



**CEDPL**  
SOUTH EASTERN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

# POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

BACHELOR OF ARTS (EXTERNAL - GENERAL)  
ACADEMIC YEAR- 2014/2015  
YEAR -1, SEMESTER-11

CENTRE FOR EXTERNAL DEGREES AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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# Postcolonial Literature

**Bachelor of Arts**

**Academic Year- 2014/2015**

**Year -1, Semester-1I**

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Published by the  
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

The South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

University Park, Oluvil, Sri Lanka.

First published 2017

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who provided support to complete this book. I extend my sincere thanks to The South Eastern University of Sri Lanka for publishing this book.

Above all I thank the almighty lord for giving me this opportunity.

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## **Introduction to the Course**

### **ENM 12013: Postcolonial Literature**

#### **Introduction:**

This course introduces the students to various aspects of Postcolonial literature and its themes from different literary texts. The course focuses on the important features of post colonialism such as alienation, marginalization, the other, exile, orients and etc. and goes on to the detail study of them by applying them on the prescribed literary texts. The course covers poetry, short story, drama and fiction from different commonwealth countries and different writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nissim Ezekie, Patrick Fernando, Kamal Das, Anita Desai etc. The students will be trained to do a comparative study of the postcolonial literature with their native literature and will be familiarized to apply the concepts to the literary texts.

#### **Course Objectives:**

- To develop the students' understanding of postcolonial literary studies by different postcolonial theories.
- To identify the impact of colonialism in the present times.
- To develop the skill of comparative study of different postcolonial texts from the commonwealth countries.
- To provide the significance of native writing by contrasting it with the writing of the West.

- To trace the native culture and the tradition of a country through a literary text.
- Introduced to the postcolonial perceptions of a wide range of people whose second language is English.
- To discuss the question of identity and dominance of landscape in postcolonial literature.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

After successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

- understand the key concepts of post colonialism.
- develop a comparative analysis of different postcolonial literary texts, discuss the impact of post colonialism.
- apply the postcolonial concepts to poetry, short story, drama and fiction.

### **Assessment Criterion:**

Assessments	30%
• On time Assessment	20%
• Take home Assessment	10%
Final Examination	70%

There will be 2 Assessments, one will be an on time assessment during your seminar and another will be a take home assignment which students should submit before the deadline.

However, both these Assessments and Final Examination are expected not to check students' ability to reproduce the material we give in these texts, but to improve their critical knowledge, Skills and ability about the subject.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### Key Terms

Postcolonialism, occidental, oriental, natives, diaspora, colonisers

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### Intended Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the background of colonization and post colonialism.
- Define the key term of post colonialism



## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to Postcolonial Literature**

Postcolonialism signifies the historical period undergone by the Third world countries after the decline of colonisation. The critical approach to postcolonialism uses the collection of theoretical and critical strategies to examine the tradition, culture, literature, politics, history, and etc. of former colonies of the European empires and attempts to restore the native culture and deconstruct the preconceived notions of the native land by the Western World. The postcolonial writers focus on both colonialism and the changes created in a postcolonial culture.

Postcolonial criticism uses a collection of theoretical and critical strategies to examine the culture [literature, politics, history, etc.] of former colonies of the European empires, and their relation to the rest of the world.

Postcolonial criticism analyzes the ideological forces that, on one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizer's values and, on the other hand, promote the resistance of colonized people against their oppressors. (Colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies.)

Thus, ex-colonial often are left with a psychological "inheritance" of a negative self-image and alienation from their indigenous cultures.

“Colonialist ideology”, or “colonialist discourse,” is based on the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) people.

The colonizers believe that only their culture is civilized. Therefore, native people are defined as savage, backward, undeveloped.

The colonizers see themselves at the center of the world; and the colonized at the margins. They see themselves as the embodiment of superior civilization and they see the native people as inferior. This practice of judging all who are different as inferior is called "mothering".

Colonialist ideology is a pervasive force in the schools established in the colonies to inculcate the colonizers' culture in the indigenous people. This results in the creation of "colonial subjects", colonized person who do not resist colonial subjugation because they were taught to believe in the colonizers' superiority and in their own inferiority.

Many of these individual tries to imitate the colonizers in behavior and lifestyle .This phenomenon of "mimicry" causes subjects to have "a double consciousness". Double consciousness often produces an unstable sense of self. This feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself caught in the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to as "unhomeliness." Thus it creates cultural identity crisis and makes the person a psychological refuge.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is vital to postcolonial studies. He describes the stereotypical discourse about the East as fabricated by the West. He uses the word orientalism to describe about the East

constructed by the West. He critiques the Western image of the Orient as savages and occident as civilised.

## **1.2 Key terms of Postcolonialism**

1. **Alterity:** It is the study of the ways in which one group of people make themselves different from others. It is the state of being other or different.
2. **Ambivalence:** It is an ambiguous way in which colonizer and colonized regard one another. The colonizer often regards the natives as both inferior yet unusually other, while the colonized regards the colonizer as both privileged yet corrupt. In a context of hybridity, this often produces a mixed sense of blessing and curse. (It describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized.)
3. **Hybridity:** New transcultural forms that arise from cross-cultural exchange. It can be social, political, linguistic, religious, etc.
4. **Hegemony:** The control of the ruling class to convince colonized that their interests are the interests of all, often not only through means of economic and political control but more subtly through the control of education and media.
5. **Minicry** the way in which the colonized adapt the tradition and culture and the life style of the colonizer.
6. **Identity:** a way in which an individual or a group of people define themselves.

### **Review Questions**

1. Explain the major concepts in postcolonial literature.
2. Critically comment on any five of the following.
  - a) Identity crisis
  - b) Alienation
  - c) Hybridity
  - d) Racism
  - e) Natives
  - f) Alterity

### **References**

1. Ashcroft, Bill., Griffiths, Gareth.,& Tiffin, Helen. 2000, Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, Psychology Press.
2. Innes, C. L., 2007, The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English, Cambridge University Press.

### **Recommended Readings**

1. Young, Robert, Post colonialism: A very short introduction, Oxford university press.
2. Wijesinha, Rajiva, 1998, *Breaking Bounds: Essays on Sri Lankan Writing in English*, Belihul Oya, Sabragamuwa University Press.

## Chapter 2

### Poetry

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#### Key Terms

Chinua Achebe, Derek Walcott, Patrick Fernando, Paul Laurence Dunbar, colour discrimination, slaves, alienation

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#### Intended Learning Outcomes

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the literary merit and historical significance of a work from colonial literature.
- Critique ideas and impressions generated by the author.
- Interpret the author's message in the text.
- Understand the key terms of postcolonialism

## **2.1 Refugee mother and her child**

No Madonna and Child could touch  
that picture of a mother's tenderness  
for a son she soon would have to forget.  
The air was heavy with odours  
of diarrhoea of unwashed children  
with washed-out ribs and dried-up  
bottoms struggling in laboured  
steps behind blown empty bellies. Most  
mothers there had long ceased  
to care but not this one; she held  
a ghost smile between her teeth  
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's  
pride as she combed the rust-coloured  
hair left on his skull and then -  
singing in her eyes - began carefully  
to part it...In another life this  
must have been a little daily  
act of no consequence before his  
breakfast and school; now she  
did it like putting flowers  
on a tiny grave.

- Chinua Achebe

### **The Background for the poem:**

In 1967 civil war broke out in Nigeria when the Catholic dominated province of Biafra tried to get independence from the Muslim dominated central state. At this time, Chinua Achebe worked as an ambassador for the Biafra government.

The war went severely for the Biafra's who suffered immeasurably and starvation was rife. The poet's first-hand experience of the hardship and struggle inspired him to write "Refugee Mother and Child".

### **Reference to Madonna and Child: Its Significations:**

The Madonna is Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, and the Child is her son, Jesus. A statue of the Madonna holding the Infant Jesus is common in the Catholic Church. Achebe wrote this poem in the Catholic province of Biafra, where statues of the Madonna and Child would have common.

### **The unavailability of Death of the Children:**

The mothers know that their children are dying. It is known as a "defence mechanism" that the mothers use to protect themselves. There is nothing they can do to prevent their children from dying, so they protect themselves from psychological destruction by giving the appearance that they no longer care. Starvation was rife in the refugee camp. Children in the camp were dying with regularity, and the mother knows that her own son would probably also soon be dead.

### **The Blown up Bellies of the Children:**

The children are suffering from kwashiorkor which leads the children's bellies to blow up. So these children are starving (have empty bellies) but their bellies are blown up from kwashiorkor.

### **Starvation at the Refugee Camp:**

Starvation was rife in the refugee camp. Children in the camp were dying with regularity, and the mother knows that her own son would probably also soon be dead. The woman is watching her child dying. Her little acts of love and kindness are therefore not unlike the ritual of putting flowers on his grave.

### **Conclusion:**

The poet is looking to an earlier life before the war broke out, a life when food was in abundance, a life when breakfast and school were an everyday event. Now there is no breakfast, no school, but only a refugee camp and death.

## **2.2 Telephone Conversation**

### **Analysis of the poem**

'Telephone conversation' by Wole Soyinka depicts the absurdity and ridiculousness of racism which shows how the so-called white people discriminate black even for the trifle issues such as renting an apartment.

The whole poem is a conversation between a land lady and a black who is supposed to be the poet himself. The first part of the poem is



in a positive note whereas the poet makes a call to the land lady and admits that he is an African in advance, the poet might have undergone several denials prior to this dealing as he is a black.

On the other hand, the lady who is expected to refuse to rent an apartment as soon as she comes to know that her client is a black maintains a silence which makes the poet to think the landlady might have hailed from an elite class.

The term 'self-confession' shows how the poet regrets for his complexion and feels guilty over his colour for which he shouldn't have been sorry for. The racism has brought out such an impact on poet even to the extent of regretting for his inborn nature where he has no control over it.

When the conversation continues, all of a sudden the poet's high image about the landlady shatters into pieces when he realized the change in the attitude of the lady. He is startled by her question "HOW DARK?", which is an evident enough to portray her as a typical racist bigotry.

There is a momentary pause when the poet has taken aback by her question of dumbfoundedness and the sense of reality is brought out by mentioning the Red booth, Red pillar box, Red double-tired omnibus squelching tar to assure the ridiculous question has really been asked to him. The Red booth, Red pillar omnibus is being a symbol to the setting which is supposed to be London.

Moreover the lady asks 'ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?' further proving her biased nature. Beyond her lavish exterior she is

simply a judgmental racist bigotry. She is in need of his exact shade of his colour to categorize him, therefore the persona reveals his ethnic identity as 'West African Sepia' citing his passport but the term is incomprehensible to the lady, so that her accent becomes hard and emphatic which discloses her indifference towards the persona.

Here it is noticeable the poet has deliberately capitalized all the utterances of the lady to show the real impact of discrimination and racism.

He even tells his various parts of his body's colour which is lighter than his face and says what caused his back dark and he sarcastically mocks at her whether she wanted to see it. The lady gets annoyed and hung up the receiver.

Though apparently the poem deals with polite conversation, in real it is a poetic satire which includes sarcasm, pun and verbal irony. The subtle approach and the usage of high diction have been the techniques of the poet to outwit the prejudicial lady who judge people based on their skin colour in spite of their other good qualities.

Thus, the poet is witty enough to outwit the lady with a sense of humor rather than the obvious sarcasm.

### **2.3 Background, Casually by Nissim Ezekiel**

Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Background Casually' is an autobiographical poem in which Ezekiel narrates the main events of his life from his childhood onwards. The poem is in seventy- five lines in which Ezekiel has summed up the major experiences of his life. The theme

of alienation is central to his poetry. The poem gives an empathetic expression in a satirical tone. It further says about his social and cultural alienation from country to which he does not really belong but which he has adopted as his own.

The poem is divided into three sections which approximate the childhood, adult and old-age experiences of the poet-speaker. The three sections do not merely present a chronology of significant experiences but reflections over these experiences that draw out lessons on the status of the identity of the self.

### **Night of the Scorpion**

‘Night of the Scorpion’ is a poem about the power of self-effacing love. The poem captures a detached picture of Indian village life with all its superstitious simplicity. The poet dramatizes a battle of ideas fought at night in lamplight between good and evil; between darkness and light; between rationalism and blind faith. And out of this confusion, there arises an unexpected winner – the selfless love of a mother.

The poem opens with the poet’s recollection of his childhood experience. One night his mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven the scorpion to hide beneath a sack of rice. After inflicting unbearable pain upon the mother with a flash of its diabolic tail, the scorpion risked the rain again.

The peasant-folk of the village came like swarms of flies and expressed their sympathy. They believed that with every movement the scorpion made, the poison would move in mother’s blood. So,

with lighted candles and lanterns they began to search for him, but in vain. This explains the superstitious belief of the villagers.

To comfort the poet's mother they opened the bundle of their superstitions. They told her that the suffering and pain will burn away the sins of her previous birth. "May the suffering decrease the misfortunes of your next birth too", they said.

The lady twisted and groaned in mortifying pain. Her husband, who was sceptic and rationalist, tried every curse and blessing; powder, herb and hybrid. As a last resort he even poured a little paraffin on the bitten part and put a match to it.

The painful night was long and the holy man came and played his part. He performed his rites and tried to tame the poison with an incantation. After twenty hours the poison lost its sting.

The ironic twist in the poem comes when in the end the mother who suffered in silence opens her mouth. She says, "Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children."

Night of the Scorpion creates a profound impact on the reader with an interplay of images relating to good and evil, light and darkness. Then the effect is heightened once again with the chanting of the people and its magical, incantatory effect. The beauty of the poem lies in that the mother's comment which illustrates her unconditional love towards her children.

**Themes:**

**Indian Background:**

Ezekiel is known to be a detached observer of the Indian scenario and this stance often has the power of a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. On the one side Night of the Scorpion presents an Indian village through the eyes of an outsider and finds the deep-rooted strains of superstition and blind faith which may seem foolish to the western eye. But on the other, the poem never fails to highlight the positive side of Indian village life. The poet does not turn a blind eye to the fellow-feeling, sympathy and cooperation shown by the villagers. And in a poem that deals with the all-conquering power of love, the reader too should be well aware of it.

**Clash of Ideas:**

There is a contrast between the world of irrationality represented by the villagers and the world of rationalism represented by the father who tries all rational means to save his wife from suffering. Religion too plays its role with the holy man saying his prayers. But all three become futile. Or do they? One cannot totally ignore the underlying current of love and fellow-feeling in their endeavours.

Images of the dark forces of evil abound in Night of the Scorpion; the diabolic tail of the scorpion, giant scorpion shadows on the sun-baked walls and the night itself point to evil. In fact, the poem is about the pertinent question as to what can conquer evil. Where superstition, rationalism and religion proved futile, the self-effacing love of a

mother had its say. Once again it is Love conquers all, and that is all you need to know.

## **2.4 A Far Cry from Africa - Derek Walcott**

### **Background of the poem**

The poem 'A Far Cry from Africa' mainly discusses the events of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the early 1950s. This battle happened during the 1950s between the European settlers and the native Kikuyu tribes in Kenya. Kikuyu was the largest and most educated tribe in Kenya. When the British people invaded their land continually the natives outrageously reacted and the tribes rebelled against the British. The rebellion was under a secret organization called Mau Mau and during this battle a large number of Kikuyu tribal people as well as the colonizers were slaughtered.

### **History**

Derek Walcott's 'A Far Cry from Africa', published in 1962, is an illustration of ethnic conflict and divided loyalties of the writer. The opening part of the poem gives the picture of the Mau Mau Rebellion; a battle during the 1950s between European settlers and the native Kikuyu tribe in Kenya. The first white settlers arrived in the region, forcing the Kikuyu people leave their tribal lands. Europeans took control of farmland and the government, demoting the Kikuyu to a subservient position. One group of the Kikuyu people formed Mau Mau, a terrorist organization intent on eliminating all European influence from the country, but less strident Kikuyus

attempted to either remain neutral or help the British defeat Mau Mau.

The external problem in Kenya created an internal conflict within the poet concerning his own mixed heritage. Derek Walcott has both African and European ancestries; his grandmothers were both black, and both grandfathers were white. In addition, at the time the poem was written, the poet's country of birth, the island of St. Lucia, was still a colony of Great Britain. While Walcott opposes colonialism and would therefore seem to be sympathetic to a revolution with an anticolonial cause, he has passionate reservations about Mau Mau: they are, or are reported to be, extremely violent—to animals, whites, and Kikuyu perceived as traitors to the Mau Mau cause.

As Walcott is divided in two, so too is the poem. The first two stanzas refer to the Kenyan conflict, while the second two address the internal crisis within the poet regarding his divided identity.

### **Detail analysis of the poem**

The poem starts with the picture of how the peaceful setting of the country was destroyed by the rebellion. The country is compared to an animal, as it indicates it is an animal like a lion with a “tawny pelt” The Kikuyu are compared to flies (buzzing around the “animal” of Africa) who are feeding on blood.

Next part explains the aftermath of the rebellion. The poet describes that the country before the conflict was a ‘paradise’ and with an ironical comment he indicates the death, inhumanity and destruction occurred in the land. The worms that can be seen as the ultimate

emblem of stagnation and decay, cries at the worthless death. Sarcastically poet indicates how the humans are reduced to statistics. And at the same time though scholars justify the presence of white men in Africa and the process of civilizing the natives, the poet indicates the fact that it was a failure with the brutal death of the small white child and his family. People behave like animals 'savages' hints and remind us the persecution endured by the Jews. Jews were killed in millions due to their ethnicity during the time of Hitler. Though the time and the place is different the same kind of situations repeat in the world time to time.

Next the poet creates a picture of white men in searching for natives who are hiding behind the bushes. The sound of 'ibises' hints a bad omen. Again the repetition is shown through the word 'wheeled'. The civilized men thrived on conquering others. This process of violence and conquering each other indicates the law of the jungle. The violence of 'beast on beast' can justify according to the law of nature, the law of jungle. Yet it cannot be applied to the 'upright man' who is stretching out themselves to reach the 'divinity'. Apart from the task of stretching themselves to reach 'divinity' they end up with 'inflicting pain' which is killing and which is the law of jungle; killing for prey. They call for the massacre they create by killing as war. Ironically, wars between people are described as following the beat of a drum- an instrument made of an animal hide stretched over a cylinder. Though the natives think the act of killing white men brings them 'courage' it ends up with fear. Moreover the poet emphasizes the fact that though the natives justify their task mentioning it as a 'brutish necessity' and considering it as a national



cause they just clean their hands with 'the napkin of dirty cause'. So the poet suggests the fact that the natives' cause is dirty and ugly though they consider it as right and nationwide. He sees a comparison with the West Indians who had their share of harsh experiences with Spain. The fight is just as the gorilla wrestles with superman. The gorilla in this context is compared to natives and superman is compared to white men.

The last two lines indicate the situation of the poet, as he belongs to both cultures how he feels inferiority regarding the situation. The mixed heritage of the poet makes him unable to decide to which he should be partial. The title itself too indicates the state of mind conflict of the poet, a cry from a great distance away and moreover it shows the alienation and the inferiority of the poet. The poem ends with a picture of violence and cruelty and with the idea of searching for identity.

## **2.5 Piano and Drums**

When at break of day at a riverside  
I hear the jungle drums telegraphing  
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw  
like bleeding flesh, speaking of  
primal youth and the beginning  
I see the panther ready to pounce  
the leopard snarling about to leap  
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;  
  
And my blood ripples, turns torrent,  
topples the years and at once I'm

in my mother's laps a suckling;  
at once I'm walking simple  
paths with no innovations,  
rugged, fashioned with the naked  
warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts  
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano  
solo speaking of complex ways in  
tear-furrowed concerto;  
of far away lands  
and new horizons with  
coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,  
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth  
of its complexities, it ends in the middle  
of a phrase at a dagger point.

And I lost in the morning mist  
of an age at a riverside keep  
wandering in the mystic rhythm  
of jungle drums and the concerto.

- Gabriel Okara

### **Analysis of the poem**

Gabriel Okara is emphasises the cultural duality in the poem 'Piano and Drums'. These two instruments are the key symbols in the poem. The piano is an instrument of Western music and the drum is an instrument of African oriental music. The writer associates the two

distinct cultures - the Western and African through the symbol of the instruments.

The drum is more than a symbol of African culture. It is part of African life. Drums are played at every important occasion in life. Thus it becomes part and parcel of the life of Africans. Its mystic rhythms are beaten into their blood-stream from the moment of their birth. As a result all their feelings are deeply associated with the sound of the drum. Those primal sensations all come alive when they hear the drum. That's what the poet means when he says:

“When at break of day at a riverside  
I hear jungle drums  
my blood ripples and turns torrent.

In this particular instance, the poet seems to be on the bank of a river flowing through a Nigerian jungle. The poet may be a member of a party of hunters waiting for wild animals being chased towards them by the drummers.

Then the poet contrasts the native life with the symbol of the piano. It has none of them of the drums. The piano produced only a wailing.” Its tear -furrowed” and complicated. It is a way of life foreign to the poet. The big musical jargon with words like, “diminuendo, counter point and crescendo” are all foreign to the poet. It is a labyrinth complexity wherein the poet is lost and suffers.

The fourth stanza brings out the poet's predicament. The poet stands on the bank of the river is "lost in the morning mist of an age." He is lost in the confusion of two distinct cultures, his own native and the imperialist culture he has embraced. Caught between the two cultures the poet has become a wanderer. He has lost his cultural identity and is condemned to live in a no man's land culturally.

The poem thus ends in a note of resignation to the present predicament of the native African with Western cultural affinities. The poet in other words does not offer us an answer, a solution to the cultural conflict faced by men like him in Africa. He seems to say that it is the destiny of such men to live with such cultural conflict.

## **2.6 Colonial Cameo**

In the evenings my father used to make me read aloud

From Macaulay or Abbot's Napoleon (he was short,  
And Napoleon his hero; I, his hope for future).

My mother, born in a village, had never been taught

that superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving  
House; she called at school to take me away.

She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala; I sensed the shocked  
of the class, hearing the servants' language; in dismay.

Followed her out, as she said, "Gihing ennang."

I was glad it was my last day there. But then the bell  
Pealed; a gang of boys came out, sniggering.

And shouted in chorus, "

Gihing vareng!” as my farewell.

My mother pretended not to hear that insult.

The snobbish little bastards! But how can I blame them? That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother.

Now, whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my shame.

- Regi Siriwardena

### **Summary of the poem**

The poet's father wants his son to learn English and study the books written by the west. His father teaches him to read the books of Macaulay and Abbot and wants his son to understand the foreign ideals. It is mentioned in the poem that Napoleon was his father's hero. It can be argued that the father doesn't seem to see himself as the victim of colonisation. During the time of colonization English is considered to be the superior tongue and the west constructed the native Sinhala language as the servants' language.

The children who were educated in the missionary school studied in English medium and they were taught the native language was inferior. The poet also studies in one of these schools and one day when the mother came to take him from school, she spoke in Sinhala language with the teacher. This was a great shock for the poet as well as his classmates. He felt insulted as the students started to make fun of the poet and his mother as she had spoken the servants' language. The poet was happy as it was his last day in the school as he never had to face the insult again. He felt ashamed of his mother for speaking the servant's language. But when he became an adult he

realised his mistake and understood the value of his native language and he felt sorry for considering his mother a disgrace when he was a child.

## **2.7 The Fisherman mourned by his Wife.**

### **Introduction**

Patrick Fernando's 'the fisherman mourned by his wife' is an elegy, a work which laments for the dead person in the melancholic tone. Patrick Fernando makes the fisherman's wife as the narrator of the poem and explains the emotional bond of the husband and wife in the first part of the poem and the emotional breakdown of the lady in the second part, and ends the poem with the maturity of the lady. Parallel to it the writer brings in the change of nature elements as a symbolic reference to the poem where it highlights the tragedy of the fisherman.

### **Summary**

- It is an elegy
- Poetic description of the fisher folk in the Southern part of Sri Lanka.
- The poet uses narrative style, with the use of flash back technique.
- The poet highlights the ideas of the life of the fisherman, his marriage through the eyes of the fisherman's wife, her emotional indifference to her husband at the time of marriage, and her natural fears of an unenlightened woman as bride, and then as a conceived lady and finally as a widow.

- The emotional bond and the emotional breakdown of the wife.
- Themes :
  - The life style of the fisher folk.
  - The transcendental love.
  - The emotional maturity of the lady.
- Techniques:
  - Rhyming words
  - The use of symbolism, visual imagery, simile
  - Use of flash back.

### **Critical analysis of The Fisherman Mourned by His Wife**

‘The fisherman mourned by his wife’ by Patrick Fernando is an elegy which gives an insight of the typical lifestyle and marital issues of fisher folk living in Southern part of Sri Lanka. It is written in first person’s point of narration by making the fisherman’s wife as the persona of this poem who recalls various significant episodes of her life to eulogize the value of her dead spouse, and it too has a highlighted depiction of how unconcerned, dispassionate and lack of mutual love turn ardent, transcendental, ultimate love between the spouses. Further, the beauty of the poem has been adorned with various usages of imageries and symbols to stir the reader’s visualization.

The first stanza is a portrayal of the mental attitude and character of the fisherman. The repetition of “when you were not quite thirty” in line one and three, as well as his mind which is not obsessed with

death and his untanned skin reveal he was too young and immature when he got married.

The last two lines of the first stanza is a characteristic portrayal of the fisherman where he has been compared to a 'gull'. Unlike other fishermen who indulge in unnecessary gossips and chatting after their work, he hurries to home to see his wife which proves his virtuous, noble character and the high morals he holds.

The second stanza deals with the confession of their story by the persona who is beyond detection. She admits the demise of her spouse and further continues her confession about the cause of their marriage and the level of mutual bond prevailed between them at the beginning stage of their marriage. Either love or loneliness isn't the cause for their marriage. They got married not out of love and affection but out of obligation and elders' persuasion. They both have no foreknowledge about each other and they are neither enlightened nor experienced to commit consummation.

"Trembling, lest in fear, you'll let me go maid,  
Trembling on the other hand, for my virginity"

The above lines show the awkwardness and perplexity felt by the couple because of the lack of mutual understanding, respect and love. Their love is rather dispassionate uninvolved and unconcerned. Therefore the reader has been given the notion that proper chemistry does not exist between them.



The revealment of love and bond between the spouses which culminated in her pregnancy is beautifully portrayed by citing the climatic change and the flamboyant tree as a symbol for an ecstatic and delirious moment.

“Three months the monsoon thrashed the sea and you  
Remained at home; the sky cracked like a shell  
In thunder, and the rain broke through  
At last when pouring ceased the storm winds fell,  
When gulls returned new- plumed and wild,  
When in our wind- torn flamboyant  
New buds broke, I was with child.”

The fisherman is confined and restricted to home because of the heavy storm. The obstacle for fisherman's outing leads to the cultivation of mutual understanding and love between them which is evident enough for her conception.

The forth stanza is about how the news of pregnancy has been conveyed. When the fisherman's wife was conveying the news she lacked the liveliness in her voice and on receiving the news the fisherman was pushed to a dilemmatic situation whether to repent or to rejoice the moment and his conscience was ruined by guilty. This unorthodox attitude towards pregnancy is rather abnormal and primitive which is contrary to the modernized thoughts.

“But soon I was to you more than God or temptation.  
And so were you to me”

These lines are considered to be the turning point or the poem where it depicts the kind of love that has to be kept on a high pedestal. Moreover these lines exhibit how they both are wrapped in devoted love and how they become adorable to each other where it was absent at the beginning. Despite being married, once they had been two different individuals where by lapse of time along with her conception their souls become intertwined in pure love and goes beyond the lustful physical needs which is considered as the virtuous, sublime and transcendental love.

Here the author has juxtaposed the extreme love of a couple to the love below the mark which prevailed at the beginning of the marriage.

The four stanzas are the flashback narrated by the persona to recall her life incidents and the fifth stanza deals with the present state where fate has parted the couple with the untimely death of fisherman. Here the persona has been portrayed as more matured lady who develops the courage and fortitude in spite of the unfortunate incident.

Her maturity reflects through the way she elaborates her pain of bereavement. She is scared of her future without him and wonders over their mutual unity. She compares her beloved as her own hand,

“You had grown so familiar as my hand....”

Further the extreme agony she has undergone by his departure is expressed by relating the term ‘dismemberment’. She is unable to shake the anguish that hangs over her. Once again the imageries and

symbol of flamboyant tree has been used to evoke the tone of poignancy.

The author is brilliant enough and unique in his way of writing. The author has created the actual feel and emotions of a woman via using a lady persona, despite him being a man.

## **2. 8 Nani**

Nani the pregnant maid hanged herself  
In the privy one day. For three long hours  
Until the police came, she was hanging there  
A clumsy puppet, and when the wind blew  
Turning her gently on the rope, it seemed  
To us who were children then, that Nani  
Was doing, to delight us, a comic  
Dance..... The shrubs grew fast. Before the summer's end,  
The yellow flowers had hugged the doorway  
And the walls. The privy, so abandoned,  
Became an altar then, a lonely shrine  
For a goddess who was dead. Another  
Year or two, and, I asked my grandmother  
One day, don't you remember Nani, the dark  
Plump one who bathed me near the well? Grandmother  
Shifted the reading glasses on her nose  
And stared at me. Nani, she asked, who is she?  
With that question ended Nani. Each truth  
Ends thus with a query. It is this designed  
Deafness that turns mortality into

Immortality, the definite into  
The soft indefinite. They are lucky  
Who ask questions and move on before  
The answers come, those wise ones who reside  
In a blue silent zone, unscratched by doubts  
For theirs is the clotted peace embedded  
In life, like music in the Koel's egg,  
Like lust in the blood, or like the sap in a tree....

- **Kamala Das**

### **Introduction:**

Kamala Das is one of the three most significant Indian poets. She was born in a middle-class home and married into the Nayar community which allowed her to enter the elite intellectuals of Malayalam literature.

### **Themes in the Poetry of Kamala Das:**

The poetry of Kamala Das is a search for the essential woman, and hence the woman persona of her poems plays the various roles of unhappy woman. Kamala Das has also been called a poet in the confessional mode. The confessional poets deal with emotional experiences which are generally taboo. There is a ruthless self-analysis and a tone of utter sincerity in these poems.

### **Critical analysis of Nani**

The speaker of the poem recalls the suicide of a pregnant servant in her grandmother's house and the silencing of this tragedy. For the

children the dead body of Nani seems to be a puppet hanging on a rope. The yellow flowers have overgrown in the place of the tragedy. After some years the poet asks her grandmother whether she remembers Nani. “I asked my grandmother/ One day, don’t you remember Nani... But the grandmother pretends that she doesn’t know such person. “Nani, she asked who is she?”

Grandmother’s question ends Nani’s existence, but initiates wide ranging meditations about truth. It is customary to remember the dead person as the death normally affects the person or the family emotionally. But here the situation is different. No one recalls the memory of the dead servant. Specially the grandmother’s reaction shows that there is a mystery behind the death of Nani.

The poet in spite of her anger and repulsion, she does not use statements or definitions but works with similes. Those who regard themselves as being in possession of the truth inhabit a peace similar to death. The images of the last lines depict the polarity of life and death. The negative “clotted peace” refers to coagulated blood at the end of life, but it is also compared to ‘music in the Koel’s egg’. In Indian mythology, the Koel or the cuckoo is the image of Krishna. The bird’s call awakens nature as Krishna’s flute arouses vitality. This bird always usurps the nests of other birds. The Koel’s egg hints at music which must be detected. The same applies to “lust in the blood” and “sap of the tree” which promises life when it is revealed and used. The poem Nani becomes a powerful indictment against complacency, indifferent and rigidity. The very practice of

remembering is an act of resistance and suggests a rethinking of society itself.

### **The Old Playhouse: Summary and Analysis**

The persona in this poem is a woman, undoubtedly Kamala Das herself; and she gives a brief account of her unsatisfactory and disappointing life with her husband. She compares herself to a swallow and her husband to a captor who wanted to tame her and keep her fully under his control. The husband wanted to make her forget all those comforts she might have enjoyed in her home before being married; but , in addition to that, he wanted her to forget her very nature and her innate love of freedom by keeping her in a state of subjection to him.

### **Kamala Das's Mind, Similar to an Old Playhouse**

Kamala Das was now feeling suffocated in her husband's home in which his room was always lit by the artificial light of electric lamps and the windows of which were shut. Her husband's whole house symbolized the masculine breath. Even the flowers, which had been cut from the plants, and which had been placed in vases, seemed to have lost their natural smell and to have acquired the smell of her husband's sweet. She no longer heard the singing of birds outside; and she began to feel that her mind was like an old and forsaken theatre-hall which was no longer in use.

The poet then says that her husband was a self-centered man and because his egoism prevented him from letting her learn anything except his own nature and disposition .

Her Resolve to obtain releases her inclination, and not only an inclination house and the loveless life of domesticity which she had been leading there. She says that her husband is physically a strong man, but he denies her the live which she desperately needs and the denial of which has effect of killing her slowly. Kamala Das now compares herself to Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection which he saw in a pool of water and which subsequently haunted him, cussing him an agony and heartache because he could not enjoy the pleasure of a sexual union with himself. Kamala Das now feels tortured by the intensity of her desire for love which she never got from her husband. It is only by obtaining a release from the tyranny of her husband that she can end that torture; and that release may have to be achieved through suicide if no other method can be found.

## **2.9 Sympathy**

I KNOW what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,  
And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals —  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling

When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting -  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,-  
When he beats his bars and he would be free;  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings —  
I know why the caged bird sings!

- **Paul Laurence Dunbar**

**Features of the poem:**

The poem emphasizes on the relationships of freedom and oppression of an individual to an oppressive society (the bird to its cage), and of an artist to expression.

**Style:** “Sympathy” features repetition (or near-repetition) in the first and last lines of each stanza to emphasize the degree to which the speaker identifies with the caged bird.

**Vocabulary:** “Sympathy,” written in 1899, features some older, more formal language that may be unfamiliar to students, particularly “chalice,” “fain,” and “keener.”

**Purpose:** The final stanza suggests that Dunbar believed in expressing one’s aspirations, even when conditions make them seem



unattainable. Based on information in the “author spotlight,” students may also infer that Dunbar valued language and poetry as a means of both artistic expression and protest against injustice.

**Tone:** Somewhat excited at discovering why the caged bird sings, but never gleeful, for it is not a happy thing that causes the caged bird to sing.

**Meaning:** Due to Dunbar's background, and living in a time that was not racially tolerant for the most part, the caged bird is singing for freedom. Also, since Dunbar's parents were freed slaves, he drew upon their stories to create this poem. The caged bird sings what is deep within it, it sings of the longing it has to be free. This poem tells the consecutive feelings of the bird. At first, the poet sympathizes with the bird, and says, "I know what the caged bird feels, alas!" The caged bird can see the world around it. Dunbar talks of how beautiful the surrounding world is, and how the smell of freedom in a way lingers around the caged bird. Second, Dunbar talks of how the caged bird reacts to the inability to be free. The torment of being enslaved, and caged up away from the world is so unbearable to the bird that he beats his wings on the bars until they bleed. The pain only gets worse as time goes on, "and a pain still throbs in the old, old scars / and they pulse again with a keener sting," Finally, in the last stanza, Dunbar tells at last why the caged bird sings. Instead of singing, the bird is praying, it is exhausting its last hope, and that is to have some. All the caged bird can do is pray, "But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings,"

**Structure of poem:** The poem consists of three stanzas, each with 7 lines, and a rhyme scheme pattern of ABAABCC. Dunbar isolates the first line of every stanza by indenting the same. He does this to show the separate progression of the caged bird's emotions.

**Examples of poetic techniques used in the poem:**

"and the river flows like a stream of glass" Simile

"when the wind stirs soft through the springing grass," Alliteration

Dunbar rhymes the last 2 lines of every stanza to emphasize the meaning. Rhyme Pattern

**Connection between the poem and the poet's life and or times:**

Paul Laurence Dunbar came from two freed slaves. His parents at one time were slaves. And as he was growing up, the world was not as racially tolerant as it is today. Dunbar probably always felt a sense of being trapped, and having only limited freedom. That is how he was able to write this poem with so much feeling. He had the stories of his parents, and the experiences he had growing up to draw on.

**Review Questions**

1. Critically evaluate the poem Fisherman Mourned by his Wife by Patrick Fernando.
2. How effectively Wole Soyinka illustrates the themes of prejudice and discrimination through the use of form, style and language in his poem Telephone Conversation?

3. Discuss the themes of Kamala Das's poems prescribed in your syllabus.
4. How does Chinua Achebe describes the pathetic picture of the refugee came in his poem 'Refugee Mother and Child'?
5. Illustrate the autobiographical element in Nissim Ezekie's poem 'Background Casually'.
6. How does Paul Laurence use the symbol in his poem 'Sympathy' to give the vivid picture of slavery? Explain with reference to the text.
7. Explain the theme of the poem 'Nani' by Kamala Das.
8. Critically analyze the poem 'Colonial Cameo' by Regie Siriwardena.
9. Discuss the theme 'identity crisis' in the poem 'A Far Cry from Africa' by Derek Walcott.
10. Critically analyse the poem 'Piano and Drums' by Gabriel Okara in terms of its techniques and themes.

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**Recommended Readings:**

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## Chapter 03

### Short Story

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#### Key Terms

Jhumpa Lahiri, R.K Narayan , Alterity, nativeness, diaspora, migration, identity crisis

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#### Intended Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain relationships between and among literary elements including character, plot, setting, theme, conflict and resolution and their influence on the effectiveness of the literary piece.
- Analyze and evaluate the effects of author's craft and style
- Analyze form, content, purpose and major themes of the story.

## **Short Story**

### **3.1 Mrs. Sen's**

#### **Jhumpa Lahiri:**

Lahiri was born in London. She is the daughter of Indian immigrants from the state of West Bengal. Her family moved to the United States when she was three and Lahiri considers herself an American.

When she began kindergarten in Kingstone, Rhode Island, Lahiri's teacher decided to call her by her pet name, Jhumpa, because it was easier to pronounce than her "proper names" Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri.

#### **Outline story of Mrs.Sen's**

In this story, 11-year old Eliot begins staying with Mrs. Sen - a university professor's wife - after school. The caretaker, Mrs. Sen, chops and prepares food as she tells Elliot stories of her past life in Calcutta, helping to craft her identity. Like "A Temporary Matter," this story is filled with lists of produce, catalogs of ingredients, and descriptions of recipes. Emphasis is placed on ingredients and the act of preparation.

Other objects are emphasized as well, such as Mrs. Sen's colourful collection of saris from her native India. Much of the plot revolves around Mrs. Sen's tradition of purchasing fish from a local seafood market. This fish reminds Mrs. Sen of her home and holds great significance for her. However, reaching the seafood market requires driving, a skill that Mrs. Sen has not learned and resists learning. At

the end of the story, Mrs. Sen attempts to drive to the market without her husband, and ends up in an automobile accident. Eliot soon stops staying with Mrs. Sen thereafter.

### **Analysis of the text**

*Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), The Pulitzer-Prize winning volume of nine short stories, is the maiden work of Jhumpa Lahiri. She was born to Bengal parents in London and was brought up in United States. Lahiri has her own personal experience of being a child of immigrants and being brought up in mix cultural background. This becomes a prominent reason for her to select the themes of alienation, isolation, identity crisis, search for one's root, cross-cultural experiences, etc. in her writings.

The stories depict the experience of the migrants and explain the problems they face through different aspects of life. The world that Lahiri portrays is set in a place where the protagonist tries his or her level best to cope up with the new culture and tradition. Yet the crisis arises when they have a strong sense of belonging in their native land, tradition and culture the characters fall quarry to loneliness. This creates them to alienate themselves from the new culture and leaves them into lifelong struggle to assimilate to it. Lahiri goes on to show this problem through the story Mrs.Sen.

Lahiri has selected the major theme of identity crisis from her own personal experience. Thus she portrays similar characters projecting her own life and it becomes easy for her to universalize the problems faced by the immigrants through her stories. In each story almost all

the characters mentally suffer from the sense of belonging which they lack in the migrated place. Lahiri gives a special focus in the character of Mrs.Sen's who feels difficult to assimilate to the American culture as she couldn't leave the life style and culture of India. Every now and then she relates her present life in America with the extended family life experience that she had in her mother land. Her isolated life in the apartment makes her get depressed whereas Eliot the eleven year old American boy whom she takes care of handles isolation at ease.

**Themes:**

An immigrant's experience like Mrs. Sen's is packed up with loneliness and detachment from one's motherland. Motherland doesn't merely mean the geographical area but the family bond which is built up with emotions. In the story Mrs Sen tries to seek Indian lifestyle in her apartment. The way she arranges the living room, cupboard, handling the kitchen equipment, the way she welcomes the visitor's resembles the Indian style.

“..Mismatched remnants of other carpets were positioned in front of the sofa and chairs, like individual welcome mats anticipating where a person's feet would contact the floor. White drum-shaped lampshades flanking the sofa were still wrapped in the manufacturer's plastic. The TV and the telephone were covered by pieces of yellow fabric with scalloped edges.” (Lahiri,1999: 112)”



Mrs. Sen's instructs Eliot to remove the shoes when he enters the apartment which is similar to the life style of India.

“Eliot learned to remove his sneakers first thing in Mrs.Sen's doorway, and to place them on the bookcase next to a row of Mrs.Sen's slippers, each different colour, with soles as flat as cardboard and a ting of leather to hold her big toe. (Lahiri,1999: 114)”

Mrs. Sen feels strange when she finds herself alone most of the time in America, something which she did not feel in her motherland. She is accustomed to community life but in abroad she has to face the society that is based on individualism. She hardly knows her neighbors in the university apartments. The society in which she lives is individualistic and maintains privacy. Mrs. Sen finds it difficult to assimilate to this environment and thus she thrives to live in the nostalgic memories that she has of India. Whenever she feels depressed of her state, she illustrates her past life to Eliot.

“Eliot, if I began to scream right now at the top of my lungs. Would someone come?”

Mrs. Sen, what's wrong?”

“Nothing. I am only asking if someone would come.”

Eliot shrugged. “Maybe.” (Lahiri,1999: 116)

Her desperation becomes evident in yet another passage:

“At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone. But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half of

another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements.” (Lahiri,1999: 116)

#### Techniques:

Letter plays a major role in Mrs.Sen’s life. It acts as a time traveling machine and takes her back to her family in India. It acts as a medicine for her loneliness. In the story there are instances where Mrs. Sen is so desperate to get a letter from her family. The moment she reads it she relives with her family.

“At first Eliot found Mrs.Sen’s anxiety incomprehensible; his mother had a p.o box in town, and she collects mail so infrequently that once their electricity was cut off for three days. Weeks passed at Mrs.Sen’s before he found a blue aerogramme, grainy to the touch, crammed with stamps showing a bald man at a spinning wheel, and blackened by postmarks....As she read her voice was louder and seemed to shift in key. Though she stood plainly before him, Eliot had the sensation that Mrs.Sen was no longer present in the room with the pear-colored carpet.” (Lahiri,1999: 121)

Recorded voices in the cassette are significant as it acts as a remedy for her loneliness. The moment the cassette is played she lives in the reminiscence with her family members. The loneliness that shatters her slowly disappears when she hears the voices of her kindred. It helps her fight back the isolation and she takes refuge in such things which becomes a source of consolation. Thus she feels happy when she narrates the situation to Eliot.

“Another day she played a cassette of people talking in her language – a farewell present, she told Eliot, that her family had made for her. As the succession of voices laughed and said their bit, Mrs. Sen identified each speaker.” (Lahiri,1999:128)

The idea of cultural heritage can be seen in Mrs Sen’s daily life behavior with regard her mental conflicts. As we come to know that Mrs. Sen is not trying to become an American. Shoes are taken off while in her home, and she wears the traditional sari; when Eliot first meets her, she wears one that is “shimmering white ... patterned with orange paisleys, more suitable for an evening affair than for that quiet, faintly drizzling August afternoon” (Lahiri,1999:112). When out in public she wears the same—a checkered overcoat and sunglasses are her only concessions to the Western style of dress (Lahiri,1999:119). Her spiritual life is indicated from the part in her hair, “shaded with crushed vermilion” and the red dot in the center of her forehead applied “with the head of a thumbtack” from red powder “stored in a small jam jar.” (Lahiri,1999:117)

The importance given to kitchen equipment is significant as it tells the life style of Indian people. Though Mrs. Sen’s has a modern kitchen the way she uses the blade illustrates her difficulties in changing her habit.

“He especially enjoyed watching Mrs.Sen as she chopped things, seated on newspapers on the living room floor. Instead of a knife she used a blade that curved like the prow of a Viking ship...” (Lahiri,1999:114)

Lahiri relates the traditional kitchen blade to explain the life of Mrs. Sen in India, and through it she spins the urban life scenario where people get together in helping each other in special occasions.

“Whenever there is a wedding in the family,” she told Eliot one day, “or a large celebration of any kind, my mother sends out word in the evening for all the neighborhood women to bring blades just like this one, and then they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing and gossiping and slicing fifty kilos of vegetables through the night.” (Lahiri, 1999:115)

Mr. Sen tries his best to make Mrs. Sen independent so he makes her learn to drive. Yet she becomes a failure as she lacks confidence in driving on highway. This slowly makes her sink into depression. This is also evident when Mr. Sen refuses to buy her fish as he couldn't come from work. The second thing that makes her happy is the fish from the seaside. When Mr. Sen stops to buy fish, she feels depressed.

“The other thing that made Mrs. Sen happy was the fish from the sea side.” (Lahiri, 1999:123)

Food habit of a person can also affect his or her character in the case of migration. It is evident that Mrs. Sen couldn't adjust with the food style in America. She tries to cook Indian food as it pleases her the most. Yet she is not happy with the fish that is available in the supermarket as she is accustomed to cook fresh fish from the sea.

“In the supermarket I can feed a cat thirty –two dinners from one of thirty –two tins, but I can never find a single fish I like,

never a single.” Mrs.Sen said she had grown up eating fish twice a day. She added that in Calcutta people ate fish first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, as a snack after school if they were lucky.”” (Lahiri,1999:123)

Mrs. Sen continually compares India and America and she feels that she is brought to America by Mr.Sen. “Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me...” (Lahiri,1999:115) She feels that she is residing in a building and she never considers it as home. For her home is where all the family members live together. And every time she mentions home Eliot understands she is speaking of India. This sense of detachment reflects often in her conversation with Eliot.

“By then Eliot understood that when Mrs. Sen said home, she meant India, not the apartment where she sat chopping vegetables. (Lahiri1999:128).

Mrs. Sen, as an immigrant Indian thinks about her past and tries to live in it by secluding herself and also derives consolation by talking about it.

### **3.2 A Horse and Two Goats**

#### **Introduction:**

First published in the Madras, India, newspaper The Hindu in 1960, “A Horse and Two Goats” did not achieve a wide international audience until 1970 when it became the title story of R. K. Narayan’s seventh collection of short stories, A Horse and Two Goats and Other Stories. It reached an even wider audience in 1985 when it was

included in *Under the Banyan Tree*, Narayan's tenth and best-selling collection. By this time Narayan was well established as one of the most prominent Indian authors writing in English in the twentieth century. The story presents a comic dialogue between Muni, a poor Tamil-speaking villager, and a wealthy English-speaking businessman from New York. They are engaged in a conversation in which neither can understand the other's language. With gentle humor, Narayan explores the conflicts between rich and poor, and between Indian and Western culture.

Narayan is best known for his fourteen novels, many of which take place in the fictional town of Malgudi.

### **Summary**

Set in Kritam, "probably the tiniest" of India's 700,000 villages, "*A Horse and Two Goats*" opens with a clear picture of the poverty in which the protagonist Muni lives. Of the thirty houses in the village, only one, the Big House, is made of brick. The others, including Muni's, are made of "bamboo thatch, straw, mud, and other unspecified materials." There is no running water and no electricity, and Muni's wife cooks their typical breakfast of "a handful of millet flour" over a fire in a mud pot. On this day, Muni has shaken down six drumsticks (a local name for a type of horse radish) from the drumstick tree growing in front of his house, and he asks his wife to prepare them for him in a sauce. She agrees, provided he can get the other ingredients, none of which they have in the house: rice, dhall (lentils), spices, oil and a potato. Muni and his wife have not always been so poor. Once, when he considered himself prosperous, he had a

flock of forty sheep and goats which he would lead out to graze every day. But life has not been kind to him or to his flocks: years of drought, a great famine, and an epidemic that ran through Muni's flock have taken their toll. And as a member of the lowest of India's castes, Muni was never permitted to go to school or to learn a trade. Now he is reduced to two goats, too scrawny to sell or to eat. He and his wife have no children to help them in their old age, so their only income is from the odd jobs his wife occasionally takes on at the Big House. Muni has exhausted his credit at every shop in town, and today, when he asks a local shopman to give him the items his wife requires to cook the drumsticks, he is sent away humiliated.

There is no other food in the house, so Muni's wife sends him away with the goats. "Fast till the evening," she tells him. "It'll do you good." Muni takes the goats to their usual spot a few miles away: a grassy area near the highway, where he can sit in the shade of a life-sized statue of a horse and a warrior and watch trucks and buses go by. The statue is made of weather-beaten clay and has stood in the same spot for all of Muni's seventy or more years.

As Muni watches the road and waits for the appropriate time to return home, a yellow station wagon comes down the road and pulls over. A red faced American man dressed in khaki clothing gets out and is asking Muni where to find the nearest gas station when he notices the statue, which he finds "marvelous." Muni's first impulse is to run away, assuming from the khaki that this foreigner must be a policeman or a soldier. But Muni is too old to run any more, and he cannot leave the goats. The two begin to converse –if

“conversation” can be used to describe what happens when two people speak to each other in separate languages, neither understanding the other. “Namaste! How do you do?” the American says in greeting, using his only Indian word. Muni responds with the only English he knows: “Yes, no.”

The American, a businessman from New York City, lights a cigarette and offers one to Muni, who knows about cigarettes but has never had one before. He offers Muni his business card, but Muni fears it is a warrant of some kind. Muni launches into a long explanation of his innocence of whatever crime the man is investigating, and the American asks questions about the horse statue, which he would like to buy. He tells Muni about a bad day at work, when he was forced to work for four hours without elevators or electricity, and seems completely unaware that Muni lives this way every day. By now he is convinced that Muni is the owner of the statue, which he is determined to buy.

The two talk back and forth, each about his own life. Muni remembers his father and grandfather telling about the statue and the ancient story it depicts, and tries to explain to the American how old it is. “I get a kick out of every word you utter,” the American replies. Muni reminisces about his difficult and impoverished childhood working in the fields, and the American laughs heartily. Muni interprets the statue: “This is our guardian. . . . At the end of Kali Yuga, this world and all other worlds will be destroyed, and the Redeemer will come in the shape of a horse.” The American replies,



“I assure you this will have the best home in the U.S.A. I’ll push away the bookcase. . . . The TV may have to be shifted. . . . I don’t see how that can interfere with the party—we’ll stand around him and have our drinks.” It is clear that even if the two could understand each other’s words, they could not understand each other’s worlds.

Finally, the American pushes one hundred rupees into Muni’s hand—twenty times Muni’s debt with the shopkeeper. He considers that he has bought the horse, and Muni believes he has just sold his goats. Muni runs home to present the money to his wife, while the American flags down a truck, gets help breaking the horse off its pedestal, and drives away with his purchase. Muni’s wife does not believe her husband’s story about where the money came from, and her suspicions only increase when the goats find their way home. As the story ends, she is shrieking at him, and Muni appears to be not much better off than he was at the start.

### **Main Characters:**

#### **Muni**

Muni, an old and desperately poor man, is the protagonist of the story. Once he was prosperous, with a large flock of sheep, but a series of misfortunes have left him with only two scrawny goats. He and his wife have almost no income and no children to help take care of them. Every day, Muni takes the goats out to graze on the scarce grass outside of town, while his wife pulls something together for an evening meal. As he watches the goats from the shade of a large statue, he remembers his younger days when the work was hard but

there was enough to eat, when he could not attend school because he was not of the right caste, and when he imagined that he would one day have children. Like many poor and struggling people, he fears authority figures, and so he fears the American who steps out of a strange car wearing khaki clothes. While the man tries to talk with him about the statue, Muni babbles on about a recent murder and the end of the world. At the end he seems to have temporarily escaped his money troubles, but his bad luck continues when his wife suspects him of thievery and threatens to leave.

### **The shop man**

The shop man is a moody man who has given Muni food on credit in the past, but who has been pushed past his limit. Muni owes him five rupees, and although they share a bit of humorous conversation, the shop man will not give him any more.

### **The wife**

Muni's wife has spent some sixty years with him (neither of them is sure about their ages), through prosperity and poverty. Although she is gruff with him now, she is willing to indulge his request for a special meal. She works as hard as he does, or harder, getting up at dawn to fix his morning meal, and taking odd jobs at the Big House when their stores are low. But poverty has worn her down: her first reaction when she sees the hundred rupees is to accuse Muni of stealing.

## **Themes**

### **Culture Clash**

The most important theme in “A Horse and Two Goats,” and in fact the central theme of Narayan’s work, is the clash of cultures, specifically the clash of Indian and Western cultures. Using humor instead of anger, Narayan demonstrates just how far apart the two worlds are: the two cultures exist in the same time and space, but literally and metaphorically speak different languages. The two main characters in this story couldn’t be more different: Muni is poor, rural, uneducated, Hindu, brown; the American is wealthy, urban, educated, probably Judeo-Christian, white. As a good Hindu, Muni calmly accepts the hand that fate has dealt him, while the American is willing and able to take drastic and sudden action to change his life (for example, flying off to India, or throwing away his return plane ticket to transport a horse statue home on a ship). Each man is quite ignorant of the other’s way of life.

Unlike many stories about culture clash, the inability to communicate in this story leads only to confusion, not to any real harm. In fact, although each feels vaguely dissatisfied with the conversation, the men do not realize that they are not communicating. Each speaks at length about his own life and local calamities, with no awareness that the other hears nothing. At the end of their encounter each man has what he wants or needs, and neither man has lost anything of value. As an Indian who writes only in English, Narayan himself has experienced the ways in which Indian and Western cultures conflict.

While this conflict may be painful at times, here he finds it merely amusing.

### **Wealth and Poverty**

Although they have little in common, the most important way in which Muni and the American differ is in their respective level of wealth. Narayan takes great pains in the opening of the story to show how desperately poor Muni is, and to emphasize that even in his time of “prosperity” his standard of living was still greatly below that of most Americans. The American takes for granted his relative wealth and seems unaware of the difference between Muni and himself. He casually offers cigarettes to a man who has never seen one, complains about four hours without air conditioning to a man who has never had electricity, brags about enjoying manual labor as a Sunday hobby to a man who grew up working in the fields from morning until night, and without a thought gives Muni enough money to open a business. He is not trying to show off; he simply accepts his wealth as his right. His very casualness emphasizes the gap between them. Narayan in no way condemns the man for being wealthy, or for not stepping in to aid the poor Muni, but he wants the two men and their relative wealth to be clear, so the reader can evaluate the relationship between wealth and worth.

### **Knowledge and Ignorance**

In a small way, “A Horse and Two Goats” explores the different ways that a person can be educated. Muni, who grew up a member of a lower caste at a time when only the Brahmin, the highest caste,

could attend school, has had no formal education. He has not traveled beyond his village, and he likes to watch trucks and buses go by on the highway a few miles away so that he can have “a sense of belonging to a larger world.” He does not even know his own age. He does, however, have an impressive amount of knowledge of the two major texts of his literary heritage, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which he has learned by acting in plays and by listening to speakers at the temple. He knows the stories, and he is able to mine them for truth and wisdom when he needs them.

The American, on the other hand, has had the full benefits of an American education. He has a roomful of books that he values as objects (“you know I love books and am a member of five book clubs, and the choice and bonus volumes mount up to a pile in our living room”), but there is no evidence that he understands or values what is inside them. On one level, he is familiar with the larger world around him in a way that Muni never will be. However, even on this trip to India “to look at other civilizations,” he does not seem to be looking at India for what it is, but only for a reflection of and ornaments for his own life. The uneducated Muni tries to tell him the significance of the horse statue, but the American sees it only as a living room decoration. Of course, the language barrier prevents him from receiving Muni’s interpretation, but it never even crosses his mind to ask. In this story, there are at least two ways to be ignorant.

### **Review Questions**

1. Discuss the themes of the short story Mrs's by Jhumpa Lahiri.
2. Explain the nativeness in the short story 'A Horse and Two Goats' by R.K.Narayan.
3. Discuss the characterisation of Muni and foreigner in R.K. Narayan's short story 'A Horse and Two Goats'.
4. Explain the significance of symbols in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story 'Mrs.Sen's.
5. Illustrate the way in which R.K Narayan depicts the cultural significance of South India through the humorous conversation between Muni and the foreigner in A Horse and Two Goats.

### **References:**

1. Shirome Noeline 2013, Identity Crisis and the Immigrant's Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's, Kalam Journal volume VI.
2. Gale, Cengage Learning 2016, A Study Guide for R. K. Narayan's "Horse and Two Goats" Short Stories for Students Gale, Cengage Learning

### **Recommended Readings:**

1. Lahiri Jhumpa, 1999 Interpreter of maladies, Interpreter of maladies, New York.
2. Narayan R.K, 1970 A Horse and Two Goats, Viking Press

## Chapter 04

### Drama

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#### Key Terms

Whole Soyinka, Yoruba culture, bride price

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#### Intended Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the conflict, plot, climax, and setting.
- Compare and contrast ways in which character, scene, dialogue, and staging contribute to the theme and the dramatic effect.
- Evaluate dramatic elements.
- Comparing and contrasting dramatic elements from different cultures.
- Analyze and evaluate the effects of author's craft and style

## **Drama**

### **4.1 The Lion and the Jewel**

#### **Introduction:**

Wole Soyinka is a renowned Nigerian dramatist, who was awarded Nobel Prize in 1986, for his accomplishment in the field of literature. He is a prolific writer and versatile genius of Africa. Being a social conscious writer, he is acclaimed worldwide, yet his home country rewarded him with solitary confinements, sentence to death and many exiles. However, no orders and punishment subdued his strong will. Instead, like a sphinxes, he came out from all difficulties with great energy to enlighten and serve his people. Such a consciousness reflects in his play with more aesthetic in sense and socially instructive. His works are based on society, culture, tradition and politics of Africa. He infuses the western stage with new dramatic possibilities while commenting on Yoruba tradition and Africa's modern political and social realities. He is a keen observer of his land, culture and customs and very eminent in expressing the observance in writings.

The admirable traits of Soyinka writings hinge upon a certain pillars of literary forms such as comedy, tragedy and scathing satire. His laughter provoking comedies have an underlying object of high seriousness of satire. The tragic plays of Soyinka are written in comic vein, though monotonous and grim, very suitable to the atmosphere of the play.



Soyinka's "The Lion and the Jewel" is a comical play based on African society, written in 1959 and published in 1963. Jeyifo comments upon the play, "*The Lion and the Jewel* occupies a unique place in Soyinka's dramas. It is perhaps the only play by him that is written entirely in a comic spirit uncomplicated by a dark, brooding humor and satire" ("Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism", 106). The play portrays a conflict between tradition and modernism. In the play, there is ample use of dance, song and mime. The play is very simple in its structure and it is a poetic drama or musical play. It shows deep familiarity of Soyinka with the various aspects of African tradition and the Influence of the modern world on the African mind. Soyinka gives an account of the origins of the play in an interview, in that he mentions about the custom and culture of Yoruba.

### **Lakunle**

Lakunle is the schoolteacher of the village. He deeply admires Western culture and seeks to emulate, often to comically inadequate effect. He is portrayed by Soyinka as clumsy in both actions and words, throwing together phrases from the Bible and other Western works in hope of sounding intelligent. He is "in love" with Sidi, but cannot marry her because she demands that he pay the traditional bride-price, something he refuses to do. Initially we chalk up this refusal to his Western beliefs, and the belief that women shouldn't be bought and sold, but later in the play he reveals his true self - when Sidi's virginity is taken away, he leaps at the chance to bypass the bride-price by saying that she can't really expect him to pay the bride

price now that she's no longer "pure". He represents one extreme of the play's central pendulum - the Western values.

### **Sidi**

Sidi is a young girl in the village who has just had her ego boosted by a visit from a big city photographer, who has taken her pictures and published them in a magazine. From then on, she is extremely conceited, thinking herself even higher than the Baroka, the Bale, the Chief of Illujinle. She refuses to marry Lakunle until he pays the bride price, and eventually goes to visit Baroka because she believes that she will be able to humiliate him by exposing his impotence. However, Baroka proves to be a cunning man and she falls right into his trap. She is the needle of the pendulum; she wavers from end to end, confused, before finally settling on the traditional side.

### **Baroka**

Baroka is the leader of the village. He holds to his Yoruba traditional beliefs, but his power is coming under threat from the Western influence. The issue that troubles him throughout the beginning of the play, we learn, is his apparent impotence, a secret he reveals to his head wife. We later learn, however, that this feigned impotence was only a clever stratagem in order to lure Sidi into coming to his palace. In the course of the story Baroka's qualities of cunning, discrimination and strength are shown to advantage; Lakunle is provided with a number of opportunities to display his talents but he fails recurrently. Finally Sidi's decision to marry Baroka reflects the playwright's opinion that in the context provided by the play, Baroka

is the better man and his attitudes are the more substantial as well as worthy.

### **Bride-price and its Importance:**

Encyclopaedia Britannica says regarding the bride-price, “the practice is common in most parts of the globe in one form or another, but it is perhaps most prevalent in Africa.” Bride-price is money or property given by the bridegroom to the family of his bride. Such a system is still followed by the native Africans and Muslims in their religion. Even in India, the same system followed in olden days, but it had gone reverse in the later period. However, the primitive African societies follow the footsteps of tradition and culture, demanding the bride-price to the bridegroom. It is honour to the bride who receives a good price. If a girl marries without the price, it is assumed that she is not a virgin or she is not worth to marry.

Sidi the traditional African girl, who is untouched by the foreign ideas and culture, insists on

the bride-price and its honour to Lakunle,

I have told you, and I say it again

I shall marry you today, next week

Or any day you name.

But my bride-price must first be paid....

But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have

The full bride-price. Will you make me

A laughing-stock? Well, do as you please.

But Sidi will not make herself

A cheap bowl for the village spit....

They will say I was no virgin

That I was forced to sell my shame

And marry you without a price. (“The Lion and the Jewel”, 8)

According to the custom of Africa, a girl marrying without the bride-price is a disgrace to the bride. Sidi, the beauty of the village, expects Lakunle to pay more bride-price for her beauty and virginity. But Lakunle, who has European sensibilities, is an iconoclast of the African traditional manner. He attacks the traditional African customs of marriage. He calls the system of bride-price:

“A savage custom, barbaric, out-dated ... unpalatable” (“The Lion and the Jewel”, 8).

As the teacher educated by west, he objects it due that his influence on the western concept of gender equality or his empty pocket. He believes that the custom is a disgrace and humiliation to women, “to pay the price would be / To buy a heifer off the market stall” (“The Lion and the Jewel”, 9).

### **Critical note of the play**

Written by Africa’s well known dramatist, Wole Soyinka, the play ‘The Lion and the Jewel’ has its setting in the village of Ilunjunle in Yoruba West Africa. It was published in 1963 by Oxford University Press.

The play is characterized by culture conflict, ribald comedy and love, where the old culture represented by the uneducated people in

Ilunjunle, led by Baroka, Sidi and the rest, clashes with the new culture led by Lakunle, who is educated, school teacher by profession is influenced by the western ways.

Like the title suggests, 'The Lion and the Jewel' is symbolic. The lion is Baroka and the jewel is Sidi. She is the village belle. The lion seeks to have the jewel. The play starts with Lakunle pouring out his heart to Sidi but she does not want to pay attention. If only Lakunle can pay dowry then she would marry him. But to Lakunle, that's being barbaric, outdated and ignorant. If he could only make her understand. He says:

"To pay price would be to buy a heifer off the market stall.  
You would be my chattel, my mere property."

Sidi does not pay attention. To her a girl for whom dowry is not paid for will be hiding her shame for she will not be known as a virgin. Her beauty has captured many souls, besides Lakunle. There is the photographer who took her photos and published them in a magazine, and even Baroka the lion, the bale/chieftain of Ilunjunle as well as other girls in the village. Sidi also brags a lot about her beauty. She is not afraid to speak of it in public.

Baroka has many wives though, despite his wanting Sidi for a wife. On seeing her in a magazine seated alone, he laments:

"Yes yes..... it is five full months since I last took a  
wife.....five full months"

Sadiku is Baroka's head wife. As custom suggests, the last wife of the previous bale/chief becomes the head wife of the new chief once succeeded.

Her duty as a head wife is to lure any woman Baroka pleases to have into getting her. Sidi turns off Baroka's proposal in the most demeaning way, through his head wife. She scorns him:

“Compare my image and that of your lord... an age of a difference....” See how water glistens my face.... But he-his is like a leather piece torn rudely from the saddle of his horse.

Baroka blames it on himself when he gets the news of his rejected proposal. He says:

“My man hood ended a week ago.”

Sadiku rather glad about Baroka's confession tells the news to Sidi. Sidi goes to see Baroka on the grounds that she did not intend to reject his invitation and proposal well knowing that he would not be capable of doing anything. In an unexpected turn of events, Baroka manages to seduce her and win her over Lakunle. The Lion and the Jewel is a very interesting play, and remains one of Wole Soyinka's best works.

## **Themes**

The most prominent theme of this story is the rapid modernisation of Africa, coupled with the rapid evangelisation of the population. This has driven a wedge between the traditionalists, who seek to nullify the changes done in the name of progress due to vested interests or simply not liking the result of progress, and the modernists, who want to see the last of outdated traditional beliefs at all cost.

Another core theme is the marginalisation of women as property. Traditionally, they were seen as properties that could be bought, sold

or accumulated. Even the modern Lackunle also falls victim to this, by looking down on Sidi for having a smaller brain and later by wanting to marry her after she lost her virginity since no dowry was required in such a situation.

There is also the conflict between education and traditional beliefs. The educated people seek to spread their knowledge to the tribal people in an attempt to make them more modern. This in turn is resisted by the tribal people who see no point in obtaining an education as it served them no use in their daily lives.

Finally, there is the importance of song and dance as a form of spreading information in a world where the fastest route of communication is by foot. It is also an important source of entertainment for the otherwise bored village youths.

### **Review Questions**

1. Discuss the themes of the play 'Lion and Jewel' by Wole Soyinka.
2. Write a detail note on Wole Soyinka's characterization of Sidi, Lackunle and Baroka in the play *Lion and Jewel*.

### **Reference:**

1. Reddy, S. 2013. Cultural Conflict in Wole Soyinka's Play The Lion and the Jewel. *Language in India*, 13(9), 404-413.

### **Recommended Reading:**

1. Soyinka Wole, 1990 The Lion and the Jewel, Oxford University Press, USA

## Chapter 05

### Poetry

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#### Key Terms

Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, Ibo culture, Anita Desai, Village by the Sea, Thul

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#### Intended Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Analyze and evaluate the effects of author's craft and style
- Compare and contrast the characters in the novel.
- Explain relationships between and among literary elements including character, plot, setting, theme, conflict and resolution and their influence on the effectiveness of the novel.
- Demonstrate how representative elements such as mood, tone, and style impact the development of a theme.



## Novel

### 5.1 Things Fall Apart

Things Fall Apart is a story told by a skillful storyteller. The novel attempts to recreate the social, cultural, and religious fabric of traditional Igbo life between 1850 and the early 1900s. However, the novel cannot be interpreted as an accurate social and political history of the Igbo people, because it is a work of fiction. Nevertheless, the novel depicts conflicts and tensions within Igbo society as well as changes introduced by colonial rule and Christianity. The novel is structured in three parts. Part One depicts life in pre-colonial Igboland. Part Two relates the arrival of the Europeans and the introduction of Christianity, and Part Three recounts the beginning of systematic colonial control in eastern Nigeria. Okonkwo, the protagonist, is a talented but inflexible Igbo who struggles to achieve success in the traditional world.

The setting of Part One is Umuofia, a union of nine villages. Okonkwo is introduced as a great wrestler, a renowned warrior, and a hardworking member of the community. He has amassed two barns filled with yams, three wives, many children, and two titles. His goal is to move through the traditional Igbo title taking system by balancing personal achievement and community service. However, although Okonkwo feels he is destined for greatness, his *chi*, or the god-force within him, *does not seem destined for greatness*.

Okonkwo seeks to overpower his mediocre chi by working hard. He is profoundly afraid of failure. As a result, he is unable to balance the feminine energy of love with the masculine energy of material success. Okonkwo often suppresses his feminine side as he pursues his goals and angers the Earth goddess Ani. His rage, inflexibility, and fear of appearing weak like his lazy father, the musician Unoka, consistently overshadow his respect for his community.

When a daughter of Umuofia is killed by the neighboring village of Mbaino, a young boy named Ikemefuna is given to Umuofia in order to avoid war. Okonkwo adopts the boy and seems to admire him, for Ikemefuna is both a talented musician and a great hunter. He is also a brother and role model for Okonkwo's eldest son Nwoye, who appears to be lazy. Ikemefuna lives with Okonkwo for three years until the Oracle of the Hills and Caves demands his life. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the village, advises Okonkwo not to take part in the ritual killing of the boy. Although Okonkwo loves Ikemefuna, he does not want to appear weak. He joins the ceremony and kills Ikemefuna. Okonkwo's action ultimately shatters his relationship with his sensitive son, Nwoye.

Okonkwo is both affectionate and violent with his family. He loves his daughter Ezinma, who is an *ogbanje*, or a changeling child who seems to die continually only to return to her mother's womb to be reborn and die again. In an attempt to break the power of the *ogbanje*, Okonkwo follows his wife Ekwefi, the priestess Chielo, and his daughter Ezinma on a journey to the oracle Agbala. Okonkwo also assists a medicine man locate and destroy his daughter's *iyi uwa*, or

the sacred stone that links the child with the spirit world. However, Okonkwo also has a dark and dangerous side, for he controls his family through anger. In bouts of rage, he beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, for neglecting to cook dinner and braiding her hair instead during the Week of Peace. He also takes a shot at Ekwefi with a rusty gun during the Yam Festival.

Okonkwo's immoral actions affect the community. During the funeral rite for the elder Ezeudu, Okonkwo's gun accidentally explodes, killing Ezeudu's son. Okonkwo's crimes enrage the Earth Goddess Ani, for he has consciously and unconsciously chosen death by beating his wife, killing Ikemefuna, and now, killing Ezeudu's son. His irrational actions are destroying the moral fabric of traditional life. Therefore, Ani banishes Okonkwo to Mbanta, his mother's village, for seven years.

Part Two of the novel takes place while Okonkwo is in exile in Mbanta. Okonkwo flees to his mother's village and takes refuge with the feminine principal represented by the Earth goddess. He is given time to learn the supremacy of a mother's nurturing love. However, Okonkwo's goals never change. He works hard to amass wealth through the production of yams, and he dreams of returning to Umuofia to become a judicial leader in the clan. While Okonkwo single-mindedly labors in Mbanta, the Europeans arrive in Igboland. His friend Obierika visits him twice with news of the political and social upheaval. Abame, one of the villages in the union of Umuofia, is razed by the British. Christianity, a new religion, is attracting the marginal members of the Igbo community. The disenfranchised

among the Igbo include the anguished mothers of twins who are forced to discard their children in the Evil Forest, the *osu*, who are despised descendants of religious slave cults, and unsuccessful men who do not earn titles or achieve status in the traditional world. The new Christian converts include Okonkwo's son, Nwoye.

In Part Three, Okonkwo returns from exile in Mbanta to a tense and radically changed Umuofia. At this point, a colonial government is taking root, the palm-oil trade is transforming the economy, and Christianity is dividing the Igbo people. Tensions escalate at the annual worship of the Earth goddess when the zealous Christian convert Enoch unmasks an *egwugwu*, a masquerader representing an ancestral spirit. His apostasy kills the spirit, unmasks the traditional religion, and throws Umuofia into confusion. Other *egwugwu*, who are actually Igbo men masked as ancestors, are enraged and retaliate. They raze Enoch's compound to the ground and burn the new Christian church. Okonkwo and other village leaders are subsequently jailed and whipped by order of the District Commissioner. After paying a fine, the humiliated Igbo are released from prison.

The traditional Igbo gather to mourn the abominations suffered by the ancient gods, the ancestors, and the entire Igbo community. They decry the new religion, which has pitted Igbo against Igbo. When colonial officials arrive to disperse the crowd, Okonkwo blocks them. He draws his machete and decapitates the court messenger. Okonkwo marshals no support; however, for the divided Igbo community fails

to rise in defense of traditional life. Okonkwo has no recourse. He retreats and hangs himself from a tree.

Okonkwo fails to achieve immortality according to Igbo tradition. Only strangers may touch him now, for he has committed suicide, the ultimate offense against the Earth goddess. Okonkwo does not even merit a simple burial among his own people. In the final denouement, a perplexed District Commissioner orders members of the Igbo community to appear in court with Okonkwo's corpse. The commissioner decides to allot the tragedy of Okonkwo a paragraph in his anthropological study of the Igbo, which he has cruelly entitled "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger." (p. 148)

### **Novel at a Glance**

- In Nigeria in the 1980s, Igbo warrior Okonkwo places great store in his masculine success; he fears failure and appearing weak, lazy, or cowardly.
- Okonkwo is appointed guardian of Ikemefuna. When the oracle demands that Ikemefuna be sacrificed, Okonkwo defies the elders and kills the boy he loves.
- Okonkwo's gun explodes at a funeral, killing the dead man's son. To appease the earth goddess Ani, he is exiled to his mother's village for seven years.
- Okonkwo returns to a village divided over the white settlers' spreading Christianity. Okonkwo and other village leaders burn the church and are jailed and humiliated.

- Okonkwo kills a colonial messenger, but the divided village fails to rally behind him. Okonkwo hangs himself, a shameful act that violates Igbo teachings.

## **5.2 The Village by the Sea**

It is a story about the life of a family of six which consists of the parents and their four children; Lila, Hari, Kamal and Bela. They live in Thul, in a village which is near to Alibagh. The main activity for the villagers to earn a living is fishing. Lila's family represents the typical lives of families in the small fishing village of Thul. While other children are fortunate enough to have parents or at least the fathers to go fishing and provide food for them, Lila's siblings have to survive on their own since their mother is sick while their father has always been drunk.

For that reason, Lila plays the role as the mother by doing the house work while Hari works in the field behind their hut. One day, Hari is being told by his good friend, Ramu that their fishing village is going to transform into industrial place with many factories will be built. Since that, he keeps thinking about the idea that the factories would give the villagers new jobs. However, Hari is not sure about the idea since it seems to take long time for the transformation to happen that he should think of another way to earn a living. Then he decides to leave for Bombay secretly, leaving Lila the full responsibility to take care of the family.

In Bombay, Hari works at Sri Krishna Eating House owned by Jagu, a watchman of the de Silva's house in Bombay. De Silva has a vacation house in Thul and he knows Hari since Hari used to help him to settle down in Thul. While working at the restaurant, Hari builds a good relationship with a watch mender, Mr. Panwallah who then teaches him watch mending. Hari acquires the skill that he manages to repair a watch of Mr. Panwallah's customer and make money for that. Mr. Panwallah inspires Hari to learn the skill so that one day it could be useful for him to earn a better living. Meanwhile, Lila and her sister are doing well since the de Silva's family come for summer vacation in Thul. They work for the family like Hari used to during his presence. Mr. de Silva is the one who sends their mother to the hospital in Alibagh when Lila asks for his help. Since that, their father stops drinking and he stays in the hospital to take care of their mother. After that, a bird researcher replaces Mr. de Silva's place to stay at the house but Lila and her sisters are still doing the job to serve the researcher whose name is Sayyid Ali.

It has been seven months since Hari left his village and it is right before Diwali that Hari goes back to Thul, surprising his sisters with the money he has brought. He eagerly tells them everything that has happened in Bombay and his dream of building better life for them in Thul.

He plans to adapt with the transformation which is soon to take place by working on poultry farm first. His watch mending skill would make him money when the factories are built since people from town

who wear watches will come and stay in Thul to work. Hari also has been told by Lila about their father's change and their mother's health condition. That year, their family celebrated Diwali much better than the previous years. Their mother has been discharged from the hospital and their father is not drinking anymore.

### **Review Questions**

1. Discuss the Igbo culture mentioned in the novel 'Things Fall Apart' by Chinua Achebe.
2. Compare and contrast the characters Okonkwo and Unoka.
3. Do you agree Okonkwo is a tragic hero? Explain.
4. Write the character sketch of Hari and Lila in the novel 'Village by the Sea'.
5. Illustrate the themes of the novel 'Village by the Sea' by Anita Desai.
6. Discuss the central theme of the novel *Things Fall Apart*.
7. Compare and contrast the two major characters Lila and Hari in Anita Desai's novel *Village by the Sea*.

### **References:**

3. Papke Renate, 2008, Poems at the Edge of Differences: Mothering in New English Poetry by Women, OAPEN (Open Access Publishing in European Networks) Universitätsverlag Göttingen.



4. Shirome Noeline 2013, Identity Crisis and the Immigrant's Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's", Kalam Journal volume VI.
5. WIJESINHA, Rajiva, 1993, An Anthology of Contemporary Sri Lankan Poetry in English (2nd Edition), Colombo, The English Association of Sri Lanka
6. <https://litlovetorrelles.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/chinua-achebe-things-fall-apart/comment-page-1/>
7. [http://www.academia.edu/3669199/Novel\\_Analysis\\_The\\_Village\\_by\\_the\\_Sea\\_Anita\\_Desai](http://www.academia.edu/3669199/Novel_Analysis_The_Village_by_the_Sea_Anita_Desai)

**Recommended Readings:**

1. Achebe Chinua, 1958 Things Fall Apart, Allied publisher, New Delhi.
2. Desai, Anita, 1982, The village by the sea, Allied publishers private limited, New Delhi.