyness and becomes gay and excited. Fielding, criticizing Aziz's lack of emotional balance, argues that emotions

should be relative to their objects. Aziz retorts that he is not a machine to measure out emotions. In spite of these fundamental differences of culture and temperament, the two men enter in a genuine friendship that dissolves the various barriers between them. Knowing nothing of each other, they behave with spontaneous affection and generosity towards each other. Even before he sees Fielding, Aziz likes the man and is prepared to give all his heart to the English man. His touching gesture in parting with his collar stud is proof enough of his desire to make friends with Fielding. Under certain circumstances, their friendship gets strained no doubt, but not for long. Their relationship of goodwill and kindness continues till the end, though Aziz declares that friendship between an Indian and a British is not possible as long as the British are the rulers and the Indians are the ruled.

The relationship between Mrs Moore and Aziz is also one of the important bonds in the novel. Mrs. Moore first encounters Aziz in a mosque when the latter visits the mosque to regain his composure after having an unpleasant confrontation with his superior, Major Callendar, the Civil Surgeon. She respects him, sympathizes for the wrongs done to him and tells him of her instinctive liking for and aversion to certain people. Aziz responds by saying “Then you are an Oriental”(20). She is already estranged with from the Anglo-Indian s of Chandrapore and even from Adela, who herself wants to see “the real India”(21). Her inclinations are more towards Aziz, whose indiscretions regarding Major Callendar she asks her son to keep to himself as she does not wish to betray Aziz’s confidence in her. She has come out of the mosque believing in personal relations, which the Anglo-Indian world does not value. Later in the section, when going to hang her cloak, she notices a wasp on the peg and her reaction to the wasp—the Indian wasp—as “pretty dear” is indication of her generous heart that now finds the Christian tendency to exclude too narrow as compared to the Hindu inclusiveness (31). Mrs Moore’s kindness and simplicity soothe Aziz and soon a friendship

develops between the two. The understanding between them that was so quickly and strangely established, endures throughout the novel. She never doubts that Aziz is innocent of the charge Adela brings against him.

After their encounter at the mosque, Mrs Moore and Aziz meet again at Fielding's tea-party and later on at the picnic to the caves. The visit to the caves proved ruinous as Mrs Moore undergoes a terrible experience. As a consequence of this experience, she becomes bitter and disillusioned which extends even to her personal relationships. When Aziz is accused of molesting and attempting to rape Miss Adela Quested at the caves and is subsequently put on trial, Mrs Moore does not take the trouble to attend the trial or give evidence in favour of her friend. But her unseen presence has a mysterious effect on the trial proceedings so that Adela changes her mind and Aziz is released. The strong bond of their friendship can be discerned in the influence she exercises over Aziz even after her death. Being reminded of the fact that Mrs Moore would not have approved of his act of demanding compensation of Adela, Aziz declines it. Thus, even after Mrs Moore's death, the personal relationship between her and Aziz is kept well-maintained.

3.6 The Significance of the title: *A Passage to India*

The title of the novel is drawn from Walt Whitman's poem, 'Passage to India' as Forster himself has acknowledged. Just as the poem stresses the need to combine the successes of Western civilization with a new exploration of spiritual experiences and welcomes the opening of the Suez Canal as a step in this direction, so Forster's novel relates the ideas of human harmony to the secrets of the inner life and the mystery of the whole Universe. Both speak of a similar quest but whereas Whitman's poem celebrates the opening of the Suez Canal as bringing together East and West, *A Passage to India* begins and ends with the question – Can the

English and Indian races be friends? — and at the end of the novel the answer appears to be “No, not yet”(306). Kipling’s assertion, ‘ne’er the twain shall meet’ further qualifies it (Sinha 28). The word “passage” of the title opens up the manifold implications associated with it, suggesting that the novel’s thematic concern is perhaps, a rite of passage, a journey, a discovery or a quest. Indeed, the quest implications of the plot are realized in the somewhat unusual name of the heroine, Adela Quested, who has made this ‘passage’ to the real India and which takes her into a terrifying darkness at the heart of life (Mukherjee, par.2).

Check your progress

1. Write a short note on the title of *A Passage to India* and bring out its significance.
2. Is E.M. Forster preoccupied with the political problem in his novel *A Passage to India*?
3. Is the problem of race the main theme of the novel *A Passage to India*?
4. Give a brief sketch of India as presented by Forster in *A Passage to India*.

3.7 Summing Up

In this unit, we studied the novel in terms of the various themes of the novel. It follows that Forster’s novel is a rich, multi-layered work, highly complex in both form and argument. It is one of the most critically discussed novels within the canon and can be read from different perspectives.

3.8 References

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UNIT - IV : USE OF SYMBOLISM

Contents:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Mosque
- 4.3 Caves
- 4.4 Temple
- 4.5 Summing Up
- 4.6 References

4.0 Objectives

The objective of this unit is to analyse the symbolism of the novel. The symbolism gives an additional significance and greater meaning to the existing themes of the novel.

4.1 Introduction

The main symbols of *A Passage to India* are named in the titles to the three parts of the novel: Mosque, Caves and Temple. Each is more or less closely related to a corresponding alternative: Arch, Echo and Sky. Each conveys a generalized impression of a salient object or event in the narrative. The minor symbols consist of the punkahwallah, the wasp etc.

Affirming Forster's introductory note to the novel, R.A. Brower has dealt with the symbolic significance of the work in detail and focussed on "a group of symbolic metaphors" which compose "the central design" of *A Passage to India*. 'Mosque', the first section, he views, is associated with arch, 'Caves', the second section, with echo, and 'Temple', the third with sky. Gertrude White, developing her arguments on the theme of "fission and fusion" in the novel, interprets the three parts of *A Passage to India* as an aesthetic version of the Hegelian triad—"Thesis—Antithesis—Synthesis", or,

the statement of the problem and two opposite resolutions. John Colmer refers to the dialectical structure of the novel as one consisting of “positive affirmation (Mosque), negative retraction (Caves) and muted reaffirmation (Temple)”. Frederick C. Crews proposes that various religious paths to the ultimate truth of life are being “problematically offered” in the novel only to imply through the inconclusive ending that all paths lead to a disappointing confusion. As viewed by Peter Burra, the novel with its three sections, is planned like a symphony in three movements “that are given their shape and their interconnections by related and contrasted localities.” The Marabar Caves are the keynote or core in the symphony to which the melody keeps returning. Before the cave incident the repeated reference to the Caves leads us forward to the disaster. After the episode, every reference of the caves takes us back to the centre “to the mystery that is never solved”. ‘Mosque’, ‘Caves’ and ‘Temple’ represent man’s spiritual explorations in the world. V.A. Shahane’s explanation of the three divisions of the novel is based on the idea of personal relationships. ‘Mosque’, the first section poses the question of the possibilities of personal friendship; in ‘Caves’, the second section, the answer to the question posed in the first is given in terms of negativity and chaos. ‘Temple’, the third section, gives us the final solution to the problem stated. The message that the novel seems to convey is that love alone without mysticism is incapable of resolving the moral and spiritual problems of humanity (Mitra 6-8).

4.2 Mosque

‘Mosque’ sets up the central problem of separation and gaps and explores them at different levels. The most discerning gap is between Indian and English. Chandrapore is two towns, the native part and the English civil station with the latter ‘sharing nothing with the city except the overarching sky’ (6). Again, India is not one but a hundred, of which Moslem and Hindu are the most noticeable. India is therefore a muddle, no one race or creed or individual can sum it up. It is not only the rulers and the ruled that are divided

but also the English, in their club from which all Indians are excluded, are divided among themselves. Moreover, men themselves are separate from the rest of the creation. Though separated from each other by race, caste, religion and other barriers of life, yet men still strive to unite and to achieve a harmonious resolution of their differences. 'Mosque' is therefore not only a symphony of differences but of attempts at bridging the gulfs (White 135-143). The most general meaning of the Mosque symbol is perhaps best expressed in the scene between Mrs. Moore and Aziz, the young Indian doctor whom she meets in a mosque near the civil station. In a dialogue which is an intermingling of minor mistakes and underlying sympathy Mrs. Moore and Aziz reach a surprisingly ultimate relationship, Aziz declaring that the English woman is 'an Oriental.' Although in a later scene, Mrs Moore calls him her friend, there is something unstable about their intimacy. In spite of his affectionate declarations Aziz quickly forgets that he has promised to take Mrs. Moore and Adela to visit the Marabar Caves. From the scene in the mosque and from similar episodes, the Mosque comes to symbolize the possibility of communication between Britons and Indians, and more generally the possibility of understanding relationships between any two persons. The Mosque represents the ambiguous triumph of Islam, the belief Aziz shares with his Moslem friends that India was one. The mosque also expresses Fielding's friendship with Aziz and more generally Fielding's conviction that the world is a globe of men trying to unite with one another and can best do so by the help of good will along with culture and intelligence.

The Caves

Forster has imparted to the caves a twofold significance, suggestions of mystery and order that are constantly countered by suggestions of disillusionment and muddle. The Cave symbol is not simply the antithesis of the Mosque, but in part a parallel symbol repeating the same oppositions. When at Fielding's tea party Aziz first proposes a trip to the Marabar, it seems that the expedition will be a triumph of Anglo-Indian friendship. And

during the ecstatic moments of the later tea party outside the caves, this possibility is apparently about to be realized. The Christian Mrs. Moore and the Moslem Aziz, having befriended one another in a mosque, have previously been kept apart by social barriers but now they are to meet with Adela, on the ground of what Adela has called 'the real India'. The Marabar Caves will offer them an India more original than they bargain for, and will, through utter indifference to selfhood, challenge their very sense of reality. Once the horrid tour has taken place, the Caves symbolize the failure of all communication, the collapse of human relationships ironically foreshadowed in the less pleasant meaning of the Mosque symbol.

In the extraordinary caves, Forster perceived all the mystery he sensed in India. In the section entitled 'The Caves', the key incident of the novel unfolds dramatically. In the last three paragraphs of Chapter XII the caves take on a mysterious quality. The focus is at first on the physical details of the caves and on the visitors' experiences and feelings about them. Then the mysterious capacity of the caves to reflect light is brought in. Forster approaches mystery through a seeming commonplace which is extraordinary. The Caves appear to be so similar that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other. They are presented as mundane and "Nothing, nothing attaches to them"(116). The echo is 'empty'. Darkness and emptiness make the caves monotonous and mysterious at the same time. On the contrary this arouses interest and curiosity. The caves are important because they make the characters conscious of themselves.

The Marabar Caves are the very voice of a union that is the opposite of divine, the voice of evil and negation, of that universe which is "older than all spirit"(116). The answer they give to the problem of oneness is an answer of despair and horror, whether on the human or on the universal level. To each woman the voice of the Marabar Caves speaks of a kind of oneness, but in different terms, terms appropriate to character, age and situation. To Adela, who has wished to understand but not love India and the Indians, who has become engaged to a man she does not love, who is not convinced that

love is necessary to a union, the meaning of the echo presents itself in different tensions. To her, it speaks of the last horror of union by force and fear, without love she believes that Aziz has attempted to assault her, goes nearly mad with horror and sets in motion the machinery that shall prosecute and punish him.

What dawns on Mrs Moore is the futility of a union between Indians and the English, she is disillusioned. She feels increasingly that "...though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man. And today she felt this with such force that it seemed itself a relationship, itself a person, who was trying to take hold of her hand" (126). In this state of mind she enters the Marabar Caves and hears the echo of that oneness which is nothingness. To Mrs Moore, the echo speaks of a universe in which all differences have been annihilated, Infinity of Nothing. Good and evil are identical, where "Everything exists, nothing has value" (139). All has become one; but the one is Nothing. Frederick C Crews remarks that Mrs Moore had, in effect, an antivision, a realization that to see through the world of superficial appearances is to be left with nothing at all. Her inversion of Hinduism is sharpened by the resemblance of the Caves' echoes- 'boum' and 'ou-boum'-to the mystic Hindu syllable 'Om', which stands for the trinity of the godhead. Mrs. Moore's ambition is simple and dignified which is to be one with the universe. In an ironical sense she achieves this, for she does grasp a oneness underlying everything. Its monotony, however, is subversive of the moral and ceremonial distinctions that we require to reconcile ourselves to the Absolute. '...Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum"(139). The oneness Mrs Moore has found has obliterated her belief in the categories of space and time, distinctions that are essential to a religion whose God has a sense of history. This is why she can be said to have perceived both the horror and the smallness of the universe; the Marabar Caves 'robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness, the only quality that accommodates them

to mankind”(139). She loses interest in everything from this moment. She dismisses Adela’s experience as rubbish. Though she knows of Aziz’s innocence she neither speaks nor stays to testify at his trial. She leaves in this season of Hot weather when travel is dangerous and dies at sea. The echo has ended everything for her. To the Christian Mystic the Marabar has said that the universe is a muddle rather than a mystery; the answer to its riddle is nothingness.

The incidents in the caves are of course the symbolic heart of the novel, where India exerts its force of illusion and disillusion upon the british visitors. These incidents are meaningful on all levels, making the hopeless misunderstanding between East and West vivid and complete, but their most important kind of meaning is clearly religious. According to Reuben A. Brower, the Caves, it appears, stand for a type of religious experience accessible only to a peculiar type of Oriental intelligence. When Aziz questions Godbole about the Marabar Caves, he gets nowhere. But it is perfectly clear that the Hindu was hiding something. Adela, who listens without understanding, does ‘not know that the comparatively simple mind of the Mohammedan was encountering Ancient Night’(69). Just after the caves are mentioned again Godbole sings a hindu song, the effect of which is described in imagery that suggests the baffling caves and their echoes. Somehow one is made to feel that the Marabar may be the scene of a revelation, perhaps confused and shadowy, but comprehensible to the Hindu mind.

The Temple

The Temple, as viewed by Brower, is a symbol signifying most clearly Hinduism, the religion of Godbole, who presides over the ceremony at Mau in which the worshippers ‘love all men, the whole universe’(271) and in which ‘the Lord of the Universe’(269) is born. But from a western point of view, the narrator observes, ‘this...triumph of India was a muddle... a frustration of reason and form’ (270). It is the collision of the boats that brings into sudden symbolic focus and fine

reconciliation, the antagonist forces in the novel. The plunging of characters into the water tank suggests a form of spiritual baptism, a form of purification. The sources of misunderstanding are scattered on the waters. The rain suggests the release of the forces of imaginative love. The collision of the boats forms the climax of *A Passage to India*, providing a sharp confrontation between Aziz and Fielding, between the East and the West. It is an ironic event, because the reconciliation between Aziz and Fielding occurs after a comic mishap. But Forster is too honest a novelist to fake a happy ending by suggesting that the reconciliation will last. The last paragraph of the novel describing the last ride together of Aziz and Fielding and ending in the words, “No, not yet,”—“No, not there,” (306) epitomises the oscillations between affirmation and retraction, vision and anti-vision, that have characterized the novel. Forster ends *A Passage to India* with a bitter sweet reconciliation between Aziz and Fielding but also with the realization that the two cannot be friends under the contemporary conditions. In the concluding words of the novel we are told that the ‘temples’ as well as ‘the tank’ (i.e. the Mosque) and ‘the sky’ do not want them to be friends. The Temple is a symbol of Hindu unity in love which is no unity.

Thus, Forster ends the novel as a tragic but platonic love story between the two friends, separated by different cultures and political climates. Forster does not express any definitive political standpoint on the sovereignty of India. Fielding suggests that British rule over India, if relinquished, would be replaced by a different sovereign that would be perhaps worse than the English. Aziz, however, does make the point that it is British rule in India that prevents the two men from remaining friends, Forster, thus, indicates that British rule in India creates significant problems for the country and is unable to offer an easy or concrete solution to these problems (Sinha, par 19).

The Indian who is seen as separate from everyone else—from Indians belonging to society as well as from the British—is the man ‘of low birth’ (205), the outcaste Indian, who is employed to pull the punkah in the city magistrate’s Court. He is humble, ‘splendidly formed’ (205), beautiful, and strong. He is shown sitting almost naked, on the floor of a raised platform, in the back of the Court. The proceedings of the trial are not understood by him, the social and political conflicts between the British and Indians do not touch his mind. Forster’s portrayal of this unique figure in the Indian world is drawn with deep feeling, and it has a central relevance to the total outlook of the novel. He is drawn realistically, and also as a symbolic presence. By portraying him as he is—deprived and condemned by society—Forster draws attention to one most enigmatic feature of the Indian social tradition, and also comments on the actual scene of social inequality, poverty and deprivation in India: ‘This man would have been notable anywhere; among the thin-hammed, flat-chested mediocrities of Chandrapore he stood out as divine, yet he was of the city, its garbage had nourished him, he would end on its rubbish heaps’ (205). Symbolically, the punkahwallah’s presence in the court room reflects on the meaninglessness of the communal and class conflicts in Anglo-India. Physically naked, he is presented in the novel as a man in his natural form, as the human individual, who is equal with all other individuals and higher than communities and religions (Das, par 17).

Prominent among other symbols is the wasp. It is significant that the image of the wasp is introduced just after Ronny has tried to discourage his mother from associating with Aziz and just before Aziz is invited to the bridge-party by Mr Turton. When Mrs. Moore goes to hang up her cloak at the end of chapter three, she sees a wasp. Calling the wasp “pretty dear”, Mrs Moore acknowledges its right to existence. The symbolic significance of the wasp is not spelled out. However, it suggests the natural life of India, and also carries a hint of uncertainty. Much later, in Part III, Professor Godbole recalls “an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days” (272). He then remembers “a wasp seen he

forgot where....He loved the wasp equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God” (272). The Westerners and Moslems in *A Passage to India* view themselves distinct from God and from one another. They are inhospitable to insects and the enmity seems mutual. Aziz is shown to be continually distressed by the presence of flies in his house. Fielding, the Western rationalist, is also shown to be disturbed by bees. Mrs Moore and Professor Godbole give their love to wasps because their religions –his is Hinduism and hers a random mysticism superimposing her Christian training –accept the entire creation as an inseparable part of God’s being. (C.Crews, par17).

Check your progress

1. Discuss the symbolic significance of the three sections- Mosque, Caves and Temple of *A Passage to India*.
2. How did the different members of Aziz’s party react to the Marabar Caves?
3. What is the relevance of the meeting of Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz at the Mosque?

4.5 Summing Up

Thus, in this unit we saw how Forster has woven various symbols into the mould of the story. It is a fusion of not only realism and symbolism but also of the personal and the cosmic. Forster’s intention is not only to present the East-West encounter, but also to communicate a much greater philosophy—a mystical, highly symbolic view of life, death and what lies beyond it.

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UNIT - V : CHARACTERISATION

Contents:

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Major Characters
- 5.3 Minor Characters
- 5.4 Anglo-Indian Community
- 5.5 References
- 5.6 Summing Up

5.0 Objectives

The objective of this unit is to analyse the various characters of the novel *A Passage to India*. In doing so, focus shall be given on the major as well as the minor characters of the novel.

5.1 Introduction

According to Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel*, characters are the word-masses which the novelist makes up, roughly describing himself, gives them names and sex, ascribes them probable gestures, and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas, and perhaps to behave reliably. Their nature is conditioned by what the novelist guesses about other people, and about himself, and is further modified by the other aspects of his work (44). In daily life we never understand each other, knowing each other more or less, by external signs, and these serve well enough as a basis for society and even for intimacy. But characters in novels, their inner as well as outer life in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes. And this is why they often seem more certain than characters in history, or even our own friends; we have been told all about them that can be told; even if they are imperfect or unreal they do not contain any secrets (47). Forster proposes to think of people as starting life with an experience they forget

and ending it with one which they anticipate but cannot understand. These are the creatures whom the novelist proposes to introduce as characters into books; these, or creatures plausibly like them. The novelist is allowed to remember and understand everything, if it suits him. He knows all the hidden life (48). According to Forster, a novel is a work of art, with its own laws different from those of daily life, and a character in a novel is real when it lives in accordance with such laws. The barrier of art divides them from us. They are real not because they are like ourselves but because they are convincing (62). A character in a book is real when the novelist knows everything about it. He may not choose to tell us all he knows—many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable, and we get from this a reality of a kind we can never get in daily life (63).

Forster uses two terms -flat and round to describe two different kinds of literary character and two methods of characterisation. A flat character is one who does not change in the course of the fiction where he or she is found and is a 'type' with a few (often only one) prominent feature. Such characters are usually, though not always, used in caricature where comic effects are needed. On the other hand, a round character is three-dimensional. It is one who changes and develops as the story progresses. The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. It has the incalculability of life about it—life within the pages of a book. And by using it sometimes alone, more often in combination with the other kind, the novelist achieves his task of acclimatization and harmonizes the human race with the other aspects of his work (78). An example of a flat character given by Forster is Mrs Micawber (in *David Copperfield*) and that of a round character is Becky Sharp (in *Vanity Fair*).

5.2 Major Characters

Aziz is a well-bred, enlightened, anglicised, modern Indian, whose personality includes an attractive blend of intensely individual

and traditional features, with elements of influence from English education. He is spontaneous, imaginative, fond of poetry, sentimental, deeply generous, hospitable, proud of his own Muslim community, but deeply prejudiced against the Anglo-Indians as a class. He is happy in his private life with his children, sentimental about his dead wife and content in his profession—despite the irritant of the relationship with his superior, Major Callendar, the civil surgeon. His curiosity about ‘Post-Impressionism’ (61) in the West, which was ignored by Fielding, his independence, which was looked down upon by Ronny Heaslop as making ‘the spoilt Westernized’ (70) type, his personal generosity, which was abused in a racially divided society, his conception of the value of pathos in personal life and in art, his inborn religious prejudices and his emotional feeling for his nation—all these qualities in Aziz show him as a modern and enlightened Indian, not simply a product of British India, but truly and deeply ‘Indian’, his complex character the result of contact with many civilizations. Aziz is no doubt conceived by Forster in sympathy and affection but is shown as lacking in dignity. Once, at his vindication feast, Aziz is represented as full of civilization, complete, gracious, rather hard and for the first time Fielding is conscious of this exaltation, but this only shows Aziz’s usual lack of dignity. Aziz is sketched as lively, impulsive, garrulous and sensitive to beauty. The human warmth in him makes it difficult for one to dislike the young Muslim doctor, and Mrs. Moore and Fielding, both look upon him with great affection.

Against the enlightened and sophisticated Aziz is set the character of Professor Godbole, presented in the novel as an essentially conservative, conventionally religious, uncertain, yet mysteriously attractive figure. He is not studied purely as a type to represent the traditional Hindu character in general; yet his portraiture is composed from certain elements which Forster had gathered chiefly from his contacts with society in the Hindu states of Dewas and Chhatarpur. Godbole is at once impressive and ludicrous and we see him in his element at the Hindu festival at Mau. He is no humanist and loves God,

not people. Towards people he is completely detached and totally inaccessible. God loves all men, the entire universe but his is a completely impersonal love, the love of a saint or a mystic for the Divine. Godbole stands as Forster's standard of truth, elusive and impenetrable.

The depiction of English officials by Forster has, of course, been disputed in England but the fact remains that the reader cannot but look upon them with a certain degree of antipathy. Most of Forster's English characters are depicted as lacking in imagination and having an undeveloped heart which fails to reach out. Mrs. Moore and Fielding are the only two characters from whom we cannot withhold our sympathies.

Fielding is described as "hard-bitten, good-tempered intelligent fellow on the verge of middle-age, with a belief in education"(56).He speaks with a highly individual voice and remarks about the necessity of seeing Indians if one is to see the real India. He tells Adela that he is really compatible with Indians and they actually trust him. His English reserve has already been broken down by Aziz's impulsiveness and he has come to feel genuinely for Indians. He has the breadth of experience that the English officials lack and like Forster himself he is antipathetic towards English women in India. A rationalist, he cannot accept the irrational; he is unable to respond to the echo in the caves. In Fielding, Forster's views his own liberal humanistic creed objectively and recognizes its limitations.

As for Mrs. Moore, it is she who carries the theme of Hinduism in the novel in the sense that the theme is first introduced by her observation of the wasp. Later in the novel, though, the theme is passed on to Godbole. Mrs. Moore's discovery of the inadequacy of Christianity in dealing with the problems of life, bring her closer to the Indian ways of feeling. She is, as Aziz says, "an Oriental"(20) in her intuitive and impulsive response to things. She dominates the action in the novel and as "Esmis Esmoor" becomes a Hindu goddess to the crown. Although she abandons her moral duty by going back to England when her evidence would have been crucial, she does, even in her absence, influence Adela to withdraw her charge against Aziz. She re-appears in the novel in the

person of her son, Ralph Moore and the bond between Aziz and her is re-established when Aziz and Ralph become friends. As a character, Mrs. Moore serves a double function in *A Passage to India*, operating on two different levels. She is initially a literal character, but as the novel progresses she becomes more a symbolic presence. On the literal level, Mrs. Moore is a good-hearted, religious, elderly woman with mystical leanings. The initial days of her visit to India are successful, as she connects with India and the Indians on an intuitive level. Whereas Adela is cerebral, Mrs. Moore relies successfully on her heart to make connections during her visit. Furthermore, on the literal level, Mrs. Moore's character has human limitations: Her experience at Marabar renders her apathetic and even somewhat mean, to the degree that she simply leaves India without bothering to testify to Aziz's innocence or to oversee Ronny and Adela's wedding. After her departure, however, Mrs. Moore exists largely on a symbolic level. Although she herself has human flaws, she comes to symbolize an ideally spiritual and race-blind openness that Forster sees as a solution to the problems in India. Mrs. Moore's name becomes closely associated with Hinduism, especially the Hindu tenet of the oneness and unity of all living things. This symbolic side to Mrs. Moore might even make her the heroine of the novel, the only English person able to closely connect with the Hindu vision of unity. Nonetheless, Mrs. Moore's literal actions – her sudden abandonment of India – make her less than heroic (Pirnuta, 384).

Though lacking the qualities of a conventional heroine, Adela is shown to possess intellectual honesty and sincerity which make her an interesting and sympathetic character. Ronny is shown to us as more through the comments of other people which enable the novelist to expose his deficiencies while still retaining sympathy for him as Adela's suitor. A definite deterioration in character has taken place since Ronny came to India but we never really come to hate him (Mitra, 18-20). Adela, like a true Englishwoman, is an individualist and an educated free thinker. These tendencies lead her, just as they lead Mrs. Moore, to question the

standard behaviours of the English toward the Indians. Adela's tendency to question standard practices with frankness makes her resistant to being labeled – and therefore resistant to marrying Ronny and being labeled a typical colonial English wife. Ronny's tastes, opinions, and even his manner of speaking are no longer his own, but those of older, ostensibly wiser British Indian officials. This kind of group thinking is what ultimately causes Ronny to clash with both Adela and his mother, Mrs. Moore. Adela's experience at the Marabar Caves causes her to undergo a crisis of rationalism against spiritualism. While Adela's character changes greatly in the several days after her alleged assault, her testimony at the trial represents a return of the old Adela, with the sole difference that she is plagued by doubt in a way she was not originally. Adela begins to sense that her assault, and the echo that haunts her afterwards, are representative of something outside the scope of her normal rational comprehension. She is pained by her inability to articulate her experience. She finds she has no purpose in – nor love for – India, and suddenly fears that she is unable to love anyone. Adela is filled with the realization of the damage she has done to Aziz and others, yet she feels paralyzed, unable to remedy the wrongs she has done. Nonetheless, Adela selflessly endures her difficult fate after the trial – a course of action that wins her a friend in Fielding, who sees her as a brave woman rather than a traitor to her race (Pirnuta, 383).

5.3 Minor Characters

Ronny, Anglo-Indian Colonial, the Public School product, is involved in the story of the visit of Mrs Moore and Adela to India. Adela and Ronny have known each other in England and it is expected among the Britishers in Chandrapore that the two will marry and settle down in India. Yet, it is obvious to the reader that Adela will not in fact marry Ronny. In England, she had known him as a sensitive human being, holding advanced and liberal opinions about life. But she is repelled to find that he has turned into “pucca Burra Saheb”, talking about white men's burden

and the need for putting the natives in their place (Sugate, 210). Ronny was not good-looking so that Adela “regretted that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm”(Chapter 15) and is described by the novelist humorously as a “red-nosed boy” (Chapter 36). He was a type of “the Public School brand” of England (Chapter 24) and was, therefore, arrogant, conceited and oppressive towards the Indians. But he was respectful and loyal to his English superiors. Ronny’s sense of religious duty, especially as regards the death of his mother Mrs Moore, is revealed as: “Ronny’s religion was of the sterilized Public school brand which never goes bad, even in the tropics. Wherever he entered, mosque, cave, or temple he retained the spiritual outlook of the Fifth Form and condemned as ‘weakening’ any attempt to understand them. Pulling himself together, he dismissed the matter [of the death of his mother Mrs Moore] from his mind” (Chapter 28). Thus, Forster depicts the wooden-hearted nature of Ronny.

Stella and Ralph are the daughter and son of Mrs Moore. Stella was beautiful. She was married to Fielding in England when he was rather of advanced age and came to India with him and watched the Gokul Ashtami Festival at Mau along with him and Ralph. Forster depicts Ralph Moore, in the penultimate chapter of the novel, as “a strange-looking youth, tall, prematurely aged, the big blue eyes faded with anxiety, the hair impoverished and tousled” (294). The doctor in Aziz thought that Ralph was born of a mother too old and the poet in Aziz found him to be quite beautiful. Aziz realised that Ralph was also an Oriental like Mrs Moore. When Aziz asks him: “Can you always tell whether a stranger is your friend?” (296) then Ralph replies in the affirmative. Immediately, Aziz concludes that Ralph is an Oriental. Stella and Ralph are re-embodiments of Mrs Moore who, as we are informed, died in the Indian Ocean and apparently got reincarnated at Mau through Ralph and Stella to witness the “negation of the conflicts” that developed after the Marabar incident (Sarker,375).

Another minor character is Mr Hamidullah, a lawyer and close friend of Dr Aziz. He is described as being gentlemanly, cultured, friendly and having a sense of poetry. He had studied law at Cambridge twenty years ago and it was then that he freely made friends with English students. Hamidullah was an honoured person, who served in the Committee of Notables. He endeavoured to reconcile the English and the Indians by peaceful means. When Aziz was falsely accused, Hamidullah was quite enraged with the English and he urged Aziz to sue Adela for compensation. All in all, Hamidullah was a sentimental man for all his Western education.

Another agreeable character is the Nawab Bahadur, whose name is revealed to be Zulfiqar only by the end of Chapter 25. The Nawab occasionally behaved crudely. As for instance, once when an animal bumped into the car in which he and Miss Derek were travelling, he “deserts his unfortunate chauffeur, intrudes upon Miss Derek. . .no great crimes, no great crimes, but no white man would have done it”(Chapter 8). The Nawab even believed in ghosts. For instance, once when he had driven his car over a drunken man and killed him, the Nawab began to harbour the belief that the ghost of the man was ever ready to catch him.

Mr Turton was the Collector of Chandrapore. Mrs Turton was his wife. It was Mr Turton who counselled the English to socialize with the Indians cautiously because he believed that “the lowly Indians might have debunked the superior English race in the case of intimacy”(Sarker, 373). The Turtons are shown to be considered as “little gods” by the people at Chandrapore (Chapter 3). Forster delineates Mr Turton at the end of chapter 20 of the novel as : “ After forty years’ experience, he had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions –and he had done it all without becoming either pedantic or wordly.”

Further, Mr McBryde was the superintendent of Police for Chandrapore. His wife was Mrs McBryde. He held a peculiar belief which he revealed during the trial of Aziz. This favourite theme of Mr McBryde

was ‘Oriental Pathology’, which according to him, meant that Indians and such other people having dark skin were physically attracted by the people with white skin but it was not the other way round. He is described in the novel as one of the most thoughtful and best educated among the British officials (Sarker, 374).

Among the other characters is Major Callendar, the broad-shouldered old man, who was the Chief Surgeon of the Government Hospital at Chandrapore. Mrs Callendar was his wife. Mahmoud Ali was a pleader who argued on behalf of Aziz during the trial. Dr Panna Lal was a flatterer of the English. Because of this reason combined with his hatred for Aziz, Dr Panna Lal had offered to give evidence against Aziz in his trial. Mr Bhattacharya was the brother-in-law of Mr Das, the magistrate who presided over the trial of Aziz. Nureddin was the grandson to the Nawab Bahadur. Amritrao, a Calcutta barrister, “who had a high reputation professionally and personally, (but who) was notoriously anti-British” was hired by the Indians to plead on Aziz’s side (Chapter 19). Mr Haq was a police inspector. Syed Mohammed was an engineer.

5.4 The Anglo-Indian Community

The West is represented by the Anglo-Indian Community (the British administrators and their families in India) in Chandrapore. They form a relatively small but close-knit community. They live at the civil station, apart from the Indians. Their social life centers around the Chandrapore club, where they attempt to recreate the entertainments that would be found in England. The principal British figures are all officials –the collector, the superintendent of police, the civil surgeon and the city magistrate whose sole interest in India is in governing her: ‘to do justice and keep the peace’(quoted in Das, par 14). They lived by the beliefs of the English public school. They are arrogant, ignorant and indifferent.

Although these Westerners wished to maintain good relations with the Easterners whom they governed, they had no desire to understand

India or the Indians nor are they interested in Indian art, literature, or culture. Early in the book Ronny Heaslop remarks that no one could even begin to think of knowing India until he had been in it twenty years. When Adela Quested rebukes him for his attitudes, he replies that “India isn’t home” –that is, it is not England (29). The wives of the officials are depicted as more indifferent to India than their husbands. They are dull and are prejudiced against the Indians. They are inhuman, too as is the case of Mrs Callendar, the civil surgeon’s wife who thinks that the most humane thing to do to a native is to let him die. However, Mrs Moore’s and Adela’s, general attitude towards India acquires an edge of sensitivity as a result of their experiences during their visit, but the British living in India, with the exception of Fielding, all are seen to be insensitive. All this is the result of “the undeveloped heart”(Trilling, par.19).

There is, as a whole, a degree of dramatic exaggeration in Forster’s depiction of the Anglo-Indian official but the overstatement is done deliberately and its intention is to show the pointlessness of an outlook to India that is mainly based on officialdom. Forster was not ignorant of the fact that it could be possible for an Anglo-Indian official to be true to his duty and maintain it within context of a larger and more significant outlook on India. This outlook is exemplified in a character like Fielding.

STOP TO CONSIDER

FORSTER’S PORTRAYAL OF INDIAN WOMEN

Indian women, in *A Passage to India*, for the most part are treated as nameless and invisible. Hamidullah’s wife and Aziz’s wife are instances of Indian women with no claim to an existence apart from their husbands’. Left behind the purdah, Hamidullah’s wife waits endlessly for her husband to show up and eat his dinner before she can eat hers. The only thing she has at her command is her continuous chatter. Aziz’s dead wife is reduced to a medium or a means for making the bonds between the men stronger. Aziz shows his affection and respect for Fielding by allowing the Englishman to see his dead wife’s photograph. Fielding acknowledges this rare gesture of friendship on

the part of Aziz. He is told by Aziz that had his wife been alive, Fielding would have been permitted to see her without the purdah. Forster views that when all men recognize their brotherhood, there will no longer be any need for the isolation of women. Significantly, there is no place here for the wife's desire or will. In fact, like all other experiences involving women in the novel, it is ignored and relegated to silence.

Check your progress

1. Analyse Forster's art of characterisation in *A Passage to India*.
2. Comment on the role of Dr. Aziz in the novel *A Passage to India*.
3. Write a note on Forster's depiction of the Anglo-Indian community in Chandrapore.
4. Analyse Forster's portrayal of the Indian characters, bringing out their attitudes to each other and to foreigners.
5. Discuss the role of Mrs. Moore

5.5 Summing Up

Thus, in this unit, we saw how Forster dexterously portrays both the British and Indian characters, having fundamental differences of culture and temperament. While doing so, he brings out the chasm as well as the friendship between both. Although Forster's depiction of English officials has been doubted and debated, but there are English characters from whom one cannot withhold one's sympathies and appreciation. The Indian characters are shown in a good light but as lacking in dignity.

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FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK : V
UNIT- I : SALMAN RUSHDIE: HIS LIFE
AND LITERARY WORKS

Structure

Unit -1: Introduction to the author

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Life and works of Salman Rushdie
 - 1.2.1 Life of Salman Rushdie
 - Check Your Progress-1
 - 1.2.2 Works of Salman Rushdie
 - Fiction
 - Short Story
 - Check Your Progress- 2
- 1.3 Rushdie's craft of fiction
- 1.4 Symbols and metaphors in *Midnight's Children*
- 1.5 The Title: *Midnight's Children*
- 1.6 Let us Sum Up
- 1.7 Keywords
- 1.8 Suggested readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit attempts to make you feel excited about studying *Midnight's Children*. Therefore, I have included a brief background about its author, his other works, and the critical reception of this novel. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- ▶ discuss the life and works of Salman Rushdie
- ▶ describe Rushdie's style of writing
- ▶ examine the socio-political contexts in which he wrote
- ▶ assess the contribution of Salman Rushdie to Indian English Fiction
- ▶ realize that Rushdie gave a new shape to Indian English Fiction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Until the publication of *Midnight's Children*, no critic had dreamt of the turning point that the Indian English Novel would make. The early Indian English fiction is derivative and imitative of English writers. Early fiction writers sometimes adopted their language from the works of English Romantics and Victorians. The Indian writers successfully employed European techniques of fiction writing to express their views and sensibility. What naturally distinguishes Indian English fiction is its social concern, realism and its unfailing interest in human beings. It represents the cultural perspectives of people. The early writers who began writing English fiction were the writers whose mother tongue was not English. Still they wrote novels in English to give an expression to their spirit of nationalism and to expose their social realities to the international community. The birth of English novel in India is to a great extent, the result of historical, political, social and cultural incidents. Especially, Indian struggle for independence, Gandhian movement and partition are the three

important incidents, which encouraged the birth and growth of English novel.

It is to be noted that these incidents are play a crucial role not only in the text *Midnight's Children* but also in the life of Salman Rushdie. This novel has successfully placed himself as a post modern writer with his non-fiction and fictional works. The novel influenced a number of writers who followed Rushdie. It has proved to be a significant work which has changed the very way in which Indian English novels had been written. All texts including novels and films mean different things to different people. An individual, who reads a text, becomes its author. This idea is present in the contemporary critical theories. It means that each reader interprets a text from one's perception, value system and beliefs. Similar is the case with *Midnight's Children*.

The Western writers and readers celebrated and admired the book for different reasons than did the readers on the Indian subcontinent. The West noted it for being the first book to come from a "Commonwealth" writer that was written in a unique style and sensibility that the West wanted. But in India, the focus was on the veracity of the historical and political realities that Rushdie had represented. So much so that Rushdie had to face a court case from Mrs. Indira Gandhi for defamation and was asked to remove an entire chapter from the novel. Some Indian readers also contested Rushdie's use of mythological references and found fault with his novel. However, Rushdie has clarified that the errors were deliberate, and a part of his technique.

It is a difficult task to consider where Salman Rushdie stands in the stream of Indian writing in English. Like many other commonwealth writers Rushdie dislikes being seen in relation to a regional literature instead of being considered part of the mainstream

of world literature. Nevertheless, he holds a prominent place in the history of Indian English literature. Rushdie's presents an entertaining scene which ironically exhibits the modern and postmodern ways of the world drifting towards total spiritual sterility and failure as evidenced in T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. However Rushdie believes that his book is not only the product of western literature but also of the oral narratives of the east.

1.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

1.2.1 LIFE OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian author was born on 19th June, 1947 in Bombay. It was the time when India witnessed many changes. There was the rapidity of national movement on the one hand and the Hindu Muslim clashes on the other. The members of the family of Rushdie witnessed the political turmoil of the period. He was sent to England. He received education at Rugby Boarding School. He disliked his school but wrote letters to his parents that he was happy there. He specialized in Indian and Islamic history in his Bachelor's degree from Cambridge University. His background of history later helped him in relating various historical episodes in his novels.

While Rushdie would later become a target of Muslim extremists, the religion was very much a part of his upbringing. His grandfather, a kind man and family doctor, was a devout Muslim, who said his prayers five times a day and went to Hajj to Mecca. After his education at Cambridge, Rushdie went back to Pakistan to join his parents who emigrated from India to Pakistan in 1964. In those days he had no clear plans about his vocation. He wanted to become a writer. So, he left for England in 1965. During his stay in

England Rushdie was exposed to English language and to a considerable extent to western culture. He worked with a multi-media theatre group and also with an Advertising company.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I

1. What is the thing that link Rushdie's fiction with writers like T.S. Eliot and Samuel Beckett?
2. When was Salman Rushdie born?
3. For which novel was Rushdie awarded the Booker Prize?

1.2.2 WORKS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

• FICTION

► Grimus

Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus* (1975), a fantasy and science fiction, was generally ignored by the public and literary critics.

► Midnight's Children

His next novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), catapulted him to literary notability. The book tells the story of India's complicated history through a pickle-factory worker named Saleem Sinai. The novel was a critical and commercial success. The awards included the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). This work won the 1981 Booker Prize and, in 1993 and 2008, was awarded the Best of the Bookers as the best novel to have received the prize during its first 25 and 40 years.

► Shame

After *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie wrote *Shame* (1983), in which he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan. *Shame* won the French literary prize, *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger* (Best Foreign Book) and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

Both these works of postcolonial literature are characterised by a style of magic realism and the immigrant outlook that Rushdie is very conscious of as a member of the Kashmiri diaspora.

► **The Satanic Verses**

His most controversial work, *The Satanic Verses*, was published in 1988. It was because of this novel, on 14th February 1989, Fatwa a religious sentence, in this case a death sentence was pronounced by Ayatollah Khomeini, the then spiritual leader of Iran. Muslim community strongly opposed *The Satanic Verse*, as they found some scenes and characters very controversial in the novel. The book provoked protests from Muslims in several countries. The British government put Rushdie under police protection.

- His 2005 novel *Shalimar the Clown* received, in India, the prestigious Hutch Crossword Book Award, and was, in the UK, a finalist for the Whitebread Book Awards. It was shortlisted for the 2007 International Dublin Literary Award.
- *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a family epic ranging over some 100 years of India's history was published in 1995.
- *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) presents an alternative history of modern rock music.
- In addition to books, Rushdie has published many short stories, including those collected in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990).
- *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) is a novel and the sequel to *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Rushdie has said “he turned to the world of video games for inspiration” and that “he wrote the book for his 13-year old son”.

- **SHORT STORY**

- ▶ In 1994 his book *East, West* was published. It is an anthology of short stories.

- **NON-FICTION**

- ▶ *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* (1981-1991), his first work on criticism was published in 1991.
- ▶ In his 2002 non-fiction collection *Step Across This Line*, he professes his admiration for the Italian writer Italo Calvino and the American writer Thomas Pynchon, among others. His early influences included Jorge Lois Borges, Mikhail Bulgakov, Lewis Carroll, Gunter Grass, and James Joyce. His *Luka and the Fire of Life* was published in November 2010.
- ▶ In 2012, Salman Rushdie became one of the first major authors to embrace Booktrack (a company that synchronises e-books with customised soundtracks), when he published his short story “In the South” on the platform.

Rushdie came to fiction writing via Fringe theatre and advertising. He gained rich experience in advertising; especially it taught him to condense. His novels are characterized by an abundant variety, in both technique and subject matter. One of the significant themes of his novels is the representation of past, portrayal of events from recent Indian history. In *Midnight's Children* he has made specific use of history, particularly the freedom movement and the consequent emergence of the two nations, namely India and Pakistan. He has transformed facts of history into a great work of art.

Now the interesting thing about his work - like that perhaps of all major writers - is that despite the variation in form and subject matter, certain ideas, literary and thematic concerns appear repeatedly in his works. His essays and interviews are of great help because they

explicitly affirm some of these ideas. Like T.S. Eliot, whose essays help to understand his poetry, Rushdie's serve to explain his fiction. Rushdie's essays certainly provide important insights. From his entire body of work, it is clear that the most recurrent ideas or themes are related to migration and the writer's freedom to challenge authority which appears in all his works.

Salman Rushdie's novels have brought up Indo-English fiction into the international scene. He is a winner of the Booker Prize for the year 1981. And the most significant fact is that this book was again adjudged Booker of Bookers in 1993 i.e. the best book to win Booker award in the last twenty-five years.

Midnight's Children is a novel about Indian independence, the partition and the aftermath. Rushdie is of the view that the freedom movement in India was not merely a political struggle, but an all pervasive experience that became a part of the life of almost all the sensitive and enlightened Indians.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-2

1. Name the first novel of Salman Rushdie.
2. When was *Midnight's Children* published?
3. When did Salman Rushdie receive the Booker of Bookers?

1.3 RUSHDIE'S CRAFT OF FICTION WRITING

The focus of his novels is on the life of the individual, on myriad inner impressions, passing fancies, fleeting thoughts and futility of existence. Along with these, another prominent feature of Rushdie's fiction is the delineation of character. He portrays each of his characters as an unsolved mystery. And to do so he uses the tools of irony, humour, parody and satire. It can be safely asserted that Rushdie is a master of storytelling.

Midnight's Children contains many themes, allusions as well as twists and turns. The novel is indeed full of meanings and symbols. Symbols cut out of a perforated, blood-stained sheet. A sheet through which Aadam Aziz examined the patient which would one day be his wife. His works on the whole have life and substance, and present a convincing picture of human existence. His writing style is incredibly dense and rich.

1.4 Symbols and metaphors in *Midnight's Children*

The use of metaphors, too, plays an important role in shaping the characters in the novel. The metaphors become a tool by which Rushdie allegorises history in the novel.

Perforated sheet: On the literal level, the perforated sheet is a form of veiling, referring to the tradition of hiding and or secluding daughters and wives by the patriarchal figures, either fathers or husbands. In the narrative, the perforated sheet performs several symbolic functions. The hole of the perforated sheet represents a portal of vision but also a void that goes unfulfilled. It is employed by Ghani to hide and simultaneously show the fragments of the supposedly “forbidden” body of his only daughter, Naseem, while being examined by Doctor Aadam Aziz; and two generations later, the same perforation is used to make it possible for Jamila Singer to sing for the new nation of Pakistan from behind the veil. Metaphorically the perforated sheet is employed in the process of narrating and unveiling India.

Spittoon: A spittoon is a pot holding spit, people spit because of chewing tobacco. In the novel, Saleem's spittoon is a wedding gift to Nadir Khan and Mumtaz from the Rani of Cooch Naheen. It is made of silver, so it is fancy for a spittoon. It is noteworthy that it is the spittoon that causes Saleem's amnesia, and he keeps it like old

memories. But, towards the end of the novel it is destroyed along with the magicians' ghetto. It appears that the spittoon symbolises Saleem's connection to his past, his memories. To Saleem, it the memories of his mother and Nadir Khan, and how they married. In a way,, it is the memoir of Saleem's family and it is what prevents Saleem from dying when Parvati disappears. It also reminds him of his identity.

Snakes: Snakes play a key role in determining the lives of some Saleem and Picture Singh. From another perspective, snakes play an ambiguous and complicated role. They can be linked with the board game of Snakes and Ladders. Saleem is often seen referring to this game. Saleem learns an important lesson from the game in which there is a struggle between good and evil. He learns that for every up (ladder), there is a down (snake), and for every down there is an up. He accepts the ambiguity between good and evil as a natural part of life. In general, snakes represent evil. But, while venom has the power to kill, it also has the power to bring life. In Hinduism represents the power of Shiva, who is both a creator and destroyer. Lastly, in the novel snakes also determine the life of Saleem's friend Picture Singh. The latter's career is both dependent upon and destroyed by snakes.

Kashmir:

Time:

Midnight's children:

Methwold estate:

William Methwold: Methwold represents Western imperialism because he forces his Indian tenants to adopt Western ways of life. He also forces the tenants to keep all the western furnishings. He also makes them attend parties.

Shiva: Shiva, born at the stroke of midnight is portrayed as Saleem's rival and counterpart. He is named after the Hindu god of destruction.

In the text, Shiva has got a pair of enormous powerful knees. Unlike Saleem who is mild-mannered, Shiva is a gifted warrior. He represents another side of India: poor and as aggressive as Saleem is passive. Shiva is determined to employ his individualist perspective and is unable to form any human attachment. In Indian mythology, Shiva is the one god who has unique powers to destroy and create.

Chutnification: The word “chutnification” was coined by Salman Rushdie in his novel, *Midnight’s Children*. His use of the expression ‘chutnification’ epitomizes his use of language in the English language. “Chutney” is an Indian dish, which is a side dish, adding flavour to any meal. By adding “-fication”, Rushdie changes an Indian word into an English one. Therefore “chutnification” in the novel signifies a transformation as well as adds an additional connotation of making the language used in the novel tangy, flavoursome and exciting. However, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is not the first novel to exhibit or employ chutnification. Indeed, other post-colonial writers tried this in some way or other. For example, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* as well as Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* were written long before *Midnight’s Children*.

Saleem is India and India is Saleem:

Having been born at a crucial moment of history, Saleem claims a place at the centre of things and he acts as the minor of the nation. In surprisingly numerous ways, India is Saleem Sinai and Saleem Sinai is India. The very time of his birth, handcuffs him to Indian history. His physical features too are not less important. His face also represents the map of India, her vastness reflected in its largeness. The disfiguring birth-marks on the face seem to be a creation of the holocaust of the partition. The ice-like eccentricity of his sky-blue eyes

seems to point to the azure skies of Kashmir. The dark stains spread down the western hairline and the dark patch colouring the eastern ear clearly stand for the two wings of Pakistan. Saleem's long nose, the most marked feature of his body appears to be indicative of India's pride and self glorification which make Indians so valuable that Saleem's nose runs. At the time of Chinese aggression, while the nation puffed itself up. Saleem's sinuses also puffed up and when Indians attacked the Chinese, his nasal passages too were in a state of acute crisis.

1.5 THE TITLE: *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Midnight's Children draws its title from the hour of India's independence, 15th August 1947. It is taken from a speech by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, delivered at the same midnight to mark India's independence from England. All the children born together at that hour become in Rushdie's novel the children of the time. Rushdie's narrative tells the joyous discovery of the midnight's children through his protagonist Saleem. Saleem's miraculous telepathic gift allows him to establish contact with other children. The destruction of the midnight's children which Saleem believes is the deepest motive behind the declaration of a state of Emergency in India is the heart of his story. Their magical powers are completely destroyed by the widow, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. This is Rushdie's way of saying that the imposition of Emergency, castrated the country.

Apart from the title of *Midnight's Children* which is significant in relation to the children of the story, Rushdie has also experimented and displayed his craft in naming the different chapters. Each of the titles holds the gist of the events and characters.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the life of Salman Rushdie and his works. He is a multidimensional figure. He is a novelist, a journalist, an essayist and sometime a critic too. His style is sharp and polished. His skill lies in his ability to describe experience in a peculiar idiom so that the texture of the experience comes through. He can articulate the philosophical moral complexities of human life without losing that life itself. His novels offer a sense of the infinite ramifications, unpredictability and inconclusiveness of human life. In the next section we will discuss plot and characters of one of his most celebrated novels *Midnight's Children*.

1.7 KEYWORDS

- irony** : in its broadest sense, it is a literary technique or event, in which what appears, on the surface, differs radically from what is actually the case.
- satire** : the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices.
- allusion** : an indirect reference.
- fatwa** : the term is used to indicate that a death sentence has been dealt to someone or some group of people. A fatwa is an Islamic legal announcement.
- magic realism** : narrowly speaking, magic realism is a genre of narrative fiction which expresses a primarily realistic view of the world while also adding or revealing magical elements.

- postcolonialism** : it is a theoretical approach in various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization in former colonies. Post-colonialism, as both a body of theory and a study of political and cultural change, has hone and continues to go through three broad stages-
- i. an awareness of the social, psychological, and cultural inferiority enforced by being in a colonized state
 - ii. the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy
 - iii. a growing awareness of cultural overlap and hybridity
- postmodernism** : historically the phase in Western civilization that follows modernity but has also been interpreted as a concept that emphasizes indeterminacy, wordplay, hybridity, fragmentation and so on.
- diaspora** : the movement, migration or scattering of people away from an ancestral homeland

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT- II : CHARACTERISATION IN *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Structure -

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Rushdie's art of characterisation in the novel
- 2.3 Saleem Sinai
- 2.4 Padma
- 2.5 Shiva and Parvati
- 2.6 Other characters

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, I first plan to discuss the critical concept of characters and characterization *Midnight's Children*. After going through this unit the learner will be able to study the characters in terms of the social, political, ideological and religious contexts.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we discussed various aspects of Salman Rushdie and his craft of fiction. One of these aspects is taken for discussion in this unit. It is his art of characterisation in *Midnight's Children*. The characters in novels are represented from Saleem's point of view. But the readers are surprised by the fact that there are many gaps and errors in his story. He admits that he has deliberately made those mistakes and highlight's the unreliability of his narration. It is noteworthy that memory also plays a crucial role in determining the authenticity of Saleem's narration of events and characters. This indicates the self-reflexive nature of the novel. Truth is constantly deferred and postponed allowing no scope for objectivity. Thus,

the validity of Saleem's narration can be questioned if you approach the text in terms postmodern theories. One of the ideas of these theories is that there is no objective truth and it is always subjective. Every story can be interpreted in many ways which are subjective interpretations. The narrative of the present novel is structured using techniques that point to the unreliability of a story.

Here, I want the readers to keep in mind the idea that a story or narrative can have multiple meanings. No one can claim that his/her opinion or conclusion is the ultimate thing. In this novel Salman Rushdie has questioned the authenticity of historical facts. Magic and realism together in the novel appear to defer "the truth". In this manner the narrative brings more complexity in the formation of meaning.

We shall discuss in detail these issues along with the themes in the next unit.

The narrator acknowledges that he undertakes the job of recording his story purely out of memory. The same, therefore, may be said of not just the events but also of Saleem's portrayal of the characters in his record. Because the novel has been written in retrospect, Saleem is armed with the knowledge of precisely what befalls the characters he encounters, and so, he uses this knowledge to drop hints or be ironical in his portrayal while he lends them the characteristics that shape them as the novel proceeds. "[Memory] selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also", as Saleem acknowledges. The use of metaphors, too, plays an important role in shaping the characters in the novel. The metaphors become a tool by which Rushdie allegorises history in the novel.

The fact that *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie's celebrated second book (1980), fetched its author a Booker Prize in 1981 and again the Booker of Bookers in 1993, speaks volumes in terms of its popularity in the world of literature. The novel has not only been subjected to critical studies but has also inspired serious in-depth studies of its contents, inviting readings of the text as a post-colonial novel; a post-modern novel; a novel that belongs

to the genre of magic realism and so on. The novel playfully evades categorization and successfully throws the reader into a fantastic world of historical events, colourful characters and languages – both familiar and unfamiliar. This is perhaps one of the aspects which have helped the novel retain its popularity decades after its publication.

The general reception of *Midnight's Children* in the literary world has been that of a landmark text which served to dismantle the popularly accepted idea of recording and presenting history as it had been recorded and presented prior to its publication in 1980. Assuming the author's *possible* intention of de-stabilising the methods of reception of the history of the nation, one may focus on a number of literary tools used to bring about this de-stabilisation. One of the major contributors that help to make such a reading is the art of characterisation in the novel.

The pre-existing knowledge of the events and the characters also help to literalize the metaphors. When Adaaam Aziz loses faith in religion he seems to be left with an empty space within. "Rushdie makes this empty space literal, and his character Adaaam Aziz is hollow inside", "a hollow ready to be filled with the new faith of nationalism" (30). Some more instances of the literalization of metaphors as given by Kortenaar are, when Saleem speaks of how the history of the Muslims who were not in favour of the Partition has been swept "under the carpet", Rushdie literally places Nadir Khan, their representative, in the cellar of the Aziz household; when the Indian government freezes the assets of Muslim citizens, Ahmed Sinai's balls are literally frozen; Indians who had received western education are reported to experience a gradual whitening of the skin.

Another aspect that comes to the forefront while analysing Rushdie's characterization in the novel, is the seemingly misogynistic attitude that can be observed in the text. The practice of misogyny (prejudice against wmen) may be observed at two levels here: first, by Salman Rushdie, the author himself and second, by Saleem, the narrator. Not only does Rushdie use a male

narrator (among all the other children) to tell the story of the midnight's children but he also undermines the role of the female listener, Padma. Padma is present in the narrative only as a foil to Saleem. Padma is endowed with the difficult task of retaining Saleem's focus on the narrative; she is essentially the first reader of the text; moreover, by adopting the role of the rather impatient reader she is the one who gives the story a form by preventing Saleem from digressing; it is she who voices the questions that come to the reader's mind and yet Rushdie adopts a rather dismissive attitude towards Padma by not giving her much importance in the text, although one may argue that the rather shallow portrayal of Padma is a strategy adopted by Rushdie to ensure that the focus of the reader does not deviate from Saleem, the narrator.

Given the number and the myriad shades of the characters presented by Rushdie in his novels, in general, and to *Midnight's Children*, in particular, it is difficult for any reading to be exhaustive enough to cover all the aspects of characterization. Rushdie's employment of literary tools, humour, languages etc. all combine to lend shape to his characters, who, by virtue of their exaggerated portrayals serve to reflect, highlight, and even mock the different sides of society and of the individuals who make up the society.

2.2 Saleem Sinai

Saleem Sinai's birth – at the exact moment of India's independence – growth and subsequent disintegration becomes allegorical to the birth, growth, and disintegration of independent India. His life becomes an extended metaphor of the literal narrative of history. He is “mysteriously handcuffed to history” and his destiny “indissolubly chained” to that of his country. This is again echoed by the birth and ailment of his son, Adaam Sinai, whose life allegorises India post the Indira Gandhi-imposed Emergency in 1975-77.

As per Saleem's account, Nehru tells him “You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India... your life... will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (122). Following a similar pattern, Saleem's dismemberment of body

parts – his loss of hair, loss of a finger etc. are allegorical of a partitioned and war-ridden India, as historical records would show.

Padma questions his narrative and forces Saleem to explain himself thoroughly, but Saleem wants Padma to inherently believe in his narration, no matter how ridiculous his story may appear. Saleem's "magical powers" of telepathy, given to him due to his significant birth date, allows him to communicate with all of India's "midnight's children." He maintains this connection between the "midnight's children," and become able to communicate with the diverse number of Indian citizens. Saleem becomes associated with two of the "midnight's children" in particular, Shiva, who, as a war-hero, becomes Saleem's rival, and Parvati-the-witch, a sorceress who eventually becomes Saleem's wife. Shiva and Parvati are both Hindus, while Saleem is Muslim, and their relationships demonstrate the mixing of religious and cultural mythologies present within India. Thus, Saleem's character in the novel serves as an allegory for India, through Saleem's creation of his identity and life narrative, his attempts to explain his narrative, his ability to communicate with other Indian postcolonial citizens, and his association with other religious mythologies and traditions.

2.3 Character of Padma

Padma is Saleem's friend and his narratee (a person or character to whom a narrative is addressed. It will be difficult to talk of her exclusively without reference to Saleem. Her companionship completes Saleem's life as a man and her role as his narratee completes his narration.

Padma is the narratee or audience for Saleem as well as his beloved. As a beloved, she is assertive and demanding and coming from the working class, her liaison with Saleem symbolically represents the ideal of "marriage" of the classes. As one who comes from the working class, Padma speaks openly on all matters with Saleem. Saleem is attracted to her in spite of her emotional outbursts against his ineffectiveness as a

lover, and narrator. As Saleem's narratee she is an index for the way the reader is responding to his story, much like King Shahryar in *A Thousand and One Nights* to Scherherazade's tales. Both the teller and these tales are explicitly mentioned in *Midnight's Children* so as to recall them as a reference point for the reader.

Padma's skepticism and her doubt undermine Saleem's autobiography as he makes big claims for his importance and centrality in the country's events. Padma who has a mind of her own is not just a narratee. She not only shows up Saleem's successes and failures as an autobiographer but also plays an important role in the deflation of his character and the creation of his story.

Saleem himself recognizes this when he accepts inability to dispense with Padma though she is (according to the upper class and anglicized Saleem) superstitious and ignorant. Her relationship with Saleem is complex and complementary; she cannot be reduced to the status of the chorus in Greek drama, or just a narratee who can be replaced by another member or narratee.

Despite their uneasy relationship, she and Saleem have great personal chemistry. One cannot ignore it. Padma briefly disappears from Saleem's life (but not his narrative because he keeps talking of her) over a disagreement regarding Saleem's use of the word "love" to describe her feelings towards him. Saleem keeps her "hooked" to his story. Thus, he keeps playing this victim-seducer game with her very much like the traditional storyteller did with his audience.

Padma represents a lively and spirited woman, a loyal friend. She adds depth to the narrative by her queries and responses in many ways. Padma is indispensable to the novel because she acts as an interactive audience of an oral narrative.

2.4 Shiva and Parvati

The story proper begins with Saleem becoming aware of his ability to read the minds of other people and of the existence of the midnight children who are also uncommonly gifted. Three of them prove to be outstanding. He is extensively allegorised. In this way he becomes just a device in the narration of the story.

Saleem is “the greatest talent of all”; he had been endowed with the ability to link the hearts and minds of men. Then there is Parvati-the-witch who is the most powerful female midnight child, next only to Saleem and Shiva because she was born a mere seven seconds after midnight on August 15. The third is Shiva, who like Saleem was “born on the stroke of midnight” and had been “given the gifts of war.” He is Saleem’s alter ego. Shiva is also his adversary. The reason for Shiva’s resentment and enmity with Saleem originates in his having been exchanged at birth with Saleem without the knowledge of his parents. Though he was actually the son of Amina and Ahmed Sinai (while Saleem’s parents were Vanita, a poor musician’s wife and Methwold) he was condemned to a life of poverty and crime. These three children are closely linked to each other. Saleem’s power to communicate with all the midnight children makes his head a kind of forum in which they could talk to one another. Only Shiva can close off from Saleem any part of his thoughts he chose to keep to himself.

Saleem with the help of Parvati becomes the leader of the midnight children, against Shiva’s wishes. Saleem is convinced that the midnight children must be there for a special purpose since each had been bestowed with supernatural or superhuman gift .But in the end they are all destroyed. The children symbolizing India’s potentiality to build her future for each of its citizens, to build the noble mansion of free India, where all her children may dwell. They not only differ in their ideas, but also through jealousy, strife, narrow-mindedness, regionalism and communalism. India’s disintegration of India mirrored in the disintegration of the Midnight’s Children’s Conference (MCC

murdered”(256). However, Saleem’s rationalization hardly helps him find an answer to his search for meaning. His and the children’s downfall is brought about in Banaras, symbolically one of the most holy places of Shiva worship in India, where all of them are castrated and thus, disconnected from their linkage with the country’s history.

Saleem withdraws into a private shell. His downfall sees the rise of Shiva who incidentally creates a new race of children who are bastard products of his illegitimate relations with numerous “society ladies”.

The story of this novel is really about broken promises. The lost opportunity of these children occurred because Mrs. Gandhi tried to project herself as the greatest Indian leader, a Durga, and thus maintain and strengthen her hold on power. Salman Rushdie also admitted that if *Midnight’s Children* had any purpose it was an attempt to say that the thirty-two years between independence and the end of the book did not provide much information, as if a kind of betrayal had taken place, and that the book was dealing with the nature of that betrayal.

Saleem is left to ponder on the concept of his story as perceived in Hindu cosmology. He consoles himself that by Hindu cosmological law. The history of man or nation appears to be a meaningless fraction of moments. Saleem resigns himself to the reality as perceived by him. Mrs. Gandhi was responsible, to a large extent, in destroying the democratic institutions of independent India. She reinforced it by using the Hindu notion of the repetitive cycle of destruction and regeneration for explaining modern political processes.

That is why in the novel, the generation that follows Saleem’s children of midnight, the generation represented by Adam Sinai, is symbolically born of the traditional gods, Shiva and Parvati the great figures of the past who were part of the cycle of destruction and regeneration as expressed by the mother goddess.

Shiva and children like him were responsible for the disintegration of India which you see being physically enacted in Saleem who is seen breaking

down. These were the children who under Mrs. Gandhi's revivalism of the traditional past, lost their real potential and betrayed the idea of the unified, plural and hybrid India.

2.5 Tai

In *Midnight's Children*, Tai's character is dealt in detail in the first two chapters. He is a simple ferryman but he is part of symbolism in the text. Tai is presented as a man who has no beginning and no end because no one remembers him being young. During spring it is his Shikara (boat) that starts floating first, as a custom. He knows the weather of Kashmir very well than other boatmen and claims to be older than the mountains. Another aspect of his character is that he has been resisting change for a long time. It is highlighted by his behavior towards Aadam after his return from Germany and especially by his reaction on seeing Aadam's bag containing medicines. Tai's resistance to change disturbs his relationship with Aadam and they become antagonists. Another assumption is that Tai represents the part of everyman's soul that resists change. His fellow boatmen look at him with awe and fear. He is portrayed in such a manner that the readers cannot think of the Kashmir valley and forget Tai, he is part of it representing all boatmen who live in accord with the nature of the place. In short, Tai is portrayed as eccentric, permanent, natural, free and familiar.

2.6 Other characters

Adam Aziz

Aadam Aziz is Saleem's grandfather is the head or patriarch of the family. By profession, he is a doctor and skeptic whose loss of faith on god leaves a "hole" inside him.

Ahmed Sinai

Ahmed Sinai is Saleem's father, a shrewd businessman who is seen struggling against failure. He spends much of his conjugal life fighting his wife and his alcohol addiction.

Mumtaz (Amina Sinai)

Amina also named as Mumtaz is the daughter of Aadam Aziz. Mumtaz changes her name to Amina after her marriage with Ahmed Sinai. She is seen as a loving and devoted mother. She inherits her father's skepticism and her mother's determination. She has problems in her marital life because of her husband's ways. Therefore, despite being married to Ahmed Sinai, she is never able to forget her first husband Nadir Khan.

Mary Pereira

Mary is Saleem's ayah who is responsible for switching the two babies (Saleem and Shiva) at birth because of a misguided sense of social justice. Later she feels guilty and in order to compensate for her criminal act she decides to dedicate her life in raising Saleem.

UNIT- III :

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR THEMES AND ISSUES OF MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Narrative technique in *Midnight's Children*
- 3.4 The novel as a historiographic metafiction
- 3.5 Role of Saleem Sinai as a narrator
- 3.6 Magic realism in the text
- Check Your Progress
- 3.7 The theme of hybridity in *Midnight's Children*
- 3.8 The issue of identity crisis in the novel

3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective is to help you understand the main themes in *Midnight's Children*. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- ▶ discuss the major themes and issues in the novel
- ▶ appreciate the novel in its totality
- ▶ describe the context, language and techniques employed by the novelist

3.1 INRODUCTION

Midnight's Children narrates the experiences of three generations of Sinai family. Saleem Sinai, the narrator engaged in the actual writing of the story, works in the pickle factory by day and records in experiences by night, hoping that-

Rushdie has highlighted the connection between public affairs and private lives in this particular novel. He believes that these two cannot be separated. Along with Saleem's personal history, we have the collective experience of a people and the history of a nation. There is in the novel virtually all of the twentieth century Indian history: the Jalianwalabagh tragedy, Quit India movement, Cabinet Mission, Freedom Movement, Muslim league and its role, riots and bloodshed subsequent to the independence, five year plans, reorganization of Indian states and language riots, Chinese aggression, the theft of the sacred relic from the Hazratbal Mosque, Pakistan war, liberation of Bangladesh, the emergency and various other historically important events. There are also typically Indian divisions and dissents, chaos and disillusion, communal tensions, religious fanaticism besides the clash between tradition and modernity.

The main difficulty in reading *Midnight's Children* is that the book is encyclopedic and overwhelming. Rushdie's novel covers more than sixty years in the history of three countries on the Indian subcontinent, and there are more characters – with strange names than in most works of fiction. Rushdie seems to assume that his readers have knowledge of Hindu mythology, and there are implicit and explicit references to major works of literature in the western tradition. In addition, any narrative or historical statements in the book have to be questioned critically because the narrator – by his own admission – is unreliable. Furthermore, the readers are teased with movements of foreshadowing, whereas major plot revelations are deferred almost indefinitely, and all of this is mixed with fantastical elements. These features somehow come together to develop the issues of the novel, which include a confrontation of East and West, an interrogation of the concept of nation, an assessment of the first thirty years of Indian history, a questioning of notions of gender, an examination of the idea of personal identity, a challenge to the literary form of the novel, an argument with traditional versions of history and historiography, and an analysis of the certain modes of culture. The first paragraph of *Midnight's Children* introduces at least three genres of discourse: autobiography, fairy tale, and history.

3.2 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is distinctive and complicated from the beginning to the end as its narration is not linear because it does not follow an organized plot structure. Readers are manipulated by the moments of foreshadowing in order to create tension but remain puzzled at the end because important parts are unrevealed while minor parts of the story are being told.

The story is based on the fragments of memory of the first person narrator, thirty-year old Saleem Sinai and covers the 30 years of his lifetime. He begins by describing the very first moments of his life and he is too detailed in description (about time place and date) that a reader wants to accept what the narrator says as a sole truth at first. But by his fantastic non-linear narration and by his misremembering the narrator is proved to be unreliable by his own admission. Saleem's narrative moves fast and the reason beneath that action is his memory loss which reduces his reliability. Sometimes he loses control over the story and tries to gain dominance over his weak memories and tries to regulate them in a meaningful order. He begins to doubt his own memories and when other characters worry about his mental and physical health his reliability is questioned more by the reader. Actually Saleem himself questions the reliability of any historical truth or memory by raising meaningful questions throughout the book and he answers them according to his own perception. It is Saleem Sinai's, therefore a nation's, search for a meaning.

Our memories doesn't follow any linear sequence ,any kind of place or scent make us to remember old days of our lives .Saleem Sinai narrates his story according to his own memories by distracting distorting and interrupting his own story with interventions of scent or any kind of object. By rejecting widely accepted truth he re-arranges his story with the help of his subjective memories and he refuses to correct his mistakes thinking that their not fitting the recorded facts doesn't mean that they are not real .They are just alternative meanings for a one single reality in narrator's own world .

People remember incidents which are most meaningful for them and each person may remember the same event differently. The reader reads the life of a man and history of a nation through memories of an individual. Sometimes memories can betray us because we can remember dates and people and places incorrectly just like Saleem does. And he admits his mistakes. Saleem seems to have difficulty in remembering some important events in world history and reader witnessed this history through memories of Saleem.

In *Midnight's Children* the world of reality is created by unreliable memories of a narrator. He ignores the accepted history and creates another one. Narrator himself accepts his own misremembering and mistakes. Through his narration he clearly indicates subjectivity of memories. But he forces the readers by raising questions. We tend to remember the events within our own perspective and how hard we tried to remember it from other sides sometimes they stay within the boundaries of their own realities. Saleem Sinai when he could not correctly remember the actual sequence of events he throws a question which leads the reader to question reliability of any kind of accepted truth. Saleem Sinai refuses to believe others' story and writes his own story which is unreliable to others but reliable within his own memories. Because he is aware of the gaps of the memory he tries to re-create his story in a manner that provides meaning to him. Some parts are left the judgements of the reader and the reader inevitably is the part of narrator's quest in finding alternative truths to so-called absolute truths. Saleem rebukes when his credibility is questioned by Padma.

He talks about the function of memory and how it creates a reality that may not correspond to recorded facts but valid for that person as any other recorded facts. He sometimes is capable of changing his story according to his own benefits but at times he is incapable of collecting his memory to make reliable narration. He uses Padma to keep the pulse of his audience and tries to balance his story not to lose reliability entirely. Even he collects his weak memory to write about past. He is well aware

of unreliable situation and honestly informs the reader about that by admitting himself the mistakes about the dates .He is aware of himself and his manipulation throughout the story and claims that the story is narrated according to his own truth. He believes that reality is a question of perspective.

So reader is imposed to Saleem's perspective and will decide which part to take for granted and which part not to. There are unrevealed mistakes in the story as well about the bus lines of Bombay, tetra pots, Hindu God etc. All these unrevealed mistakes are either left for the reader to have pleasure of revealing the author's faults or done unintentionally at first, but not corrected later as they serve to another purpose.

Saleem narrates the events that he has not been through .He writes about his grandfather mother and his relatives even if he was absent at that time. The idea in here is filling the gaps with his way of re-arranging the history and creating a new reality. Saleem re-arranges history not only because he forgets the actual order but also his story becomes meaningful for himself when filtered through his memories .Reality is not consist of one single truth but multiple perspectives. It is readers' aim to make it meaningful. Salem's remarks give important clues about the role of midnight's children. He asserts the fact that Midnight's children can be made to represent many things.

Throughout the book Saleem takes the recorded facts as scaffold of his own narration use them as a reference point rather than an absolute truth. His deliberate mistakes, or unconscious errors, his manipulative manner, all of them is just to keep the distrust in the reader alive and show them that there are other possible facts, other realities and other perspectives as well. The narrator reveals his aim while narrating his story in following sentences. "I have been only the humblest of jugglers-with-facts; and that, in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case (326)."

Midnight's Children is a story of nation's search for a meaning and its existential dread evoked by its past. Instead of believing any so called factual documents or any reality Saleem chooses to believe one that he remembers with all its discrepancies. Partial nature of memory serves for the subjective narration of one's story. While narrating Saleem uses doubtful remarks about reality and complains about his memory. He wants his readers to consider alternative realities other than what is dictated to them.

In his book "Imaginary Homelands" Salman Rushdie clarify some points about veracity of Midnight's Children and the process of narration.

"What I was actually writing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: 'my' India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect, and I knew that my India may only have been one to which I (who am no longer what I was, and who by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I was meant to be) was willing to admit I belonged."

In the end Midnight's Children's Saleem Sinai cannot be trusted and constitutes a warning for other types of texts which can be unreliable just like this one. Midnight's Children provides a different way of approaching facts and memory becomes important tool in collecting facts.

3.4 *Midnight's Children* as a Historiographic Metafiction:

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* belongs to the genre of "historiographic metafiction". The novel can be read as a subversive text that problematises the boundary between history and fiction and questions the claim to objectivity of historical representation. Rushdie's postmodernist text is analysed with respect to his use of different voices and alternative histories, through the writer's emphasis on how history is a human construct.

The postmodernist view of history, in order to falsify the objectivity of conventional history writing, bases its arguments heavily on the theories of post-structuralism which claim that language creates and shapes reality. The poststructuralist view entails the idea that there are plural meanings and truths as opposed to one meaning or one “Truth”. It is a denial of the empirical concepts of history on which traditional historical novels are based. By the use of metafictional elements, postmodern texts like *Midnight's Children* challenge the capacity of history to represent reality and defy the truth-value of historical knowledge as well. Such self-reflexive novels point to the process of constructing, ordering and selecting, which presupposes that history is a human conduct as is literature.

Postmodernist historical novels attempt to insert history into fiction to subvert historical facts and rewrite them from a different perspective. In such texts, which question the problematised relation between history and fiction, the hitherto silenced histories of marginalised groups are sometimes foregrounded through this rewriting and subverting of historical material. In *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, Salman Rushdie makes the East and the history of India and Pakistan, respectively, the themes, and he openly parodies the historical discourse of the colonial West.

3.5 ROLE OF SALEEM SINAI AS A NARRATOR:

Saleem Sinai is one of the most unreliable, irritating, annoying, clumsy, distracted narrators. He addresses the readers directly and without any formality. He breaks as well as rejects conventional mode of storytelling and playfully violates the rules of time, space and language. This playfulness is one of the primary ingredients of a post-modern novel. Through the character of Saleem Sinai, Rushdie seems to dismantle the false veneer of faith, exposing and exploring the essential human frailties and complexities that lie beneath.

He is born exactly at the moment of India's independence. However, just after his birth he is exchanged with another child leading

to his reversal of fate. As a result, Saleem is raised by a prosperous family in Bombay, while his counterpart and future rival, Shiva, is raised in poverty. Rushdie's use of magic realism provides Saleem the powers of telepathy and an acute sense of smell. These powers help Saleem to locate and find the other children born on the same day of India's independence and create the Midnight's Children Conference.

Saleem narrates his story in flashback. As he approaches his thirty-first birthday, he reveals that his end is near. He says that his body is literally falling apart, and may crumble into dust. He says, "Now, however, time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning – yes, meaning- something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity."

Saleem admits at the very beginning that he has many stories to tell and he is influenced by all people and events of these stories. He states, "And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a comingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me you will have to swallow the lot as well."

He narrates his life story to his devoted and loving caretaker and companion, Padma. His tale, which begins with his grandfather Aadam Aziz at times, appears to be unreliable. Saleem's birth is used as a metaphor to depict the birth and fate of India. All the major events in his life correspond to important political events in Indian history.

For an Indian settled abroad, it could be really a fear to write about the native customs and manners in an alien language i.e. English. Rushdie's success in using the English language as a medium for the expression of creative urge is in his device of using ironical style to expose the hypocrisy of a society. He uses pure and limpid English. It is

easy and natural. The tone is always evolved and conscious. The historical facts, social conditions and the weathers are presented in a different setting. His language beautifully communicates the Indian sense and sensibility. With highly perceptive observations Rushdie neither condemns nor reacts. He simply gives a written document. His pungent satires on religious fundamentalism, caste and sects feelings are supreme examples of a detached observer. He uses straight-forward language to convey his own feelings. He never hesitates to use many suitable Hindi or Urdu words like Gunda, Chup, Amma, Takht etc. to provide clarity and suitability. It shows his skill in introducing modern narrative technique.

Rushdie's descriptions are authentic and marked with intense realism. The lives of his protagonists often end into a realised life at the end of the novel. They are wonderfully innocent and show distinctive artistic presentation. His approach is always objective in the treatment of his subject. He can cause to work a miracle even through a modest language. His themes, characters, dialogues and straightforward statements are able to carry the feelings and atmosphere of the Indian sub-continent, because he uses common Indian English idioms without any change in structure. His vocabulary is large and adequate enough to deal with the range of his subject. He often uses lengthy and complex sentences. His stylistic writing makes even simple incidents charming and interesting. His narrative gives an impression of his confidence in expression and power of story-telling. The gentle touch of humour makes it more touching. In his novels - appearance and reality, free will and determinism, individual and society virtue and vice, reason and passion beauty and ugliness, hopes and despairs, tears and smiles, all are inseparably interwoven. Though Rushdie is not a humourist but he often uses light humour wherever needed. His use of satire is so powerful that it sparks of controversies inside and outside the literary world. There is no imagery at all. The syntax is straight forward. Narrating historical and political events with the help of individual characters facilitates to create a narrative that is suggestive of the complexity of telling a story

that is linked with history. It appears that the readers are left to rely on the information given by Saleem as a narrator and fill the gaps in his story. In short, the text is left open to be interpreted and approached in a number of ways.

*** Check Your Progress**

3.6 MAGIC REALISM

Magic realism is an approach that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. The term magic realism was invented in the later part of Postmodernism by Franz Roh, a German art critic, but it flourished by the publication of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967).

The term "Magical Realism" was first used by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 to describe a story current in the art toward realism. Alternatively, Roh referred to the trend as "Post – Expressionism".

Some of the characteristics of this kind of fiction are-

- ▶ The mingling and juxtaposition of the realism and the fantastic or strange, skilful time shifts, convoluted (very difficult to follow) narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories. Thus, while reading the text a reader is reminded of the maze of narratives in which truth appears to be a mirage or a distant dream.
- ▶ Magic Realism is an aesthetic style or narrative mode in literature in which magical elements are blended into a realistic atmosphere in order to access a deeper understanding of reality. These magical elements are portrayed like normal occurrences that are presented in a straight forward manner which allows the "real" and the "fantastic" to be accepted in the same stream of thought. It has been widely considered a literary and visual art genre; creative fields that exhibit less significant signs of magic Realism include film and music.

- ▶ Magic Realism relies upon the presentation of real, imagined or magical elements as if they were real. Moreover, it also relies upon realism but only so that it can stretch what is acceptable as real to its limits.
- ▶ American Heritage Dictionary defines Magic Realism, “A chiefly Filtering style or genre originally in Latin America that combines fantastic or dreamlike element with reality.”
- ▶ According to Harmon “ Magic Realism the Fame or surface of the work may be conventionally realistic , but contrasting elements such as supernatural myth, dream, fantasy- invade the realism and charge the whole basis of the art.
- ▶ Garcia Marquez, suggests that the magic text is paradoxically, more realistic than the realistic text.
Now we will see how the concept of magic realism is applied in *Midnight’s Children*. In the novel Salman Rushdie has incorporated supernatural vents into realistic narrative. His novel is one of the classics that used magic realism. It is an allegory that deals with the events in India, before and after independence, partition and emergency. Magic realism tends to engage the themes of time, space and identity. These three themes are commonly found in the postmodern and postcolonial perspectives. Magic realism is illustrated in the inharmonious binaries as urban and rural and Western and indigenous. The plots of magic realist works deal with issues of borders, mixing, and change. While writing such texts the authors reveal a crucial purpose of magic realism: a more deep and true reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate. The narrative structure of the text consists of a tale comprising the life story of Saleem Sinai, who recounts the events to his caretaker Padma.

***Check Your Progress**

- ▶ Who coined the term magic realism?

3.7 HYBRIDITY

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), is certainly a postcolonial novel. This ambitious text rejects the British colonial versions of India and constructs a 'new' world and a new depiction of Indian citizens and history in an attempt to provide greater truth to Indian images and history. Saleem Sinai, the novel's narrator, self-consciously explains his family history to the readers and to his listener, Padma. While narrating his family history, Saleem intertwines Indian history within his narrative. This combination of personal history and Indian history culminates in the moment of his birth on 15 August 1947; Saleem's birth echoes the birth of an independent India, which gained its independence from Great Britain at the same exact moment as Saleem's birth. In this moment, Saleem gains the ability to communicate with the other "midnight's children," those also born on the same day of India's independence. Saleem's narrative seems to move along the narrative of a newly independent India, creating an allegorical reading of his character.

The importance and significance of *Midnight's Children* as a postcolonial text arises from the novel's ability to intertwine three major themes: the creation and telling of history, the creation and telling of a nation's and an individual's identity, and the creation and telling of stories. The novel expresses these themes of the creation and telling of history, identity, and stories, while simultaneously introducing the problems of postcolonial identity. Every aspect of the novel is imbued with the mixing and melding of various elements and characteristics.

Through the novel's presentation of a multitude of differing characters and allowing these characters to articulate their own histories and stories, a new colonial and post-colonial history emerges, which remained silenced in an imperial and colonial India. The novel's social and cultural hybridization, illustrated through the multitude of differing

characters, also allows historical hybridization to occur, through which the characters may explain more accurate versions of their own colonial and postcolonial history, as opposed to the rigid one-sided version history from their British colonialists. The novel's creation of new and seemingly more accurate versions of Indian colonial and post-colonial history stems from the text's explicit references to historical events.

Saleem's position as author, writer, and creator of his familial history points to the fact that history may be created, just as a family history may be embellished and exaggerated. Through the formal framework of magical realism, the novel allows its multitude of characters, belonging to different cultural backgrounds, to evaluate and formulate their own versions of Indian history, thus subverting British colonial versions of history. Magical realism becomes necessary to communicate the postcoloniality of India, and within its framework, the novel explores and presents a postcolonial history of its own.

Midnight's Children's setting, Bombay itself is a hybrid, of Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian; of young and old; of the past and the present moment; within this context, the novel becomes able to express new versions of Indian history and accurately illustrate Indian postcolonial citizens.

3.8 IDENTITY CRISIS:

Saleem remains confused by his own identity, and within this passage, he describes how he has been called many different names, including "Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even Piece-of-the-Moon." The difficulties in determining one's identity remains central to the novel and remain connected to determining a nation's identity. The problematic nature of creating an Indian national identity becomes clear within the novel, through the multitude of cultures, religions, and peoples. Yet Saleem embraces his various names, realizing that one of the inherent problems of a postcolonial society is the impossibility of finding and embodying one true "authentic" identity.

The novel describes an immense number of people living within the city, even in 1951, along with the diversity of the population, in terms of religious and social backgrounds. Saleem comes from a middle-class Muslim family, while his “ayah,” or nanny, Mary Pereira, is Christian convert who works for Saleem’s family. Shiva, a character born, like Saleem, as one of the “midnight’s children” on the night of Indian independence, yet is a Hindu who was raised in extreme poverty. The religious and social diversity of the characters echoes the diversity in Bombay itself, because the mixing and melding of various cultures and traditions within Bombay represents social hybridization. The novel illustrates the difficulties in creating one central historical narrative for a nation and people by providing so many various and multiple perspectives within the text. *Midnight’s Children* seeks to combine India’s narrative, imbued with various people and ideas, into Saleem’s personal narrative, and one of the ways the novel attempts to do this is by placing Saleem into Bombay, allowing him to interact and meet various and diverse people.

The elaborate and lengthy films use music, myth, and narrative to express romance and tragedy, and Saleem uses these elements in his narration of his own story. The melding of theatricality and realism, evident in Bollywood films, comes together in the literary technique of “magical realism.” Magical realism, with its combination of mythology, realism, and history, becomes the means through which Saleem tells his story, and this technique remains the most effective way for Saleem to express his narrative and his position as a postcolonial Indian citizen and the position of India as a postcolonial nation. The novel’s major themes, connecting the creation and telling of history, identity, and stories, arises through the structural hybridity of magical realism. Without magical realism, it would remain incredibly difficult to connect these three themes, along with the novel’s discussions of the problems of postcoloniality together.

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also known as the Amritsar Massacre, was a brutal massacre that occurred on April 13, 1919, in the Indian city of Amritsar. An unarmed gathering of men, women, and children were present in the Jallianwala Bagh (Garden) to celebrate the Sikh religious New Year. Due to civil unrest in the area, British officials ordered a ban on Indian assembly. Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, a British officer, ordered British Army soldiers to attack the gathering of men, women, and children at Jallianwala Bagh. The attack lasted about ten minutes and due to the constricted nature of Jallianwala Bagh, with a narrow alleyway allowing people to leave and enter the area, all those gathered in the area remained trapped. Although official reports placed the number of fatalities as 379 killed, later approximations indicated that about 1500 people killed and more than were 2000 injured. The novel depicts this violent attack through the perspective of Aadam Aziz, Saleem Sinai's grandfather, thus allowing an Indian citizen to maintain control over the historical record, instead of allowing the British version of this historical event to take precedence.

Midnight's Children interweaves two historical records: India's national history and Saleem's familial history. Just as the novel attempts to depict more accurate versions of Indian history, Saleem seeks to create his own familial identity through his narrative. In the novel, identity creation occurs at both the national level and the personal level. Thus, while the novel describes the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre from the perspective of Indian citizens in an attempt to accurately depict the event, the description of the event serves as a means for Saleem to explain and understand his grandfather's past. Saleem's gift of having an incredible sense of smell allowing him to determine others' emotions and thoughts stems from his grandfather, Aadam, who also had the same large nose and magical gift.

Yet while the nation readies itself for independence from Great Britain, two couples arrive at Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home to give birth to their children: Amina and Ahmed Sinai, Saleem's mother and father, and Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie. Both women give birth to

sons at the exact same moment, midnight on August 15, 1947. However, connecting the moment of Saleem's birth to the moment of Indian independence and Saleem's own personal history becomes complicated. Due to Mary Pereira, present in delivery rooms, who switches the babies, causing Amina and Ahmed Sinai's biological son to be given to Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie, and Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie's son to be given to Amina and Ahmed Sinai. Thus, Saleem, biologically the son of Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie, is given to Amina and Ahmed Sinai, and Amina and Ahmed Sinai's biological son, eventually named Shiva, is given to Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie. Both sons gain special gifts due to their miraculous births; Saleem gains the power of telepathy, while Shiva gains the gift of war. This switch immediately complicates the ideas of inheritance, identity, and history within the novel. Although Aadam is not Saleem's biological grandfather, Saleem connects to him, through the inheritance of his nose, which allows Saleem to sense various ideas and things just as his Aadam was able to do. It becomes unclear whether Saleem received the gift of telepathy merely due to his birth situation, being born at the moment of midnight, or whether his gift stems from the personal history he claims as his own, his grandfather's nose. The creation of history remains vitally important within the novel, and Saleem participates in this process beginning at the moment of his birth. He must create his own familial narrative and history, and he combines various cultural myths, histories, and stories to complete his own narrative.

Midnight's Children consists of a large number of characters, associated with various parts of Saleem's life. Padma, as Saleem's listener, remains central to the novel, due to her importance as Saleem's sole source of feedback for his storytelling process. The novel begins with Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz, and his grandmother, Naseem, and their relationship. The novel continues to describe Saleem's immediate family, his father, Ahmed Sinai, his mother, Amina, and his sister, the Brass Monkey, along with his ayah (nanny), Mary Pereira, who takes care of him as a child. Various historical figures pervade the text, including

British officials like Brigadier-General Dyer and Earl Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of the British Indian; along with Indian and Pakistani officials, like Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first prime minister, and others.

The creation of only one specific identity, a personal identity or a national identity, becomes impossible, due the impossibility of condensing varying people's perspectives into one coherent narrative. Saleem realizes that each person has his or her own personal history, and although, as Jameson explains, the national history plays a role in a postcolonial citizen's narrative, one's memory exerts a "special kind" of truth over one's narrative. Saleem attempts to explain this idea to Padma: "Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent vision of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own." (*Midnight's Children* 242)

Thus, memory becomes the author of one's own reality, just as Saleem becomes the author of his own reality and history by combining mythology and cultural histories through magical realism. Saleem emphasizes that "no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version [of reality] more than his own," and this focus on the individual perspective demonstrates how the novel illustrates the various characters' narratives. This passage also illuminates the novel's own premise of attempting to "select, eliminate, alter, exaggerate, minimize, glorify, and vilify" what the novel deems as important in order to create "its own reality, its heterogeneous, but usually coherent vision of events."

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5. Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributers, 2006.

Here are some useful URLs

<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/54136> (Stylistic features of *Midnight's children*)

<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/12578> (Salman Rushdie: A critical study of his novels)

<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/76994> (Magic realism in *Midnight's Children*)

<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/85831> (the novels of salman rushdie)

Model Questions

1. Examine the role of Saleem Sinai as a narrator?
2. Discuss the features of his narrative in making Saleem an unreliable narrator.
3. Define magic realism. Mention the characteristics of magic realism.