

**MEG-07
INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE
ASSIGNMENT 2020-21
(Based on Blocks 1-8)**

**Course Code: MEG-07/ 2020-21
Max. Marks: 100**

Attempt all questions. All questions carry equal marks.

1. Write short note on: 4 x 5 =20
 - a) Forms and varieties of prose.
 - b) Importance of Hind Swaraj.
 - c) Nehru's prose style in his *Autobiography*.
 - d) Gandhi's thought and its impact on *Kanthapura*.
 - e) Role of Bakul
2. Discuss the structure of *Midnight children*. 20
3. Critically examine the ending of Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable*. 20
4. Compare and analyse the two poems, 'The Old Woman' and 'Indian Dancers'. 20
5. How does Mahesh Dattani treat the issue of Gender in *Tara* ? Discuss. 20

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

M.E.G.-7

Indian English Literature

Disclaimer/Special Note: These are just the sample of the Answers/Solutions to some of the Questions given in the Assignments. These Sample Answers/Solutions are prepared by Private Teacher/Tutors/Authors for the help and guidance of the student to get an idea of how he/she can answer the Questions given the Assignments. We do not claim 100% accuracy of these sample answers as these are based on the knowledge and capability of Private Teacher/Tutor. Sample answers may be seen as the Guide/Help for the reference to prepare the answers of the Questions given in the assignment. As these solutions and answers are prepared by the private Teacher/Tutor so the chances of error or mistake cannot be denied. Any Omission or Error is highly regretted though every care has been taken while preparing these Sample Answers/Solutions. Please consult your own Teacher/Tutor before you prepare a Particular Answer and for up-to-date and exact information, data and solution. Student should must read and refer the official study material provided by the university.

Q. 1. Write short note on:

(a) Forms and varieties of prose.

Ans. Forms of English Prose: There are different literary forms of prose. We shall devote our attention to the main non-fictional forms : the essay, biography, autobiography and travelogue.

Essay: The word “*Essay*” is derived from the French word meaning “*attempt*”. “*An essay is a prose composition of the moderate length devoted to some particular topic.*” Again, essays can be divided into formal essays and non-formal essays. Formal essays are also referred to as articles. A formal essay discuss the topic concerned in an objective and impersonal manner. Its primary aim is to impart knowledge. On the other hand, a personal essay seeks to entertain the readers. The style of essay is often conversational, it can be anecdotal and generally reveals the personality of the author. In English literature, “*The Essays of Charles Lamb*” or “*Elia*”, are famous specimens of the personal essays.

Biography: A biography is the story of the life of a person. A biography tries to protect the personality of the subject. It helps the readers to share the person concerned’s hopes, fears, likes, dislikes, facts and fancies. In case of an autobiography, the writer is himself/herself his/her biographer. In this way, it tends to be more subjective.

Events are seen, felt and understood through consciousness of the author himself/herself. It is another thing that with the passage of time, it may give much objectivity to the recollection. Again, in an autobiography and biography, there is a big difference, whereas an autobiography is more selective in the incidents it describes, a biography covers the whole life of the subject from the birth to death and even discuss his/her reputation after his/her death. An autobiography is no doubt incomplete, at the same time it is or in advantageous position of presenting events at first hand. The author/authress is in a position to write what he/she has experienced himself/herself.

A Travelogue is a description of the author’s travels. It is a sort of autobiographical account wherein the focus is on the places and people he/she has met in his/her travels and not on incidents in the writer’s personal life or his/her personality. There is a very strong tradition of writing travelogues in the English writing. Addison, who is known to be the father of the periodical essay, wrote a travelogue. There are a lot of travelogue written in English literature by Indians. The first Indian writer of English literature Dean Mahomet also wrote a travelogue, “*The Travels of Dean Mahomet through Several Parts of India*” (1974).

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

Varieties of Prose

Uptil now, we have discussed the forms of non-fiction prose. Now, we shall concentrate on varieties of prose written by authors. There are *three varieties of prose namely descriptive, narrative and expository*. There can be no hairline distinction. An author is independent to use one, two or all the three forms of prose in a single passage. **Narrative prose** describes incidents and events. It deals with what happens with the passage of time. In the narrative prose, the attention is absorbed in the action. So far as narration is concerned, it can be slow or fast. The narration may be colourful, exciting and heightened or factual and matter of fact. Narrative prose can be both highly imaginative and thoroughly objective. A narrative prose can deal with external happenings or interpersonal relationships. The author is at liberty to narrate the changing feelings.

Emotions and internal events: Non-fiction prose-forms like travelogues, autobiographies and biographies deal with the narratives based on facts, whereas short stories and novels are the product of author's imagination, but no hard and fast line can be drawn between non-fiction and fiction prose. One can find a great deal of historical facts in good historical novels. At the same time autobiographies can be full of imagination and the facts may not be so important. Fiction based on factual events can be seen. Such novels are called a "faction" (fact + fiction) or non-fiction novel. In "*Cold Blood*" (1966) by Truman Capotes novel, the basis of treatment is that of crime and punishment in Kansas. It is based on the interviews by the accused. "*The Executioner's Song*" (1979) by Norman Mailer the term 'true life novel' has been used as the novel chronicles the life and death of Gray Gilmore, a murder, who demanded his own execution in Utah. Whereas, short stories and novels, have a big narrative voices, the narrative prose also finds an important place in the non-fiction also.

Expository Prose: The use of expository prose is done to explain or define a subject under consideration. Works of scholarship religion, philosophy, science, technology, economics, history, commerce, political science. Expository prose presents details logically, clearly, concretely and in sequence. It is the objective of the author to present facts and ideas and narrate a story to describe something. Dynamic authors use a number of devices to make their subject-matter effective, for that, they use examples to illustrate their point of view, vary their tone from one of public rhetoric to one of personal conversation present analogies in support of their view point, narrate lucid anecdotes and use figurative language, such as personification, metaphor and similes. A lot of non-fiction prose is explicatory. Nevertheless, it means that expository prose has no scope in fiction.

Interesting Prose: There is one thing very clear that prose should be read as interestingly as verse. In analysing prose, the fiction of author should be closely examined – whether it is range of vocabulary or the usage of words. The structure and syntax of sentences must be given due attention, whether they are short or long? Does the author make simple senses or does he give preference to complex ones using many clauses and qualifying parenthetical comments. The rhythm of sentences need be closely examined, how the sentences flow. The style of the author is revealed by the use of punctuation marks and the structure of paras. The meaning should be kept in mind while analysing the style of author. The literary meaning of a piece of expression depends on the manner it is said. Apparent meaning does not constitute the full meaning of the text under consideration.

(b) Importance of Hind Swaraj.

Ans. The Importance of Hind Swaraj: The quintessence of Gandhi's thinking was contained in his little booklet "*Hind Swaraj*". Its import is so revolutionary, so different from what most of us are used to, that a real paradigm shift is a basic pre-requisite to grasping what he had in mind. As Gandhi himself explained, anyone who wants to understand *Hind Swaraj* has to view the world "with my eyes". That is why even close followers and admirers of his, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, just could not stomach what he had said in *Hind Swaraj*.

The most important thing that Gandhi conveyed through this booklet is a meaning to Swaraj which is totally removed from the political context in which we normally understand this concept. He declared in his booklet.

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

We have plunged headlong into globalization and the market-oriented economy. Even more than in Nehru's days, money and material growth and industrial production are being worshipped as the only way out of our problems. That our appreciation of Gandhi is confined to symbols is evident when, for instance, we name the biggest streets in our cities as M.G. Road, and then carry out the most un gandhian activities on it, or when we print his photos on our 500 rupee notes and then use those very notes for the most un gandhian transactions. While we may celebrate his birthday as a national holiday and praise him in our speeches and functions and newspapers, deep down we feel that in the present era of technology and modernization, rapid development and globalization, his ideas are outmoded and unsuitable for our needs. In other words, Gandhi may be a hero of our past, but has no place in our future.

And yet, simultaneously, there is also a slow awakening – at least amongst a limited circle of concerned citizens – to the wisdom contained in his ideas. This is the result of a growing realization that our present way of living is leading us headlong into disaster. Where ever development has made rapid strides, it has been accompanied by environmental problems, social stratification and stress, water scarcities, soil depletion, air pollution and traffic nightmares – Bangalore and China being two shining examples of how badly we foul our very nest which we are trying to convert into heaven through technological progress.

Gandhi had predicted all this a full hundred years ago. Interestingly, his predictions included an environmental crisis. How did he manage to do that at a time when no one had heard of words and concepts like ecology, sustainability and bio-diversity conservation? The secret lies in his awakening of the soul-force, a faculty each one of us possesses, but has not developed. It is the method by which we can rise above the concept of the 'other' and experience the world as an undivided whole. This is the route to true spirituality or religion, and it is also the route to true ecology, for then we see the interconnectedness of all the species, nay, of all living beings, with one another. Gandhi could see with his own eyes how modern science and technology was violating this supreme Law that governs the entire universe, and the consequences that will follow. That is why he insisted that to grasp the message of *Hind Swaraj* one has to see the world "through my eyes".

He was not, as is commonly imagined, against science and technology. On the contrary, he favoured science in its true essence – the uninhibited pursuit of truth and reality, rather than just blindly following a 'scientific method' that had evolved through experiments at the physical level. He predicted that a new science of the future would take into account the realities of the spiritual dimensions and the resulting technologies would be very different from what we witness today – promoting rather destroying ecology, healing the earth and its wounds, and thus having a healing touch on the human psyche too. As he put it:

"Modern science is replete with illustrations of the seemingly impossible having become possible within living memory. But the victories of physical science would be nothing against the victory of the Science of Life, which is summed up in Love which is the Law of our Being."

But for the above vision to be translated into practice, we need to reverse the following five trends which have become necessary corollaries to our notions of what development is all about:

Urbanization, Heavy industrialization, Commercialization, Monetization and Militarization.

Unless and until we discard our attachment to the above five as necessary indicators of 'progress', we cannot implement Gandhi's notion of Swaraj at a societal level. But we can still do so at the individual level.

(c) Nehru's prose style in his *Autobiography*.

Ans. Ans. Nehru did most of his serious writing during his prison terms. His '*Autobiography*' was written entirely in jail in a record period of less than 9 months. His account is clearly and self-confessedly "egotistical" and

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

selective. Nehru's writing is enlivened by a quiet sense of humour. Notice his dig at A.M. Khwaja as he got up at public meeting in Cambridge to ask the visiting Indian leader, G.K. Gokhale a question, "Khwaja got up from the body of the hall and put an interminable question, which went on and on, till the most of us had forgotten how it began and what it was about."

Nehru's usual weapon of criticism of those contemporaries whose conduct he did not approve of is irony. This is how he speaks of those who at Cambridge talked to extremist language but ended up holding respectable jobs in British India : "Later I was to find out that these persons were to become the members of Indian Civil Services, High Court Judges, very staid and sober lawyers, and the like. Few of these firebrands took any effective part in Indian political movements subsequently."

Besides, Nehruji always has an eye for vivid detail. Here is a very small example "Eighteen years later, I was again in Paris when Lindberg came like a shining arrow from across the Atlantic."

The crowing irony is—and the irony is not lost on Nehruji—that it is the apostle of non-violence who is using that what Nehruji calls "military analogies."

The "Autobiography" offers several kinds of writings : narrative, descriptive of two or more kinds. Nehru is very caustic about the virtues imputed to the civil services. "Hierophants of the sacred myteries of government, they will guard the temple and prevent the vulgar from entering the holy precincts. Gradually, as we make ourselves worthy of the privilege, they will remove the veils, one after another till, in some future age, even the holy of holies stands uncovered to wondering and reverent eyes."

Nehruji is not over fond of using metaphors and images but the image of fire that burns and cleanses and tempers is singularly apt in the context in which he was writing. The image reminds us Indians of Sita's fire ordeal that tested her chastity, but it could remind Westerners of the purgatory. It is characteristic of Nehruji to have used an image having implications across cultures.

Nehruji ends as he has begun with an epitaph. The initial epitaph from Abraham Cowley spoke of the difficulties of an autobiographer. The present epitaph from Talmud draws attention to the essential incompleteness of human endeavour.

His mood is reminiscent. He tries to sum up how he has been a part of a great mass movement:

"Sometimes, we were fortunate enough to that fullness, of life which comes from attempting to fit deals with action."

After expressing his ambivalent feelings, Nehruji uses the metaphor of climbing mountains recalling Pope's words in "An Essay on Criticism." He then says, "the higlier one goes the more labourious becomes the journey and the summit recedes into the clouds. Yet the climbing is worth the effort and it has its own joy and satisfaction."

Nehruji's style reflects a cultivated conciousness, it is the style of a man who has read enormously and has absorbed a great deal of what he has read. Evidence of this is widespread in the book in the form of quotations used as epigraphs to chapters and other references. And he writes as one to whom writing came easy. Walter Cocer, an Australian Diplomat and Nehruji's contemporary compliments him on his English saying that Nehruji at his best wrote better English than "most of us born to the language." And he was not alone in doing so.

Nehruji is disarmingly candid about himself and he tries to be fair to his opponents and hardly loses his temper. The writing is urbane and controlled but he is unalterable opposed to the continuance of British influence imperialism in India. This passion to see India free colours the entire book.

The writing is not without humour, though the issue of India's freedom does not afford much scope for it and it is sometimes enlivened by an apt metaphor or a comparison.

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

(d) Gandhi's thought and its impact on Kanthapura.

Ans. Gandhian Thought and its Impact: Gandhi does not make its appearance in the novel as a character, but one can feel his presence and the presence of his ideas throughout the novel. It is the protagonist of the novel, Moorthy, who introduces Gandhian philosophy in the novel. Moorthy come under the influence of Gandhian ideas at a very young age. For him Gandhi is a role model and intends to follow him in every possible way. He is the one who popularizes Gandhian ideas of non-violence and truth among the villagers. Moorthy also persuades the villagers to boycott the foreign made clothes and make cotton you are on the spinning wheel and to be only the clothes spun and woven by their own hands. It tells the villagers that according to Gandhi, "spinning is as purifying as praying". Soon the Gandhian ideas and values become law for the villagers of *Kanthapura* and Gandhi himself becomes Mahatma, a man with a great soul. The villagers look at Gandhi as someone with immense spiritual power, someone who is capable of overthrowing the British rule from India.

The villagers of *Kanthapura* and nearby areas decide not to drink alcohol in any form in the name of country the Mahatma. As a result of this the body shop in some of the neighbourhoods are picketed so that the sale of liquor can be prevented. People start living a saintly life by taking morning outings, getting up early in the morning, gathering at Temple, and singing religious songs while going through the streets. There are various songs in the novel which creates an image of Gandhi as a king with a humble origin. An example is:

Our king, he was born on a wattle-mat,
He's not the King of the Velvet that, he is small and he is round and he's bright and he's sacred,
O, Mahatma, you are working and we are your slaves.

And again:
there is one government, sister,
there is one government, sister,
and that's the government of the Mahatma.

The villagers take pride in declaring that they are gone these men and that they would do anything for him and at his command. There are so many occasions in the novel when we hear thundering slogans like "*Vande Mataram*", "*Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*" and "*Inquilab Zindabad*".

The create a unique image of Gandhi, someone who has a supernatural powers. In spite of such devotion they fail to understand one thing about Gandhi's teaching – upper-caste Hindus should mingle with the lower-caste Hindus. They fail to understand at why does Gandhi advocates the upper caste Hindus to go ahead and live with lower caste Hindus and eat them. They also do not understand that why on the suggests inter-caste marriage between upper and lower cost Hindus. They do not find such a behaviour as a behaviour of Mahatma. Some of the characters like Bhatta and Venkamma openly criticize Moorthy's attachment and association with low caste Hindus. One can notice some reservations in the heart of the villagers for some extreme suggestions of Gandhi. For example, when Moorthy asks Range Gowda to take out a threat from their herds and feel love it in for their enemies, as suggested by Gandhi himself, Gordon answers: "that's for the Mahatma and you Moorthappa – not for us poor folks!" What Rao is trying to suggest here is that both the Gandhi and Moorthy have reached the ideal heights of spirituality wherein they can actually practice what they think to be right and preach, but for the common people of the village it becomes a little difficult to practice the preaching of Gandhi.

Gandhi lived a simple life, a life of ordinary people. But the image created in the novel of Gandhi is different. People talk about Gandhi in the novel as a he were some Hindu God. When the *Harikatha* man, Jayaramachar,

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

comes to *Kanthapura* he narrates a story in which he actually amalgamates mythology and contemporary politics. Here Gandhi is compared with Shiva, God with three eyes. He says that just like Shiva, Swaraj also has three eyes – self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity, and Khaddar. He goes on to parallel the achievements of Gandhi to that of Krishna, Hindu god because Mohan is one of the names of Krishna and is also the first name of Gandhi. Overall there is a mythical aura around the image of Gandhi created in the novel. Gandhi's idea of self-rule becomes an ideal form of government in the vein of Ram Rajya. The novel expresses the myth of Gandhi by paralleling it with Indian epic *Ramayana*:

They say Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravna will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of air, and brother Bharatha will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers."

In the world of *Kanthapura* Gandhi is placed alongside with the Hindu gods like Krishna, Shiva and Rama. P. Dayal while writing about Gandhism and *Kanthapura* says:

Kanthapura remains primarily a novel about the Freedom Movement. It propounds the political beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi, as Gandhism forms the basis of the book. The novel expounds the Gandhian values on non-violence and abolition of untouchability. The tremendous religious activity, the mythicising of Gandhi and mother India and the spiritualization of the Freedom Movement within the framework of Indian cultural tradition suggest Raja Rao's zeal for Indian philosophy. The references to the Karma philosophy, the omnipresence of God, the immortality of soul and the doctrine of incarnation which are derived from the Bhagavad Gita signify the novelist's fascination for Vedanta."

(e) Role of Bakul

Ans. Bakul is the husband of Tara the younger Das sister. He met Tara for the first time while he was still a trainee in the Indian Foreign Service, at the Roshanara club. When the story of the novel begins we learn that Tara and Bakul are vesting Delhi. Together with Tara he has two daughters, who are to join the couple later.

There is no doubt that Bakul is a minor character in the novel, but in spite of this his contribution in the novel is significant. In him Desai creates a character who serves the purpose of giving the readers an outside perspective of the Das family. For the first time when we see him in the novel, he seems to be withdraw while in the company of Tara, Bim and Baba. The narrator tells us:

"While the two women sat upright and tense and seethed with unspoken speech, the two men seemed dehydrated, emptied out, with not a word to say about anything."

He has no interest in sitting with his wife and her sister and brother. He gets bored and irritated sitting there and doing nothing. Desai also uses Bakul to highlight certain characteristics of Das sisters. Bakul notices the change in Tara's behaviour, the moment she is with her own family, and it surprises her. Bakul tells Tara: "So, I only have to bring you home for a day, Tara, and you go back to being the hopeless person you were before I married you". Bakul is not like Tara who gives in to apathy, rather he likes to fight:

"Bakul said one could rise above the climate, that one could ignore it if one filled one's mind with so many thoughts and activities that there was no room for it. "Look at me," he had said the winter that they froze in Moscow. 'Idon't let the cold immobilize me, do I?'"

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

After marriage Bakul transformed Tara's personality. He made her into an: "active, organized woman who looked up her engagement book every morning, made plans and programmes for the day ahead and then walked her way through them to retire to her room at night, tired with the triumph and tiredness of the virtuous and the dutiful."

One can see the influence of Bakul and their daughter on Tara, when she observes Baba's refusal to respond her question of whether he would go to office:

"He kept his head lowered, smiling slightly, sadly. 'Never'! The room rang with her voice, then with silence.. She herself had been taught, by her husband and by her daughters, to answer questions, to make statements, to be frank and to be precise. They would have none of these silences and shadows. Here things were left unsaid and undone. It was what they called 'Old Delhi decadence.'"

The reason Bakul visits Delhi is that he wants not to forget his Indian roots. During one evening at Misras place, he tells Tara: "part of me lives here, the deepest part of me, always". On being asked by the older Misra son to comment on the poverty and corruption in India, he replies: "why talk of local politics, party disputes, election malpractices?"

According to Hashmi:

"Bakul, though a representative of India abroad, distrusts Indian travel-agency arrangements and grumbles about the Old Delhi decadence. Bakul is a flat character, a member of the Indian Foreign Service, a type that is practical, alert, and competent, but unimaginative and insipid; one that believes in projecting India abroad as 'The Taj Mahal, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Indian philosophy, music, art, the great, immortal values of ancient India.'" He asks, "But why talk of local politics, party disputes, election malpractices, Nehru, his daughter, his grandson—such matters as will soon pass into oblivion?"

Official hypocrisy and shallow idealism which obstruct a realistic appraisal of things as they are, say, for Bim, thus become part of the Old Delhi decadence, although Bakul likes to think of himself as one belonging to the more aware and dynamic world of New Delhi."

Through his character Desai highlights the difference between the real India and the image of India as projected by the Non-resident Indians in the foreign nations. When looked from the post-colonial perspective the matter becomes complex. Desai also highlights the new reality of post-independent India, which is neo-colonialism:

"The Misra brothers and sisters were not interested in the subtleties underlying such exchanges. One brother wanted 'know 'what is the price of good whisky in Washington? Not that terrible thing called bourbon but scotch—can you get scotch?' and the sisters asked Tara where she had bought her chiffon sari and her leather bag, and for how much."

One of the most significant role that Bakul plays in the novel, as far as the storyline of the novel is concerned, is that he is the one who asks Tara to make it possible for Bim and Raja to meet so that the misunderstanding between them, after the Raja's letter, can be done away with:

"What is the matter with her?" asked Bakul, realizing Tara had to talk. He had his own suspicions about Bim but thought better of telling them to Tara. 'Is it that business with Sharma you told me about' Surely it can't be — she's been dealing with him for years.'

'It can't be that then,' Tara agreed. 'It seems to be Raja again, as far as I can see.' "What, haven't they made up that quarrel yet? Bakul asked in a bored voice. Really, the house had an atmosphere — a chilling one, like a cemetery. I can't even remember what it was about — it was so long ago'. It wasn't really a quarrel — it was a letter-; it's just that

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

Bim can't forget old grudges. They make her so miserable – I wish I could end them for her 'Bakul paid her some attention now. He could always find a solution to any problem he liked to think. He rather relished problems. He relished solving them for anyone as easily impressed as Tara. He thought how nice it would be to have Tara stop looking so preoccupied and concerned and be impressed by him instead. Really, it was a night of Persian glamour and beauty. They should be sitting together in the moonlight, looking together the moon that hung over the garden like some great priceless pearl, flawed and blemished with gray shadowy ridges as only a very great beauty can risk being. Why were they worrying instead about Bim, and Raja? He came and stood close to Tara his large solid thighs in their white *pyjamas* just before her eyes like two solid pillars and his cigar glowing between two fingers. 'You must arrange for them to meet and speak,' he said in a thick, rich voice."

Q. 2. Discuss the structure of *Midnight children*.

Ans. The Structure of *Midnight's Children*: It is difficult to categorize *Midnight's Children*. The structure of the novel is more like a Chinese box – stories within the stories. There are so many books like *Panchtantra*, *Kathasaritsagar* and *Arabian Nights*, which use the technique of stories within the story. Though *Midnight's Children* also uses the frame story in which all the other stories are fit together, the structure of Rushdie's novel is different from that of the ancient storybooks. The question is how?

Another reason that *Midnight's Children* is difficult to classify is that it recalls what we call as metafiction. Metafiction can simply be defined as a form of fiction which the theme is the process of writing fiction. Many writers have sued such a form of fiction in order to investigate about the relation between life and art. Rushdie brings to forms of writing fiction together in his postmodern masterpiece. Now, again we come across a question – whether Rushdie is postmodern or postcolonial writer? Many accuse him of exoticizing India for the consumption of west. Many say his vision of India is not of an insider but of a tourist. Rushdie seems happy to play along with the theorist belonging to post-modern tradition.

Rushdie's narrative not only contains textual aberrations from typical narrative but also houses oral narrative within the narcissistic narrative. The self-aware narrative process that addresses the audience and creates new rules while undermining conventional forms reflects the process of oral story telling. Rushdie acknowledges that "Padma enabled the book to become an oral narrative, some kind of stylization of such a narrative, if you like". By creating a character who acts as a catalyzer for the telling, encouraging the continuation of the tale and interacting with the teller of that tale, Rushdie allows Saleem's narration to embody qualities of the oral narrative. As with such a narrative style, Saleem often interrupts his own story, addresses the reader, and speaks in circles before returning to his main point.

As Saleem tells the story, he constantly digresses when some element of his tale reminds him of something else. At one point he rails against these digressions: "Interruptions, nothing but interruptions! The different parts of my somewhat complicated life refuse, with a wholly unreasonable obstinacy, to stay neatly in their separate compartments". By narcissistically pointing to the orality of the text, Saleem draws attention to that orality and the nature of the narrative itself to emphasize the function of memory. The elements of oral narrative overlap and work with the elements of narcissistic narrative and simulate the function of memory in history: both the narrative style and memory under minetraditional forms. Just as a person's memory jumps from one event to the next, without chronological sequence in many cases, Rushdie's narrative also leaps from one memory to the next, often interrupting itself in order to make room for a certain memory. Wilson also observes the narrative connection with memory, as elicited by the narcissistic and oral elements of the narrative:

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

“Thus the reader/listener, deity of the narrator’s present to whom he offers up narrative, has equal status with memory, the past out of which narrative is made and to which then narrator also owes service if he is to have meaning”. The shared status of memory and narrative in *Midnight’s Children* indicates the significance of each element: both memory and oral, narcissistic narrative provide alternatives to the conventional forms of literature and history. As the narrative style simulates the function of memory, Rushdie exemplifies one of Hutcheon’s arguments in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: “The important contemporary debate about the margins and the boundaries of social and artistic conventions is also the result of a typically postmodern transgressing of previously accepted limits” Rushdie transcends traditional limits in his use of narcissistic and oral narrative. These artistic conventions not only relate a story but also mimic the function of memory and thereby help redefine history as individual rather than a single historical view-point shared by all. Focusing on memory throughout and through his narrative, Rushdie undermines the conventional ideas of history and posits a multiplicity of histories that are comprised of a chutnified mixture of ur-history and memory.

Q. 3. Critically examine the ending of Mulk Raj Anand’s novel *Untouchable*.

Ans. The Picture of a Framented Nation: The primary aim of the novel is not to represent the idea of nationalism, as has been represented in other nationalist novels like *Kanthapura*. To say the novel does not engage directly with the complexities of nationalism, rather in showing the miserable plight of Bakha’s life it shows the failure of India as nation or of national culture in including the entire demographic mass which it claimed to represent. In *Nation and its Fragments* (1994), Partha Chatterjee says that “the formation of a ‘national culture’ was necessarily built upon the privileging of an ‘essential tradition,’ which in turn was defined by a system of exclusions.”

The way, in which Anand, depicts the isolation and exclusion of the *Untouchables* in his novel, is interesting and worth understanding. He opens his novel with description of the colony of the outcastes and shows us how they are excluded from both town and cantonment.

“A group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment; but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and the other outcastes from Hindu society”.

In the next paragraph Anand tells us that Bakha is a “strong and able-bodied” young man. Though he lives in the outcastes’ colony, he thinks it to be an uncongenial place. We are also informed that at the same time he is fascinated by then life-style of white men and desires to live there life. Anand thus presents a very human description of the lives of Untouchables by making the reader to look through the perspectives of an *Untouchable* and letting the readers to gain the access in to the private and emotional realm of the protagonist Bakha. By make the narrative voice identify with that of the protagonist, Anand further accentuates the impact of Bakha’s suffering. According to Saroj Cowasjee: “So strong is the identification with his hero that for the best part of the novel we forget the presence of the novelist.”

The episodic nature of the novel further stresses the exclusion of the protagonist. The different episodes of the novel act as a form of community existence – an existence in which Bakha has no share both socially and emotionally. An example can be seen in the episode when Bakha casually walks through the city road. This simple walk become complex and gets loaded with various layers of meaning and complexity when we see the humiliation that an *Untouchable* has to go through as his daily experience. This exclusion is to such an extent that when Bakha buys sweet, his “head was bent [and] he was vaguely ashamed and self-conscious at being seen buying sweets”. This

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

sense of being self-ashamed is followed by his public humiliation, when he is slapped for merely touching an upper caste Hindu. Anand writes:

“His [Bakha’s] first impulse was to run, just to shoot across the throng, away, far away from torment. But he realised that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulders would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like bodies of the onlookers, but a moral one. He knew that contact with him, if he pushed through, would defile a great many more of these men.”

Bakha becomes aware of his position in the society. He becomes aware that he actually holds no position in the society but he merely exists. He realizes that the barrier is not “a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulder would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like onlookers, but a moral one.” The incident makes him aware of his being an *Untouchable* for the first time. It not only a crucial moment in his life but also in the novel as it makes us aware of what does it feels to an *Untouchable* to be an *Untouchable*. Anand writes:

“Like a ray of light shooting through darkness, the recognition of his position, the significance of his lot dawned upon him. . . . A shock had passed through his perceptions, previously numb and torpid and had sent a quiver into his being, stirred his nerves of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, all into a quickening. ‘I am an *Untouchable!*’ he said to himself.”

Another example of his humiliation can be seen in the episode when the priest attempts to molest his sister and then humiliates her. With these episodes Anand tries to depict a realistic picture of pathetic condition of *Untouchables* in the colonial India.

Anand does not attempt to depict a simplistic picture of Hindu-Muslim divide rather he complicates the religious situation in the emerging India by showing the alliance of lower caste Hindu with Muslims and English. Anand also stresses on the existing problems within the Hindu lower castes itself by telling us about the hierarchy existing with the social structure of the lower caste Hindu. Because of these problems it becomes impossible for them to get organized against the upper caste Hindu and demand what is theirs. The washer woman Gulabo, one of the novel’s characters, “thought herself superior to every other outcaste, firstly, because she claimed a high place in the hierarchy of the castes among the lower castes, secondly because a well-known Hindu gentlemen in the town who had been her lover in her youth was still kind to her in her middle age.” By bring the hierarchy within the lower caste Hindu, Anand further accentuate the plight of Bakha since he not only belongs to the lower caste but also belongs to the lowest of the lower caste. Thus he is alienated twice from the society – both from the upper caste and the lower caste.

The model of nation as presented in Anand’s *Untouchable*, which excludes the lower castes, apparently has a gap in it as it is based on privileging an essential tradition. The reason for this gap is not only that the dominant Hindu religion has its own divide within itself but also that abulk of the population does not find any place in it. The internal divide of the Hindu religion also threatens the structure as it encourages the lower caste Hindu population to form an alliance with Muslims and Christians.

Chinua Achebe shows a similar idea in his famous novel *Things Fall Apart*, wherein the native community faces the danger of disintegration when the Christian Missionaries starts accepting the native outcastes into church. This inclusion of outcastes does not go without protest, but Mr. Kaiga, the head of the congregation, maintains that everyone is equal in the eyes of the God.

In *Untouchable*, Anand also raises somewhat similar issues. Here we see Colonel Hutchinson trying to convert some *Untouchables* to Christianity. Conversion to Christianity is luring for an *Untouchable* like Bakha, as it not only promises an opportunity enjoy an equal status in the society but also brings the hope of living the life of white men.

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

In spite of the fact that Bakha has no interest in the priest's song he decides to follow him because the Sahib wore trousers. Trousers had been the dream of his life. The kindly interest which the trousered man had shown him when he was downcast had made Bakha conjure up pictures of himself wearing the Sahib's clothes, talking the Sahib's language and becoming like the guard whom he had seen on the railway station near his village."

There is no doubt that Bakha seems to be charmed by the Christ message of equality but at the same time he finds most of the things said by Christ as absurd as they do not make any sense to him.

"He hadn't understood very much what the Salvationist said. He didn't like the idea of being called a sinner. He had committed no sins that he could remember. How could he confess his sins? Odd. What did it mean confessing sins? 'Does the Sahib want some secret knowledge?' He wondered."

The Salvationist fails to understand the real problems of Bakha and instead goes on to mystify the Christianity. This act of mystification is not taken well Bakha and he repels the idea of conversion to Christianity. Though unlike Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Bakha of *Untouchable* does not consider the conversion as an option, still Anand shows us the danger of disintegration of Hindu community by the alliance of lower castes Hindu and Christians.

Anand also shows in the novel the unspoken alliance between lower caste Hindu and Muslims, since both the community are considered as outcastes by the upper class Hindu. For this obvious reason the lower caste Hindu feels closer to the Muslims. The *tonga-wallah*, who is a Muslim, shows sympathy towards Bakha and comes to his rescue when he is slapped and humiliated by an upper class Hindu.

"Leave him, never mind, let him go, come along, tie your turban," consoled the *tonga-wallah*, who being a Muhammadan and thus also an *Untouchable* from the orthodox Hindu point of view, shared the outcaste's resentment to a certain degree".

Q. 4. Compare and analyse the two poems, 'The Old Woman' and 'Indian Dancers'.

Ans. The Old Woman: This poem is also from the collection *The Bird of Time*. It is a poem full of compassion. The poem, as is clear from the very title, is about an old woman who once was a wife and a mother, but now has been reduced by the circumstances to beg on the street. The second stanza of the poem is known for its stark reality and can be said to be the most realistic stanza ever written by Naidu.

There are fourteen lines in the each stanza of the poem. Here, Naidu also presents a fine example of code mixing through her use of Arabic in the poem. Anapest is the dominant foot in the poem.

It would be enlightening for us to compare the old woman of this poem with dancers of the first poem. What is striking in this comparison is that the old woman is very sharply portrayed while the dancers are hazy and blurred.

Indian Dancers: This poem is from Naidu's collection of poetry entitled *The Golden Threshold* and is marked by overabundance of lush and overripe imagery. The poem creates an entranced mood and suggests images of lack of clarity and sharpness.

The main foot of the poem is the anapest, which means that two unstressed syllables are followed by a stressed one. Each line opens with an iamb. The end of each line has an extra weak stress. The lines of the poem suggest the physical exertion of a dancer and in order to overcome this exertion, the poet offers a sort of breather in between after one beat of four feet.

The poem creates image after image and still when the poem ends we do not have a very clear picture of dancers. What is get is an impression, an experience but clear picture. The reason for this is that the poem, as has been mentioned, offers lack of clarity for the mood is entranced. The idea behind the poem is to create a sense of super sensuality and to blur the boundaries between senses. Words such as 'ravished', 'rapture', 'celestially panting', and 'passionate bosoms', create a sense of excess.

—Advertisement—

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

Many might consider the aesthetic that informs the poem as escapist or decadent for the reason that poem does not focus on the labour, sorrow, sweat, and degradation of the dancers. The poem offers a loss of subjectivity and invites us to experience the sensuality of the dancers into the “voluptuous watches of the night”. The poet warns us against the facile and dismissive judgement by depicting the dancers with excess. It seems that the poet is aware of what she was doing. The poet urges her dancers to retain their dignity and not be transformed into a living ghost. This perspective allows us to look at her poetry as a resistance against colonialism and modernity.

The Indian Dancers shows her mastery of ever complex and long metrical structures which are apparent. She has not attempted much in blank verse or in the sonnet form as yet. But, her poems exhibit a marvellous melody and rhythmical grace, and cling to the mind long after they are read. Further, there are beautiful usages of phrase and imaginative temperament that make her illuminate by a single flash of epithet, a world of new ideas and feelings and unfamiliar relations between familiar things and spiritual meanings and joys in facts which convey no messages to ordinary ears.

Sarojini is a poet of extreme lyrical sensibility. She has an eye for the most delicate aspects of beauty, an ear for the music of life and nature and a superb sense of rhythm, rhyme and cadence. She scatters memorable phrases over a page like stars and was so filled with rhythm and romance of life that lyrics sang in her mind and overflowed from her exotic and passionate nature into song. By the use of jewelled phrases and epithets she could throw open a new world of experience and feelings. The ornate adjectives, dreamy similes and liquid phrases enhance the romantic unearthliness of her themes.

This poem is full of compassion. The poem tells us about an old woman, as is clear from the very title, who once was a wife and a mother, but now has been reduced to beg on the street by her extreme circumstances. In the second stanza of the poem Naidu presents the reality of the world to such an extent that it can be said to be the most realistic stanza ever written by Naidu.

There are 14 lines in the each stanza of the poem. Here Naidu also presents a fine example of code mixing through her use of Arabic in the poem. Anapest is the dominant foot in the poem.

Q. 5. How does Mahesh Dattani treat the issue of Gender in “Tara”? Discuss.

Ans. Most of Dattani’s plays deal with gender issue. Alyque Padamsee calls him “one of the – most serious contemporary playwrights” Dattani takes issues that afflict societies the world over. He has chronicled the social victim and the follies, foibles and prejudices of Indian society. Bravely Fought the Queen’ foregrounds this whole issue of gender with its very title. Dattai raises these and a number of other questions regarding gender and social stratification and hierarchy and sexuality. In *Dance like a Man*, Dattani problematizes the idea of gender roles. He not only questions the usual idea prevalent in the society that dance is for women, but also complicates it. Gender role becomes important again in his play *Where there is a Will*, in which Hasmukhlal does not think of his son to be manly enough. The question is – how does man becomes manly enough? Dattani seems to question the significance of the divisions of gender roles in these plays.

Gender Identity: Dattani’s plays deal with the social and contemporary issues Dattani’s plays are about the marginalized sections of our society:, women, gays, and *hijras*. His plays raise question of discrimination, including, gender discrimination and homosexuality. His plays not only bring up gender issues and the liberty fixed to women in a patriarchal society, but also they deal with gender biases and prejudices which influence the lives of girl-children even amongst middle class educated society. “Tara” is a play deals with the theme of gender discrimination and social consciousness in modern society. “Tara” is not only the story of the hero of the play, but it is the story of every girl child born in society whether urban or rural.

— Advertisement —

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com

Revelation of Past: In most of Dattani's plays past reveals as the present continues to engage the characters. In his plays past is not something from which one can escape but is something which one must face as it was. Past always contain some conflicting action which contributes to warp the growth of the characters. In his play Where There is a Will, it is the ghost of Hasmukh's father, in *Dance Like Man* the past contains the connivance between Ratna and Amritlal to thwart the ambition of Jairaj and also Ratna's part in the death of her son. In the play *Bravely Fought the Queen* a number of things are buried in the past such as homosexuality of Nitin, violence of the father, and Jiten's part in the maiming of his daughter, Daksha. In the play *Final Solution* again we have a number of secrets buried in the past, the most important of which is the heinous behaviour of Ramnik's father and grandfather. Dattani is not merely concerned with past but also how past comes to reveal itself in the present. It is the process of revelation, which attains significance in Dattani's plays.

Middle-Class Life: The plays of Dattani exposes the hollowness in the middle class life, by exploring the mask of lies which people put up fool the world and which shows the emptiness of their lives. In his plays the vulnerability of characters is revealed. He exposes the emotional price that the characters have to pay in order to achieve their successful appearance. The characters of his plays are displaced and disenchanted. These characters are common people who are in their quest of fulfilment and happiness. They long for love and sexual fulfilment and need affection. The families in Dattani's plays are not mere families but represent society at large they also represent the concerns of everyday life of every person.


Badshah

Badshah of Educational Books & Online Study
www.studybadshah.com

Advertisement

for I.G.N.O.U. Reference Books, Guides, Question Bank, Please Visit :

www.neerajbooks.com